

THE EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

# Bulletin

Volume 25, Number 2

November/December 2013

*"The Only News I know / Is Bulletins all Day / From Immortality."*

## Emily Dickinson World Citizen



# EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

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*EDIS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial contributions of these members.*

EDIS *Bulletin* (ISSN 1055-3932) is published twice yearly, May/June and November/December, by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. Standard Mail non-profit postage is paid at Lexington, KY 40511. Membership in the Society is open to all persons with an interest in Emily Dickinson and her work. For further information, contact Jonnie Guerra, President, EDIS, 1812 Garden Street, West Lafayette, IN 47906 USA or [jgguerra@purdue.edu](mailto:jgguerra@purdue.edu). Annual dues are \$50.00 for regular members, \$30.00 for students, \$200.00 for sustaining members, \$113.00 for institutional members, \$100.00 for contributing members (all of whom receive the *Bulletin* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*), or \$20.00 for associate members (*Bulletin* only). Membership inquiries should be directed to James C. Fraser, 159 Prospect St., Apt 7, Acton, MA, 01720-3654, USA. Membership applications and changes of address should be sent to The Emily Dickinson International Society, c/o Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211-0966, USA. Direct changes of address to [jnrcirc@mail.press.jhu.edu](mailto:jnrcirc@mail.press.jhu.edu), 800-548-1784 (U.S. and Canada), or 410-516-6987; fax to 410-516-3866. Address submissions for the *Bulletin* to Daniel Manheim, Centre College, 600 West Walnut St., Danville, KY 40422, USA or [dan.manheim@centre.edu](mailto:dan.manheim@centre.edu). Submission deadlines are March 1 (Spring issue) and September 1 (Fall issue). All articles become the property of the *Bulletin*. Back issues are available for \$5.00 each from the editor. Copyright © 2013 by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. The *Bulletin* is indexed in EBSCO, Humanities International Complete, and the MLA Bibliography.

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*This issue is largely devoted to coverage of the EDIS International Conference, held in College Park, Maryland, in August 2013. The photographs on the front cover will take conference participants back to three sultry and stimulating days spent pondering many facets of the topic of Emily Dickinson World Citizen..*

*The images on the back cover are from the final event of the conference, high tea at the Willard Hotel, where Emily Dickinson stayed when she visited her father when he was his district’s representative to Congress, and where Julia Ward Howe wrote “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”*

*Special thanks are due to Rebecca Mooney, EDIS webmaster, for serving as the conference photographer. All photographs from the conference are hers, unless otherwise marked.*

*The Editorial Assistant for this issue was Laura K. Zolman*

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# Emily Dickinson: World Citizen Three Days in “Scarlet Maryland”

By Dan Manheim

To someone driving through Maryland and Virginia, the modern world can seem a palimpsest over haunting lessons learned in high school and visualized in the stark images of early photography. Here democracy received its first strong challenge, and here the duties and costs and rewards of citizenship were explored by a still-experimental nation. Thus it is fitting that a conference addressing Emily Dickinson as a World Citizen should take place not simply in proximity to a city that every day sees the best (and worst) of modern citizenship, but to a region and a time when citizenship was weighed and contested.

The scholarly presentations opened with a keynote address by Alexandra Socarides entitled “Escaping Emily” (an interview with Alex and a book review appear on pages 24 and 33, respectively). Telling the story of writing her dissertation, Alex characterized her relationship with the poet as a “dysfunctional romantic” one. By turns beset by awe and dread, she periodically fled the very quarry she had set out to pursue. Much of what she sought to escape lay in Dickinson’s tone in courting the allegiance of her own friends, a tone Socarides characterized as “passive-aggressive.”

But Socarides realized that Dickinson, too, wanted to escape: from expectations regarding marriage, religion, and publication, and from the whole culture in which women’s poetry was little more than a thing to mock. The 1850s saw an explosion of anthologies of women poets – “poetesses” – and it gave certain male readers a sense of unwelcome inundation. The image of the poetess of the generation immediately prior to the war was still alive toward the end of Dickinson’s life: Socarides sees the image not only satirical

sketches from James and Twain, but more pertinently in Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s famous portrait of Dickinson in his Preface to the first edition of her poems, from 1890. The portrait of the reclusive invalid who poured her soul into her verses, never intended to publish, and was rescued from obscurity by a kind relative or friend was not intended to present Dickinson as a fascinating enigma, but rather as simply a poetess, a stock character from an earlier age reemerging in the 1890s. In other words, he reconstituted her in the very role she sought to escape.

The second keynote of the first morning, “Emily Dickinson and the Tropical Eden,” was presented by Judith Farr. In an argument more divergent than simple summary may convey, she demonstrated how Dickinson’s well-known tropical imagery was encoded as Edenic in contemporary arts. Beginning with

Dickinson’s description of an idyllic Mount Vernon, a description in sharp contrast to the reality of Mount Vernon in 1857, as represented by Eastman Johnson – a shabby estate badly in need of maintenance and repair – Farr described the establishment of this trope of landscape paradise in Dickinson. She then showed how the romantic landscape had been associated with the Garden of Eden since Thomas Cole’s 1828 painting of that name, and explored the transformation of the elements of that Eden – sunset, river, lush vegetation – into romanticized representations of exotic lands by Frederick Church. Church located his personal Eden first in the Middle East, and then in the tropics of South America. The underlying implication is that “Paradise is of the option” – that by loving God’s creation we can in some measure get ourselves back to the Garden.

For Dickinson, the return to the Garden was met to some extent through her own humble gardening, but in the painter’s many images of Chimborazo she saw something at once tropical and lofty and erotic. “Love – thou art high – ” Dickinson cried in her own Chimborazo poem (Fr452); accordingly, the equatorial volcano became a dense image of tropical bliss, Edenic beauty, and amorous aspiration. It also signified labor: the arduousness of returning to the Garden tallied with the arduousness of Love. Farr, who in *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (1992) explored the possibility that certain Dickinson poems constitute a sort of “narrative” delineating the course of her amorous relation with Church’s friend Samuel Bowles, next observed that Bowles himself was figured in letters and poems as “Eden,” his spirit inevitably characterized as “tropical.” Ultimately, whatever Dickinson loved would be emblemized as tropical and Edenic: “Af-



Photo courtesy of Anthony Arkin

Jane Sheldon performed an “Evening of ‘Bolts of Melody’” – reviewed on page 20

fection gropes through Drifts of Awe – for his Tropic Door –” (L621).

Though saddened by the unavoidable absence of panel member Barbara Mossberg, the audience at Friday afternoon’s “Emily Dickinson, World Citizen” roundtable were compensated by interconnected presentations by Emily Dickinson Museum director Jane Wald and University of Paris professor (and host-in-prospect of the next international conference!) Antoine Cazé. While two speakers could never make a table round, Wald and Cazé presented papers with contrasting manner and dovetailing matter, both considering dimensions of Dickinson’s sense of community.

Jane Wald saw Dickinson’s sense of citizenship emerging out of her letters and poems of consolation and sympathy, especially those written in the mid to late 1870s. Noting Dickinson’s civically engaged family – Mabel Loomis Todd once wrote to Austin Dickinson that no one in town could take up any project without his being near – Wald described poems that center in the extremely local but take in vast expanses of territory, moving between the house and the newly settled territories in the West (Fr1069), or from the coffin to the realm of the “citizen of Paradise” (Fr890). Accordingly, from her own base of freedom and independence, her bedroom with the secure lock, the poet reached out to the town and beyond, by means of letters and poems that

sought to touch the bereaved and coax them toward renewed engagement following a period of grief.

Like Wald, Professor Cazé spoke about Dickinson’s expansive concept of neighborhood. The main question he pursued concerned the ways in which language served as Dickinson’s means of “neighboring” the world. By inviting the recipient of a letter or reader of a poem to appreciate the play of her language, she was in effect inviting that person to share a common space with her. Ironically, such neighboring could happen only at a certain distance from the person with whom she shared the created space: as she suggests, “Play” requires being “Away.” Through writing, she could encounter others while still remaining in her secure place – the place with the security necessary for democratic engagement. Only then could she become an ethical host.

The ethics of hospitality proved no challenge to the organizers of Friday evening’s entertainment, where a ballroom full of Dickinsonians received their meal’s blessing from not one but three poets: David Keplinger of American University, Elizabeth Arnold of the University of Maryland, and the eminent Marilyn Nelson. Warmed by these rich preliminary offerings, the audience then heard songs performed by a Swedish nightingale: not Jenny Lind, who so entranced Dickinson when she visited Amherst in 1851, but Sofie

Livebrant, composer of the pieces on the CD *Emily and I* (see the review in the *Bulletin*, Spring 2012). Ms. Livebrant’s music provoked people to rise spontaneously and dance with a lithe and lissome extravagance.

The evening keynote was delivered in the form of a poem. Joseph Donahue, of Duke University, read from a multi-volume poem in progress: “Terra Lucida.”



Joe Donahue addressed the mysterious creative power of love.

from “unable”

Must be  
an anti-script of

pure lightlessness  
pouring forth from the hand of

care, envy, rage, grief  
in a letter, across

a letter perhaps  
to no ultimate point beyond

assuring scholars  
this letter was

in some sense  
answered

\*

Must be  
this page is the

creation, and the black of the  
cancelling hand,

the flourish  
of a Manichean.

\*

Must be  
this annihilating

post-script is malevolent  
tendency rising from the singing of

the name of the  
beloved.

\*

Must be  
an anti-logos

there before any  
word, before even the paper itself

the blackness  
before the page was,

soaking through from behind  
pulled into visibility

with a  
pen stroke.

The full work will ultimately address various dimensions of 19th-century American art, literature, and religion, among them the religion of sentimental love – a religion in which “the act of writing is an act of deification.” (An excerpt from his reading appears above.)

Donahue took as his point of departure the notoriously alarming manuscript of Dickinson’s early poem, “One Sister have I in the house” (Fr5), the whole text of which was obliterated by some unidentified hand (even while the sheet itself was preserved). Donahue called this unnamed effacer an “artist” who understood on some level that “a part of Love’s agony is precisely to experience, within the act of desiring, such a negation as the blackening out of the letter enacts.” That is, if writing the love letter is an act of deification, then part of that act may involve a simultaneous desire to obliterate the very ardency upon which the

deification feeds. The part of “Terra Lucida” from which Donahue read was entitled “unable,” after Dickinson’s line, “Unable are the loved to die, / for Love is immortality” (Fr951).

Saturday was a day for panel discussions, with scholars and artists from around the world sharing their research and insights on a variety of subjects directly, or at least tangentially, connected to the picture of Dickinson as a “World Citizen.” (Accounts of panels begin on page 9.)

Early Saturday afternoon, however, there was a different sort of panel discussion: a roundtable discussion on the question of “Knowing Emily Dickinson through the Arts.” Thursday evening’s presentations by Barbara Dana and William Andrews (see Seelbinder, p20) and Friday night’s beautiful songs by Sofie Livebrant had already stimulated a lot of private reflections about what happens when a Dickinson poem is rendered in another medium: an audience member was overheard to say, “It was lovely; but I don’t know if it’s the poem or not.” Addressing just such ruminations, a panel including outgoing EDIS president Jonnie Guerra, author and actress Barbara Dana, Maryanne Garbowsky of County College of Morris NJ, Emily Seelbinder of Queens University (NC), and poet Thom Tammaro, of Minnesota State, all addressed different dimensions of their own or others’ artistic engagements with Dickinson’s poems. (This panel, too, was to have included a contribution from Barbara Mossberg!)

Guerra thanked former *Bulletin* editor Georgianna Strickland for inviting her

to discover poets’ creative responses to Dickinson in the Poet to Poet Series, and spoke about her own realizations about the creative process through her encounters with the work and working of Argentine painter Juan Carlos Aznar. Garbowsky addressed how the use of other artworks in class can help students to realize their responses by “thinking wordlessly about the poems.” Dana, who in the Spring 2013 *Bulletin* explored her experience writing a novel about Dickinson and playing the poet in *The Belle of Amherst*, likewise spoke about wordless dimensions of words: for Dana, knowing a poem means experiencing it in one’s blood, not just in one’s mind. Seelbinder likewise described how the other arts can help pedagogically, before ending up with a narrative of her encounters with composer Leo Smit, who when setting Dickinson songs said he “felt Emily was giving him the music of her score.” Last, Tammaro described compiling the poems for the first of his tribute anthologies for American poets: *Visiting Emily*, *Visiting Walt*, *Visiting Frost*, and *Visiting Dr. Williams* (all co-edited by Sheila Coghill, from U of Iowa Press).

After a presentation about an astonishing *three* new collections of essays about Dickinson that are either in print or nearing production, and entertainment provided by more artists who base their performances on works by Dickinson (yes, one of them was to have been performed by Barbara Mossberg), the conference was nearing its end. Sunday morning’s highlight, after the passing of the EDIS presidency from Jonnie Guerra to Martha Nell Smith, was a discussion of “Presentation & Editing of Her Writings,” with Harvard’s Leslie Morris, Amherst’s Mike Kelly, and Smith herself discussing recent advances in their various digital archives. Cristanne Miller described her forthcoming edition of the fascicle-bound poems, which will complement the Franklin variorum edition by maintaining the archival presentation of the poems; and Marta Werner discussed the late works, which were available for perusal in Werner’s own gorgeously presented *The Gorgeous Nothings*.



## Distinguished Service Award to *Bulletin* Editor Georgiana Strickland

Established with the objective "to promote, perpetuate, and enhance the study and appreciation of Emily Dickinson throughout the world," the EDIS Distinguished Service Award has been granted periodically since 1992 to recognize not just scholars, but also others whose service has been of outstanding value to Dickinson studies. The list of those who have received the award is impressive and decidedly international: Richard Sewall, Ralph Franklin, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, and Roland Hagenbüchle. This year the EDIS Board unanimously voted to grant the award not to a scholar but to the long-time editor of *EDIS Bulletin*, Georgiana Strickland. (Georgie is currently the editor

of the regular series, "What's Your Story?" The subject of this issue's feature is Georgie herself. See page 22.) What follow are the tributary remarks from current EDIS president Jonnie Guerra, former *Journal* editor Suzanne Juhasz, and current *Bulletin* editor Dan Manheim.



Photo courtesy of Eleanor Heginbotham

### Tributes to Georgie Strickland from Suzanne Juhasz, Jonnie Guerra, and Dan Manheim

Twenty-five years ago, when EDIS was formed, we decided that we needed something like a bulletin to send to members, to keep in touch and to pass on information about the Society and Dickinson. Margaret Freeman and Cristanne Miller created two issues that formed the basis for the present *Bulletin* and also sent out a request for an editor who could be devoted to the publication and make it an ongoing venture.

A member named Georgiana Strickland responded, offering her services. She was, in fact, a real editor: Managing Editor at the University of Kentucky Press! "The editing of the *Bulletin* is a task I take on with great pleasure, since it draws together the threads of my vocation, editing scholarly works, and my chief avocational interest, Emily Dickinson," she wrote in the third edition (1990). Quickly and with little fuss she took over the reins, and our publication became truly a capital B *Bulletin*. She had a myriad of ideas for features and topics that might be included, and she had as well the wherewithal to publish and obtain bulk mailing

privileges from the University of Kentucky Press.

In a matter of a few years the scope of the *EDIS Bulletin* expanded greatly in length and content, filled with fascinating columns and articles on a range of topics related to Dickinson, including features on Dickinson and the visual arts, Dickinson on stage, Dickinson scholars, and a column called "Poet to Poet," accompanying our regular material such as convention coverage, publication announcements, and news.

Georgie's editorial skills were matched only by her imagination. Through her twelve years as Editor, what I remember most is her gentle but firm administrative powers. Deadlines were deadlines. At the same time she always welcomed new ideas, and her careful shepherding of them into excellent articles was impressive. Her devotion to the *Bulletin* was strong and unwavering, and each issue was a treat for EDIS readers. We were so very lucky to have her at the helm of what has become an important publication. Even after she formally stepped down

from the editorial position, she continued to offer aid to the new editors as they learned the ropes. She even returned to guest edit the Oxford University International Conference Issue in 2010.

She is also an author. While *Bulletin* editor, she published "Emily Dickinson's Colorado" (1999), and later, "Emily Dickinson in Philadelphia" (2001) and "In Praise of Ramona: Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson's Indian Novel" (2010), all in the *EDJ*.

Over the years she has become a valued friend as well as an active member of the Society. She is a warm and gracious woman, with a subtle sense of humor. One special moment that I remember with a smile is her portrayal of the Dog, on hands and knees with floppy ears, in a dramatic rendition of "I Started Early – Took my Dog –" (Fr656) at an Annual Meeting in St. Paul. Georgie is one EDIS's most cherished members.

*Suzanne Juhasz was Vice President of EDIS from 2000-2003. She was the founding editor of The Emily Dickinson Journal.*

In 1992, the Emily Dickinson International Society established the Distinguished Service Award to recognize individuals whose scholarship and/or service supports its goal “to promote, perpetuate, and enhance the study and appreciation of Emily Dickinson throughout the world.” This evening the Society is privileged to present the award to Georgiana Strickland, former editor of the *Bulletin*, former member of the EDIS board of directors, and organizer of the 2002 EDIS annual meeting “Emily Dickinson in Song.”

In a few minutes, others will reflect on the contributions Georgie made through her twelve years of editorship, but I want to acknowledge my own enjoyment of serving as the Editor of the “Poet to Poet” Series

during her tenure. The Series was only one of Georgie’s many creative ideas, and it continues to be a favorite feature of *Bulletin* readers. I also want to comment briefly on Georgie’s dedication to expanding the knowledge of our membership about Dickinson and music. Those of you who attended the lively event in 2002 will remember it as one of the Society’s most ambitious annual meeting programs. In a *Bulletin* report that followed, Jane Eberwein applauded Georgie’s “imaginative and painstaking preparations” which resulted not only in a pleasurable experience of Dickinson’s poetry, but also, as Jane put it, in “an occasion for enhancing or (for the more tin-eared among us) developing appreciation for the twentieth- and twenty-first-century American art song.” As some of you may know,

Georgie is currently at work on a discography of Dickinson musical settings, and we look forward to the benefits of such a resource to advance Dickinson study in the area of music.

The framed award the Society is presenting to Georgie was hand calligraphied by graphic artist Bill Waddington of Universal City, Texas, who is a member of the San Antonio EDIS chapter. It reads: “The Emily Dickinson International Society honors Georgiana Strickland for her distinguished service as editor of its *Bulletin* and her leadership in promoting knowledge of musical adaptations of Dickinson poems.”

