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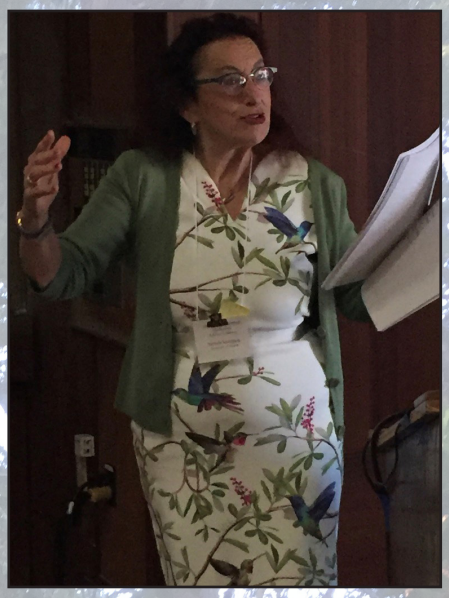
"The Only News I know / Is Bulletins all Day / From Immortality."



Of one Corolla is the West

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In This Issue

Front Cover: The title of the international conference, "'To another Sea': Dickinson, Environment, and the West," brings to mind the many poems referring to the West, including the line from Fr1261.

Back Cover: A selection of artist Robert McCormick's watercolors appears on pages 18-19 of the issue. The image on the back cover is in acrylics. It's title is This Consciousness, *from Fr817.*

Special thanks are due to LeeAnn Gorthey for her always excellent photographs, as marked. Thanks, too, to Barbara Mossberg, for providing images from the Saturday morning visit to the sea (on the front cover) as well as the cover photograph of herself adorned with hummingbirds. EDIS is grateful to Barbara for her work in organizing the remarkable conference.

"To another Sea": Dickinson, Environment, and the West
Asilomar 2019

Ocean, mountains, forests, brooks – Emily Dickinson never visited the west, any more than she visited the sea, but EDIS members who gathered last August at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, west of Monterey, California, found that the poet knew the place as if the checks were given. The tree-surrounded cabins of Asilomar, designed to harmonize with Julia Morgan's original design of the central buildings, were within earshot of the surf, and a few intrepid Dickinsonians even braved the waves to kayak among the sea otters, as swift as eels and as charismatic as household dogs.

On the opening evening, President Barbara Mossberg welcomed participants to Dickinson's "inner wild," a place she called "turbulent and chaotic and shimmering"; and she introduced the first keynote speaker, Sandra Gilbert. (Summaries of the keynotes appear on pages 5-7 of this issue.) President Mossberg's own initial comments, entitled "This Tremendous Scene – This Whole Experiment of Green," came the following morning, when she presented reflections on Dickinson and the wild that prepared for the next days' papers. Beginning with "A little madness / in the Spring" (Fr1356), and conjoining it with "Nobody knows this little rose" (Fr11), she explored the topic of Dickinson and the unfamiliar, the foreign, weaving her own experiences as an internationally travelled Dickinson ambassador/scholar into her observations about how Dickinson can connect people from different places and express one's interior mysteries. She closed her presentation in a different key, by singing "You are my sunshine."

Friday morning and afternoon were taken up with panel presentations (see pages 8-15 for summaries of a selection of panels), as well as a lecture performance of a piece composed by pianist Kit Young and directed by Ted Gorodetszy, accompanied by Rhapsodist Daniel Neer and second pianist Eve Kodiak (see page 10). For the evening keynote address, participants had the rare opportunity of hearing Wendy Martin, the founding editor of *Women's Studies*, reflecting on her "Fifty Years of Looking at Emily Dickinson as a Woman."

It would not be right to discuss Emily Dickinson at a seaside conference center without at least once donning appropriate garb, starting early, and visiting the sea – accompanied by an obligatory dog (or two). Saturday morning a group assembled at 7:50, bolstered by the fond thoughts of the well-intentioned but still somnolent fellow travelers back in their cabins, set out in a sort of chariot, and read poems to the soft sounds of the surf of Monterey Bay. Then, following another rich day of panel discussions and a third keynote address by poet/scholar Alicia Ostriker, people convened in the plaza between the facility and the ocean for a festive banquet around a fire pit.

The conference closed Sunday morning with a Round Table on public humanities that led into the EDIS Business Meeting. The Round Table, attended by a robust group of 20 early risers (a somewhat different population from those who had set out to visit the sea at dawn on Saturday), addressed the large question of the fate of the arts in the public sphere: "Why teach Emily Dickinson?" "What poems must be taught?" If a case is to be made for public funding for poetry, we must be able to articulate just what is being sustained. Those in attendance proposed a surprising range of poems that they would be reluctant to live without, but the question of just what parts of life the reading of poetry vitalizes went to the heart of what makes the Humanities as important now as it has ever been.

One of the many attractions in the Monterey Bay area is its wildlife. No one encountered a mountain lion on the Conference Center grounds, but it was just a short walk to the Aquarium, where one could see sea otters, schools of sardines, and a wide array of jellyfish.

Asilomar Keynotes: Decades of Reflection

Recent keynote speakers at Dickinson Society meetings and conferences have often drilled deep into a wide range of topics – Edenic landscapes; Dickinson and the Amherst College meterologist; the dance of Dickinson's innovative language; Dickinson in the anthropocene. .

The Asilomar Conference offered, in presentations by writers long familiar as founding figures in modern Dickinson studies, three forty-year retrospectives on the experience of studying and writing on the poet through times when her work, and that of women authors generally, were scarcely welcome in university curricula. In addition to EDIS President Barbara Mossberg herself, author of When a Writer is a Daughter *(1982), these presenters included Sandra Gilbert, who wrote, with Susan Gubar,* The Madwoman in the Attic *(1979); Wendy Martin, whose* An American Triptych: Ann Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich *(1984) helped establish a model way to view women poets writing against the grain; and poet/scholar Alicia Ostriker, whose writings about poetry go back to the late 1970s, and who has, in numerous poems throughout her career, engaged Dickinson' voice and sensibility.*

While full-text transcriptions of the addresses await future publication, the following accounts, two by Bulletin *staff and one by the author herself, may provide some sense of the breadth and power of these addresses. The article begins with Wendy Martin's abridgement of her talk, because it speaks to the academic context in which modern Dickinson studies began.*

Wendy Martin

"Emily Dickinson: A Portrait of Courage"

When I first began working on Emily Dickinson, who was the subject of the middle panel for *An American Triptych: The Lives and Work of Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson and Adrienne Rich*, the prevailing view of Dickinson was that she was a neurasthenic spinster and agoraphobic recluse. Almost all of the scholars who had written about Dickinson up to that time were men who had not thought about Dickinson, or her work, in a feminist context.

Since I didn't know much about Dickinson when I began my research, I started by reading all of her previously overlooked letters, which made it very clear to me that Emily Dickinson was a fiercely independent, high-spirited and playful young woman who had a wonderful sense of humor. Certainly, Emily Dickinson was rebellious for a time when women were supposed to be passive, pious and passionless. Dickinson was very outspoken: for example, she successfully argued with her often very stern and authoritarian father about keeping her own hours in order to stay up late at night to write poetry. She also was defiant about accepting the traditional Calvinist religious beliefs of her parents, and of the community of Amherst in general. As a student at Mt. Holyoke Academy, Emily Dickinson was the only student who refused to make a public statement that she was "a Christian," which caused her classmates to consider her one of the "lost ones."

Emily Dickinson rejected patriarchy in all of its forms: she rejected an all-powerful masculine God who decided whether people were "saved" and would go to Heaven, or "damned" and would go to Hell. She also rejected the authority of patriarchal social structures in which men were arbiters of social practice as well as cultural and poetic values. Dickinson makes it clear in her poetry that life on earth is brief and precious and that we need to appreciate this fact. As she wrote, "Oh, Matchless Earth – We underrate the chance to dwell in Thee" (L347). Emily Dickinson is a poet for the ages and her work will be read for a very long time to come. In short, her letters made it clear to me that Emily Dickinson was a woman – and a poet – who was far ahead of her time.

However, at the time I was writing *An American Triptych*, my portrait of Emily Dickinson as a courageous iconoclast, especially in regard to religious and poetic conventions, was not well received by traditional male critics. Here is an important example of the hostility of one traditional male critic to the feminist interpretations of Emily Dickinson. After I completed writing *An American Triptych* in the late 1970's, Harvard University Press expressed interest in publishing this book. Of course, I was thrilled and sent the manuscript to the press without delay. After waiting a year for a response, I called the press to inquire if a decision about publication had been made; the Editor assured me that she would get in touch with the two external reviewers immediately and get back to me soon after. Two weeks later, I received the Reader's Reports. One report was very positive and recommended publication, and the other rejected my manuscript on the basis that I portrayed Dickinson as not being traditionally religious (it turns out that this reader was very religious himself).

Of course, I was deeply disappointed, especially as a book from Harvard would have made a huge difference in my career trajectory. I was then advised by a colleague to send my manuscript to Cambridge University Press, which I did; unfortunately, I didn't know at the time that the same reader who rejected the manuscript at Harvard was the editor of the American Literature series at Cambridge University Press. As

with Harvard, one reader's report was highly positive and recommended publication, but the Editor altered the other reader's report, which recommended publication, to make it seem as though the second reader had rejected the manuscript. Today, this would be considered grounds for legal action, but at the time, for me to have protested and "gone public" would have branded me as an "abrasive woman" and "trouble-maker." Just as Emily Dickinson responded to T.W. Higginson's judgment that she "delay" publication, with a jocular defense, I did my best to make light of what, in truth, was a massive misjudgment and ethical breach.

Of course, it is highly ironic that when the University of North Carolina published *An American Triptych* in 1984, this book received a highly positive, full page review in the *New York Times Book Review*, which described the book as important and pioneering work. It is even more ironic that one of my other books on Dickinson – *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson* – was published by Cambridge University Press in 2007 – under a different editor, of course! This study of Dickinson has also been well received. Today, my interpretation of Emily Dickinson as a staunchly independent woman and boldly innovative poet is accepted as the standard view, so much so, that people have forgotten that I was the person who first put forth this interpretation.

It is important to remember that Emily Dickinson continued to write brilliant poetry after Higginson's rejection of her work – still she persisted, as we would say today. Her courageous model has been a sustaining inspiration to me and legions of women scholars and readers of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Sandra Gilbert

Following an introduction by longtime friend and EDIS President, Barbara Mossberg, Sandra Gilbert opened the substantive part of the seaside conference with an address titled, appropriately, "'His Silver Heel' – Dickinson by the Sea." Framing Dickinson's sea with images out of lyric sea journeys from Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, and Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," Gilbert returned to Dickinson's most famous sea poem, "I started Early – Took my Dog – " (Fr656). She recounted the increasingly disruptive events in the poem, from the outsetting picnicker, to the defamiliarizing frame of the sea as a house, to the "spidery, strangling, miniaturizing" hands that reach to the speaker, to the embrace by the "alien salty element," a personified power that "fills and swallows." The dubious security of human place to which the speaker retreats, the "Solid Town," is thus set against the vast formlessness of nature.

Like the Great Wave of Japanese artist Hokusai, first printed around the year of Dickinson's birth, the sea in Dickinson's poem "bows from a celestial height." It has a kinship with other representations of formless powers (and empowered formlessness) by Dickinson, Whitman, and artists in other media – think Franz Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*. All are trying to see the infinite in the finite.

But why, Gilbert asked, does the poet make the formless power male? Unlike Whitman, whose Paumanok was male, and whose sea was beckoningly female, a fierce yet loving old mother (mèr/e), in Dickinson it is landscapes that are more often figured in feminine terms – loving, slow, violet. Where the public male artist might seek the danger of the sea, Dickinson dramatizes the private felicities of staying home: it's all very well to worship mountains, which in another poem have "far – slow – Violet Gaze – " and watch over her like "Strong Madonnas" ("Sweet Mountains – Ye tell Me no lie – " [Fr745]). The sea is a contrary power that menaces and destabilizes.

In the question and answer session, Gilbert elaborated that she was trying to move away from the erotic, orgasmic reading of the poem that had long been prevalent. Audience members welcomed the greater emphasis on what one person called "the absolute other, the other that rearranges who you are." Other questioners wondered about Hokusai. Could Dickinson have seen "The Great Wave off Kanagawa"? If it came to Boston when she visited, Dickinson would truly have made East Meet West.

Keynote speakers included three authors whose work has been known to and valued by readers of Dickinson's poetry for forty years.

From left, Sandra Gilbert, Wendy Martin, and Alicia Ostriker.

Photo Credit, above center and right: LeeAnn Gorthey

At the end of her address, Gilbert read two of her own poems, written back when she was writing *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), representing two different senses of Dickinson in domestic spaces. The earlier, "Emily's Bread," was a poem about confinement, while the later, "The Emily Dickinson Black Cake Walk," celebrates what Gilbert has called "the fluidity of her identity."

Alicia Ostriker

Further reminiscences about what it was like to be a woman and a scholar in the 1970s came from poet Alicia Ostriker. Looking for literary models, Ostriker confessed that it was a long time before she turned to Dickinson. A scholar of William Blake (she edited the *Complete Poems* [1977]), she found in him an early "hero and guru." It was not until the next decade, as she wrote *Stealing the Language* (1986) that she turned to Dickinson.

In Dickinson Ostriker found what she called "duplicity" – writing in which "contrary meanings exist with equal force. Her examples were "I'm Nobody," a poem she had loved since girlhood, and "The Soul selects her own Society." The duplicity lay in the way its almost prissy opening ("selects") gives way to what she found to be an all-out erotic come-on.

In keeping with the "wildness" theme of the conference, Ostriker then explored "Wild Nights." Here, the duplicity lay in the ambivalence of the sea. Does the image of being "Done with the Compass" reflect the result of successful planning, or an abandonment to orgastic ecstasy? Both, she said. The poem equally embraces the safety of comfort and the wildness of the sea: "Eden" allows us to imagine both at once. Ostriker read one of her own poems ("Another Imaginary Voyage": see below) about love as journey and choice: is sexual transgression "sin or blessing"?

What was remarkable about Alicia Ostriker's address was that she took the audience back into poems that we had all known since adolescence, poems that, one might have felt, held few further secrets. She opened them up, as she used them to explore not only her own fascination with Dickinson but her growth as a poet and as a woman in the twentieth century. Her discussion of "Because I cound not stop for Death" moved from the brutality of the opening lines – Death comes in like the KGB or the FBI – to a suggestion of pregnancy ("A Swelling of the Ground") to a more detached meditation on time. Through the reflection on time, Ostriker talked about her own writing about old age. She read another poem, titled "Waiting for the Light," to suggest this very different transformation of Dickinson's influence.

Ostriker ended by insisting that Dickinson gave her "permission . . . to write some of the riskier poems" she ever wrote. She thus ended with a celebration of risk – or more precisely of acknowledging the risk that is always latent within us. "All of us," she concluded, "spend time bravely deploring – and enjoying it."

Another Imaginary Voyage
– for X

When kabbalists declare
Each deed we do affects
Beings in other worlds,
My thought turns round to sex,

As it inclines to do,
As needle to true north,
Considering our case,
Weighing it back and forth.

What if we had undressed
That chaste July, and what
If we were being watched
Or watched for, as a boat

Reported missing brings
A crowd down to the shore,
To wager whether it
Will or will not appear,

The fog so thick, the sea
Invisible, until
A form coagulates,
And someone calls, "A sail!"

And all things clear. To you,
No comfort; you would see
Yourself step from the deck
Straight into custody;

There follows a swift trial,
A sentence swift and crude
(Reflecting guilt and fear)
To penal servitude.

While I – I can't agree
Touch is a sin, and so
I picture a small crowd
Of sleepless townsfolk who

Have waited out the night
And stand at crimson dawn
Ready to welcome us
With garlands and with wine.

To tell if I am right,
Or you, all books are dumb;
This is among the secrets
Kept by the world to come.

– Alicia Ostriker
From the transcript of her address

Dickinson and the Sea (See)

By Li-Hsin Hsu

Chair: Li-Hsin Hsu, National Chengchi University
Jeffrey Simons, "Dickinson Hearing the Wind"
Zoe Pollak, "Dickinson's Sea Changes"
Yumiko Koizumi, The American Scenery through Dickinson's Window"

The panel titled "Dickinson and the Sea (See)" provided prismatic glimpses into the connection between Dickinson's poetic visions and the natural elements both within and outside her immediate environment, physically and metaphorically. While the notion of the sea (see) served as one of the main entry points and common threads that pulled all three papers together, the three papers provided a surprisingly diverse range of perspectives in terms of how Dickinson's relation with nature and her employment of natural imagery can be conceptualized, experienced, or reconsidered.

Jeffrey Simons explored how Dickinson addressed the issue of hearing the wind, asking how the poet felt and thought about the wind, and where "Dickinson's senses of hearing the wind" came from. By analyzing a wide range of Dickinson poems about the sensory experiences of the natural element, Simons noted some "salient patterns" in Dickinson hearing the wind and proposed to read them "as Orphic, ghostly, earthly, human, and theophanic."

In the second presentation, Zoe Pollak used Dickinson's aesthetic "engagement with pearl," especially "The Spider holds a Silver Ball" (Fr513), as an example to explore "the Prosperian qualities of her verse." That "pearl" occurs 77 times in the Dickinson archive's manuscript database suggests how "this organically-formed gem ironically stands as the most linguistically cultivated and conceptually multi-faceted of the poet's jewels." By examining "pearl's associations with opulence and exoticism – as well as recognizing the labor necessary to harvest this luxury," Pollak demonstrated "how Dickinson plays with pearl's connotations to navigate the tensions between the alluring and distressing aspects of her poetic transformations".

Yumiko Koizumi argued that "[a] comparison between Thomas Cole's famous painting *The Oxbow* and Dickinson's poem illuminates the poet's anti-picturesque stance." By contrasting "a bird's-eye panoramic view of Mount Holyoke" in Thomas Cole's painting with Dickinson's "worm's-eye view of the outside world" in her poem "By my Window have I for Scenery" (Fr849), Koizumi showed how "the view from Dickinson's bedroom window" shed some light on our understanding of "how the poet viewed nature and the world in general from the ground level."

During the Q & A session, questions were raised about the way Dickinson used convoluted imagery to magnify the multi-layered implications as well as duplicity of her poetic allusions to the Bible and other literary works. Audience members also made connections between the panel's understanding of Dickinson's sea imagery and Sandra Gilbert's keynote speech on the previous day, in which Gilbert read Dickinson's "I started Early – Took my Dog – " in relation to her fear of the sea.

Photo Credit, far left and left: LeeAnn Gorthey

Self and Other in Times of Crisis: Dickinson and Literary History

Páraic Finnerty

Páraic Finnerty, Chair and Presenter: "'Gathered from many wanderings': The Brontës, Dickinson and Travel Motif"
Eliza Richards, "Dickinson's Somatic Inquiries"

The panel on "Self and Other in Times of Crisis" comprised Eliza Richards and Páraic Finnerty, who also chaired the session. Both papers considered the language and imagery through which Dickinson constructed her "supposed persons." The panel moved from a consideration of Dickinson's inquiries into psychological states that are often corporeally grounded depictions of thinking and feeling to a deliberation of her use of travel imagery to celebrate imaginative freedom over physical confinement.