*Jonnie Guerra is the out-going President of EDIS*

Georgie: without her I would certainly not be editing the *Bulletin* right now. Before reproachful glances turn her way, I’ll explain.

First, she persuaded me to do it. Plying me with lunch at the excellent restaurant at Lexington’s Joseph-Beth Books, she dispensed with each and every one of what were, in fact, quite substantial reasons why I would not have the time to learn to edit the newsletter.

Second, she prepared me to do it. It began with a lesson in layout software (about which I knew not a thing), then followed a detailed and accurate description of the process. Finally, she equipped me with well over half an issue’s worth of material, along with very sound suggestions for gathering more.

So much might any former editor do for a new and inexperienced successor. But Georgie had only begun to help. She critiqued my early efforts at layout, making me pay attention to things I’d never noticed before, in any magazine, and she gave me sage advice about some delicate hazards confronting an editor’s handling of authors.

copyediting. She set me up with a printer who was generous enough to overhaul my first issue’s images with Photoshop – completely gratis.

She gave me a gracious introductory interview in her series that made me look surprisingly professional and interesting.

Beyond all this personal support, she contributes a series with a variety of subjects that keep it from ever becoming tired or redundant.

And most of all, she has provided a model of care, thoroughness, and high standards that leave me, who has already a tendency to combine a crippling self-criticism with a kind of swaggering last-minute recklessness, always aware of how much better I need to be the next time around.

Georgie stopped editing the *Bulletin* in 2002; but she’s still present in every issue: here’s a tribute from someone who knows how to be grateful.

*Dan Manheim is the current editor of the EDIS Bulletin*



Photo courtesy of Yanbin Kang

She has taken the time to critique my recent efforts at layout, as well – I could do this for twelve years, and her eye would still be much sharper than mine for visual details and for



# EMILY DICKINSON WORLD CITIZEN

*What follows are reports about individual panels from the conference. To address the question of world citizenship, scholars considered these and other topics such as "Transdisciplinary Poetics" or offered "Transoceanic" readings. Abstracts remain available on the EDIS website.*

## Religion: Amherst to the World

By Jane Donahue Eberwein

*Chair: Jane Donahue Eberwein, Oakland University; Presenters: Jennifer Leader, Mt. San Antonio College; Richard Brantley, University of Florida; Roger Lundin, Wheaton College of Illinois*

This richly informative session began with Jane Eberwein reminding attendees that, when Emily Dickinson was born, the Congregational Church was still legally established in Massachusetts and faith closely tied to citizenship. Three speakers then discussed complexities within the poet's local religious culture as well as ways the broader world influenced Dickinson's thinking and expression.

Jennifer Leader discussed contentions within New England Congregational circles in "Wicked as I am, I read my Bible sometimes": Emily Dickinson in Her New England Hermeneutical Community," highlighting disputes over biblical interpretation that shaped the poet's approach to language. Leader traced three main lines of scriptural reading available to Dickinson: Presbyterian/Princeton Scholasticism; Congregational/New Divinity; and Congregational/New Haven. Leaders of the New Divinity school included theologians Edwards Amasa Park and Henry Boynton Smith, educators Edward Hitchcock and Mary Lyon, and First Church ministers Aaron Colton and Henry Hubbell. Horace Bushnell was the most influential thinker in the Yale group, and Edward Dwight and Jonathan Jenkins represented that tradition within the Amherst church. Charles Hodge and Charles Wadsworth were key figures within the Princeton group. Leader connected their concerns to Dickinson's, arguing that these theological teachers "wondered about the viability of personal experience in the perception of spiritual truths and about the role of propositional or figurative language in its interpretation." Pointing out that "in the years of Dickinson's child- and early adulthood...the most vigorous discus-

sions among seminarians were hermeneutical rather than theological," Leader focused attention on Horace Bushnell's radically metaphoric approach to scripture that ignited the "paper wars" fought in theological journals. Two passages from Dickinson's writing that Leader highlighted were a letter declaring that "The Fiction of 'Santa Claus'...illustrates - Revelation" and the poem "What is - 'Paradise,'" (Fr241) both prompting Leader's conclusion that "Dickinson's confidence in language as a medium that could yield stable interpretations over time...is more akin to Bushnell's belief in language as living metaphor than her friend Wadsworth's sense that language is 'true representation.'"

Richard Brantley reinforced Leader's observation that Dickinson waged her struggle for religious knowledge within a community rather than in isolation when he placed her in a broadly inclusive intellectual context in "The Interrogative Mood of Emily Dickinson's Quarrel with God." Brantley emphasized how she gravitated toward "obstinate questionings" rather than trying to resolve thorny problems in theodicy. Emphasizing "Apparently with no surprise -" as key to her thinking, he argued that she "sarcastically gives up on God and triumphantly spurns Him without either denying that He existed, at least in the past, or waiving the right to speak with Him again." Her tough-minded persistence in questioning distinguished Dickinson from Wordsworth and aligned her more closely to Darwin, Dostoevsky, and Hopkins. In his treatment of the "cat and mouse game" of divinely sanctioned suffering, Brantley paid particular attention to Dickinson's sympathy with the suffering, human Jesus, suggesting that Dickinson's continuing focus on immor-

ality bespoke hope for "a better dialogue in Heaven."

Roger Lundin carried this discussion of intellectual/artistic affiliations into the twentieth century by beginning "Vicariously from Vesuvius: Dickinson Meets the World" with reference to Alfred Hitchcock as one of many creative analogies useful in helping Dickinson's readers cope with what Jay Leyda termed her "omitted center." Positing a connection between her seclusion and the creative use she made of biblical language and her religious training, Lundin identified forces counteracting her isolation: newspapers and books along with friends who became "her vicarious representatives in the world." Arguing that Dickinson engaged in what Kenneth Burke calls the "borrowing back" of religious terminology, he discussed "Should you but fail - at Sea -" (Fr275) and "The Soul selects her own Society" (Fr409) to show how she "borrowed back" Calvinist language of election. Although Lundin judged that such uses of biblical language served Dickinson well at times of psychological strength, he posited that "in times of difficulty and doubt...she turned to a form of Lutheran psychology that drew upon the Incarnation in ways Calvinism rarely did." Like Brantley, Lundin stressed her attention to "the incarnational humanity of Jesus," concluding that the suffering Jesus provided her companionship in the wilderness and "enabled her to become, through her letters, an emissary of the kind Higginson, Bowles, Wadsworth, and others had been for her." Lively discussion followed these three illuminating papers, raising issues regarding such questions as the sources of her knowledge about both the Higher Criticism and Lutheran thought.

## Emily Dickinson's "Supposed Person" and the Art of Dramatic Lyric

By Marianne Noble

*Presenters: Páraic Finnerty, University of Portsmouth, UK; Paula Bernat Bennett, Southern Illinois University Carbondale emerita; Faith Barrett, Duquesne University; Respondent: Cristanne Miller, University of Buffalo*

Paradigm-Changing." "I will never see Emily Dickinson the same way again." "This is going to be a major new trend in Dickinson scholarship."

These are some of the phrases overheard following the panel on "Dickinson's Supposed Persons." This convergence of seasoned Dickinson scholars, all with multiple books on Dickinson to their credit, gave the weight of authority to the new approach they were advocating.

The presenters shared central argument is that we must take far more seriously Dickinson's claim that "When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse – it does not mean – me – but a supposed person" (L268). We must let go the conviction that this was somehow a coy deflection, they jointly claimed. When we do so, we discover a poet who was seriously and consistently attempting to think and feel her way into the experiences of others, communicate their experiences, establish a seriously other-oriented form of poetry.

Páraic Finnerty compared Dickinson's poems to Robert Browning's dramatic monologues. He opened by quoting a letter in which Elizabeth Barrett Browning complained that English readers dismissed her husband's works as being incomprehensible and – as she put it – "spasmodic." But as Finnerty showed, Americans prized precisely these qualities in Browning, finding his dramatic monologues to be democratic (readers participate in making meaning), individualist, and original. They even appreciated the passion of his "spasmodic" verse and its relative obscurity. According to Finnerty, Dickinson modeled her own poetry on Browning's. That is to say, she, like Browning, wrote dramatic monologues. Her "I" poems represent an effort to transcend per-

sonality in order to get inside those of others. Thus the speaker and the poem in both Dickinson and Browning express different meanings. Rather, the poem offers an opportunity to listen to, inhabit, and assess the intimate thoughts of another; its meaning resides in the judgment the auditor brings to it. Dickinson's imitative use of the dramatic monologue form, for Finnerty, suggests a sympathetic and democratic ethos pervading her poems in the "I" voice.

Paula Bennett agreed that Dickinson writes dramatic monologues rather than lyrics exploring her private subjectivity. She cited a similar idea in Jane Eberwein's 1981 book, *Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation*, which argued that Dickinson incorporated "a substantial measure of dramatic objectivity into her apparently subjective verse." Lamenting the relative paucity of attention to this claim, Bennett cheerfully observed a trend towards appreciating Dickinson's dramatic monologues in recent work by Leigh-Anne Marcellin, Jed Deppman, Páraic Finnerty, Cristanne Miller, and others. Bennett's paper analyzed the interface between Dickinson's use of supposed persons and that of the poets who were her American peers, many of whom wrote "dramatic lyrics" rather than careful expressions of personal emotion. Bennett cited Julia Ward Howe's poem "The Lyric 'I,'" which insists that the speaker of the poems is not Howe herself; rather, the poem is the lyric artwork of an infinitely malleable self. Bennett argued that the "I" that Howe describes is the same one to which Dickinson refers, and on which the dramatic lyric as a genre turns. Bennett distinguished between those dramatic lyrics which testify to the lives of others distinct from the poet's self, and those which focus on the diversity within themselves. In both cases, Bennett insisted, "the line between drama and

poetry was far more porous than it is today and poetry was viewed generally as a performative art – a fact supported by the enormous popularity of the dramatic lyric itself. The poems do not give voice to a singular, coherent, unified and stable self, but rather one constituted in contradictions. Bennett concluded with a quotation from Jed Deppman's *Trying to Think With Emily Dickinson* (2008): these poets "became aware of themselves as sites of intellectual conflict torn or traversed by competing language games and they responded with great intensity, passion, and creativity, by developing a "variorum" poetics that scattered their voices into myriad personae and vocabularies."

Faith Barrett also finds an unstable self foregrounded in Dickinson's "I" poems, similarly using the context of the poetry of her peers to clarify her claims. Her paper suggested that we can gain a clearer sense of Dickinson's voice by comparing her poetry to that of Phoebe Cary. *Poems and Parodies* opens with section of poems that do not challenge genre expectations, and it then features a section of parodies of almost entirely male poetic voices. Cary gains aesthetic freedom by putting these two forms together, in that she unsettles our assumptions about the project of the lyric. Barrett then applied the insights gleaned from Cary to clarify points she wanted to make about Dickinson. She suggested that Dickinson's seemingly conventional poem "If I can Stop One Heart from Breaking" might indicate Dickinson's determination to claim a variety of voices, including conventional ones. She is neither simply the defiant and ironic wife of "Title Divine, is Mine" nor the self-effacing speaker of "If I can Stop One Heart." Rather, she uses a variety of voice effects to explore a variety of affects and ideas, in a way that rejects any sense of a stable "I."

# EMILY DICKINSON WORLD CITIZEN

## Inscriptions 2

By Melanie Hubbard

*Presenters: Andrew Dorkin, University of Buffalo; Katelyn Durkin, University of Virginia; Yumiko Koizumi, Ibaraki University, Japan; Chair: Melanie Hubbard, New College of Florida*

Andrew Dorkin proposed to look at the poems and letters that contain references to or depictions of language itself, asking, do Dickinson's recorded thoughts about language offer any evidence of her conceiving language as a fundamentally visual or material medium? The evidence points as much to aural as to visual values, and a reading of the eye- and ear-rhymes of "One note from One Bird" (Fr1478), implies her trajectory toward a poetics that, far from asserting the primacy of either the visual or aural dimensions of language, seeks – much more characteristically – to cultivate tensions between them.

Katelyn Durkin presented an exploration of the poet's interaction with, not isolation from, print culture by examining Dickinson's fragments – her drafts, notes, and word variants written on scraps of paper that juxtapose her

writing with printed text. Durkin focused on a columned student ledger containing the poem beginning "We talked with each other" (and ending upside down) (A516), as well as on an organ concert programme in which the prose fragment valorizes silence while itself using the stops and sounds of its t's and s's. Dickinson stages the poet as student and performer while presenting these relatively fixed and repetitive functions as negative examples for her own notion of the poet as one who engages in fluid processes of creation and interpretation.

Yumiko Sakata Koizumi presented on the need to attend to Dickinson's deliberate use of full rhymes; in a setting marked by deficient rhymes, a full rhyme at the end of a poem has a great impact. In "Better – than Music!" (Fr378), the poet attempts to create the very moment when earthly humming turns

into a sacred song by ending the poem with a full rhyme. The correspondence of sounds in terminating words in the last stanza brings this heaven to earth through the use of "that Keyless Rhyme." A lively conversation was provoked by one of the Conference's performers, pianist Nicole Panizza, who asked in what way a poem directs or opens out to its oral performance. It seemed clear that Dickinson's poems lent themselves to "stops" and "sounds" via syntax, dashes, line breaks, and other decision-points. The discussion also acknowledged that syllable, rhythm, and sound are materials; rhyme in particular seems to insist on this, while also providing the collective "song" that the "hum" of a keyless rhyme might imply. Much talk ensued about jazz improvisation, Dickinson's piano knowledge, and the poet's preference of silence to the oppressive tones of the organ.

## Orientalisms

By Nelly Lambert

*Presenters: Katsuya Izumi, SUNY, Albany; Yanbin Kang, University of Buffalo; Adam Katz, University of Buffalo; Nelly Lambert, Catholic University*

For the "Orientalisms" panel, an audience of about fifteen to twenty people gathered in a small seminar room to listen to four talks on allusions or similarities to eastern traditions in Dickinson's poetry.

Katsuya Izumi outlined principles of Zen Buddhism that could be helpful in understanding Dickinson's references to the mind as an inadequate organ of sense, her inferences that death is a form of liberation, and how subject and object are often indistinct in her poetry.

Yanbin Kang's talk traced intertextual connections between Dickinson's poetry and

passages about the East in Emerson and Thoreau's work.

Adam Katz used Dickinson as a way into a discussion of mindfulness in Buddhism; Dickinson's work partially but not entirely matches with these particular Buddhist tenets, he claimed.

Last, Nelly Lambert discussed wine imagery in Dickinson's poetry, comparing it to the rich spiritual, cultural, and philosophical tradition of invoking wine in medieval Persian poetry to show that Dickinson's tones of ecstasy were "wild and free."

The discussion that followed, as with many of these panels, was lively and engaged. Audience members helped parse out the difference between direct influence and "coincidence" in Dickinson's allusions to the East. Kang's paper spoke of traceable influences; the other three reflected striking coincidences. One audience member finally asked whether it was useful to compare Dickinson to traditions with which she may or may not have been closely familiar. Another responded that Emily Dickinson would have been delighted by this panel and the discussion that followed, noting that these four papers had brought Dickinson, as it were, around the world.

# EMILY DICKINSON WORLD CITIZEN

## Dickinson and Children's Literature

By Barbara Dana

Chair: Barbara Dana, playwright, screenwriter, writer, actor; Presenters: Kathryn Burak, Boston University; Lesley Clement, Lakehead University; Burleigh Mutén, children's writer; Respondent: Eleonor Linafelt, Takoma Park, MD

Kathryn Burak opened this lively and engaging session by describing the genesis of her novel for young adults *Emily's Dress and Other Missing Things* (Roaring Brook Press, 2012) the story of a young woman who turns to Dickinson's poetry looking for kinship in the darkness and ultimately discovers how much light, life and redemption she can actually find there. In Burak's presentation "At That Exact Moment When Poetry Might Change Your Life: Bringing Emily Dickinson into the Lives of Teen Readers through Fiction," Burak shared her belief that poetry can be a guiding light for teens, perhaps even more than any other readers. The idea that Dickinson's poetry might be transformational in young lives was the pivotal impetus for embarking on her work. She spoke about the importance of authenticity in writing books meant for teens, after which she read from the book, bringing the story to vibrant life. We were treated to a glimpse into the mind and subsequently the heart of the main character, young Claire, as we joined her on a journey filled with mystery, heartache and humor.

Next, Lesley Clement discussed two children's books about Dickinson, Jane Yolen's *The Emily Sonnets: The Life of Emily Dickinson*, illustrated by Gary Kelley (Creative Editions, 2012) and Isabelle's Arsenault's *My Letter to the World and Other Poems* (Kids Can press, 2008). Her presentation, "The Last Resort: Death and Liminal Spaces in Children's Picture Books on Emily Dickinson," included slides of illustrations from both books. Clement discussed the suitability of Dickinson's poetry as a mechanism to introduce the concept of death to child readers through the picture book format. Her talk focused on the use of liminal space, or spaces defined as those that are "projected outside of society and symbolize a borderland through which the protagonist passes to re-enter struc-

ture." She explained that liminal space can also be used to signify an interior state – a projection of creative power, a metaphor for the imagination. As we followed the exquisite illustrations pictured on the slides, we noticed the use of liminal space and how it drew in the reader. With no frames other than the edge of the page and with images often cropped by the boundary of the page, the reader is engaged quickly and dramatically.

Burleigh Mutén's delightful presentation, "Our Laughing Goddess of Plenty: Writing About Dickinson to Capture Young Readers," pointed out that Dickinson was an extraordinary adult in the lives of the children who knew her, sharing their fresh view of the world, their love of nature, and at times participating in their games. "Not only did Emily Dickinson grow up in Amherst just like you," Mutén tells her kindergarten students. "She loved nature (just



Lesley Clement presents to an attentive audience.

like you) and she liked to write about it." We were treated to scenes from Mutén's forthcoming poetic narrative *Miss Emily* (Candlewick, 2014) portraying a midnight escapade to greet the circus gypsies as they arrive in town by rail in which Miss Emily portrays her loyal commitment to children. The presentation ended with a treasure. After taking her kindergartners to The Homestead, one of the girls, named

Anni, asked her mother to help her rearrange her bedroom so her night table could become her writing table, like Emily's. She wrote her first poem that night using phonetic spelling, later bobbing up and down on her toes as she read her poem to the family.

snow falling from  
the white sky  
children playing in  
the frosty cold air  
their voices giggle the stars

Respondent, 10th grader Eleanor Linafelt, who joined EDIS at the age of 7, continues to be an avid fan of Dickinson's poetry. She told us that what really drew her to the poetry at such a young age was the rhythm of it and the way it sounded, but the illustrations and the annotations by editors helped greatly in deciphering the meaning. Responding to the presentations

with straightforward clarity, she shared her thoughts. "As Burleigh's anecdote about taking her class to The Homestead and Kathryn's YA novel suggest," she explained, "Emily's house is a perfect place to experience the spirit of Emily. The character of Claire in *Emily's Missing Dress and Other Missing Things* feels a strong connection to Dickinson when she is in the house, and is inspired to write poetry of her own. The house has the same affect on the young girl Anni, from Burleigh's paper. And when I stood in her bedroom at 7 I felt it too. I knew that Emily Dickinson was still

there, in those walls and floor, a liminal space between her life and her death. It takes a child to feel that kind of enchantment and wonder, and a young imagination, with the help of a few picture books, to feel as though they are right back in the 19th century."

This was a thoroughly heartwarming and inspiring panel!

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## Inscriptions

By Andrew Dorkin

*Presenters: Jayne Chapman, University of New South Wales; Seth Perlow, Oklahoma State University; Stephen Rojcewicz, University of Maryland; Christina Pugh, University of Illinois Chicago*

In the first of two panels devoted to Dickinson's "Inscriptions," three scholars reconsidered Emily Dickinson's manuscripts as literary and historical objects – not only as sites of Dickinson's composition but also as perpetual canvases for creative interpretation or manipulation.

Jayne Chapman, a doctoral candidate from the University of New South Wales, opened the panel with her essay "Fetishizing Emily Dickinson's Hand." From her title, one might expect a critique of scholars who "fetishize" Dickinson's hand-writing and manuscripts, but Chapman defied such expectations by arguing instead that Dickinson fetishized her own hand in writing. Taking for granted that Dickinson devoted "incredible attention" to the details of her hand-writing, Chapman focused on references to hands in Dickinson's poems – particularly instances where Dickinson writes about hands while writing by hand. By comparing such references – in poems like "The Spirit last – but in what mode –" (Fr1627), "Going to Him! Happy letter!" (Fr277), and "There is a word / Which bears a sword" (Fr42) – to Roy Ellen's four processes of fetishism, Chapman demonstrated how Dickinson par-

ticipates in the modern literary practice of fetishizing the writing hand.

The second presentation was "Erased Dickinson: Janet Holmes and the Trace as Historical Absence" by Seth Perlow, an assistant professor at Oklahoma State. The object of Perlow's inquiry was Holmes's *The ms of m y kin* (2009) a strategic erasure of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* that transforms Dickinson's Civil War-era poems into a commentary on 2000s political history and especially the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perlow posed questions about the meaning and function of Holmes's "conversation" with Dickinson: why does Holmes need Dickinson? what does it mean to find, for example, Dick Cheney hidden beneath the surface of Dickinson's texts? Reading *The ms of m y kin* as an act of Dickinson criticism, Perlow argued that we should reconceive Holmes's erasure as redaction in order to illuminate its disciplinary functions; under this paradigm, Perlow invited the audience to imagine actually erasing a Dickinson manuscript, to ponder what such an act would mean and what its consequences would be.

Stephen Rojcewicz presented the panel's third and final paper, entitled "The Night

Became Emily." A retired psychiatrist currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, the conference's host institution, Rojcewicz proposed an alternative reading of Dickinson's poem "The Crickets sang" (Fr1104). The final line of this poem, printed in type, "And so the Night became –," is the final line of a letter-poem sent to Susan Dickinson, immediately preceding her signature "Emily." But this signature, Rojcewicz argued, offers itself as the object of the verb "became," such that the line properly reads, "And so the Night became Emily"; examining the way this changes the meaning, syntax, and prosody of the poem, his presentation highlighted the intricate flexibility of Dickinson's compositions. Interpreting Dickinson's identification with the night as identification with sexuality, danger, and gender flexibility, Rojcewicz also read the poem's opening line as an allusion to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, where the phrase "The crickets sing" appears in the context of gender-disguise and danger. Underscoring the broader implications of his argument, Rojcewicz concluded his presentation by insisting on the importance of examining all manuscript versions when attempting a comprehensive reading of a Dickinson poem.

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## Dickinson Pop-Culture Trivia and Prizes!

By Kate Dunning

*Presenters: Scott Pett, Rice University; Jessica Beard, University of California at Santa Cruz; Catherine Forsa, Case Western Reserve University; Nate Allen, University of Buffalo*

At this year's international conference, the graduate student members of EDIS were delighted not only to participate in numerous panels, but to host a panel considering Dickinson and popular culture as well. Reflecting

many aspects of contemporary popular culture, as well as popular culture in Dickinson's time, the panel included pecha kucha style presentations, a Polish YouTube video rendition of one of Dickinson's poem, questions of

science and archive formation, digital interaction with Dickinson, an interactive creative writing exercise, a "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" magnet for all participants, and a delicious Dickinson-inspired snack.

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Scott Pett, a Ph.D. student from Rice University, presented “Representations of ‘Pure Madness’ in Polish Media.” Pett began by catching the entire room off guard with a bizarre, slightly grotesque music video titled “Czyste Szalenstwo,” translated into Polish from “Much Madness is divinest Sense.” While the video, for the audience, appeared to come out of nowhere, Pett spent the next few minutes contextualizing the 2009 independently funded film by Michael Jaskulski within Polish art and history. Ultimately, Pett illustrated that the representation in the film stemmed directly from “a long tradition of nightmarish aesthetics in Polish media.”

Jessica Beard, a Ph.D. student working on her dissertation at the University of California Santa Cruz, presented her work on “Emily Dickinson’s Archive at Play.” Beard, the general editor of the Dickinson Electronic Archive, pushed the audience to challenge their conception of the Dickinson archive and how we use it. Her expertly executed pecha kucha presentation shared her exploration of how the work of Jay Leyda and Joseph Cornell relates to the Dickinson archive. In particular, Beard advocated Leyda’s approach to Dickinson’s biography as an example of how one might resist accepting the archive as a solidified record.

Catherine Forsa, a Ph.D. student at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, took advantage of the popular culture panel to use some popular culture technology to present from afar. Her presentation, “Crystalline Planes: Measures of Science, Feeling, and Form in Dickinson’s Science Poetry” switched gears a little bit to bring to the panel some questions about popular culture during Dickinson’s time. Forsa’s pecha kucha style presentation explored Dickinson’s depiction of measurement, working together the threads of science, feeling, and poetic form that Forsa argues are prevalent in Dickinson’s science poems. Using the poem “After great pain, a formal feeling comes –,” Forsa illustrated that Dickinson’s science poems frequently view seemingly empirical truths from new perspectives.

Buffalo based web designer Nate Allen shared the most recent updates in the ongoing development of the graduate student website. This online space is meant to be a virtual community bringing together graduate students around the world who are interested in Dickinson. Non-graduate students are welcome to join the site, with the understanding that everything is organized around the graduate student perspective. Anyone interested in helping with

the site, whether it be managing forums, providing usage feedback and update suggestions, or raising awareness among graduate students, should contact Kate Dunning (crd60@case.edu). Visit [www.edisgrad.org](http://www.edisgrad.org) and sign up for a free login to see the website.

The panel rounded out with Kate Dunning passing around several stacks of Dickinson related children’s books and leading a Dickinson inspired creative writing exercise. In one of the books, the fictionalized Emily grumbles about having to make everything – like butter, flour, and her baked goods – from scratch when it would be immensely easier to buy them ready made. In a nod to one of the popular stories about Dickinson, as well as the presumption that Dickinson would have loved a bread maker had she been able to get her hands on one, Dunning passed around freshly made, historically accurate gingerbread, as well as a history of gingerbread recipes over the past six centuries. Who knew that Dickinson and popular culture could taste so good?

Overall, the panel offered a wide variety of approaches to questions of historical and contemporary popular culture in the context of Emily Dickinson’s life and writing.

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## Conditions

By Dan Manheim

*Presenters: Mita Bose, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi; Jill Spivey Caddell, Cornell University; Alison Fraser, University of Buffalo; Amanda Licato, University of California Berkeley*

Despite their different topics, the four presenters on this panel all considered Dickinson’s channels to “oblique places” – oblique, that is, from the Amherst-centered universe in which readers have traditionally seated the poet.

Mita Bose’s paper on what she coins as Dickinson’s “Enigmatical Sublime,” addressed the poet as “an enduring world icon for female dissent and self sufficiency.” She ex-

plored the importance of Dickinson’s voice for readers in her native India, where in addition to multiple contemporary translations of the poems currently being undertaken, there are also performances of the poems and even Emily Dickinson impersonators. Likewise, there are similarly avid readers in many other countries: the poet’s role-playing invites readers to play roles: Dickinson is become a model of how to escape stereotypes. According to one Japanese reader whom Bose

found on the internet, Dickinson was “a hero because she was a joker.”

Jill Spivey Caddell delivered a rich and complicated paper entitled “War’s Oblique Places: Dickinson, Higginson, and the Geographies of Correspondence.” Centering in Dickinson’s famous letter to Higginson in South Carolina (L280), she addressed the ways in which correspondence during the war proved a means for writers to meditate

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on distance, time, and their personal relation to the public catastrophe of civil conflagration. The letter could in some sense “follow the soldier to the battlefield,” while simultaneously acknowledging the writer’s dislocation from the action on which she comments. Thus her remark in that letter that Higginson had become “improbable” to her must be seen in the light of the temporal disjunction in which letters were unlikely to arrive at all; in which conditions reported in one letter would certainly have been superseded by further events by the time the letter was read; and in which the attempt to defy the difference between the domestic world of the writer and the space of war gives way to a spatial/temporal deferral of the reconciliation of the separated correspondents. Dickinson’s letters to the battlefield meditated on that paradox.

Alison Fraser likewise considered Dickinson’s voices as reflecting on the Civil War. She, however, in line with papers earlier in the conference about the art of dramatic lyric, argued, in “Dickinson’s Domestic Battlefield,” that the notorious crux, “Rearrange a ‘Wife’s’ Affection” (Fr267) can be read as a monolog in the voice of a woman on the home front, articulating a domestic reaction to the war that partakes of battlefield language and imagery. Noting Dickinson’s awareness of women making supplies for soldiers, she suggested that some of the terms from the poem – “crown,” “thorns,” “diadem,” “bandage” – could be seen as figuring dressings of a head wound in addition to their more conspicuous Christian associations. And she described a court case Dickinson likely knew about in which a Lysistrata-like woman deserted her marriage bed because she “refused to have any

more boys to send to war.” In general, Fraser sees the poem as expressing the “domestic impact the war had on women of the era.”

Women’s domesticity was also the subject of Amanda Licato’s paper, “I tried to match it – Seam by Seam – / But could not make them fit –’: Clothing, Sewing, and Self in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson.” Licato confessed that it was her first conference paper, but it was with seasoned assurance that she explained how Dickinson, a “poet of borderlands,” used seam imagery in order to negotiate questions of stability and instability, parts and wholes, interiors and exteriors. The image addresses those parts of the self that aren’t complete, that struggle to find a fit. Sewing imagery enabled Dickinson to engage household economy and commercial labor, as well as psychology and aesthetic form.

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## Affect

By Anne Ramirez

*Presentors: Patrice Chaudron, University of Buffalo; Ann Shih-Yuan Chou, National Chengchi University; Laura Dawkins, Murray State University; Anne Ramirez, Neumann University; Dali Tan, University of Maryland*

These panelists explored Dickinson’s reception and influence from a wide range of perspectives across time and space. In “A Route of Evanescence: Emily Dickinson’s New England Moment of Modernity in the 1890’s,” Patrice Chaudron described the impressions of Dickinson’s early reviewers, who tended to categorize her as a New England local-color writer with marked eccentricities in her language. Many reviewers emphasized her biography; some regarded her as an outdated recluse while others saw her as proto-modernist in form, if not in content. One must recall that these early readers had access to only a small fraction of Dickinson’s poems. Particularly interesting was Chaudron’s explanation of conflict arising between those who romanticized Dickinson’s work as the spontaneous overflow of feelings and those who thought she was trying too hard to make an impression.

Shih-Yuan Chou examined Dickinson’s complex treatment of human relationships in her

presentation, “Where the Meanings Are – The unrepresentable in Emily Dickinson’s Love Poems.” She noted that Dickinson’s cryptic language calls upon the reader to take part in making meaning; the poet often begins in the midst of an experience or event without providing background information about the imagined relationship. Dickinson’s silences often suggest that the nature of love cannot be fully presented in words. Shih-Yan Chou concluded by interpreting three poems, “There came a Day – at Summer’s full – (Fr325), “Forever at His side to walk” Fr264, and “He was my host – he was my guest” (Fr724), as illustrations of Dickinson’s ideal relationship. In subsequent discussion, it was suggested that these poems portray a rather subordinate female voice rather than an independent woman’s perspective. Others believe the poems imply a balanced relationship rather than a master – handmaid scenario. Furthermore, “Forever at His side to walk” concludes with the impression that the happy existence just

described is not “now” but still to be anticipated.

Laura Dawkins examined a very different selection of poems in “Their coming back seems possible: Dickinson’s Ghosts.” After summarizing psychoanalytical theories concerning the inner phantoms often imagined and assimilated by mourners, Dawkins focused on a number of Gothic poems. In some the speaker tries to subsume the lost loved one’s phantom into her own being, while in others the speaker presents herself as following the beloved dead into a kind of shadowed half-way existence between time and eternity. Such poems may demonstrate the speaker’s longing for connection with the dead even at the price of her own psychic integrity, yet Dawkins notes that Dickinson can detach herself from the mood she is describing – consciously crafting the poem from a stance outside the emotional turmoil within it.

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In “Emily Dickinson’s Momentous Mission – Messenger Between the Worlds,” Anne Ramirez approached Dickinson’s role as “World Citizen” through the perspective of the poet’s own use of the word “world” and related travel imagery. Very often, Dickinson employs the word “world” in reference to the temporal world and the world to come, rather than in a spatial or geographical context. The possibility, difficulty, or methods of travel or communication between this world and the next, or between past, present, and future on a more modest scale, are among her lifelong preoccupations. In addition to several poems directly illustrating this pattern, Ramirez examined the late poem “Cosmopolites without a plea” (Fr1592) and other examples of the poet’s claim to receive messages from another

world, to be crafted into missives of good news to recipients in distant lands or times. As a mysterious example of poets transmitting remarkably similar messages with similar imagery, “A solemn thing within the soul” (Fr467) was compared to Robert Frost’s “After Apple-Picking,” – which was composed prior to any known publication of this Dickinson poem.

Finally, Dali Tan traced even more remote parallels between Dickinson and other poets in her fascinating presentation “Emily Dickinson’s Affectivism: Decoding the Power of Her Poems from the Perspective of Chinese Poetics. Direct influence remains difficult to uncover, but it is possible that Dickinson could have derived some elements of Tao-

ism and other Eastern philosophies through her intensive reading of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Dali Tan explained that Dickinson’s work and Chinese poetics have striking affinities in their emphasis on the affective-expressive rather than the mimetic. Both also share continual experimentation with language to create ambiguity and multiple meanings, and both place importance on the senses of taste and smell – difficult to forget but hard to describe. Comparing and contrasting the poetic sensibilities of different cultures can foster new reading dynamics of Dickinson and help us better understand the power of her poetry. The combined effect of this panel’s presentations was to justify our contemporary perception that Dickinson appeals to an impressive variety of readers.

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## Ecocriticism

By Lesley Clement

*Presenters: Kate Dunning, Case Western Reserve University; Mary Kuhn, Boston University; Leslie McAbee, University of North Carolina; Emer Vaughn, Indiana University; Chair: Ellen Louise Hart, Portland State University*

I know the Butterfly – and the Lizard – and the Orchis –

Are not those *your* Countrymen? (L268)

Given Dickinson’s empathy with nature, it is not surprising that more and more scholars are approaching her work from ecocritical perspectives. This session examined the ways in which Dickinson fits – and does not fit – into the arena of ecocriticism.

Appropriately, therefore, the presentations began with Kate Dunning’s “The Ecopoetics of Emily Dickinson,” which immediately made the point that, although an application of ecocritical theories to Dickinson’s poetry shifts our understanding of and attitudes towards the nature-human relationship, Dickinson is not an ecopoet. Dunning drew upon Leonard Scigaj’s categories in *Sustainable Poetry* (1999) to develop and explain her thesis. Much of Dickinson’s poetry fits into Scigaj’s defi-

nition of nature poetry, which opens the potential for what Scigaj, citing Robert Pack’s afterword to *Poems for a Small Planet* (1993), describes as “‘a morality of restraint,’ ‘reverence,’ appreciation of natural beauty and a ‘capacity for empathy’ toward nonhuman nature.” To illustrate, Dunning examined Dickinson’s “The Day came slow – till Five o’clock.” By setting the poem up to appear as though humanity is the central figure around which nature is seen and then complicating this figuring, Dickinson both emphasizes and undermines the ease with which we as humans are willing to read the experience and texts anthropocentrically. Environmental poetry, according to Scigaj, brings in a sense of ethics through human responsibility and accountability. To illustrate, Dunning examined Dickinson’s “Our little Kinsmen – after Rain” (Fr932), concluding that the speaker’s discovery of the history of the worms and the bird influences the decision that “leaving” the

worm is the ecologically ethical course of human action. Finally, for Scigaj, an ecopoet consciously writes to effect change through poetry that recognizes and raises awareness of the complex cycles and connections that keep humanity always within and inherently part of nature. Because capturing the state of silence is essential to raise awareness, the visual and auditory silences of “A Bird, came down the Walk” (Fr359), Dunning suggested, encourage a rethinking of the implications and values of Dickinson’s anthropomorphism.

With Dunning’s excellent overview of how each approach situates the human in relation to nature and how Dickinson’s unsettling view of nature can contribute to the ecocritical conversation, the stage was set for an in-depth look at how this can be accomplished. Mary Kuhn’s paper on “Every Flower that Grows from Amherst to Cashmere: Dickinson’s Global Floral Network” and Leslie McAbee’s



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on “Memories of Palm”: Dickinson’s Tropical Commodities and Unstable Geographies” looked to the natural world of exotic plants and animals, respectively, finding connections in Dickinson’s poetry between the local and the global. Kuhn’s paper on global floral networks used the domestic garden to unsettle our sense of Dickinson as an a-political poet, linking gardens to imperialism and colonialism. For example, Kuhn observed that Dickinson’s herbariums contain samples from not only her own garden but also the species that her friends sent her from Syria, Lebanon, Greece, and other Southern European and Middle Eastern regions, which through garden and floral imagery find their way into her poetry and thus juxtapose the global and local. McAbee concluded her paper with the observa-

tion that Dickinson “untethers cultural and racial stereotypes” through “Eastern figures” that “achieve a level of freedom and volatility that rattles the stability of Western narratives of cultural and racial dominance.”