Eliza Richards began her paper, "Dickinson's Somatic Inquiries," by noting important recent scholarship on "Dickinson's brain poems" that locates the poet's interest in embodied thinking in the context of the emerging science of psychology. Dickinson's use of words such as "mind," "heart," and "soul" to describe thinking and feeling evokes an earlier understanding of psychology as the study of the human spirit or soul. However, a substantial number of Dickinson's poems use scientific terms associated with anatomical aspects of the brain and nervous system, reflecting a developing understanding of psychology as the study of mental functioning and of the interrelationship of mental, bodily, and environmental processes. Richards suggested that a considerable number of Dickinson's poems could be read as early psychological studies that chart the relation of thinking and feeling by taking into account bodily processes. Rather than simply using such poems to discuss Dickinson's psychology or biography, Richards made a case for taking seriously the ways Dickinson's inquiries into psychological states take into account the relationship of mind, emotion, and body. Richards highlighted the value of viewing Dickinson's poems as studies of psychological processes that are not diagnostic or therapeutic, but strictly observational. The point of these representations of internal experience is not self-expression, but rather they show Dickinson searching for ways to articulate psychological states in poetic form.

Páraic Finnerty, in his paper, "'Gathered from many wanderings': The Brontës, Dickinson and Travel Motif," argued that the Brontë sisters' 1846 poetry collection, *The Poems of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, was one among many sources that influenced how Dickinson used travel imagery. While previous scholars have noted the Brontës' and Dickinson's similar use of images of imprisonment and bodily confinement, Finnerty identified resemblances between how the Brontës and Dickinson deploy travel imagery to unsettle distinctions between restriction and liberation, and the real and the imagined. Dickinson explicitly associates the Brontë sisters with bird-like mobility rather than grave-like stasis in her elegy to Charlotte Brontë, "All overgrown by cunning moss" (Fr146) in Fascicle 7. Although the poem begins with a symbol of captivity, Charlotte's grave-cage, it goes on to celebrate Brontë's imaginative vastness through images of journeys to actual, mythic, and otherworldly locations: Haworth, Yorkshire, Gethsemane, Asphodel, Eden, and Heaven. Evoking the travel theme in the Brontës' works, Dickinson honors them not as figures of incarceration but as wanderers of liberty. Comparing some of Charlotte Brontë's and Dickinson's travel poems, Finnerty underlined how these poets similarly used the compact space of the poem to bring together that which is geographically and conceptually distant.

What Miss Dickinson Heard – And Didn't – An Opera for Rhapsodist, Vocal Quartet And Duo-Pianists Composed by Kit Young

By George Boziwick

What Miss Dickinson Heard – And Didn't – is an expansive, sprawling, engaging hour-long work. Pianists Eve Kodiak and Kit Young (who devised the opera) presented a wide array of imaginative and creative improvisational musical canvases. Integrated into the mix were source readings, often fugitive snatches, both as recitations and improvised vocalizations of Dickinson's words, poems, and the words of others delivered deftly and creatively by Rhapsodist Daniel Neer. According to the program notes "the opera follows a large arc of Emily Dickinson's life as if it were one day by exploring Dickinson's depth of auditory artistry through improvisation evoking music and environmental sound."

On Thursday afternoon the Kiln lecture hall was readied for the opera's premiere. The room was darkened to reveal the pre-dawn hours of a day in the life of Emily Dickinson. As the audience entered the room, music from the parlor piano drifted through the air as if Dickinson was just concluding one of her late night improvisations; but in fact her day was just beginning. Duo-pianists Eve Kodiak and Kit Young provided the sounds of nineteenth-century parlor piano music which included "Di Tanti Palpiti" (by Rossini, with variations by Edward L. White), "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms," arranged by Thomas Valentine (both from Emily Dickinson's music book, a bound volume of miscellaneous sheet music, with Emily Dickinson's name written on the flyleaf), as well as renditions of songs by Stephen Foster and extemporaneous representations of a variety of other tunes including "Wayfaring Stranger," and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" – all of it drawing us into Dickinson's time and place.

With the sounds of birds, the Pre-Dawn gave way to the Sunrise. The piano chirped and clucked as the strings were plucked and the sounds of tone clusters – adjacent notes struck simultaneously on the piano – filled the room. I suddenly felt the happy ghost of the California composer Henry Cowell (1897-1965) who in 1914 (at the age of seventeen) debuted his unique tone cluster inventions in a performance at the Forest Theater in nearby Carmel. I'm sure Dickinson would have loved them.

The opera's soundscape grew more expansive, a muted trumpet (performed by Daniel Neer) accompanied the dawn which was breaking "opon the town," (Fr229) and as sunrise swept into mid-morning we were reminded that it might be a Sabbath Day. Everyone seemed to be off to church as we were greeted by a beautiful rendition of the hymn "Morning Star" (1835) by the Moravian composer the Reverend Francis F. Hagen. "The bells are ringing Susie" proclaimed Rhapsodist as Dickinson's own service began with a hymn-like accompaniment to her poem "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church – I keep it, staying at Home – " (Fr236). A "Responsorial" was invoked by the performers; with Rhapsodist and audience declaiming a robust antiphonal reading of Dickinson's "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (Fr314).

The bird references and environmental sounds increased exponentially as Dickinson's noon emerged, transitioning us into the "Mid-Afternoon" portion of the opera. There was a tangible apparition of the soprano Jenny Lind performing a snippet of her famous "Echo Song" (by Jacob Niclas Ahlström), and the "Bird Song" (M. Taubert) as Dickinson may have heard them during Lind's concert in the old Edwards church (L46). An instrumental version of Lind's encore of "Yankee Doodle" (from Dickinson's music book) was also heard. "It's a great thing to be great," intoned the Rhapsodist, as if Dickinson were offering a loud footnote to her already legendary post mortem on the "Swedish Nightingale." Here Dickinson claims a birdsong of her own as the Rhapsodist seemed to retort: "I am studying music now with the jays"! (L665). A reading of "Heart not so heavy as mine" (Fr88) was accompanied by a cleverly improvised and amplified heartbeat to the Irish tune "Molly Malone." A muted trumpet offered a call from an imaginary window; and as it had beckoned the morning, it now called the afternoon to a close.

As we approached the Dusk the ensemble presented a momentary reflection on the "blissful evenings at Austin's" accompanied by more improvised sounds of Dickinson at the piano performing a tune that the Rhapsodist reminded us, "she laughingly but appropriately called 'the Devil'"[1]; and as the Rhapsodist quoted Dickinson's reference to her "old odd tunes" (L184) the musicians commenced a dramatic improvisational setting of her poem "Better than Music" (Fr378). An accompaniment of clappers, a rain stick, and other percussive sounds, with the duo pianists serving as choirsters proved very evocative, a high point. "Of all the sounds dispatched abroad" (Fr334), "There came a wind like a bugle" (Fr1618), and other poems provided additional momentum combining improvised sung words with accompanying instrumental snatches of American folk tunes. Here the opera transitioned into evening, bringing with it a Sabbath singing school, in the form of a filmed continuation of the opera.

The film commenced with a vocal quartet delivering beautifully dense harmonies that reminded me of another California composer, Daniel Lentz (b1942). These sounds were soon contrasted by improvised broad vocal and instrumental counterpoints creating rich evanescent modalities. An improvisational setting of "Dying at my music!" (Fr1003) produced a web of vocal glissandi over a modernist casting of folk fragments eliding into a performance of the beautiful "Broad is the Road that Leads to Death" ("Windham" by Watts/Daniel Read) from the American tunebook *The Sacred Harp* (1844) from the shape note hymn tradition. This transitioned into a lovely fragment of a closing hymn "I Walk by Faith and Not by Sight."

The final Night segment of the opera elicited a sense of gradual decay through a beautiful vocal treatment of the words "omnes, omnes." As the tight homophonic voicings melded into incantations of the "Amen," we heard the sounds of crickets, choreographed by the performers rubbing at their shirt sleeves, signaling that the Night (and the opera) was quietly coming to a close.

Following the performance there was an enthusiastic Q and A, which concluded with President Barbara Mossberg offering her thanks, calling the performance "moving and profound" which indeed it was. I look forward to hearing this work in progress again in its evolving iterations.

[1] From MacGregor Jenkins' *Emily Dickinson: Friend and Neighbor,* 1930.

Dickinson and Other Writers

By Regina Yoong

Chair: Regina Yoong
Vivian Pollak, "'Well, you can *tell* yourself that': Gwendolyn Brooks's Heaven, and Emily Dickinson's"
Carol Dietrich, "'Inland Souls, Thoughtful Shoals, and Partial Wholes: A comparative Analysis of Several 'Sea' Poems by Emily Dickinson and Robinson Jeffers"
Elizabeth Petrino, "'Was the sea cordial?': Dickinson's Echoes of Thoreau's Inner Wild"

Vivian Pollak opened by describing how, when Gwendolyn Brooks read the paired stanzas comprising "I never saw a moor" (Fr800), she commented in the margin, "Well, you can tell yourself that," underlining the word tell in red ink. Brooks was intervening in a long conversation about a poem that many readers have cherished, but often for quite different reasons. During the 1890s, "I never saw a moor" emerged as a Dickinson classic, but after that its critical history is murkier. Pollak described its presence on the radio beginning in 1928, before turning her attention to a program Brooks might have heard in May 1940, when radio celebrity broadcaster Ted Malone was at The Evergreens for his "Pilgrimage of Poetry." Overall, Pollak suggested that studies of Dickinson's reception by mid-twentieth-century women poets can benefit from greater attention to Dickinson's presence in textbooks, in anthologies, and on the radio.

Carol Dietrich's "Inland Souls, Thoughtful Shoals, and Partial Wholes" investigated the spiritual intensity of Dickinson's and Jeffers' quest for the "secrets of the universe." Dietrich asserted that both poets understood that humans are neither the privileged source nor the ultimate measure of values. The sea is more than a setting for divine intoxication, enabling one to drink life to the lees. The materiality of the shore-shoal complex evokes the edges of consciousness just as the sea embodies the ebb and flow of eternity. By using anthropomorphic terms to highlight the dependence of humans on the sea for sustenance, Dietrich suggested that both poets undergird the relational whole of sea, humans, and knowledge.