Emer Vaughn’s paper, “The Circulatory Self: Emily Dickinson’s Trans-Corporeality,” returned to ecocritical theory, combining trans-corporeality with natural history to draw further connections between the local and the global in Dickinson’s poetry. Vaughn argued that, at the level of individual identity, an awareness of natural history prompted Dickinson to imagine embodied subjectivities which are traversed by environmental factors and which may inhabit multiple scales of space and time. Her paper situated Dick-

inson in the context of the gradual transatlantic decline of natural theology and rise of evolutionary theory, approaching her poetry as a unique medium for investigating how these changing understandings of the human’s place in the material world impact the sense of self. With her shifting subjectivities, Dickinson challenges her readers through encounters with animals, environments, and organic remains. Her poetry uses trans-corporeality to draw readers into a distinctly ecocritical posture of respectful uncertainty rather than confident assurance.

A wide-ranging question-and-answer period followed, with much of the discussion focusing on issues of gender and post-humanism theorists such as Karen Barad.

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## (Im)mortality

By Anne Ramirez

*Presenters: Karen Dovell, SUNY Suffolk Community College; Mary Schuhriemen, Catholic University*

Personal emergencies unfortunately prevented three panelists from attending the EDIS conference. However, the panel’s excellent quality was most rewarding despite the lack of quantity. As the two presentations were both related to the subject of war and focused on a limited number of specific poems, they precipitated a very lively discussion that filled most of the time available.

First, Karen Dovell explained her research on Dickinson’s references to Western classical tradition in “Classical Thermopylae in Works by Emily Dickinson: War, Death, and Immortality.” Although many scholars have documented Dickinson’s familiarity with classical philology, history, mythology, and philosophy, there has been relatively little focus on the poet’s actual adaptation of this knowledge in her poems, in the context of nineteenth-century American reception of Greek and Latin tradition.

The Battle of Thermopylae, in which Spartan soldiers gave their lives defending a mountain pass against the invading Persians, was repeatedly used in nineteenth-century media as a symbol of heroic self-sacrifice, in reference to the Battle of the Alamo, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. Dickinson alludes to Thermopylae in poems Fr524, Fr1023, Fr1584, and in two letters. She acknowledges the soldiers’ courage but grimly questions whether such sacrifice is really necessary or worthwhile, speculates about their immortality, and indicates her interest in the messenger who escaped to tell the tale (thereby ensuring at least the immortality of fame for those who lost their lives). Dovell is currently working on a book which will include many other examples of Dickinson’s adaptation of classical tradition.

Mary Schuhriemen continued the theme of Dickinson’s reservations about the

horrors of warfare in “Dickinson’s Paradoxical Union of War and Nature in a New Civil War Poem.” She provided a brief overview of scholarly work on the influence of the Civil War on Dickinson’s poetry, noting that numerous texts traditionally read as nature poems are now believed to employ metaphors of nature to express the poet’s reactions to the war.

Moving to her own extensive analysis of “The Sunrise runs for Both – ” (Fr765), Schuhriemen explained that this poem was written in 1863, a few months after the Battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862. The puzzling references to “Both” and “Two” become much clearer when the first stanza is read in this light. Most interesting was the presenter’s research concerning the second stanza: on the night following the battle there was a magnificent display of the Northern Lights, rarely seen so far south as Virginia. This event of nature was not men-

# EMILY DICKINSON WORLD CITIZEN

tioned in any official news accounts, but reported in several soldiers' letters to their families. The final stanza employs imagery of the night embracing dead soldiers from "Both" sides, implying the poet's distress once again at the destructiveness of war contrasting with the calm beauty of nature.

Someone asked whether Dickinson might have known President Lincoln's view of the Southerners as brothers, with whom Northerners should re-unite without malice. Since this was not the attitude of the majority in the North, both presentations contributed to the portrait of Dickinson as

an independent thinker who was very much aware of contemporary affairs. It might be appropriate to arrange more panels in the future that focus on a relatively small selection of poems, fostering such fruitful group discussion of Dickinson's outstanding literary achievements.

## Citizenship

By Cindy MacKenzie

*Presenters: Sean Ash Gordon, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Dan Manheim, Centre College; Vivian Pollak, Washington University; Stephanie Tingley, Youngstown University; Marcy Tanter, Tartleton University*

In the faculty lounge of Tawes Hall, a large crowd listened to five engaging and varied approaches to the question of citizenship, the thematic emphasis of this year's conference, in Dickinson's work. In the first paper, "Dickinson and Democratic Citizenship," Sean Ash Gordon questioned the way that Dickinson's poetry speaks to the experience of democratic citizenship despite her apparent absence of explicitly political commentary and her legendary reclusiveness. Raising questions regarding her definition of political terms such as "equality" and "democracy," Gordon seeks to correct such misconceptions of the poet's public interest by finding evidence of a political philosophy in both the content as well as in the formal characteristics of the poems. Gordon emphasized that his work is motivated by a belief in the capacity of literature as a resource for becoming a better citizen so that he states at the end of his presentation, "while political theory can enhance literature, so, too, literature can enhance political theory."

In "Emily Dickinson's Republic of Suffering," Dan Manheim explored several poems Dickinson composed in the aftermath of the Civil War to demonstrate how she sought to develop a poetics of conso-

lation derived from private expressions of sorrow that could ultimately participate in public projects of reconciliation. The accessibility to others' pain in times of suffering and the ways in which sympathy could work to reconcile a divided nation grew into a larger vision of her own poetic project, one in which the personal could embrace a wider democratic sphere. Manheim ended his talk with reference to the relevance of the powerful poem by Yehuda Amichai, "Diameter of the Bomb," in which the repercussions of a specific bombing spread throughout the world.

In "Muriel Rukeyser, Emily Dickinson, and Visionary Citizenship," Vivian Pollak began with the question, "what is it to be a visionary citizen?" Pollak's presentation, an excerpt from a larger project of her study of poets after Dickinson, emphasizes Muriel Rukeyser's representations of Dickinson in her 1949 manifesto, *The Life of Poetry*, in which Dickinson as woman poet exemplifies the problem of cultural waste. Referencing the Spasmodic poets who created gaps by way of voicing emotional intensities, Pollak emphasizes the importance of voice and oral presentation in Rukeyser's theory of constructing of effective

poem sequences. Excerpts from Rukeyser reading helped to illustrate her mode of writing.

Stephanie Tingley used a power point presentation to outline the way that Dickinson teaches her readers to think globally across both space and time. Referring to the online archive "The Classroom Electric" (<http://www.classroomelectric.org/volume1/gruesz/index.htm>), Tingley emphasized Dickinson's geographical imagery and the resources that promoted it: education at Amherst College, literature, magazines, newspapers, and of course, atlases.

Finally, Marcy Tanter talked about the work of Elizabeth Stearns Tyler, who served in France as secretary and interpreter for medical staff as part of the American Red Cross. Of particular interest to Tanter are the letters Tyler wrote home because they provide a view of the end of the war that we do not typically encounter. Martha Dickinson Bianchi, a close family friend to Tyler, wrote an elegy to her included in the publication of her letters. As a "world citizen," Tyler applied the values instilled in her home in Massachusetts, to selflessly aid the people of ravaged France.

## Emily Dickinson's Transatlantic, Transtemporal Contexts

By Susanna Compton

*Presenters: Elizabeth Petrino, Fairfield University; Cindy MacKenzie, University of Regina; Michelle Kohler, Tulane University; Melissa Girard, Loyola Baltimore*

Melissa Girard, Michelle Kohler, Cindy MacKenzie and Elizabeth Petrino each considered ways in which Emily Dickinson and her poetry extend beyond her contemporary moment and New England location to reach a wide array of locales and literary eras, both during her life and posthumously.

First to present was Melissa Girard. She examined Dickinson's modernist reception and impact on literary culture, primarily in the realm of women's poetry in the twentieth century. Girard contrasted reviews of Dickinson's poetry to reveal and complicate Dickinson's connection to imagism.

Girard cited the conflicting reviews of Harriet Monroe, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant and Amy Lowell to reveal different receptions of Dickinson, and juxtaposed an opening of Dickinson to a broader aesthetic world with the grounding of her poetry in American soil. Girard also drew on the literary criticism of Louise Bogan, arguing that her definition of "mysticism" allowed modernist women poets to look back to the nineteenth century, with a "formal language" for their literary experiments.

Michelle Kohler followed Girard by considering Dickinson's poems about the deaths of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Charlotte Brontë. Kohler prompted us to consider how readers mourn the (literal) death of authors, citing Virginia Jackson's argument that Dickinson hoped her readers would reconstruct her contemporary moment and imagine the "historical person of Dickinson" through reading.

Kohler presented several close readings, of poems Fr600 ("Her – last Poems –"), Fr637 ("I went to thank Her –"), Fr627 ("I think I was enchanted"), Fr146 ("All overgrown by cunning moss"), and Fr930 ("The Poets light but Lamps"). She interpreted these elegies as a critique of readings that focus too heavily on

dead authors, arguing against a reading like Jackson's. By way of conclusion, Kohler suggested takeaways for reading Dickinson's own "last poems," which are, in effect, all of them. Kohler introduced a dialectic between misery and jubilee, as Dickinson's poetry is both about her and detached from her: it is ours.

Cindy MacKenzie investigated Emily Dickinson's participation in the widely debated political issue of marital union in the nineteenth century. MacKenzie discussed the very public nature of the nineteenth-century marriage contract and outlined how this contract would beget "legal oneness" for man and woman. Given the tradition of biblical male authority, union thus essentially reduced "the couple" to "the husband."

Through readings of Emily Dickinson's marriage poems, MacKenzie raised questions of love, commitment, and public order, ultimately asking whether Emily Dickinson could assume citizenship for herself, an unmarried woman. In a sense, Dickinson becomes a disenfranchised wife – or, "nobody." Her poetry thus allowed her to act as a non-citizen speaker staging a coup, MacKenzie argued. Returning to questions of identity – does a woman have an individual identity if the husband is the full citizen of the house? What is the identity of an unmarried woman? – MacKenzie reminded us that in Dickinson's poetry, identity is "a process of becoming."

Panel chair Elizabeth Petrino presented on the transatlantic connections between Emily Dickinson and George Sand, specifically evident in Dickinson's

poem, "Alone and in a Circumstance." Working with the manuscript of the poem, Petrino interpreted the collage poem as a text and a material object, which represented the female creative artist. Given the article clippings about George Sand which Dickinson placed on her collage, Petrino suggested that Dickinson identified with certain elements of Sand's life: separation from her husband, bohemian life, her writing habits, transvestism, and her rejection of fame.

Petrino also interpreted Dickinson's use of legal language, which embodied the central concern of the role of the female artist vis-à-vis the public, regarding the pressures of the domestic sphere. Issues of intellectual property are at play, Petrino argued, and Dickinson wished to find an alternate space for creation, therein challenging preconceived notions of poetry and presentation.



# EMILY DICKINSON WORLD CITIZEN

## World-Class Entertainment for Emily Dickinson World Citizen

By Emily Seelbinder

This already jam-packed conference featured many performers offering musical, dramatic, and even digital mash-up interpretations of Dickinson's life and work. So many stimuli! Some might say too many, but what or whom would one cut from the conference program? Certainly not the performances of Diana Wagner, whose guitar and vocals set a convivial tone for the conference's opening reception and the light suppers served in Tawes Hall.

Nor the opening evening's fare, which began with "Chanting to Paradise," a recital by soprano Jane Sheldon and pianist Nicole Panizza of music found in Dickinson's piano bench and recently made available for perusal online (<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL.HOUGH:10951150>).

In performing these pieces as Dickinson and others of her time might have heard them, Sheldon and Panizza allowed their audience to experience the tenderness of familiar folk songs and to appreciate the depth and breadth of Dickinson's musical studies.

Musical delights continued in a staged reading from "*Wider than the Sky*": *The Mystery of Emily Dickinson*, written by Barbara Dana and directed by Anthony Arkin, which included song settings by Martin Hennessy (who also served as pianist for this performance), Vincent Persichetti, William Roy, Drew Hemenger and others, all beautifully performed by Kathleen Shimeta as "Eternal Emily." Elizabeth Morton delivered a strong performance as "Emily," while Laurie McCants and Jamie Smithson brought nuanced differences to their lively readings of a variety of roles.

Thursday evening closed with William Andrews introducing

and playing 1994 recordings of his rock 'n roll settings of three poems. When technical difficulties threatened to derail his presentation, Andrews treated his audience to deeper insights into his composing process and the "quick gratitude" of working with musicians who breathed life into his ideas. Sure enough, those songs rocked!

The rocking turned rollicking on Friday evening, when Swedish vocalist Sofie Livebrant took the stage with her guitar, accompanied by Lisa Eriksson Langbacka on accordion, to perform some of the more than twenty songs Livebrant composed over a two-year period during which she and Dickinson became "inseparable." The performance included several songs not on Livebrant's 2012 album *Emily and I*, among them "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" and "Good Morning, Midnight." The latter of these pulled many in the audience out of their chairs to frolic among the tables and in front of the stage. Livebrant later posted a video of these festivities with this descriptive comment: "The professors were dancing . . ." (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wH6O5sHC93c&feature=share>).

Music yielded the floor to drama on Saturday evening in "Vitallist Expressions." One of



Mac Davis was a bit of a loaded gun himself.

these was a fascinating digital improvisation by Stephanie Strickland and Nick Montfort with *Sea and Spar Between*, a poetry generator that combines the lexicons of Dickinson's poems and *Moby Dick*.

The rest of the evening was devoted to solo performances. Several monologues sought to fill in blanks in Dickinson's biography through imagined encounters with her or members of her family. Walter A. (Mac) Davis read from his play *Abberation of Starlight* a riveting scene focused on the two nights Dickinson composed "My Life had Stood – a Loaded Gun –." John Little shared from his work-in-progress, *Tell It Slant*, an intriguing scene in which Susan Gilbert Dickinson recalls her first conversation with the odd schoolmate with whom she would develop a complex lifelong relationship. In *Time Travel with Emily Dickinson*, MiMi Zannino, in full



Sofie Livebrant and Lisa Eriksson Langabacka struck the right note.

# EMILY DICKINSON WORLD CITIZEN

19th-century costume, wove selections from poems and letters into a lively conversation Dickinson might have had over tea when she and her sister Lavinia visited their father in Washington.

Other performances explored readers' experiences of Dickinson. Laurie McCants performed excerpts from *Industrious Angels*, a "solo hand-crafted-story-spinning-shadow-puppet-play-with-music," which she developed in collaboration with several other artists. In McCants's words, "The story unfolds through

puppetry, paper-cutting, music, movement, light and dark, and the weaving together of words" as "a daughter searches for what it is that ties together her mother, herself, and an elusive poet." The result is a mesmerizing and deeply moving experience.

In *Sincerely, Master*, Emily Anderson took the stage silently, sat in a chair with her back to the audience, and proceeded to wrap herself in several sheets as she typed on a laptop. On the screen above her, a digital chat emerged in which the typist

at first sought a date and then wrestled, as Dickinson scholars are wont to do, with dating the poems. Anderson's efforts to "problematize notions of critical and editorial authority, explore an ethics of criticism, and undermine all possibilities of certainty" brought great delight, as did all of the performances at EDIS 2013.

*Emily Seelbinder teaches at Queens University of Charlotte, North Carolina. She also edits a periodic series for the Bulletin on Emily Dickinson and Music.*

## Further Images from the Conference

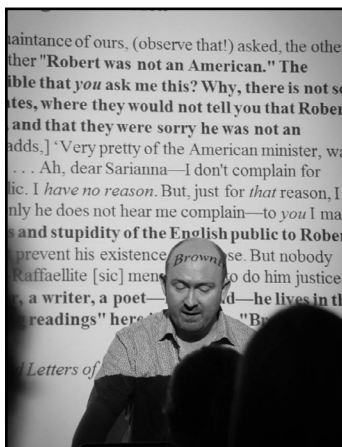


Photo courtesy of LeeAnn Gorthey

# WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Series Editor, Georgiana Strickland

## Georgiana Strickland: A Profile of the Editor

By Jane Donahue Eberwein

Like many of the Dickinson lovers Georgiana Strickland has profiled for the *Bulletin's* "What's Your Story?" series, she herself came somewhat belatedly to enthusiasm for the poet – but not before fostering talents that prepared her to make exceptional contributions to the community of Dickinson readers. As the favorite poem (Fr348) inscribed on the citation for her Emily Dickinson International Society Dis-



tinguished Service Award testifies, Georgie has brought to her work of editing, organizing, and documentation the skills and capabilities honed through a lifetime's immersion in the visual arts, music, and literature. It became apparent when I interviewed her for this article during the Society's August 2013 international conference in Maryland that Georgie Strickland's scholarly accomplishments are deeply grounded in her experiences as a reporter, editor, musician, and reader.

Though born in Chicago to parents who sparked her interest in the arts, Georgie spent most of her childhood in Springfield and Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, where she heard about Emily Dickinson as a local poet and something of a "curiosity" but not yet regarded as the major literary figure Thomas Johnson and Richard Sewall

showed her to be. Georgie does not recall studying Dickinson's poems in the local schools but took a different route toward her eventual role by seizing on the invitation from her eighth-grade teacher to edit the junior high school newspaper. In high school, she studied journalism while working on the school paper in a city where memories of Samuel Bowles and the *Springfield Republican* were still honored. After majoring in English at Middlebury College in Vermont, Georgie took a job as editorial assistant for the Merriam-Webster dictionary publishing firm in Springfield, the company that had bought the rights to Noah Webster's dictionary in the mid-nineteenth century and still regards itself as the "supreme authority" on American English. She characterizes that setting as a "somewhat weird place to work but a great place to start a career in publishing." It was in that setting that she learned to proofread with great accuracy and to

pay attention to the smallest detail even as she developed deeper appreciation for lexical nuances.

In 1957, Georgie married John Strickland, an artist, with whom she moved to Michigan while he completed two degrees at the Cranbrook Academy of Art and she worked for the Wayne State University Press. Later, she did freelance editing

in New York. When her husband's teaching career led the family to Auburn, Alabama, she worked on publications for the Cooperative Extension Service. John's career move to the University of Kentucky School of Architecture brought the family (by then including daughter Cyndi and son Neal) to Lexington, where Georgie took a position with the University Press of Kentucky. She worked there for twenty-nine years, the last eight as managing editor. She credits her husband, a great reader of poetry, for calling her attention to Dickinson and recalls exploring with great interest the "wonderful" yet often "bewildering" poems she encountered in the copy she gave him of Thomas Johnson's paperbound selection, *Final Harvest*.

It was Georgie's editorial responsibilities that directed her professional attention to

Dickinson. Having edited an earlier book by William Shurr, she was assigned to edit *The Marriage of Emily Dickinson* as well. While checking quotations in Thomas Johnson's variorum, she became fascinated with Dickinson's manner of writing and curious about how the poems related to the author's experiences. She credits her discovery of Dickinson at that point as a profound influence on her own life. Seeing potential for an invigorating new project, Georgie decided to devote herself to learning more through immersing herself in the poems. So she read them over and over while also delving into Johnson's and Sewall's biographies and whatever new books came along. Shortly after her husband's death in 1987, she represented the Press at the 1988 Modern Language Association meeting in New Orleans, where she attended an evening session sponsored by the Emily Dickinson International Society. Soon after she joined EDIS, a *Bulletin* arrived with a notice indicating that an editor was needed for that publication. Initial issues had appeared through the good offices of Margaret Freeman and Cristanne Miller, and Georgie talked with them about that opportunity. By happy chance, she had an updated resume in hand; so she decided to apply despite some apprehension about her lack of advanced degrees. She got the job, though she admits to learning many years later how the selection process worked out. When she visited Margaret Freeman in California and happened to ask how many applications they had received, Margaret replied "I've always hoped you wouldn't ask me that. You were the only one." It was a fortunate choice for EDIS, and Georgie proceeded to fashion the *Bulletin* into an exceptionally varied and valuable literary publication.

Her passion for the performing arts expressed itself in the article featured in the first issue Georgie edited: an interview with actress Julie Harris about *The Belle of Amherst* (followed in May 2001 by an interview with playwright William Luce). That first issue also included a report on Dick-

inson collections at Harvard, an announcement of plans for the Society's upcoming Washington conference, and a note from Georgie ascribing the "little bit different" appearance of the *Bulletin* to the new logo rather than the new editor. Although she confesses to wondering at first whether she could find enough material for two issues a year, Georgie encountered no problems attracting contributions as the publication's size continued to increase over the eleven and a half years she served as editor. She published news of dramatic, musical, and other performances related to Dickinson, wherever in the world they were presented. She enlisted Barbara Kelly to handle book reviews and other scholars to edit most of the series that still undergird the *Bulletin*'s content: Dickinson and the Visual Arts; Poet to Poet; and Dickinson Scholars. As editor, she attended Board meetings and was then elected to the Board for successive terms. After resigning in 2002 (four years after her retirement from the Press), Georgie took up her blue pencil again in 2010 to bring out the fall *Bulletin* during a period of editorial transition.

Georgie's skill at gathering information and deploying it in interesting ways has expressed itself in several admirably researched plenary presentations at the Society's meetings. At the Boulder meeting in 1998, she spoke on Samuel Bowles and Helen Hunt Jackson as Dickinson's guides to Colorado, and at the Philadelphia meeting in 2003, she delivered the closing address on the poet's experience of that city. Three articles expanding on those talks have appeared in the *Emily Dickinson Journal*: "Emily Dickinson's Colorado" (vol. 8,1); "'In Praise of Ramona': Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson's Indian Novel" (9,2); and "Emily Dickinson's Philadelphia" (13,2).

Another accomplishment was organizing "Emily Dickinson in Song," the 2002 annual meeting in Amherst that focused on music. Music has always been central

to Georgie's experience of the world. As a child, she studied piano for eight years (as she does again now), and she has sung in church choirs and in Lexington's large community chorus for many years as well as holding leadership positions in the Lexington Opera Society and its Bravo Guild. While living in New York, she volunteered for the classical radio station WBAI, where she fell in love with art songs – first Schubert's, then other German ones, then those in other languages, and most recently American ones. Her acquaintance with Dickinson poems composed in twentieth-century musical idiom began with Aaron Copland's song settings but soon expanded greatly. Friendships with Emily Seelbinder and Virginia Dupuy convinced Georgie that EDIS could stage a musical seminar, and she credits music faculty at Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, famed vocal coach Martin Katz, Ellen Bacon (widow of composer Ernst Bacon), and Dickinson scholars Cristanne Miller, Judy Jo Small, and Carolyn Cooley among those who made that meeting so memorable.

Georgie's current long-term research project entails compiling a discography of Dickinson poems that have been set to music and recorded on LPs, CDs, and audiotapes. Currently, she reports having documented 105 recordings by 84 composers (about a quarter of them women), which include about 600 individual song performances. She is trying to decide how to handle YouTube and other sites with ephemeral content. So, although Georgiana Strickland "would not paint – a picture," she has heightened awareness of visual responses to Dickinson. Although she "would not talk, like Cornets," she continues to promote appreciation for the musicality of Dickinson's poems; and although she would not "be a Poet," she has contributed richly to love of poetry. One wonders whether Dickinson would have wanted to be an editor if she had guessed how much quietly beneficial influence Georgie has managed to exert.

## Socarides Unbound: Marta Werner Talks to Alexandra Socarides about Manuscripts

Marta Werner and Alex Socarides are among those who have turned readers' attention to Dickinson's quondam ignored late fragmentary writings. Socarides teaches at the University of Missouri. Her recent book, *Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics* (reviewed on page 33 below) occasions this interview. She is currently at work on a new book, tentatively titled, *The Lyric Pose: Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry and the Problem of Recovery*. Marta Werner teaches literature at D'Youville College. She has presented Dickinson's fragmentary writings to the world in *Emily Dickinson's Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing* (1995), *Radical Scatters: An Electronic Archives of Emily Dickinson's Late Fragments and Related Texts* (1999/2011), and *The Gorgeous Nothings* (2012/2013).

**M**arta Werner: In your "Introduction" to *Dickinson Unbound*, you allude to the apparent "scenelessness" of Dickinson's poems – i.e., to the "impression" the poems give us of having arisen apparently without labor. How has this impression influenced readings of Dickinson's work? How does your reading of Dickinson's poetic process revise these earlier readings?

**A**lex Socarides: This apparent "scenelessness" is interesting to me because I actually find so many of Dickinson's poems to be very visual. I always see a "scene" – whether it's a woman walking a dog, a bird hopping down a path, the earth tipping over into darkness, a soldier dying on the battlefield . . . Sometimes they don't make much sense – like the visual composition of dreams in which space and time don't follow regular logic – but they are still "scenes" to me. So I was fascinated by the fact that others read her poems as devoid of scenes. And I think this is connected to the fact that readers often think of the poems as things that were produced spontaneously and without work – as if the apparent scenelessness of the poems is related to the absence of the scene of composition. By putting Dickinson's labor back into the story, I tried to show the made-ness of these objects, which I hoped might allow readers to "see" both what's inside and outside the poems a little differently, or more starkly.

**MW:** Your work in *Dickinson Unbound* places Dickinson in a complex relationship with nineteenth-century material culture. Yet at the same time that you position Dickinson in relationship to her culture – especially to women's copying and bookmaking practices – you

also call attention to her difference or distance from these practices. Can you say more about Dickinson's absorption in and ambivalence to these various practices?

**AS:** *The trickiest part about investigating nineteenth-century material culture was figuring out how any of it was related to Dickinson. In other words, I kept asking myself: Is this stuff like or unlike what Dickinson was making? Very early on in this project I spent a month at the American Antiquarian Society looking at homemade scrapbooks and commonplace books and hymnbooks and diaries and almanacs and sermons. I wasn't really sure what I was looking for; all I knew was that I was trying to figure out how people made books in the nineteenth century and then how they used these books. I eventually realized that Dickinson was learning from lots of the book-making practices that were popular in the nineteenth century but that she wasn't adopting any one technique wholesale. One could draw lots of different conclusions from this fact. The conclusion I drew was that there was something about the bound book – the book that requires start-to-finish reading, the book that mimics print conventions, the book that doesn't allow you to take out pages and put them back in somewhere else – that Dickinson didn't want. So instead, she used bookmaking techniques but she made objects that allowed her to sidestep the limitations of the book. It took quite a while for me to arrive at that formulation, and it only happened because I spent so much time with lots of different kinds of nineteenth-century books.*

**MW:** In *Dickinson Unbound* you often speak of the importance of paper and its relation-

ship to poetics. In many ways, though, you don't deal with the most intimate features of paper directly – the embosses, the chain lines, etc. – or with the sources of the stationery in Dickinson's household. Can you discuss what specifically about paper draws you? What, moreover, is distinctive about a "poetics that is guided by paper"?

**AS:** *It's true that I don't deal with those elements of the paper. Others – I'm thinking of you and Virginia Jackson in particular – have done such great work with embosses. I was*



Alex Socarides writes a regular poetry column for the Los Angeles Review of Books.



more interested in the size and shape of the paper than in what else appears on the paper; although in the final chapter I discuss other print that appears on her paper at times. I think more about the confines of the paper – about the breaks between sides of a folded sheet, about tiny slips that were torn along the edges, about formal pieces of stationery paper. I'm drawn to paper because it's a medium, but one that we don't think about in that way very often. I did a fair amount of research on exactly where Dickinson got her paper from, but in the end I couldn't nail down that information well enough to put it in the book. I was curious about the fact that most people say she got her fascicle paper from a "local stationer" so I went in search of who this might have been. I wanted to be able to name him, or, better yet, to find that the store still existed in the early twenty-first century and be able to tell my readers what the shop looked like and what the paper smelled like. I had no such luck. I found out that there was a "local stationer" in Amherst in the 1860s, but I couldn't confirm that Dickinson got her paper there. Then one of the many archivists I talked to suggested maybe she got the paper through the General Store (where she got most supplies), which means it mostly likely would have come from Boston. So I read all the records from the General Store from the 1860s and while I found lots of interesting things that went into the Dickinson Homestead during those years – so many pins! – there was no mention of paper. Then Jonathan Senchyne (who was writing a dissertation at the time about paper) suggested that maybe her paper came from the Berkshire Mills. It started to feel like a wild goose chase and in the end I wasn't really sure that finding the source of the paper had anything to do with my argument about how Dickinson used paper. So I have left the paper mystery for somebody else to solve.

MW: In your work you divide the trajectory of Dickinson's writing into roughly five chronological phases. Can you tell us what those phases are and what your revision of earlier imaginations of these style periods reveals about Dickinson that was not evident before?  
 AS: The five phases that I discuss are: copying poems onto fascicle sheets; writing let-



Marta Werner concedes that she is seldom pictured without a cat. To the right is an excerpt from one of her own reflections on Dickinson's manuscripts.

ters; sewing fascicle sheets; copying poems onto loose sheets; and writing on scraps and fragments of paper. They are really only very roughly chronological, since Dickinson was often engaging in several of these at once (especially the first three "phases"). I needed to organize the book in a way that would help me move through each of these practices, but I also wanted to emphasize that they weren't discrete. Chronology is important to the final two chapters because these do happen at a certain time, once some of the earlier practices have been abandoned, but nothing about Dickinson's process can be mapped too precisely, especially because we are probably missing so many of her manuscripts. So, this was the sense I could make of what had been left. How are these periods are different from earlier imaginations of them? Critics who deal with Dickinson's materials and her compositional practices tend to look closely at just one of these phases (usually the fascicles or the late scraps). I benefitted greatly from the focused work that had been done on each of these phases, and I took it as my challenge to say something about how they were connected.

MW: Your work strongly argues for a critical re-imagination of the fascicles: instead of see-

ing them as the most significant (and stable) site of Dickinson's poetic production, you see them as just one of several sites of poetic production. Can you say more about these other sites? How are the various sites of poetic production related; that is, how is each one reflecting on or predicting the others?

AS: When I started writing this book, I thought I was just going to write about the fascicles, so it still takes me by surprise when I realize that in some ways I ended up writing a book that destabilizes their position as the center of Dickinson's writings. But the longer I worked with them (and with her letters and loose sheets and late scraps) the more I saw that there was very little that was stable about the fascicles. I think that because they look like little books, they give off this impression, but once you get inside her process of making poems, you realize, for instance, that her letter writing practices are intricately tied to her fascicles and that she is returning to fascicles late in life long after she has stopped making them. One summer I decided to make a kind of database that shows the compositional history of each poem that appears in Franklin's variorum. That was totally eye opening because I was able to see, say, that a poem was written in a fascicle and then a few years later part of it was put in a letter and then later it was shortened and revised and copied on a scrap of paper. I started grouping these actions, like "Poems sent to Sue before being copied onto a fascicle sheet" or the more complicated "Po-

From "Reportless Places":  
 Facing the Modern Manuscript,"  
*Textual Cultures* 2011

ems copied into a fascicle and later revised into a fair copy and retained (sometimes as if for sending).” Sometimes the whole system felt like it was going to fall apart when I started to think about the copies that had been lost or destroyed. Also, while I deduced a fair amount of this from my own work with manuscripts, I was also relying heavily on the work of other textual scholars, like Franklin. But in the end the database allowed me to see certain trends and traits, which helped me locate these phrases, even if they aren’t, as I have said, discrete or solid or a perfect formulation of what was probably a very messy writing process.

MW: In chapter Three, “Sewing the Fascicles: Elegy, Consolation, and the Poetics of Interruption,” you observe that Dickinson’s most intense probings of death coincide with the years in which she was constructing fascicles. Can you say more about the connection you draw between the poetics of death and the poetics of sewing? How does this connection also suggest a new way of reading the elegy?

AS: *If I were a different kind of critic I would have written about Penelope and knitting, about what it means to stitch things together when we are grieving. And there’s part of me that believes that, and thinks that Dickinson may have been doing exactly that – turning to the act of sewing at the very moment that she was feeling death so acutely. But I tried to resist drawing biographical conclusions (although I know I’m not always successful at this) and instead look at how she was making poems. By looking at her compositional process I came to the conclusion that by writing poems about death onto sheets of paper that she then stitched together, Dickinson was in some ways continually writing and re-writing that moment of death. What this tells us about Dickinson, I’m not sure. What this tells us about the elegy is that it’s a genre that not only demands re-writing, but is about re-writing.*

MW: As far as I know, your reading of Dickinson’s “sets” offers the first full-scale critique of that extremely problematic term. How did your work in the archives lead you to reject the term “sets” as appropriate for describing certain gatherings of Dickinson’s loose sheets? In what sense are the sets editorially

constructed objects? Do you think Franklin should not have included them in *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*? What possible misconceptions has their editorial association with the fascicles engendered?

AS: *Because Franklin includes the “sets” in The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson I think he urges us to think about them as related to the fascicles when they really aren’t. They are simply loose sheets of paper. I knew this, but I didn’t really know this. Not until I got in the archive and attempted to call up a “set.” As I write about in the book, what I got was a folder with lots of different sheets in them and I had to reconstruct Franklin’s “set” for myself. Which made me wonder: Whose object is this – Dickinson’s or Franklin’s? As far as if they should be in The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson or not, well, that’s a trickier question. I think it is misleading to have them there, but it was their presence there that led me to think about them as objects in the first place.*

MW: I’m always interested in a book’s acknowledgements – both for what is acknowledged and also for what often isn’t acknowledged in this formal paratext. Would you be comfortable addressing the importance of your mentors – both those you knew personally and those you knew largely through their scholarship? What was the most important gift you received from them?

AS: *I think the best part of writing Acknowledgements is getting to thank all of those mentors. Mine were fabulous – strong, brilliant, feisty, challenging women who had lived with Dickinson in their systems for a long time and who taught me how to think for myself about her. I think one of the reasons why they worked for me was that I admired (and I continue to admire) each one of them so much, personally and professionally. The most important thing I learned from one of these mentors happened on a Spring day, probably in 2005. I was on the phone with Meredith McGill, who was my dissertation director at the time, and something must have happened to make me call her, but I can’t remember what the context was. It was in that conversation that she told me that all acts of literary criticism are two things: 1) collaborative and 2) unfinished. I think about that almost every day.*

MW: *Dickinson Unbound* is your first book. First books, like last books, are often uncanny things. Or, perhaps, I should say, they are often both “homely” and “unhomely.” What questions – in a more personal sense – drive or haunt this work? What were you, Alexandra Socarides, revealing about your own relationship to Dickinson in the pages of this work?

AS: *That’s something I often think about when I am reading other people’s books but that I don’t think I’ve answered well enough yet about myself and my own work. Who is it that said that all acts of criticism are autobiographies? I’m clearly obsessed with how poetry gets made, and that’s probably because I had a stint as a poet myself, albeit not a very good one. I’m probably a bit nostalgic and mournful about that, and I admire Dickinson’s ability to stick with it against all odds. (Writing poetry is hard, hard business!) I like to ask how things come into being, how they make themselves and unmake themselves and then make themselves again.*

MW: What is on the horizon for you? What direction will your work on Dickinson take next?

AS: *I’m not actually writing about Dickinson these days. I might do so again, but I decided to take a break from her for a while. I’m currently writing a book about the para-textual and extra-textual conventions of nineteenth-century American women’s poetry books, by which I mean prefaces and portraits and books covers. I’m looking mostly at books that were published in out-of-the-way places and not at anything coming out of the big publishing centers of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. It’s fun writing about material that no one has ever written about. And I love being in the archive again. I also write a regular poetry column for the Los Angeles Review of Books called “The Poems (We Think) We Know” and I’m knee deep in a bunch of editing projects. I had never done either of these two things before – written about poetry for a general audience or edited other people’s scholarly work – and I’ve come to realize that I like both of these activities immensely. And since I’m not writing about Dickinson these days, I’ve rediscovered the joy of picking up one of her poems and reading it to myself, or to a friend, without the pressure of wondering what I might do with it.*

## My Friend Julie Harris

By Barbara Dana

When I was first asked by Cindy MacKenzie to perform *The Belle of Amherst* at the EDIS meeting in Regina in 2009 I declined. You see, Julie Harris is my hero. I remember her boots (tan, mid-calf, worn over tights) as she played Joan of Arc in Hallmark Hall of Fame’s television broadcast of *The Lark*. I was 16. Joan sat on a stool at the trial, un-compromising, brave, exhausted – they wouldn’t let her sleep – strong, yet vulnerable. It was one of those pivotal moments, a coming home, a quiet exhilaration, connecting past and future, forecasting the path of my life. In that moment I remembered what somewhere I had always known: I wanted to be an actress. I wanted to be Joan of Arc. I also wanted to be Julie Harris.