Elizabeth Petrino's "'Was the sea cordial?': Dickinson's Echoes of Thoreau's Inner Wild" explored the truth of nature and its deep connection with humans. Petrino asserted that nature holds the key to understanding nationhood, as nature is bound up with the human mind. She argued that the poetic imagination in Dickinson and Thoreau allows readers to reach provisional conclusions which highlight the delusions of living.

Photo Credit: LeeAnn Gorthey

The Western Landscape

By Dan Manheim

Chair: Dan Manheim
Midori Asahina, "Reconsidering the Epistolary Exchanges between Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson as Nature Essayist in the West"
Ryan Heryford, "'the strength to perish is sometimes withheld': Dickinson's 'Western' Poetics of Decomposition"
Li-Hsin Hsu, "'To Pastures of Oblivion' : Dickinson and Western Wilderness,"

Exploring the Western Landscapes of a poet who resolutely sought to "see New Englandly" turned out to be more productive than one might have expected. The first speaker, Midori Asahina, of Keio University, addressed an unexplored dimension of Dickinson's relationship with Helen Hunt Jackson. Jackson, living in Colorado and California, wrote nature essays that, like those of John Muir a few years later, fed the east coast hunger for accounts of western scenery. Her landscape articles were appearing in *Atlantic Monthly* and *Scribner's* around the same time as she was writing her late letters to Dickinson. They may have influenced the poet's prism imagery in L937 / Fr1664, and Jackson's boasts about the glories of her lavishly scenic surroundings prompted Dickinson to weigh the relative power of imaginative and actual travel experiences.

Ryan Heryford also looked to the Jackson correspondence in making a subtle and ingenious argument about how Dickinson's notion of the "West" centered in "sites of decomposition." A decompositional poetics, he said, raises the paradoxical possibility of becoming through death – "necrogenesis." If death is final, then the only solace is immortality and immutability; but an alternative poetics would see mutability as the condition of things, in the body and in natural processes. This idea comes into Dickinson's work through the letters in which Jackson contrasted her own friability with the endless horizons of the Western landscape. Dickinson saw no discontinuity between landscape and corporeal frailty. In her view, the very changeableness of the land was a connection to the body and to human suffering. In change begins care and sympathy, whether for the failing human body or for the changing inanimate world. Comfortably dwelling within the time of degeneration and decay, Dickinson is able to espouse sympathy for both the ailing human body and the ever-changing nonhuman world, eschewing the authority of fixed categories and assumptions about eternal landscapes, and offering, instead, possibility for living and writing in a time when human activity has rendered irreversible impacts on global climate and conditions for life on earth.

In "'To Pastures of Oblivion' : Dickinson and Western Wilderness," Li-Hsin Hsu took the signal from Dickinson's "I send Two Sunsets" (Fr557) to explore the poet's attitude toward the development of the Western wilderness in the mid-19th century. Would she celebrate the amplitude of the west or would she instead, as Hsu put it, "prioritize pragmaticism over aestheticism"? In her reading, the celebrated poem "To make a Prairie" (Fr1779) revises William Cullen Bryant's 1832 poem "The Prairie." Where Bryant made bees into agents of cultural amnesia, lulling readers into forgetting about the recent Black Hawk uprising, Dickinson's image calls attention to the way the prairie functions as a poetic and imaginative construction. Nevertheless, she knew well and occasionally exploited certain essentializing formulations of the west and of Native Americans. Over all, Hsu argued, her references to western landscapes reflect a "delicate balancing act between utilitarianism and aestheticism," acknowledging the imagination's part in the creation of the wild, even as she depended on popular representations for her imagery.

Conversations after presentations and between sessions were animated, as people explored common interests.

Crossing Boundaries – Emily Dickinson and the Performing Arts: Remediation, Intermediality

By Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau

Chair: Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau
Participants: Martha Nell Smith, Barbara Dana, George Boziwick

Martha Nell Smith opened the discussion by presenting an overview of the representations of Dickinson in popular culture, asking the following question: what does it mean, and why does it matter that this cultural icon is so well-known among scholars and general audience? Martha Nell pointed out that Dickinson's work infuses our culture, and that questions of authority and authenticity are more diverse than scholarly practices often assume. As Adrienne Rich once said, there are multiple Emily Dickinsons and she tends to "proliferate" in a cultural palimpsest that Martha Nell took us through in this session – from TV shows like Jeopardy, TV series like *Damages*, *Cheers*, *Nurse Jackie*, *30 Rock*, *Breaking Bad*, *Bones*, movies like *Being John Malkovich* or *Sophie's Choice* or the recent biopics (*Wild Nights with Emily*, *A Quiet Passion*) popular music (Van Morrison, Simon & Garfunkel) …Martha Nell ended this journey through popular culture with the conclusion that the crippled vision of Dickinson is now giving way to a more powerful depiction, with more humor for example, and that all these examples reflect the way scholarship about Dickinson has seeped into the more general culture.

Barbara Dana then went on to present her experience as the lead actress in William Luce's *The Belle of Amherst*; for Barbara, the format of the one-person play is uniquely suited to tell the story of Emily. Barbara shared the biggest challenges she encountered while rehearsing the role and then touring with the play for over 4 years, and delighted the audience of the roundtable with lively readings of some of the passages of the play.

George Boziwick presented the great diversity of musical compositions inspired by Dickinson, including Carmel California's own Henry Cowell, and took us through the evolutions in composition, highlighting how editorial changes in the various editions of the poems infused the composer's understanding and adaptations of Dickinson's idiosyncratic style.

Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau closed the roundtable by a presentation of the adaptations of Emily Dickinson's life and work in ballet and modern dance, focusing particularly on Martha Graham's *Letter to the World*, and invited the audience to weigh in on the following issues raised in dance adaptations of Dickinson: How could choreographers work to present a less heteronormative vision of Dickinson, and an adaptation of her life and work that does not rely on the legend of the heart-broken, white-wearing recluse? How does one "dance" Dickinson? How could movement echo Dickinson's particular style? How does Dickinson's language translate into the language of movement?

Both Boziwick and Chevrier-Bosseau evoked their current musical and choreographical projects on Emily Dickinson.

Photo Credit, left and right: LeeAnn Gorthey

Approaches to Dickinson's Sound and Music

By George Boziwick

Chair: George Boziwick
Emma Duncan, "Defamiliarizing Faith: Emily Dickinson's use of Hymn Meter, Scripture, and Metaphor"
Samantha Landau, "'Invisible, as music – ': Sheet Music and Communication in the Dickinson Family"
Wendy Tronrud, "'Strange plants': Abolitionism, Black Song and Emily Dickinson"

While each of the three papers presented in this session covered music in the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson, it is actually the sound of that music that differentiated the work of these three fine presenters.

Emma Duncan problematized Dickinson as the poet hymnist, showing how on the one hand Dickinson brought tangible and unique clarity to the interpretation of the Christian symbols of belief, reinvigorating them by applying both the familiar hymn meters and the shared language of the believers of her day. On the other hand Duncan also offered vivid examples of Dickinson's own poetic editorializing that belied that clarity (and meter) revealing her acute sense of un-belief. Often Dickinson would offer both sides of the proverbial coin in a single poem thus "[keeping her] believing nimble." Examples include "I know that he exists" (Fr365) or "Going to Heaven!" (Fr128). The most striking illustration came in the following passage from her paper: "Dickinson echoes the enduringly popular hymn 'Amazing Grace' with the opening lines of her poem 'If I'm lost now – / That I was found' (Fr316), and reverses the order of the hymn which originally states 'I once was lost, but now am found.'" Duncan concluded her presentation by saying that Dickinson's purpose is not to instill doubt in the reader but rather, "to express the need for criticism and critical thinking. These very large [Christian] concepts, while believed by many, are not easy to believe or understand. Dickinson's poetry becomes a tool for exploration, a way to see the strangeness of Christianity more clearly."

In her paper "'Invisible, as music – ': Sheet Music and Communication in the Dickinson Family," Samantha Landau situates Dickinson's engagement with the classical music tradition as a fluid pathway of communication through Dickinson's own musicality and the music of her own time, by extension into that of the next generation of Dickinson's family. Landau offered vivid examples of both Emily and Susan Dickinson's musical influence on Susan's daughter (Emily's niece) Martha Dickinson, who had a notable professional musical career as both a singer and pianist. In her paper, Landau stated that "music represented a form of communication between Emily and Susan, and between Emily, Susan, and Martha. In Martha's public musical career, Emily and Susan's musical aspirations might have been realized." Landau elaborated on this through evidence found in the music holdings of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Papers in the John Hay Library, at Brown University. Landau's presentation made clear that ownership of the music in the Bianchi Papers crossed generational boundaries, showing just how much Martha's mother and aunt had significant input into Martha's musical performance, education, and taste. Landau also noted that just as there was evidence of these musical connections, the lack of evidence spoke just as loudly to the fact that music was so commonly threaded into their daily lives, that its presence was both self-animating and assumed.

The final paper of the session, Wendy Tronrud's "'Strange plants': Abolitionism, Black Song and Emily Dickinson," offered a connection between black song and Dickinson's work through a view of Thomas Wentworth Higginson as folklorist, curator, transcriber, and mediator for the collecting and dissemination of vernacular forms of musical and poetic expression. Using the sounds of black music that he heard and quietly collected when he was in charge of the Black Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers, Higginson defined himself as a folklorist. As Tronrud quotes from Higginson's 1867 article "Negro Spirituals," "I could now gather on their own soil these strange plants which I had before seen as in museums alone." The curatorial parallel offered by Tronrud of the intertwining and, at times, vernacular poetic voice of Emily Dickinson was compelling. Here Tronrud argues that Higginson established a parallel between his work with black song and with Dickinson, "transcribing" the words of Dickinson written in a hand that Higginson likened to the "fossil bird tracks" that Dickinson may have studied in the museum in Amherst. Higginson himself notes in the preface to his collected and edited volume of her poems that Dickinson's words are "like poetry torn up by the roots, with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them, giving a freshness and a fragrance not otherwise to be conveyed." Tronrud observes that the echoes of a similar antebellum rhetoric of folkloric cultivation are re-sounded in Higginson's work on Dickinson, and as Tronrud notes, Higginson wants "us as readers to know he is the one out in the field doing the picking of Dickinson's poems."

We in the audience were the beneficiaries of the excellent "field work" evidenced in all three papers. Each presenter elicited unique "soundings" of Dickinson, bringing new and fresh auditory and musical insights into our "circumference" of Dickinson scholarship.

Dickinson After Darwin: New Environmental Readings

By Paul Crumbley

Chair: Paul Crumbley
Anna Goldman: "Darwin and Dickinson Among the Heliotropes"
Katrina Dzyak: "Ornithology and Creole: Emily Dickinson and a History of Radical Peace"
Amy R. Nestor: "'Disclosed by Danger' 2 – Hauntings: Dickinson, Darwin, Anthropocene"

Anna Goldman's paper, "Darwin and Dickinson Among the Heliotropes," presents Dickinson as a dedicated amateur naturalist inspired by Darwin. Goldman argues that during her single year at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary Dickinson studied botany, astronomy, and natural history, then mined these fields for metaphors with the same concentration Darwin brought to bear on the seedlings he observed. Dickinson turned the lens of her attention inward to ponder sky ("Bring me the sunset in a cup – "), lightning (Not yet suspected – but for Flash – / And Click – and Suddenness"), and a bird taking wing as "…Oars divide the Ocean, / Too silver for a seam, / Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon, / Leap, plashless as they swim." As with Darwin, it was plants, in particular, which occupied Dickinson's attention. "This is a Blossom of the Brain" (Fr1112), one poem asserts in its opening line. In "Revolution is the Pod" (Fr1044), "Liberty" is in danger of being "Left inactive on the Stalk" and "Revolution is "a "Pod… Systems rattle from." In letter 1038 of the *Selected Letters* (ed. Thomas H. Johnson), John Milton becomes "the great florist," while in letter 682, a child's hand is "so little it had hardly a Stem." Writing to Susan, her sister-in-law (L178), Dickinson confessed that "The cats... have not so absorbed my attention as they are apt at home" but "as for my sweet flowers, I shall know each leaf and every bud that bursts, while I am from home." This paper draws parallels between the British naturalist-and-writer's lifelong focus on plants with the American poet's own to throw a different light on her eye for what the chemist and writer Primo Levi calls in *A Periodic Table* "our silent sisters, the plants."

In "Ornithology and Creole: Emily Dickinson and a History of Radical Peace," Katrina Dzyak opens by asserting that Dickinson's poetry is relentlessly opaque. She then argues that the small collection of Dickinson's Caribbean poems use absence, paralepsis, and inconclusiveness to induce relentless opaqueness with the aim of proposing alternative histories. The invariable simultaneity of silence and the question of war and violence woven throughout her Caribbean poems gradually tell a history of their causal relationship, and is, Dzyak suggests, Dickinson's active and strategic response to questions about the Civil War, its Caribbean roots, and the afterlives of slavery. Dzyak then reads this particular form of poetics alongside Afro-Caribbean traditions that reject the literary models of Natural History and Romanticism that drove Western colonial expansion and expression. While not in direct relation to these movements of radical resistance and creolization, Dickinson's poetry stages the ways in which our reading practices come out of this lineage of Natural History and Romanticism, and are, consequentially, trained to elide these non-Western, alternative histories. When our expectations backfire and line after line poses sheer inscrutability, Dickinson's poetry forces us to confront the circular logic of our interpretive skills, the predictable ways in which our questions prompt certain answers. In this way, the opaqueness that marks Dickinson's poetry prepares us to read, listen to, narrate what are otherwise silenced voices and histories from the colonial past of the Americas.

In "'Disclosed by Danger' 2 – Hauntings: Dickinson, Darwin, Anthropocene," Amy R. Nestor explores Dickinson's incorporation of Darwinian temporal ruptures to explore ruptures that devastated her sense of home, leaving movement, indeterminacy, displacements of the human from itself. Exploring these ruptures, Nestor argues, reveals entanglements of life/death, human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate – and Matter/Spirit. Spirit, as glimpsed in Dickinson's landscapes, emerges from Matter's glancing touch; Life, as shown by Darwin's ever-ascending Tree, is haunted by the ever-gathering dead branches below; both inscribe ghostly enfoldings into the unfigurable life to come, if Life there be…. Nestor's aim is to diffract Dickinson's and Darwin's poetics through our present-future Anthropocenic now. Reading their troubling of the still-foreclosing force of Newtonian time and their entanglements of Matter-Spirit as letters left for us, Nestor identifies ghostly Matter engraved upon the surface of the world that echoes the Spirit emerging from this Matter's touch upon the now-future of our Earth. This sets in place an ethics that angles off such touch, an ethics of entanglement, of forking Possibility; an ethics whose Spirit, in its haunting, embodies the power to move us from the Dead Letter we now doom ourselves to be, to move us from Newton's deadened time to the Flash, the Click, the Suddenness of Futurity, its ineluctable but indeterminate change.

Emily's Light

The Bulletin *is grateful to Laurie McCants for calling attention to* Emily's Light*, an exhibit of paintings by Robert McCormick that appeared at the Artspace Gallery in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, from January 17 through February 22, 2019. What follows is a redacted version of the transcription of a radio interview with McCormick conducted on WVIA, the NPR affiliate for Northeastern Pennsylvania, by Erica Funke, for her series ArtScene. Images of paintings from the show appear following page 17. The full transcription (not the redaction) was painstakingly prepared by Zoe Zink.*

Erica Funke: Mabel Loomis Todd describes the way she was received by Emily as a guest in the Dickinson home. She says, "although our interviews were chiefly confined to conversations between the brilliantly lighted drawing room where I sat and the dusky hall just outside where she always remained, I grew very familiar with her voice." And Mary Cappello takes it from there, explaining, "Emily's preference was to stand inside the hallway, outside the reach of vision when a visitor came to call. Standing unseen in a hallway was how she wished to meet you. To face you was too much; after all, how could two infinities hope to touch. And at the same time, meeting face to face was too little. That is, face-to-face meetings made for the predictable awkwardness of following social form: the sentence punctuated with the proper lilt, the teacup steadied, the hands held like closed wings in the lap, the body sitting neither too lightly nor too heavily upon the chair. All of this curtailed conversation, whereas the awkward encounter with a person who is out of sight, but there, offered the possibility of a meeting of minds, a whisper in the dark of truth, a voice listened hard for, and heard." Mary Cappello asks, "To meet without facing, is it more awkward to face or turn away?"[1]

Bob McCormick is a visual artist, and as he says, "a solitary soul," a searcher, someone who explores a landscape – human, and larger than human landscape. And he found himself compelled to immerse himself in [Dickinson's] world. And to have a "heart-to-heart," if not face-to-face conversation, on and through his canvases. An exhibit titled *Emily's Light*, with these paintings by Bob McCormick, has just opened at the Artspace Gallery in Bloomsburg. Nine new paintings, drawing their inspiration from the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Last spring when Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble's Laurie McCants announced that she would bring her Dickinson-inspired one-woman play *Industrious Angels* to Bloomsburg, McCormick decided to see how he could respond to Dickinson's unique lexicon with his brushes. *Emily's Light* is the result.

BM: When I heard Laurie was going to do this play, . . . instantly – instantly – a light went off and I went, "I wonder what I could do with her poems," and I started on the project. And I really was very reluctant to share this with people because I didn't know if I could do it. But this involved taking an artist I respected very much and reading her work and seeing could I somehow catch her spark and turn it into some sort of visual art of my creation. And that, that's a big step actually – to find somebody else's passion and to try and connect it with your passion and come up with a new piece of work that can stand on its own and not just copy or represent her. So it was a challenge, but a good challenge.

EF: Let's go back a little bit. Bob, you have taught English in your life, so you are well-versed in the forms, and novels, and short stories, and poets, and the various eras. What was your past experience with Emily Dickinson?

BM: As an English teacher, I ended up teaching an awful lot of British lit, so I didn't come across a lot of Emily in the classroom. I didn't know much more than everybody knows – that she was a recluse supposedly, she was from Massachusetts, her father was stern. And she wore a white dress. I mean I had limited knowledge. And I remembered hearing something about her dashes – apparently her dashes annoyed a lot of people. I as a reader as a young person always figured, "Well of course she put a dash there. She wants you to stop and think." It seems so easy on one level – what she's writing about – but on another level, I don't have a clue. I initially read I think it was three or four hundred poems and I narrowed them down to thirty-two that I felt connected to me, or that I could visually do something with because she uses such unique imagery, but it's . . . it's not something you could simply pick up a pencil and draw. It was a challenge on many levels – both intellectually and as a person trying to make art.

EF: There are poems that are very dark. She doesn't avoid death, right?

BM: No. I began to worry a bit about that. This is *Because I could not stop for Death* which I knew before and I did like. And that's probably the most illustrative piece that I've done. I think that phrase "He kindly stopped for me" presents a civility, a gentlemanliness that we associate with the nineteenth century. As I worked my way through the poem, I would read it again and again and just sketch different ideas, write down different ideas. And somewhere along the way, this particular piece – as I worked through it – using a coffin form suggested itself. And I don't like macabre. I don't like to go for that. But it was there so I followed it. But I knew it needed something else. And in my research, I saw images of burials in the 1890s, 1870s, 1860s where they would have the corpse entombed in a wicker casket. So, I tried to capture the feeling of wicker, which is why you see the outline. And then the rest of it just needed to be dark. So that's . . . that's how I handled the darkness that you mentioned.