So I declined Cindy’s offer.

Much as I might want to, how could I step into a role that Julie Harris had done so brilliantly? Was I mad? “Much madness is divinest sense,” but there are limits! It would be like following Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*, or Laurette Taylor in *The Glass Menagerie* (which Julie did, by the way).

No matter that I had just spent twelve years writing a novel based on the young life of Emily Dickinson. No matter that I felt the poet in my blood. There was no way I would play her. When I added that it would be too awesome an amount of work for one performance, Cindy suggested that once I had learned it, I could perform the play in other places. Still, months later when Cindy repeated her offer (thank you, Cindy!), I repeated my answer. There was no way I would step into the “boots” of my acting hero.

By that time Julie and I had miraculously become friends. Years in the same profession had brought us together many times at performances, benefits and other theatrical events. When my novel about Joan of Arc



Photo courtesy of Anthony Arkin

Julie Harris (left) with Barbara Dana after the performance of *The Belle of Amherst* at the Kirby Theater at Amherst College, March 11, 2010.

was published (Young Joan, HarperCollins, 1991), I brought it to her backstage after a performance of *The Glass Menagerie* at Roundabout Theatre in New York. She thanked me, quickly read the book, wrote to me about it and we developed a correspondence.

Several years later when I began my novel *A Voice of Her Own: Becoming Emily Dickinson* (HarperCollins, 2009), we had lunch in Stamford, Connecticut, where she was appearing in *The Gin Game* with Charles Durning. It was Valentine’s Day. She gave me a bottle of perfume. I asked her endless questions about Emily, all of which she answered with enthusiasm and humility. I remember asking her about *The Belle of Amherst* and how she dealt with the aspect of talking to the audience for over two hours as 53 year-old Emily, who at that time in her life spoke to virtually no one but Vinnie and possibly the cats.

Julie said it had been a challenge to find a way to do that and shared with me her “substitution” (an actor’s term for using an experience, situation or person from one’s own life, or the life of the character, in exchange for a given element in the play). Her answer served me well when years later I accepted Cindy’s offer and took on the challenge.

What finally inspired my change of heart was a discussion with my hero/friend. I told her how I had been offered the play and how, out of respect for her iconic performance, not to mention the fear of disappointing those many scholars in the audience who had seen her performance, I had not accepted.

“Oh, no,” she said. “You must do it. It will be your Emily.”

I protested, but she would hear none of it: “You must. Remember, you are Emily.”

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When I did the play at the Kirby Theater at Amherst College (the same theatre in which Julie had done the play 34 years earlier), she was there. Before the show I was onstage checking my props when Jane Wald walked down to the edge of the stage carrying a small box. It was a gift from Julie, an antique brooch that had belonged to her grandmother. Overwhelmed, I wore it in the show that night.

I had been concerned about performing the play in front of my acting idol. How would I handle the stress? But as the show started, I felt Julie's support flowing over the footlights from her place in the first row. She was with me throughout the performance. I felt completely safe. It was extraordinary. After the show we stood at the edge of the stage, sharing an embrace, long, quiet, deep, and her single word, "Magic."

To say it was a night to remember would be a serious understatement. I of course wear the brooch whenever I play Emily.

Over the years I have learned much about my friend. Often referred to as the first lady of American theater, Julie Ann Harris was born on Dec. 2, 1925 in Grosse Point, Michigan, an affluent suburb just east of Detroit. Her father William was an investment banker and an expert on squirrels (a fact I find charming), who served as a curator of mammals at the museum of zoology at the University of Michigan. Her mother was a socialite. Having trained as a nurse, her chief aspiration for her daughter was that she should become a debutante. In this, young Julie failed miserably. She was born to act.

"Acting is my life," she is quoted as having said to her high school drama teacher.

She made her first Broadway appearance during her year at Yale School of Drama in the comedy "It's a Gift" and went on to earn 10 Tony nominations, more than any other performer. She was honored with 5 Tony awards, then won for a 6th time, a special Tony for lifetime achievement, putting her in a class by herself.

"Acting is always an adventure and a struggle to find the truth," she has said, a comment not unlike one that Emily might have made in relation to the writing of poetry.

Julie worked diligently and passionately in a remarkable variety of roles for over 50 years, on stage, in film, and on television. She was a true chameleon, with a fierce commitment to each and every character she played. From Frankie, the 12 year old restless, motherless, desperately lonely tomboy she played at 24 in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*, to Sally Bowles, the bohemian nightclub singer in *I Am a Camera*, John Van Druten's adaptation of Christopher Isherwood's novel *Goodbye to Berlin*, for which she won her first Tony in 1952, to Emily Dickinson in William Luce's *The Belle of Amherst*, for which she also won a Tony, it was always the same. It hardly seemed as if one actress could embody so many totally different people.

Julie appeared in over 30 Broadway shows and in countless stage performances throughout the world. In addition to *The Belle of Amherst*, the list includes *The Member of the Wedding*, *I Am a Camera*, *The Lark*, *Lucifer's Child*, *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*, *The Gin Game*, *The Country Wife*, *Mademoiselle Colombe*, *The Warm Peninsula*, *Skyscraper* (her first musical), *Forty Carats*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Little Moon of Alban*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*, to name a few.

Though she is best known for her work on the stage, her list of film and television performances spans over five decades. Her film credits include *East of Eden*, *Requiem for a*

## Julie and Mary at "The Evergreens"

We knew it wasn't a revenant because at mid-day there was much too much sunlight for such capers. Yet the figure coming across the way between the houses could have passed for an apparition, moving smartly, reddish hair (the color a tad darker than the sherry the guest leaves at the bottom of the glass), and smallish. She burst into the house, made herself known and hugged Mary. Old friends who had never met, meeting at long last, though there was no doubt that in some way they had met before. After some chat, Mary fetched out a scrap of manuscript and handed it to her. Unfazed, as if she had expected it all along, she struck a dramatic pose, and gave the words of the note an impromptu reading. No more than two lines, it was a note to Sue, support in a time of illness. The remaining minutes were pleasant enough but rather anti-climactic. The visit over, the two women kissed and the younger one, burnished hair a cloche to her red fox cape, dashed off the same way she had come.

George Monteiro, August 24, 2013

*Heavyweight*, *The Haunting*, *Harper*, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, *The Bell Jar*, and *Gorillas in the Mist*.

Her countless television appearances include classic dramas like *The Lark*, *A Doll's House*, *Ethan Frome* and *The Belle of Amherst*, along with a variety of popular dramas and a long running stint on the series *Knots Landing*, which she shot while recuperating from a mastectomy after a bout with breast cancer.

In 2001, while performing in Chicago, she suffered a stroke, which impeded her speech and limited her ability to perform. She did however "keep going" by appearing in a handful of films and small stage roles.

Married three times, she has one son, Peter Alston Gurian.

In 2003 she was invited to become the Honorary Chair of the the newly formed Emily Dickinson Museum. The family estate was re-united that year at the formal opening cel-

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ebriation at which she and Richard Wilbur did the honors.

In 2005 she was made a Kennedy honoree.

She was funny. She was one of the most generous people I have ever known. In interviews, as in life, she was extraordinarily humble, speaking of acting as “an imperfectible craft for which the effort at rendering a character, not the finished result or the applause, was not only the challenge, but the reward.” The work of an actor had the capacity to frighten her. “It’s wanting to do it right, that’s where the fear comes in,” she is quoted as having said in an interview after 30 years on the stage, “but who can say what’s right? We’re very delicate creatures, aren’t we?”

Julie loved to read. She loved biographies and was drawn to playing historical figures, among them Charlotte Bronte, Isak Dineson, Joan of Arc, Mary Todd Lincoln, Florence Nightingale, Queen Victoria, Nora Joyce (wife of James Joyce) and – of course – Emily Dickinson. The following widely known quote says it all: “I first fell in love with Emily Dickinson when I read her letters. It was like listening to someone’s heart.”

*The Belle of Amherst* by William Luce opened on Broadway in 1976 and was widely admired as a tour de force performance by Julie. It struck Walter Kerr of *The New York Times* as the pinnacle of her career.

“As I look back, I find *The Belle of Amherst* the most stimulating event of the season, and not only because I’ve long since been persuaded that Emily Dickinson is our finest poet,” Mr. Kerr wrote. “It may seem a form of magic to make her most casual lines live so intensely on stage. But for magic read craft. And for craft – painfully, stubbornly, at last stunningly acquired – read Julie Harris.”

William Luce described the genesis of *The Belle of Amherst* in a recent phone conversation by explaining that Julie was co-starring with Charles Nelson Reilly in the Broadway musical *Skyscraper*. She had accepted an invitation to do a reading of Dickinson poems

and letters at the New York Public Library after a matinee. She had Emily’s white dress with her. “When she invited Charles and the rest of the company to attend, Charles felt that he had to go, although he also felt that an afternoon of poetry was not his cup of tea. He went, thinking it was only the courteous thing to do and was overwhelmed. After the performance he ran backstage. ‘This is drama!’ he exclaimed. ‘These words are theatrical! They belong on the stage!’ Suddenly he had something wonderful to direct.”

Then a hopeful playwright came into the picture. It was William Luce, recommended to Charles by Bill’s friend Timothy Helgeson. Charles set up a luncheon at Universal where Julie was filming a pilot with Glenn Ford. “I arrived with two shopping books full of books about Dickinson,” Bill said, “and Julie had read them all.” Bill was already in ASCAP at that time, writing lyrics for Doris Day with his music collaborator. His move into theater was a natural step.

Julie’s input along with Charles’ was enormous and a play was born. *The Belle of Amherst* opened on Broadway on April 28, 1976 and ran for 116 performances.

Known throughout her career for taking plays on the road, in 2000, at the age of 74, Julie took *The Belle of Amherst* on its Silver Anniversary tour, crisscrossing the country for months, doing 8 performances a week. She confided in me that she had never been so tired in her life. But her enthusiasm remained strong. She was doing what she loved. I can still see her trundling down a darkened Seattle street, carrying several shopping bags, heading back to her hotel room after a performance.

Memories of our friendship fill my mind and heart: sitting at her kitchen table in Cape Cod, sharing coffee (she liked it lukewarm) along with the pastry she had gone out to get that morning while I was still asleep; quiet conversations about life, love, marriage and children, regrets and triumphs; talks about the theatre, her description of hearing the thunderous applause at the opening night curtain

call for *The Member of the Wedding*, a young girl in her first major Broadway play, how she was alarmed, mystified and how she sat on the edge of the tub in her tiny New York apartment that night trying to assimilate what had happened; the framed snapshot in my living room of the two of us after my performance in *The Belle of Amherst*; her grandmother’s brooch in my jewelry box and her Thanksgiving card that says simply, “I love you.”

The last time I saw her in *The Belle of Amherst* was in 2001 at the Helen Hayes Theater in Nyack, NY. I had seen the show many times. Julie was always radiant, magnificent, but this time as she entered with her teapot, Emily was there. It was chilling. I had never seen anything like it and haven’t to this day. It lasted throughout the entire evening. It was not merely a great performance. It was not a performance at all. I can only describe it by saying Emily was there. I wondered if Julie felt it.

When I went backstage after the performance, mute, in a state of shock, there was Julie, this small seventy-five-year-old woman, standing in her dressing room in her slip, eyes wide, stunned, looking into another world. It was as if she had seen a ghost. “Did you see?” she asked. I nodded, unable to speak.

“She was there.”

“Yes.”

“You saw!”

Later, standing outside the theatre that cold January night, alone in the light of a single street lamp, we embraced. “I’m so glad you were here tonight,” she said and for the longest time she didn’t let me go.

Julie Harris, the most decorated performer in the history of Broadway, passed away at her home in West Chatham, Massachusetts, on August 24, 2013. She was 87.

*Author and actor Barbara Dana is currently appearing as Emily Dickinson in William Luce’s The Belle of Amherst, in Canada and throughout the US.*

## Dorothy Oberhaus

By Polly Longworth

Dickinson scholar Dorothy Huff Oberhaus, a member of EDIS from its founding, died on September 5, 2013 after an illness of several months at her home in Bronxville, NY. A member of the faculty at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, Oberhaus taught courses in Dickinson from 1972 until shortly before her death, and this past spring of 2013 was honored by Mercy College with its Lifetime Achievement Award. As a teacher and writer, Dorothy's work on the poet focused primarily on the fascicles and on Dickinson's religious experience.

A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University, from which she emerged both a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Homecoming Queen, Dorothy began a career in journalism, turning only later to an academic path. Her graduate work in literature at Sarah Lawrence (M.A.) and at the City University of New York Graduate Center (Ph.D.) came to focus on the 19th century poet. Her 1980 dissertation, titled "The Religious Voice of Emily Dickinson," probed the poet's complex spiritual struggle, in which faith was constantly destabilized by death and doubt and uncertainties concerning immortality.

Dorothy was influenced by the work of Charles Anderson, Louis Martz, and Jack Capps in believing that Dickinson belonged within the tradition of Christian devotion, and more specifically within the meditative tradition of 17th century metaphysical poets. She argued that the poet's canon be read as a spiritual pilgrimage toward God's infinite Circumference. In time, Oberhaus built

upon her dissertation's content in a series of articles, among them "Engine against th' Almightye': Emily Dickinson and Prayer" (*ESQ* 32:3, 1986) and "Tender Pioneer': Emily Dickinson's Poems on the Life of Christ" (*American Literature*, Oct. 1987).

The appearance in 1981 of Ralph Franklin's *Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, and the subsequent theories it spawned concerning how and why Dickinson ordered her work, stimulated Oberhaus's intense interest in the fascicles, which became the focus of her book, *Emily Dickinson's Fascicles: Method and Meaning* (Penn State Press, 1995). Recognizing the poet's affinity for the work of George Herbert in particular, Oberhaus argued that the fascicles represent a skillfully woven, intricately riddled, story of a spiritual pilgrimage, a narrative that begins with the first poem of the first fascicle and continues in a unified telling to the fortieth, which concludes the mystical conversion and on which her book concentrates. The book has been influential for other students of Dickinson and was acclaimed "a major contribution to Dickinson scholarship" by Marta Werner, author of *Emily Dickinson's Open Folios*, in the *New England Quarterly* (1996:4).

My own relationship with Dorothy began as a correspondence, and continued through the great interest she and her husband Ed took in the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst. They were among the founding members of the Cupola Society, the Museum's top donor group, and they encouraged the enterprise



through its (to date) ten year history. Dorothy impressed those who knew her both by her sharp intelligence and her elegance. Her commentary was swift, inspiring, and often feisty. She knew the King James Bible cold, as Emily did, so that having Dorothy walk one through a Dickinson poem, opening up its dense, elliptical syntax and pointing out the subtle biblical allusions one had breezed right by, was always a delight.

Dorothy continued her analysis of all of Dickinson's fascicles during the fifteen years preceding her last illness, and leaves a nearly finished manuscript representing her culminating work on the poet. She leaves, too, a loving family in her husband, her daughter Ann Oberhaus Mackin, her son-in-law and two grandchildren, Tim, Kate and Sean, all of Chagrin Falls, OH. Dorothy's keen appraisals, her advocacy for reading and working with Dickinson's poems in their pre-edited state, and her monition to consider like poems in clusters, that "one alone proves nothing," will remain.

Edith Perry Wylder passed away on July 4, 2013, at 88 years old. She was perhaps best known for her 1964 study of Emily Dickinson's manuscripts, particularly her argument that the dashes were borrowed from elocutionists' notations: she argued in the *Saturday Review* in 1963 that "Dickinson had borrowed these symbols (the rising and falling slides, 'monotone' dashes and circumflexes) to create her own system of punctuation." Wylder last taught at Murray State University, in Murray, Kentucky, retiring in 1989.

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

## By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

### Brantley, Richard

*Emily Dickinson's Rich Conversation: Poetry, Philosophy, Science.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 272 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-230-34063-3, \$85.00.

Brantley's erudite, spirited study envisions Dickinson as the moderator of a seminar, in dialogue with both dead and living precursors and contemporaries – a select society including Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Carlyle, Tennyson, Emerson, as well as John Locke, John Wesley, Charles Wadsworth, and Darwin. Brantley tracks Dickinson's progressive thinking along an arc of intellectual, literary, and cultural history from Anglo-American Romanticism, evangelical idealism, and experiential faith; through sense-grounded reason, evolutionary biology, knowledge-based skepticism, tough realism, and empiricism; leading to pre- and post-Modern pessimism that foreshadows and influences current writers and their work. Dickinson's often oscillating stance may be compared to Keats's "Negative Capability: the condition of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason"; that is, remaining open to imagination and new thought. Although Dickinson's empirical voice co-existed with her "stubbornly persistent evangelical vernacular," Brantley argues that her empiricism, "her faith in experience, trumps her evangelical yearning." He concludes that in her aftermath poetry she balances pessimism with optimism, turns loss into gain, acquires wisdom, and entertains hope. He references 123 Dickinson poems from the Franklin edition and provides selected close readings. This volume emphasizing Dickinson's empirical voice is Brantley's sixth

in the Nineteenth Century Major Lives and Letters series. His fifth volume, *Experience and Faith: The Late-Romantic Imagination of Emily Dickinson* (reviewed in the fall 2005 *Bulletin*) favored her faith-based evangelical heritage. Engaging other Dickinson scholars, Brantley's well researched study includes 97 pages of three appendices, informative notes, works cited, and two indexes.

### Fuss, Diana

*Dying Modern: A Meditation on Elegy.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013. 150 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-8223-5389-8, \$21.95.

The consolatory elegy served mourners when mainstream culture believed in a "good" death, religious ritual, salvation, and faith in eternal life, but modern mourners are often beset by a culture of skepticism, even fatalism, where modern drugs, technology, and hospitals participate in a kind of cultural silencing. Fuss explores "the literary desire to make death speak in the face of its cultural silencing," concentrating on the past 200 years of American and British poetry and drawing from the work of Elizabeth Bishop, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Randall Jarrell, Philip Larkin, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sylvia Plath, Ezra Pound, Anne Sexton, Lydia Sigourney, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Richard Wilbur, William Carlos Williams, Richard Wright, and less familiar poets. She argues persuasively for the continued value of the consolatory elegy and examines "the ethical dimensions of the modern elegy." She names, organizes, and interprets "groups of poems that undertake the reclamation of loss in the modern period." Her book is divided into three sections, each representing a dif-

ferent voice in the poetry of modern death: the dying voice of last-word poems, including Dickinson's Fr591, 648, 838, 860, 946, and 1100; the reviving voice of the speaking corpse poems: Fr140, 239, 278, 344, 390, 437, 448, 479, 528, 605, 743, 817, 900, 1027, 1068, and 1784; and the surviving voice of the mourning lover's aubade poems. She concludes that elegies represent human concern for both the departed and the survivor. Her concise, insightful, meditative book includes an introduction, conclusion, notes, bibliography, and index.

### Graham, Gordon

*The Kuyper Center Review: Vol. Three: Calvinism and Culture.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. 184 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-8028-6876-3, \$26.00.

Graham explains, "Some religious traditions . . . have aesthetically rich resources on which to draw for the renewal of arts in everyday life, [but] Calvinism has generally been suspicious of the arts." Twelve scholars with backgrounds in theology, philosophy, psychology, history, and the fine arts consider new ways to think about Calvinism's relation to the arts. Many of these essays were presented at the 2011 conference of the the Abraham Kuyper Center for Theology and Public Life at Princeton Theological Seminary. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a Dutch prime minister and theologian, initiated the neo-Calvinism movement to awaken the church from its "pietistic slumber." Noting Calvinism's "aesthetic austerity," Graham says, Kuyper wanted "to uncover and give articulation to Calvinism's enduring relationship with the arts." These essays suggest that "neo-Calvinism espoused

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.  
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by Kuyper can and should make more of the arts than the traditional view of Reformed Christianity might be thought to allow.” In “The Calvinian Eucharistic Poetics of Emily Dickinson” (94-101), Jennifer Wang presents Dickinson’s J528, 579, 342, and 130, discussing “the tension between the frequent use of Calvinist language . . . and the recurring theme of exclusion from Communion in Dickinson’s poetry,” asserting that she “attempted to find a surrogate for the Lord’s Table in and through her poetry.” Wang suggests, “Considering her doubts about the fulfillment of the sacramental promise in her contemporaries’ actual practice of Communion, and her displacement of true eucharistic participation for herself onto nature . . . Dickinson adopted a kind of inverted Calvinism.”

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**Healey, John J.**

***Emily & Herman: A Literary Romance.*** New York: Arcade / Skyhorse Publishing, 2013. 238 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-61145-830-5, \$21.95.

When Healey’s grandfather, an Amherst College professor emeritus of English literature, died in 2011, he bequeathed his Lenox, Massachusetts, home to Healey, who found stored in the garage the manuscript of this novel, set in 1851, author unknown. The author imagines a fictional journey that starts in Amherst, bringing together Austin and Emily Dickinson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, all traveling to Boston and New York, where they meet Walt Whitman and a runaway slave. We witness a spirited 20-year old Dickinson drinking champagne and visiting an oyster bar in Manhattan. Candid philosophical discussions throughout the journey focus on the nature of God, love, romance, memory, sanity, slavery, and social, sexual, and cultural mores. Readers learn of the intimate domestic lives of the protagonists, but this is primarily the story of Melville’s fascination with Emily Dickinson, “the rarest creature he had ever encountered,” and her response. Although Melville loves his wife, pregnant with their second child, he admires Dickinson’s mind and her passion for

literature, finding her mixture of wit, spunk, self-confidence, and insecurity irresistible. Their brief but passionate romance during the journey is followed by a series of 15 letters and a secret rendezvous at a remote cabin near Amherst. In the novel’s 1965 prologue, Healey’s grandfather, referring to Dickinson’s Master Letters, writes, “the conceit of this novel, entirely fictitious, is that the ‘master’ was Herman Melville.” Well researched, sensitive, and salacious, this novel will both inform and entertain adults willing to enter this decidedly frank Victorian world of romantic fantasy.

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**MacColl, Michala**

***Nobody’s Secret.*** San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2013. 241 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-4521-0860-5, \$16.99.

Inspired by Emily Dickinson, MacColl’s young adult novel immediately engages readers with the image of 15-year-old Dickinson lying in a meadow of wildflowers, hoping that a bee will land on her nose. She is jolted from her musing when a handsome young man approaches and lightheartedly says, “A young lady lying hidden among the wildflowers . . . How unexpected.” Although he will not identify himself, saying that he’s nobody important, their conversation becomes merrily flirtatious. He pulls a fresh honeycomb from his pocket and dabs a bit of honey on Dickinson’s nose, to help her attract bees. Two days later a shabbily dressed “Mr. Nobody” is found dead, floating in the Dickinson pond. This shocking discovery is the catalyst for Dickinson to take on a Nancy Drew-like role, interacting with various Amherst residents, collecting clues, enlisting sister Lavinia’s help in an unwavering effort to identify Mr. Nobody and find out why he died. Each chapter begins with an appropriate Dickinson quotation, and throughout the book MacColl gracefully integrates references to Dickinson’s family life on North Pleasant Street and the nineteenth-century life of Amherst. Included is an author’s note explaining the fiction and non-fiction elements of her story, a page of “further reading,” and a copy of “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” Anyone

who has read the poem will have a new way to think about it after reading MacColl’s well-plotted book, the first in her anticipated series that “imagines great literary figures as teenage crime solvers.”

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**McTier, Rosemary Scanlon**

***"An Insect View of Its Plain": Insects, Nature and God in Thoreau, Dickinson and Muir.*** Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishers, 2013. 202 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-7864-6493-7, \$55.00.

McTier discusses nineteenth-century attitudes about insects and nature, then devotes one chapter each to Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and John Muir, showing how they viewed and represented insects in their work and how insects played a significant role in their thinking about nature and God. In Thoreau’s essay, “The Natural History of Massachusetts,” he says, “Nature will bear the closest inspection; she inspires us to lay our eye level with the smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain.” These three writers share that microscopic awareness of life and give voice to the nonhuman voices in nature. McTier says that “taking ‘an insect view’ encouraged each of these writers to appreciate the evidence of divine order and love written in the book of nature and to understand that even the smallest ‘particles’ of creation are significant and important in the eyes of God.” In “‘A Minor Nation’: Emily Dickinson and the Insects’ Society” (104-144), McTier focuses on insect imagery in Dickinson’s poems and letters. She says, “Dickinson’s understanding of the ecological significance of insects enhances her belief in a divinely ordered creation in which every organism matters, no matter how small or insignificant it may appear to be”; she then discusses Dickinson’s interest in metamorphosis, in which the poet sees “the possibility of change and transformation, of renewal and resurrection . . . a reaffirmation of her faith in God.” Ecocriticism and cultural entomology inform McTier’s interesting, well researched book, including chapter notes, works cited and an index.



# NEW PUBLICATIONS

## Book Reviews

Socarides, Alexandra

*Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 211 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-19-985808-8, \$49.95.

Reviewed by *Ellen Louise Hart*

A poetics guided by paper” – this is the focus of *Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics*, Alexandra Socarides’s important contribution to manuscript scholarship – and to the study of the lyric, particularly in the context of the material culture of poetry by women in the nineteenth century. Through close examination of the writing papers – stationery, scraps, household detritus – Socarides returns readers to “scenes of composition.”

The scope of this book, based on extensive archival work, is far-reaching, and includes Dickinson’s fascicles and sets; letters in her correspondences; late drafts and manuscript fragments. The book’s central premise is that “Dickinson was developing both poems and a theory of poetry to which the methods of composition and the materials taken up in the act of composition are integral” (4). “This book reveals how Dickinson was actively appropriating and questioning the conventions of a wide array of poetic genres that were available to her – sequences, elegies, narratives, lyrics, and fragments, in particular – as well as pressing on the boundary between poetry and prose” (13).

Socarides’s discussion of “the bind of reading manuscripts as if they are lyrics” builds on *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading*, in which Virginia Jackson maintains that “the reading of the lyric produces a theory of the lyric that then produces a reading of the lyric” (Jackson 10). In *Dickinson’s Misery*, Jackson concludes that the result for readers is lost opportunity for encountering work that, in Socarides’s terms, “emphasizes the material object itself” (132). *Dickinson Unbound* works to restore that opportunity.

Chapter 1, “Dickinson’s Sheets,” focuses on the “individual folded fascicle sheet,” a piece

of stationery, folded by the manufacturer to form four sides, four writing surfaces, which became the “primary unit of construction” Dickinson used to make the fascicles. The argument here is that “stacking sheets allowed one to do and undo, organize and reorganize,” and “because Dickinson stacked her sheets instead of inserting them into each other, she did not necessarily have the unit of the book in mind” (34). In this way a poem in the fascicles resists “the static lyric moment” and narrative reading (36). Reading against the theory of the fascicle as a sequence, Socarides claims that Dickinson did not conceive of the fascicles as books with one poem connecting to the next from start to finish. Instead, the central relationship among the fascicle poems is among the three or four poems – the number varies – on a single sheet.

Chapter 2, “Epistolary Practices and the Problem of Genre,” investigates the relationship between verse and epistolary prose, with the central text, “As if I asked a common alms,” sent to Thomas Higginson, with a version in a fascicle. Here Socarides stresses that Dickinson was not concerned with the generic issue that concerned later readers, but wanted to “think through an instability that is built into both modes” (51). Socarides discusses “the private and public ways” her lines circulated in the correspondences and fascicles, concluding that “Dickinson’s act of literal, material recontextualization magnifies the possibilities inherent in both letters and poems” (54).

Chapter 3 returns to “Sewing the Fascicles.” Subtitled “Elegy, Consolation, and the Poetics of Interruption,” it addresses poems on death, and explores Dickinson’s contribution to the development of the elegy. Dickinson “challenges the promise of consolation that the elegy aims to conjure, a consolation that depends precisely on the formal conventions of closure that the stop-again, start-again nature of the fascicles makes impossible” (80). That Dickinson’s “relationship to the genre of the elegy has been obscured by treatments of her individual poems that do not take their fascicle context into account” (80) leads Socarides to advocate for “reading across the fascicle sheets.” These are sheets “both connected to

and broken from each other” where Dickinson “multiplies and magnifies the problem of consolation for poetic renderings of loss and mourning” (99).

Chapter 4, “Dickinson’s ‘Sets’ and the Rejection of Sequence,” points out that the “Sets” are editorially constructed: Ralph Franklin “grouped” them, in his words, “by similarity of paper and date” (*The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, xi). Socarides’s interest is in the integrity of the “loose” – that is, unbound – sheet, and whereas Franklin describes the sheets as “copied as if for inclusion” in fascicles, Socarides believes they were meant to stand alone: “The move from copying poems onto sheets that are sewn to copying poems onto those that are not can be read as a reflection on the limitations of the relations that the fascicles had set in motion” (118).

Chapter 5, “Methods of Unmaking: Dickinson’s Late Drafts, Scraps, and Fragments,” tells “a story about how an evolving compositional process, her developing struggle with her poems’ endings, and some very real pieces of domestic material culture come together” (159). This discussion suggests that utilizing household materials for writing, such as an advertising flyer or the verso of a coconut cake recipe, “supports and intensifies struggles with endings by creating more opportunity for interruption, digression, and rethinking” (159). The chapter concludes that during this period, “more so than at any other stage,” Dickinson “rejected the book as a source of containment, comprehensibility, and authority, navigating new relationships to issues of order, wholeness, [and] finality” (166).

Overall, this study enriches the debates in Dickinson scholarship, and continues them. Here are some questions to consider:

How much can we actually know about the process of each poem’s composition? The Johnson and Franklin dates for manuscripts that the poet left undated are based on handwriting and stationery. This uncertainty makes the order of versions indeterminable. Socarides qualifies her timeline when she notes that she is “reading” the order of the copying of

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lines sent to Susan which later became parts of longer poems (114), while elsewhere her representation of a “scene of composition” seems less interpretive than definitive, as in the statement, “Poems before [the late] period did not get copied on recipes, advertising flyers, and abandoned wrappers” (160). We cannot know what kinds of drafts might have been discarded. Describing and ordering the stages of drafting, revising, and copying ultimately involves speculation.

Finally, is the method of fascicle reading presented here – reading within sheets and across sheets – best understood as an innovative reading strategy, one choice among many choices that have been presented by Dickinson critics over the years? “What we can say is that Dickinson intended to make clusters of poems and she intended to place these clusters in relation to each other,” Socarides asserts (104). Are the themes, patterns, and associations that emerge from perceived relations among fascicle poems the result of a reader’s desire for series, sequence, narrative? Socarides points out that “reading with an awareness of the individual sheets” is “an experience that is almost impossible to recreate, as even Franklin’s facsimile edition blurs these lines” (80). Yet determining which poems appear on each sheet is possible using the manuscript number assigned by the library archive, which Franklin provides. So readers can test the approach to fascicle reading presented here and have the pleasure of seeing for themselves.

When Socarides writes that she “aims to broaden how we think about the relationship between manuscripts, print, and interpretive practices,” this engaging and provocative study certainly meets that aim.

**Ellen Louise Hart**, retired from the University of California, Santa Cruz, teaches at Portland State University and Portland Community College in Oregon. She writes on prosody and the visual line in Dickinson’s manuscript poems and letters, and is a contributing editor to the Dickinson Electronic Archives.

**Bakker, Gerbrand.** *Ten White Geese: A Novel.*

2010; Reprint, Penguin Books, 2013. 240 pp. Paper, ISBN 978-0-14-312267-8, \$15.00

**Messud, Claire.** *The Woman Upstairs.*

Knopf, 2013. 272pp. Cloth 978-0-307-59690-1, \$25.95.

*Reviewed by Stephanie Tingley*

In a recent “Best Books” feature for *The Week* magazine, historian and biographer Brenda Wineapple says of Emily Dickinson, “She’s a poet of small spaces and inner drama; you can follow her anywhere and learn of feelings you never before could articulate, or knew you knew.” The powerful connection between Dickinson’s poetry and readers’ emotional lives fuels and inspires the female protagonists of two recent novels: Gerbrand Bakker’s 2010 international bestseller *Ten White Geese* (translated from the Dutch by David Colmer) and Claire Messud’s 2013 bestseller *The Woman Upstairs*.

Bakker’s heroine, who remains unnamed until near the end of the story but has taken on the name Emilie during her self-imposed Welsh exile, meditates on Dickinson’s poems about nature and death, while Messud’s Nora (named, perhaps, after Ibsen’s frustrated housewife in *A Doll’s House*) connects with the fiery artistry, outsider status, and volcanic talent (Vesuvius at Home) of her favorite poet.

The novels are starkly different in tone. Bakker’s brief, bleak mystery is about a middle-aged Dickinson scholar who loses her job, abandons her thesis work, “which was supposed to be about the plethora of lesser poems and Dickinson’s all-too-eager canonization,” leaves her spouse, disappears from her home in Amsterdam, and lives in stark isolation on a sheep farm in Wales during the damp and dark autumn and winter months. The epigraph for the novel is Dickinson’s meditation on death that begins “Ample make this bed,” a poem that sets the meditative tone for this enigmatic

and sparsely written story. As she settles into her new life and develops a complex relationship with the young son of her landlord, we discover that Emilie is terminally ill and getting weaker. Her husband has no idea where she has gone. The only book on her bedside table is Dickinson’s *Collected Poems*. She recalls that “she’d had this book for more than a decade...and now noticed for the first time how short the section titled LOVE was and how long the last, TIME AND ETERNITY. She started to cry.” She often connects her own emotional weather with both the desolate Welsh landscape and Dickinson’s nature poetry. Emilie sees in one scene fraught with symbolic significance that “[t]he sun was already low” and recalls the poem “Presentiment is that long shadow on the lawn.” She notes that “Dickinson had seen what she saw now. . . . She had left everything behind, everything except the poems. They would have to see her through.”

In contrast, the dominant tone of Messud’s *The Woman Upstairs* is one of defiance, suppressed anger, and thwarted artistic hopes and dreams. The novel’s title echoes that of Gilbert and Gubar’s landmark feminist study *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Nora, a forty-two-year-old single elementary school teacher and aspiring artist, describes herself as a “good girl,” devoted daughter, and exemplary teacher, and asks in the novel’s startling opening line, “How angry am I? You don’t want to know. Nobody wants to know about that.” Later in the opening chapter she complains that women like her are invisible. She explains: “We’re the quiet woman at the end of the third-floor hallway, whose trash is always tidy, who smiles brightly in the stairwell with a cheerful greeting, and who, from behind closed doors, never makes a sound.” She describes her life of “quiet desperation.” She shows readers how she dwells on the edges of other people’s richer lives and experiences, and complains bitterly about the fact that she has given up her dreams of becoming a “Great Artist.” She identifies both with Dickinson’s solitude and her fiery creative ambition.

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As the story unfolds, Nora develops a complex friendship and rivalry – even falls in love with – the entire Shahid family: her student Reza and both of his parents – his mother, the exotic and successful Italian artist Sirena and his father Skandar. Her passionate and mercurial emotional attachment to the family rekindles her artistic ambitions. For a short time she shares a studio with Sirena, who creates room-filling avant-garde art installations (her current work has an Alice in Wonderland theme), while Nora toils over a series of miniature boxes (like doll houses?) designed to recreate, down to the last detail, the artistic/living spaces of some of her female hero writers: Virginia Woolf, Alice Neel, Edie Sedgwick, and Emily Dickinson. She describes her Dickinson diorama, the first in the series, this way:

That fall I was making a tiny replica of Emily Dickinson's Amherst bedroom, about the size of a boot box, each floorboard in place, the recreation of her furnishing exact and to scale. Once I'd made the room, and made her, as perfectly as I could, . . . my aim was to set up circuitry so that my Emily Dickinson might be visited . . . by floating illuminations – the angelic Muse, her beloved Death, and of course my tiny gilded mascot, Joy herself.

As the novel ends Nora again finds herself alone, betrayed by the Shahid family in the most intimate ways. What has changed, though, is her attitude and perspective on her own life and experience. She has come to see her anger as an asset rather than a liability.

She taps into the fury and announces: "I'm done staying quietly upstairs." She vows to let her anger fuel her art.

Although very different in tone and style, both novels draw on Emily Dickinson's life and poetry for much of their power and symbolic resonance. Those who read and study Dickinson will appreciate how both Bakker and Messud tap into the poet's range of themes and emotions – fiery ambition, passion, solitude, loss, despair joy – as they explore two female characters "at the White Heat."

*Stephanie Tingley is Professor of English at Youngstown State University.*

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## The Muse, in Action

By Chelsea Apple

Possibility is flavorless," croons Noortje Korst, quoting Emily Dickinson's poem "Impossibility, like Wine," but there is nothing flavorless about Korst and the group muse conNAction's newest album, "By the Oceans Passed."