EF: There's a lot of energy there even though this is a quiet, still-focused moment – definitely quiet.

BM: And it's interesting [that] you're picking up on the quietness. Makes me happy because I had to shift my color choices for this particular project because when I think of Emily and the more I read her poems, I thought "quietude," I thought "softness." And I looked for starkness and also a bit of that Calvinistic household in which she lived – you know, where things were apparently pretty rigid and colors would have been toned down. So, these were all things that inform a person when it's time to paint.

EF: Let me then just follow up and say that if people know your work or go online and see your work, they know you love color. You just love color.

BM: Mm-hmm. Yes.

EF: And your canvases often explode with color, just wonderful juxtapositions of color. And the thrill that the –

BM: I do. I do love color. You're right.

EF: That's the tension. Because though it may be about a moment of dying, it's very alive. We just have these two for example. And there are some white figures. And you mentioned her white dress. Talk to us about some of these figures.

BM: As I read about her, I understood that as she developed, she began to wear only white. And so, I thought "Okay, I'll work with that." Now as a watercolorist I'm not always thrilled with white. Because it's what you call negative painting. I have to do other things to make the white show. In this one Emily's describing the people in the room, waiting for the woman to die. So, that's what I would imagine. This is me throwing myself into a belief. I would hope that when she passed, she was flowing to someone who was waiting for her and they were soaring past the sky, past the moon, past the church, into infinity.

EF: And the windows are in the shape of a church. There are things that echo in terms of shape and give us a sense of perhaps the sacred space that this is. It's not a church but there is something sacred about this space.

BM: If you'll look, the room is actually floating in the sky.

EF: Do you have some other examples with you?

BM: That's *A certain Slant of Light*. And again, I have her walking out in the snow. She painted at a certain table and a certain chair in her room, which you know we think Virginia Woolf 's *A Room of One's Own*. Well here's Emily Dickinson – quite a bit earlier than Virginia Woolf – lucky. That's why the window and the chair are just floating there in the tree. And I questioned a whole lot, what was her source of writing? What passion was it? Was it a man? Was it a woman? Was it death? Was it love? Was it fear? And that's the little black bird in the tree. I want to suggest that. I just want to suggest that there's something speaking to her – to that figure.

EF: And the light in this particular painting, Bob! You talk about the slant of light. It's subtle! But if we look carefully, look at all you've done. And you're talking about whites and so forth, about how you've used white and other things to create this sense of light! Talk about that for us. 'Cause this is all light.

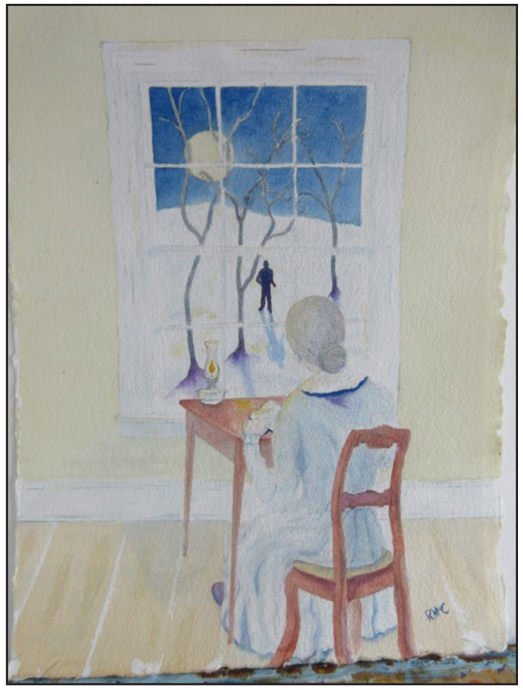
BM: Yes, and thank you because I don't know exactly what I mean. I clearly understand in my life many, many times living here in Northeast Pennsylvania. I've been out somewhere and there's that moment where you just kinda stop and you look and you feel. Your awareness is alert to the something that surrounds us on those cold winter afternoons when the shadows are long and slightly different and the earth is slightly askew, not the way we normally see it, things are quiet. She knew this. She's sharing this. There is this spiritual side. There is this spiritual life. By spiritual I don't mean churchlike. I'm talking about spiritual as in beyond the physical – metaphysical I guess is what we're saying. And she was in tune with that. And it comes through to me in her poems.

EF: Did you feel like you were conversing with her?

BM: Aren't I brave talking about Emily as if I know her? But it happens when you spend a lot of time – and I had other things that I had to work on through the months, but this has been the main project particularly for the past maybe three months. Now maybe it's winter time and I tend to struggle with depression a bit when things get dark, but also working on this I was often very sad by the end of a day, wondering what am I doing? Am I succeeding? And what's the point? And I think a lot of it was picking up a little bit of the emotion of the poem and translating it into myself and into my work and into my day. But that's what you do.

I love the power of shadows because of the magical reality that they have in their own right. I ended up entitling my exhibition *Emily's Light*. This is the only piece that is not from a specific poem. It's just trying to answer that question: Why did she sit down at that desk? And how did she sit down at that desk? And why did she spend so many years writing what to her were obviously very important life-giving pieces? If you look beyond, there's just a plain room. I kept everything very very plain, the desk, the table, the candle, and the trees outside and the moon. And of course there's that figure there again with the shadow. And I don't want to say too much about that figure but I want viewers to ponder. And I think people who know Emily's work and her history – what little we know – will enter the discussion: what is her source of light?

[1] Words of Mary Cappello in *Southwest Review* 2005 in an essay titled "Dickinson's Facing or Turning Away."



Watercolors by Robert McCormick, clockwise from lower left: *Divine Intoxication*, McCormick's response to "Exultation is the going" (Fr143); *Emily's Light*, the title piece from the exhibit; *Because I could not stop for Death* (from Fr479); *A Certain Slant of Light* (from Fr320); and *The Last Night that She Lived* (from Fr1100).

McCormick is a former high school English teacher, though he had taught only a few of the most famous of Dickinson's poems. Initially drawn to her work after he saw a production of Laurie McCants' play *Industrious Angels*, he says his first reaction to the poems was "Oh man! What did I get myself into? This is *really* hard." The exhibit included nine original paintings.

Series Editor, Marianne Noble

"'Tis Centuries - and yet": Teaching Dickinson and the Presence of the Past

By Elizabeth Harris Sagaser

Exchanging hellos and small talk, students in my course, Dickinson and English Poetry, settled in for the last class of the semester. "Because I could not stop for Death – " and "This was a Poet – " were on the syllabus, as well as the *Springfield Republican* obituary for Emily by Susan Huntington Dickinson.

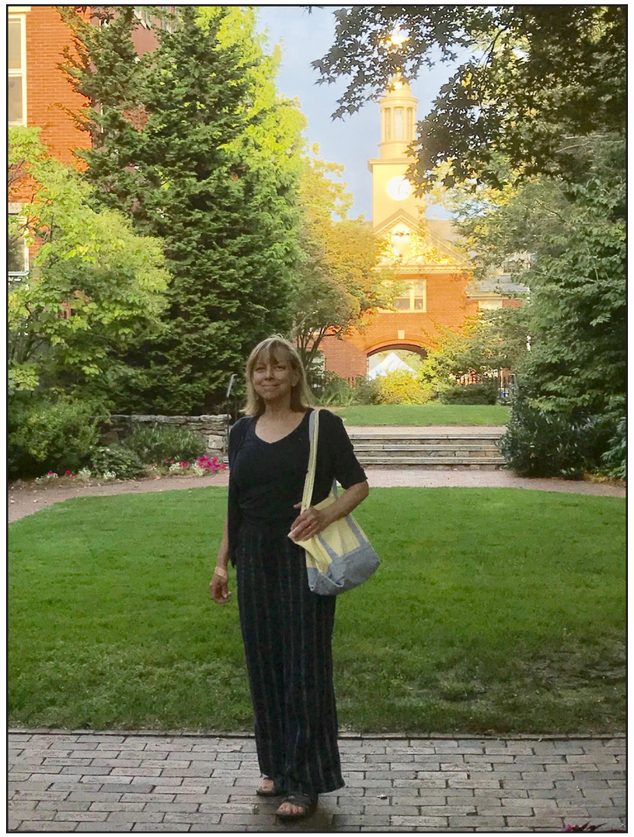


Photo Credit: John W. Sagaser

"Who will start us off today?" I asked. "Who can speak "Because I could not stop for Death – "?

They knew I meant, *speak by heart*. Thanks to the hands-on, immersive activities and assignments students were engaged in through the course, particularly the Table-of-Memory Project I assign after midterm, my question was not unexpected, nor unwelcome. I scanned the room expectantly, trying to recall which students in this group had included the poem in their project proposals.

I caught a look of potential confidence in the eyes of two students. "Oh yes," I said, remembering. "Paige, you've been working with this poem. And Chris, you have been as well!" They happened to be sitting next to each other. "Which of you will speak it for us?"

Happily, we were in the Special Collections reading room, our alternate classroom through the semester. With its ceiling-high bookshelves, wooden tables and comfortable chairs, it was an ideal space for thinking about literary pasts and presents. During our first class in the room, students had perused our college collection of *Poems* 1890, 1891, and 1896; deciphered a letter in Dickinson's own hand; and had the "privilege" to "meet" many an "Antique Book" (Fr569B) approximating a shelf or two of the Dickinson family library, including *The Household Book of Poetry*, ed. Charles Dana, 1865.

"I'm not sure I have the whole thing – " one of the two said.

"I could try, but…" said the other.

"How about you share it?" I suggested. "Paige, you start with the first stanza, then Chris, you speak the second, and if either of you can't recall a word or line, the other will prompt."

They glanced at each other and agreed.