The album takes seventeen of Dickinson's poems, including "Water is Taught by Thirst," "Pain – has an Element of Blank," and "The Soul Selects her Own Society," and sets them to an unusual and plaintive coalescence of soft jazz and haunting instrumentals.

Piano and viola take us where we might expect to go in an arrangement of Dickinson poems set to music, creating a pastoral atmosphere that is both soothing and melancholy. Yet the melodies are underwritten by percussive base, and split by clarion blasts of jazz trumpet that sweep us from bucolic brooding straight to the silver-hued streets of film noir. The effect is lonely, wistfully nostalgic, and altogether persuasive.

Then there is Korst's smoky soprano, wandering through the music with purpose but seemingly without plan, spontaneous yet harmonic. If the group repeats the poem within the song, they change the melody line-by-line, allowing the piece to grow and build free from the predictable repetitions of conventional music.

Korst's voice invites us to wander with her, and because she avoids almost all conventional melodic repetition, the experience is surprising and enjoyable to listen to as we move through each piece – though very difficult to sing along with, even after repeated plays.

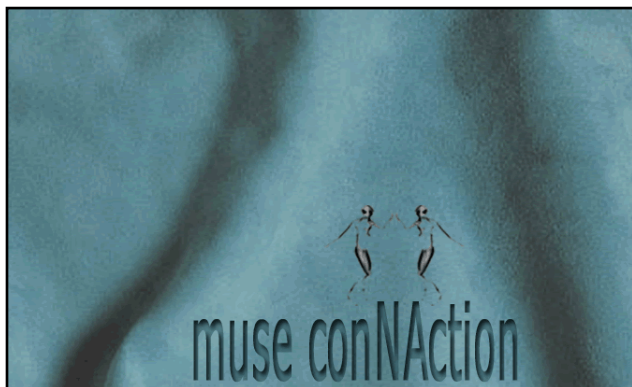
Muse conNAction is a musical duo comprised of vocalist Korst, and pianist and composer Annemiek van de Geijnan. For *By the Oceans Passed*, they were joined by celebrated jazz musician Hein VandeGeyn, in dual roles as bassist and producer. They were also joined by Marieke de Bruijn on viola, and Angelo Verploegen on trumpet. Van de Geijnand ar-

ranged the music and played piano, and Korst designed the album's clean and tactile artwork.

The duo has previously released several CD's of musical homages to famed Dutch poets like Gerrit Kouwenar and Ida Gerhardt. Korst, who studied Dutch literature and drama, and van de Geijnand, who studied music and expresses strong interest in its connections with poetry, have been musically experimenting with Dutch poetry for about fifteen years. Their newest album, and its muse, provides rich new artistic ground.

If the Dickinson songs sound improvisational, it's because they are. While taking a break from a larger project (a triple-CD featuring the work of Ida Gerhardt), the group began "playing" with Dickinson's poetry as a means of creative rejuvenation. "When we work with new material, we start on a base of improvisation. From the results of these first impressions, slowly a new song 'grows,'" writes van de Geijnand.

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The group selected poems solely on the criteria of instinctive enjoyment, began “to dig for musical layers,” and slowly created the arrangements.

The result is at once playful and cohesive; it seems entirely possible that muse conNAction may be improvising throughout, save for the harmonic unity among the five instru-

ments that speaks of deliberate rehearsal.

The songs – all of them short, the shortest a minute long – function almost as musical vignettes (a nod to their experimental birth), meandering through an interplay of styling, often trailing off like half-remembered thoughts.

Yet Korst pays careful reverence to Dickinson’s lines, the vocalist making the poet’s thoughts her own as she ranges from high sustained notes to dreamy half-whispers. The result captures the intimacy of Emily Dickinson’s internal monologue while interpreting it in a new medium.

For the most part, it works: the group’s version of the poem “Pain – has an Element of Blank” arrests the listener with Korst’s shivery note on

“pain” set against piano and mournful trumpet, capturing Dickinson’s sense of isolation and even her despair.

Some of the interpretations are a little more counterintuitive. For instance, the song “We Must an Anguish Pay” (“For each ecstatic instant” Fr109) has a warm, pleasant melody, not quite what you would anticipate for a piece characterized by lines like “Sharp pittances of Years - / Bitter contested farthings - / And Coffers heaped with Tears!” The song “Soar Away and Never Sigh” (“The Butterfly upon the Sky” Fr1559) is downright cheerful by its third refrain on grief.

But therein lies the beauty of reinterpretation, and if “enchantment makes ingredient,” then there is much beauty and enchantment to be found here.

*Chelsea Apple is an essayist and freelance journalist living in Nashville, Tennessee.*

## Save the Dates

*The Emily Dickinson International Society will hold its annual meeting on August 8 to 10, 2014, in Amherst, MA. The program on the theme of “Emily Dickinson and New England Writers” will be co-sponsored by the Emily Dickinson Museum. On behalf of EDIS, Elizabeth Petrino and Alexandra Socarides will host an Institute on the theme. (See CFP at right.) For attendees who are not participants in the Institute, there will be discussion workshops on Dickinson poems and short writings by other New England writers as well as exhibitions at the Frost and Jones libraries. Karen Kilcup, Jane Wald, and Paul Crumbley will be featured speakers during the weekend. EDIS’s annual Members’ Meeting will take place on August 9. More information about the program and registration will be available on the website by March 1, 2014.*

## Call for Papers: Dickinson Institute

*On Friday, August 8th, 2014, the EDIS “Dickinson Institute” will be held in Amherst, Massachusetts. The topic is “Emily Dickinson and New England Writers.” Individuals doing work on Dickinson’s relationship to other writers of her region should send 250-word abstracts of a paper to Elizabeth Petrino (EPetrino@fairfield.edu) and Alexandra Socarides (socaridesa@missouri.edu) by January 15, 2014. Accepted participants will be notified by Feb. 15th and will be asked to circulate completed, conference-length (8-10 page) papers to a small group by June 15th. Members will meet at the Institute with this group to discuss their work in detail. The Institute will also involve a plenary speaker and a gathering of all Institute members at its close to reflect on their work and the larger themes of the conference. The Institute is scheduled for the first day of the Emily Dickinson Annual Meeting, which all participants are welcome to attend.*

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## Update of EDIS Chapter Groups and Local Emily Dickinson Activities

By Nancy List Pridgen

Nancy List Pridgen and Lois Kackley, co-chairs of the EDIS Chapter Group Committee, have asked Eleanor Heginbotham to join the Chapter Group Committee and look forward to receiving the benefit of her vast expertise on establishment and maintenance of local Emily Dickinson groups over the years.

Massachusetts still has the greatest number of Emily Dickinson groups. The EDIS Amherst Chapter Group, established by Kackley, meets twice a month, year around. The Dickinson discussion group of the Emily Dickinson Museum meets each month September to May. Margaret Freeman's Dickinson discussion group meets monthly September to May in Heath. This year they met in June to make up meetings missed due to inclement weather.

In Texas, Pridgen's EDIS San Antonio Chapter Group has been meeting once a month for an hour and a half. Although a relatively small group, this chapter group now has five members that belong to the Emily Dickinson International Society. Because members come from a wide geographic area and often are involved in grandchildren's activities on Saturdays, most members' attendance is sporadic. The group discusses a set of poems that have a connection. The connection may be structural, such as definition poems or poems using scientific or legal or religious language; or thematic, like "paradise" or "love"; or topical, like birds or sunsets. Discussion is lively and often concludes with members holding different opinions about all or part of a poem.

The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan was founded in 1980 with Toshigazu Niikura as its first president, and began issuing an annual newsletter. Soon after that the society also began having annual meetings. This year it had the 28th Annual Meeting (one was missed in 2007 because of the EDIS International Conference in Kyoto). It was held in Tokyo with a special lecture by Japanese poet Kiwao No-

mura, a presentation of a paper by the current president Naoki Onishi, and a workshop on poem Fr181 with the panelists Takaomi Eda, Junko Kanazawa, and Mari Kurata.

Ellen Beinhorn's health has caused her to move away from the groups she had started in North Carolina and South Carolina. She has relocated to Falcon's Landing in Great Falls, Virginia, where she is receiving the care she needs after a heart attack. She has assured me that she is on a healthy path at this moment and that she will be happily teaching a course on Lady Emily for the Osher program out of George Mason College in Fairfax Virginia. Beinhorn has contributed a great deal to local chapters in the past few years and deserves high commendation for her work. She also produced a book of her portraits inspired by Dickinson's poems, *Emily & Me: Poems by Emily Dickinson with Faces by Ellen Beinhorn* (published by Dancingfish Press, Valle Crucis, North Carolina, USA in 2008). She presented these portraits at the 20th anniversary EDIS annual meeting in Amherst in 2008. If you would like to send an email wishing Ellen good wishes, her address is [ellen.beinhorn@gmail.com](mailto:ellen.beinhorn@gmail.com).

At EDIS in Cleveland in 2012, Pridgen met Dr. David Jamieson of Claremont, California, who has been sponsoring an Emily Dickinson Group for quite some time. Dr. Jamieson's group meets once a month for an hour and a half and has six to twelve participants. They discuss anywhere from three to a dozen poems relating to the same theme. They veer away from discussion of Dickinson's biography as it might relate to the poems, concentrating on how the poem affects them emotionally and intellectually, before moving on to what the poem might mean. They avoid settling on one right meaning. They are moving toward understanding specific poetic principles as well as specific techniques often used by Dickinson. Jamieson allows that sometimes looking at letters and poems written at a particular time can lead them toward biography.

Nelly Lambert, with the support of Eleanor Heginbotham and Judith Farr, has been active in establishing a new EDIS Chapter Group in the Washington, DC area. This is actually a rebirth of an earlier group from the 1980s. The new group has met in some of Washington's most beautiful public buildings. In September, for example, the group (representing professions ranging from acting and curating museums to clinical psychology and government service) gathered in The Textile Museum to share Dickinson's many sewing and fabric motifs, along with their own journeys in reading the spider who sewed at night.

Past meetings, too, have been set in buildings that would have delighted the poet: its initial meeting, with an emphasis on "Dickinson and the East," was in the Freer Gallery, home of Eastern art and Singer Sargent paintings. Another took place in the library of the East Wing of the National Gallery with its view of kite-runners on the mall. Next they will use the ornate rooms of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. With its major universities, colleges, libraries, museums, and readers (200,000 for the National Book Festival), Washington promises to be an optimal spot for the new EDIS chapter.

Several other special events were held throughout the past year. Three members participated in local Big Read activities. Both Jed Deppman and Jonnie Guerra presented lectures at the Frankfort, Indiana, Big Read Celebration of Emily Dickinson, held in March 2013. Barbara Dana participated for a week in Sonoma County California's Big Read Celebration of Emily Dickinson in March 2013.

Dana also appeared for two weeks in *The Belle of Amherst* in Cape May, New Jersey. Dana visited ten schools doing programs as Emily Dickinson. She appeared as Dickinson on several radio interviews and in two bookstores; gave talks and readings from her novel *A Voice of Her Own: Becoming Emily Dickinson*,

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and shared Dickinson poems at a benefit for Ridgefield Library, in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

Cristanne Miller helped sponsor a Community Marathon Reading in Buffalo in April. At this reading, Kate Allen provided a table of children's books on Dickinson and art supplies for illustrating poems. Around 200 people attended the marathon.

On September 15, 2012, in New York City, Aife Murray presented "An Emily Dickinson Sense-Surround," exploring what Dickinson saw, smelled, tasted, touched and heard while creating poetry. This event was presented to an audience of about 50 and was co-sponsored by EDIS. Other Dickinson-related events given in 2012-13 by Murray include a Tenement Talk at the Lower Eastside Tenement Museum in New York City on September 18, 2012; as well as presentations in Martha Ackmann's class *Emily Dickinson in Her Times*, which met at the Homestead in September 2012; at

18 Reason's Food-Lit Book Club in San Francisco, California, on November 11, 2012; in Gloria Frym's graduate class at California College of Arts February 22, 2013; and in Dodie Bellamy's MFA class at San Francisco State on September 30, 2013.

Barbara Mossberg presented lectures and readings on Dickinson in her capacity as Poet in Residence for the City of Pacific Grove, California. In December 2012, she led a group of fifty high school students in celebration of Emily Dickinson's birthday, in a Flash Mob, doing "I'm Nobody on Cannery Row and at Pacific Grove High School." Mossberg made gingerbread cake for 100, and the students distributed candles to passersby and sang.

Mossberg also gave a performance of Emily Dickinson's life from her play on Dickinson at the Cherry Theater in Carmel. For this occasion, she served gingerbread and sherry. In addition, she gave two lectures at Pacific Grove

Library, one for Dickinson's birthday, and one for spring, featuring "Dear March Come In!"

Two chapter groups will have the honor of leading workshops at the 2014 meeting in Amherst. The annual meeting's theme will be "Emily Dickinson and New England Writers." Nancy and Bill Pridgen from EDIS San Antonio will lead a workshop on "Dickinson and Thoreau," and Lois Kackley and Greg Mattingly of the Amherst group will lead a workshop on Dickinson and another New England writer, to be announced. Additionally, the Amherst group will be filling the seats at the registration table for the 2014 annual meeting.

For information about how to start a chapter group, contact Nancy List Pridgen at [npridgen@satx.rr.com](mailto:npridgen@satx.rr.com) or Lois Kackley at [lobobolink@mac.com](mailto:lobobolink@mac.com). See "Steps for Starting a Chapter Group," under "Chapter Groups" on the EDIS website at <http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org/>.

## EDIS Membership Form

Membership in the Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS) enables you to participate in the Society's meetings and conferences, to receive both of the Society's publications (the *Bulletin* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*), and to help foster the goals of the Society.

Name, title & affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
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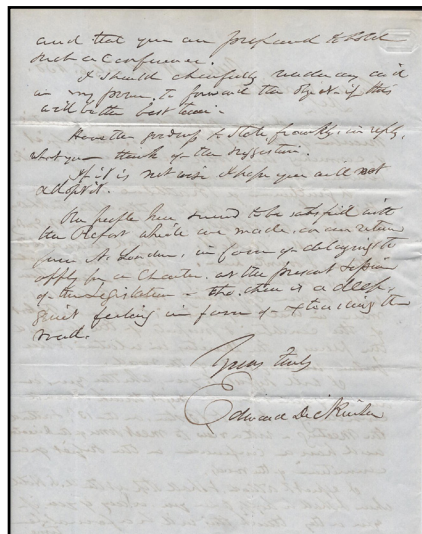
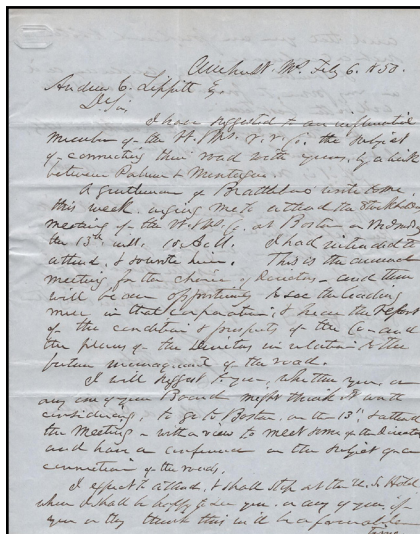
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# Another Edward Dickinson Letter Found

By Krans Bloemaand



Envelope  
 Andrew C. Lippitt Esq  
 New London  
 Conn.

page 1  
 Amherst, Ms. Feby 6. 1850.

Andrew C. Lippitt Esq.

D. Sir:

I have suggested to an influential member of the Vt. & Ms. r. Co. the subject of connecting their road with yours, by a link between Palmer & Montague.

A gentleman of Brattleboro wrote to me, this week, urging me to attend the stockholders meeting of the Vt. & Ms. Co. at Boston on Wednesday the 13th, inst., 10 A. M. I had intended to attend, & so wrote him. This is the annual meeting for the choice of Directors - and there will be an opportunity to see the leading men in that corporation, & hear the report of the condition & prospects of the Co. and the plans of the Directors in relation to the future management of the road.

I will suggest to you, whether you, or any one of your Board might think it worth considering, to go to Boston, on the 13th, & attend the meeting - with a view to meet some of the Directors and have a conference on the subject of a connection of the roads.

I expect to attend, & shall stop at the U. S. Hotel where I shall be happy to see you, or any of you, if you or they think this will be a favorable time,

page 2  
 and that you are prepared to hold such a conference.

I should cheerfully render any aid in my power to forward the object - if this will be the best time.

Have the goodness to state frankly, in reply, what you think of the suggestion.

If it is not wise I hope you will not adopt it.

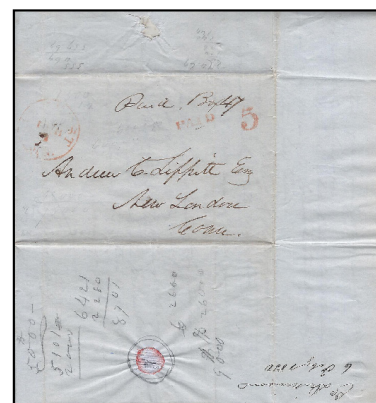
The people here seemed to be satisfied with the Report which we made, on our return from N. London, in favor of delaying to apply for a charter at the present session of the Legislature--tho there is a deep, quiet feeling in favor of extending the road.

Yours truly  
 Edward Dickinson

Among Emily Dickinson collectors, acquiring a letter written by a Dickinson family member is comparable to opening a celebratory bottle of fine Champagne.<sup>1</sup> In this instance, a letter written by Edward Dickinson in 1850 to the Mayor of New London, CT, Andrew C. Lippitt, appeared on eBay from a trusted seller with whom I had dealt previously. The opportunity to own this letter was enhanced by the seller's inability to accurately determine exactly who wrote the letter. In this case, it was described as having been written by a Mr. "Dickerman." A careful examination of an Edward Dickinson letter to Austin Dickinson in facsimile that appeared in Millicent Todd Bingham's book *Emily Dickinson's Home*, confirmed that the handwriting in the Lippitt letter was indeed Edward's. I knew then that I had to have it. Andrew C. Lippitt was an Amherst College graduate, lawyer and an active promoter of railroads.

<sup>1</sup>See Dan Lombardo's "Edward Dickinson and the Amherst and Belchertown Railroad: A Lost Letter," in *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. XII, No. 1, January 1984, pp 36-43. The letter resides in the Jones Library's Dickinson collection.

*Krans Bloemaand's article about his collection of Dickinsonia appeared in the Fall 2012 edition of the Bulletin.*



Top left and right, the text of the letter. Above, envelope, address side. Left, transcription courteously provided by Vivian Pollak.



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