The impromptu duet absorbed and carried us, emphasizing the poem's narrative structure – a journey advancing stanza by stanza. Hearing the poem aloud also intensified that deft final move, the speaker's shift to the present tense:

"Since then – 'tis Centuries – " Chris said, half statement of fact, half expression of wonder:

> and yet
> Feels shorter than the Day
> I first surmised the Horses' Heads
> Were toward Eternity –

We knew these powerful lines were approaching; we'd discussed the poem in a prior class as well as read it for this one. Yet hearing them now gave us a fresh start of recognition: we were not mere passive listeners; we were witnesses to the speaker's memory and a voice sounding as immediate as if it were 150 years ago.

The moment primed the class for revisiting a central theme of the course, that poetry has long been – and still is – a technology for bringing voices and thought from past centuries into the minds of newly present readers, speakers and thinkers. This spring, I had particularly emphasized poetry as such a technology because it aligned with our campus-wide Arts and Humanities theme, *Presence of the Past*. Now I invoked the poems that first helped students think through the concept: Shakespeare's Sonnet 5, "Those hours," and Dickinson's "Essential Oils – are wrung –." "I believe a few of you know these," I said. "Might someone speak one or the other for us?"

Robin, a sophomore Environmental Studies major considering an English minor, volunteered the Dickinson poem. "Essential Oils – are wrung – " she began, quietly but precisely, and with evident pleasure.

When last discussing the poem, we had recollected delightedly that Dickinson herself kept poems in a drawer. Now "this – in Lady's Drawer" (Fr772B) resonated anew, surrounded as we were by books that had long outlived their first owners. I also reminded the class of "this" turning us into collaborators in Shakespeare's Sonnet 29: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives *this*. . . . " [italics mine].

Robin was at a different table from Chris and Paige, and as she finished the poem, their tables – and corners of the room – seemed lit up together.

At a third table, Courtney, a senior History and American Studies double major and Education minor, raised her hand, offering Sonnet 5. A student of pedagogy as well as the past, she delivered the sonnet as an experienced teacher would, addressing all parts of the room, using intonation and gesture to remind her peers how the poem worked: "Those hours," and "never-ending time" were the grammatical subjects, personified abstractions who "frame" the beloved's beauty with "gentle work" but then "play the tyrants to the very same" and "confound" an unsuspecting summer in winter.

Courtney paused dramatically at the sonnet's turn, then began again, glad to reveal that in this sonnet at least, time does not triumph; "summer's *distillation*" does – specifically, "flow'rs distilled" [italics mine]. They "leese but their show, their *substance still lives sweet*" [her emphasis]. She made it clear that this still-living "substance," along with Dickinson's "Essential Oils – " was more than perfume; it was the poetry in our midst.

"You are probably thinking now of a particular poem you read for today," I said. Though no one knew this one by heart, everyone nodded, and we opened our books to "This was a Poet – ."

When I asked how the three poems framed the distillation metaphor differently, many hands went up. Thanks to the useful footnotes in Cristanne Miller's edition of the poems, our course text, students also considered how T.W. Higginson's statement "Literature is attar of roses, one distilled drop from a million blossoms" ("Letter to a Young Contributor," *Atlantic Monthly* April 1862), was likely the most immediate source for Dickinson's "Essential Oils." "What do the poetic framings of the metaphor accomplish that the statement does not?" The question prompted animated responses, as all my students had learned not only to understand poems but to embody them.

How had they, and I, arrived at this point?

I developed "Dickinson and English Poetry" six years ago, drawing on my work in poetry and poetics (both historic and cognitive studies approaches) and my training in early modern literature. The course compares poems by Dickinson with poems by writers she admired and read intensely, from Shakespeare and Milton to Keats, the Brontës and E. B. Browning, and also with a few poems she did not read but that are mutually illuminating with hers (by 17th-century poet Katherine Philips, for example, and poets after Dickinson, such as Elizabeth Bishop and Audre Lorde). Students also explore contexts for Dickinson's reading and writing, including her education, correspondence, interest in the natural world, and American Civil War. And of course, vitally, students gain close reading and comparative analytical skill.

For the course to work, however, for this idea of poetry as a kind of technology to capture imaginations and provoke personal investment, for students to learn to read poems from 400 years ago as well as 150 years ago, and for them to get to know Dickinson as a reader herself as well as a poet, I had to find particularly immersive, hands-on ways to engage students in poems. I had to crack their assumptions and resistances. I had to give "close reading" a new meaning.

In each iteration of the course, I experimented, pruned and honed. A versatile foundation for much course work proved to be a poem reading strategy students came to know as "A Very Smart Way." I'd first created this strategy for a Renaissance poetry course to help students inhabit and analyze strange-seeming poems with highly unfamiliar language. The

strategy works for any poem that represents voice, as most poems did and a majority still do. It also works well for speeches and other kinds of persuasive discourse.

When confronting a challenging poem, students ask themselves, "How do I get a foothold in this poem?" If they reply to themselves, "*A Very Smart Way, My Little Pal…*" *(or, "My Literary Pal")*, then, there it is – a plan. The first letter of each word in the reply prompts them to look for different rhetorical devices and elements of craft, and a couple of letters prompt them to consider how all the devices and elements work together. In brief, A=Address and Apostrophe; V=Verb tenses and Verbs; S=Sentences | Syntax | Sound; W=Words; M = Metaphor | state of Mind; L = Line; P = speaker's Purpose.

The mnemonic alone guides students in lots of situations, including on essay exams, but when they first use the strategy, and later when annotating for longer assignments, they refer to a handout that elaborates on each category with useful questions and prompts for short experiments. Under "A=Address and Apostrophe," for example, they read: "Who is speaking to whom, or to what? What personal pronouns does the speaker use? How would the poem be different if – for example – the speaker used third person instead of first and second person, or vice-versa? Rewrite the poem in different persons to find out." When students answer the questions and do the experiments – for example, rewriting, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" as "She's Nobody! Who is he?" – they discover they have something important to say about direct address in the poem. Likewise, they find they have something to say about apostrophe when they rewrite "Burglar! Banker – Father! / I am poor once more!" as "He's Burglar, Banker, Father! / And I am poor once more!" (Fr39)
For the "W=Words" category, students also play a substitution game, and they learn to gloss words using the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* (particularly the 1844 Websters), the OED, and Stephen Booth's edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. They learn too about Dickinson's alternate words, which they love having right on the page in Miller's edition, and they learn how to look at manuscripts on the *Emily Dickinson Archive*. Always they are struck by Dickinson's well-known remarks on the power of words from a letter to Joseph Lyman. I project these on the screen:

> We used to think, Joseph, when I was an unsifted girl and you so scholarly that words were cheap & weak. Now I dont know of anything so mighty. There are [those] to which I lift my hat when I see them sitting princelike among their peers on the page. Sometimes I write one, and look at his outlines till he glows as no sapphire. (First cited in Richard Sewall's *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, vII.)

I reinforce the analytical experiments in "A Very Smart Way" with in-class, hands-on activities, such as setting up comparisons with corrupted versions of poems, either corrupted by me to make a point about verb tense, person, meter, diction, or metaphor (for example, "I measured every Grief I met" instead of "I measure every Grief I meet" [Fr550]) or corrupted by early editors (the last stanza of the Todd/Higginson version of "If you were coming in the Fall" works particularly well here). Sometimes I distribute stacks of poem lines, one or two line[s] per strip, to unscramble. Other times, pairs or trios of students will each compare different elements of craft in the same two poems ("I dwell in Possibility – " and Emily Bronte's "To Imagination" is a rich pairing here), and then we'll share observations as a class. Sometimes I lead full comparative close readings, particularly for poems that tend to baffle students at first but then with a few leading questions and suggestions, open up rapidly and become favorites; at the top on this list, fittingly, are "I think I was enchanted" (Fr627A) paired with Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

I also make and distribute fill-in-the-blanks versions of poems by which students grapple with such lines and metaphoric possibilities as: "prompter than a ____" (Fr383) or "The Brain is just the weight of ___ – " (Fr598). Doing this with poems on the syllabus for the day not only provokes students to notice key moves in a poem, but also forces them to see how attentively they are reading in the first place.

Fill-in-the-blanks versions of poems they have not yet read work in a different way: students must try their hand at thinking unconventionally as Dickinson did. On a snowy morning, for example, they might find "It sifts from Leaden Sieves" (Fr291B) on their desks, with lines to complete such as: "It Ruffles _____ of Posts – / As ____ of a ____." Or, during our unit on the American Civil War, they will find the battlefield photo titled *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania July 1863* (Timothy H. O'Sullivan) projected on the screen, and on their desks, an incomplete poem, including the lines "'Tis populous with ____ and ____ – / And Men too straight to ___ again – / And Piles of solid ___ – " (Fr704). They thus experience how readily predictable words and concepts spring to mind, while it is a different feat entirely to forge words and ideas that are both surprising and insightful.

When we first read sonnets, I lead the class in composing two quatrains of our own sonnet, a humorous one that aims to include all the students' first names. They craft the last quatrain and couplet as homework, and I read successful efforts aloud in class. This work helps them experience the differences in Dickinson's shorter but still usually iambic lines, and to engage in further revealing experiments, such as altering Shakespeare's lines to work in ballad measure and Dickinson's to work as pentameter.

The Table-of-Memory Project, a signature assignment in the course, takes all this analysis a step further. ("Table of memory" comes from *Hamlet*. Speaking to his father's ghost, Hamlet says he'll "wipe away" all else from the "table of my memory" so "thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain / Unmixed with baser matter" [l. 1.5.99, 1.5.98, 1.5.102-104].) The project immerses students in choosing, analyzing, annotating (according to thorough guidelines based on "A Very Smart Way") and reflecting on a group of poems, and *by way of* this analysis, learning them by heart. At an appointment with me, they hand in their annotations and informal comparative/reflective essays, then speak the poems as if they were their own thoughts.

From the start, I emphasize that trying to memorize poems in a rote way, abstracting lines from the unfolding sense of the poem would be *antithetical* to the assignment. And indeed, students are surprised and empowered to find that by analyzing and annotating poems, they already know much of a poem without even 'trying.' Ensuring they know the whole requires them to further discover for themselves – by reason, empathy, imagination and sound perception – why each word, phrase, image, and idea in the poem leads to the next. Learning poems by heart in this way is the closest kind of reading.

Additional benefits abound. For many students, the very act of deciding which poems they want to keep in their minds and lives involves extra hours of reading and thinking about poems. And the project does more than any number of lectures could do in teaching students how mightily form, meter and all kinds of sound weaving (assonance, consonance, slant rhyme, internal rhyme, etc.) – *meshed with provocative thought* – engage attention and facilitate memory. Thus by learning a Shakespeare sonnet or two, they know for themselves what 18th-c. Shakespearean actor Edmund Kean meant when he said Shakespeare's verse was "stickable." As they speak and hear Dickinson poems, they understand why Susan Huntington Dickinson took such pleasure in reading the poems aloud, and how Mabel Loomis Todd's own reading aloud was pivotal in persuading Thomas Wentworth Higginson to help her edit and publish a first edition of Dickinson's work.

Finally, the project yields dynamic, inclusive class engagement. Students are eager to offer analysis they've gained over hours of working intimately with a poem, and they are eager to hear each other's observations, knowing the kind of research, experiment, and reflection that informs these insights.

And while I begin most classes speaking a poem by heart myself through the first half of the semester, in the second half, as we've seen, anything can happen.

Paige wrote, "I had goosebumps speaking 'Because I could not stop for death' in class that day! It was a really unexpected moment for me, but I think that it would not have been possible without the creative and kind of outside-the-box thinking that this class offered." Chris proclaimed it "a very cool experience . . . the mixing of our various takes on the poem, while never sacrificing our unique voices." Robin recalled "The space of the room itself was very inviting to recite in, being surrounded by all of the literary art and the works that influenced Dickinson," and remarked on the "fluidity," "passion" and "inflection" of classmates speaking poems. Courtney recalled how in the last classes, "we were all able to build off of each other's memorized poems by offering lines from our own repertoire," and how the project and course "position[ed] all of us as teachers and students, experts and novices, all at once."

Courtney gestures toward a fact I can't emphasize enough – any four of the nineteen students in the class I described might have been the ones who happened to know the poems of that day. In other classes, and in individual Table-of-Memory appointments, I heard many more thoughtful and sometimes powerful renditions of poems by Dickinson and Shakespeare, as well as a few by Katherine Philips, Keats, Emily Bronte, and an excerpt from E. B. Browning. What a pleasure, experiencing these poems afresh, framed by particular student voices and approaches, sometimes infused with surprising observations!

Learning poems by heart enables well-crafted language and ideas to play a role in everyday thought, sometimes in unexpected and important ways. Environmental Science students tell me how their Dickinson poems sharpen their focus on particular landscapes, details of birds, and their own processes of observation. Students from many disciplines value internalizing poems that call out the dangers of groupthink and uncritical "assent" to default assumptions. Psychology and neuroscience students not only find Dickinson's "brain" poems thought-provoking in ongoing ways, but also find the Table-of-Memory Project gives them actual experience of cognitive processes they have studied in class. Livia, a pre-med junior wrote, "Throughout this project, I have learned a lot about my powers of attention, perception, memory and imagination." Elizabeth, a pre-med senior reflected, "As a Biology major with a concentration in Neuroscience, I have learned countless times about how learning occurs in the brain, and how strengthening neural connections is the way to create a strong memory. By annotating these poems first and noticing particular details, learning them by heart was a much more fluid process than I imagined it would be."

And students find the poems they learn useful in pervasive personal ways. As Hannah, a junior English/Creative Writing and Studio Art major, wrote, "When I am at a loss for words or experience emotions I cannot explain, I will have the internal tool of these poems to reflect back on. I find a sense of home in these verses."

Citations

Shakespeare's Sonnets quoted from Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth. Yale UP, 2000.*

Quotes from Hamlet *are from* The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et. al., 2nd ed., Norton, 2008.*

Elizabeth Harris Sagaser is an associate professor at Colby College. Her teaching and scholarship center on Renaissance poetry and culture, poetry in the history of ideas (scientific and political), transatlantic poetry, and cognitive poetics. She has published poems and essays as well as scholarship.

Series Editor, Jonnie Guerra

In the essay that follows, featured poet Faith Shearin reflects on Emily Dickinson in light of a personal tragedy in her own life, and she does so with the "sheer sanity of vision" and "economy of pain" that Linda Pastan so aptly ascribed to Dickinson herself. Shearin is the author of six books of poetry: The Owl Question *(volume 6 of the May Swenson Poetry Award Series, 2002),* The Empty House *(2008),* Moving the Piano *(2011),* Telling the Bees *(2014),* Orpheus, Turning *(2015 Dogfish Head Poetry Prize), and, most recently,* Darwin's Daughter *(2018), published by the Stephen F. Austin University Press. In addition, Shearin is the recipient of awards from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Yaddo. Her poems have been read aloud by Garrison Keillor on "The Writer's Almanac" and included in* American Life in Poetry. *Shearin taught high school English for a decade and also has been writer-in-residence/visiting writer at Interlochen Center for the Arts, American University, Carver Center for the Arts, and West Virginia University. She currently lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, what she terms "Emily's town." A special thank you to Adrienne Su who first brought Shearin and her poetry to my attention.*

A Wild Night and a New Road

By Faith Shearin

Emily Dickinson spent the first decade of her life in a house that overlooked the Amherst cemetery, so she witnessed many funerals; she saw wooden coffins and displaced earth and was familiar with the sicknesses of her era: tuberculosis, measles, cholera, scarlet and typhoid fevers. At Mount Holyoke Seminary, where she was a student at the age of 17, she refused to accept Christianity; certain of its notions about heaven did not always seem to comfort her; in November of 1882, after the death of her mother, Emily wrote: "We don't know where she is, though so many tell us" (L785). Just three years before her own death Emily sat at the bedside of her nephew Gib, who came down with typhoid fever and succumbed at the age of eight; there is some speculation that his death was so distressing it ultimately hastened her own, which took place in the bedroom where she accomplished so much of her writing, after spending seven months in bed; the note she fashioned for her cousins during her last days read simply: "Called back" (L1046).

I have been thinking about death because my husband of 24 years died suddenly of a heart attack this past November, while on a business trip in Colorado; one morning he was a 48-year-old man waiting for a Lyft to take him to the airport: a dark middle-aged fellow with a suitcase in one hand and a mobile phone in the other; two days later I found him in a wintery hospital attached to a city of machines; our final conversation was about Halloween: the children in costumes I was expecting to arrive on my doorstep that evening, asking for candy; he stayed on the phone longer than usual.

"Sorry to linger," he said.

"You'll be home soon," I said.

We had our last conversation without knowing it would be our last: talked about a trip we meant to take to Vermont to buy syrup and cheese and walk under canopies of sugar maples before the fall foliage was lost to snow; we considered a chipped teapot, a tire on our jeep that needed replacing; we made fun of the pillows in his hotel room; I expected he would be in our kitchen by early evening, in time to see the parade of capes and wings.

Photo Credit: Kerry Stavely

In a letter to her friend Elizabeth Holland in 1866, Emily wrote: "When you had gone the love came. I supposed it would. The supper of the heart is when the guest has gone" (L318). I have felt this since my husband's death: that, in his absence, my love for him has intensified, as if memory works as a magnifying glass; he and I shared a common private language I was not aware of until I became its last speaker. Only he and I knew the TAD was a terrible telephone answering device we owned when we were first married, which almost exclusively recorded messages from a man named Marty Hanson at Bloomfield Hills Schools Credit Union, who liked to remind us we were late repaying a loan; only we knew the Red Devil Grill was a thing we ordered off an infomercial at the end of our first year of teaching high school English together, after staying up all night to grade

one hundred essays about Odysseus in the underworld: a grill that fell apart the first time we lugged it into the woods on a summer camping trip beside a Michigan river where we collected flat black stones.

Many of life's daily details have shifted since Emily was alive; she was confined, for example, to travel by horse or train and could not choose many vocations other than spinster or wife; there was no significant medical help for her failing eyes; her questions about the natural world were answered by heavy tomes instead of Google; she learned Latin and botany and how to make bread and knew nothing of tweeting or online banking; but death, it turns out, has remained more or less the same. An early death, like that of her nephew Gib, caused a deep, relentless grief and raised questions about the purpose of our mortal journey; I'm familiar with that kind of grief and those sorts of questions. Why do some people receive a brief life while others linger and grow old?

When she wrote "The Distance that the dead have gone / Does not at first appear;" (Fr1781), I can agree; my husband seemed to sleep at the center of a hospital room and looked, at the end, as if he might open his eyes and reach for his glasses; the fact of his absence was a thing I encountered afterwards: in restaurants where I dined alone, across from an empty chair; on parents' weekend at my daughter's college (which happens to be the same Mount Holyoke where Emily was once a student) when other fathers rowed across a lake with their daughters while my daughter rowed without one; the beds and tables in my apartment were flat, empty expanses of loneliness; my husband's clothes were folded into an armoire I could not bring myself to open; his watch waited on a bedside table for his missing wrist.

When Emily wrote "Parting is all we know of heaven, / And all we need of hell" (Fr1773), I am reminded of my husband's reluctance to take that final business trip to Colorado, of the way he stood in our bedroom the night before his flight saying: "I don't want to go to Denver," as if he already knew Colorado – with its dry air and impossible altitudes – meant the end of his life. We parted many times on his journeys to distant countries – Australia, India, New Zealand – but always he returned with dried kangaroo meat, or a bit of silk, or a story about a monkey dancing in a park. Just before I received the phone call from the doctors in Denver I was walking our dog on a street full of Victorian houses, their porches decorated with bats and ghosts, when I had a vision of him standing in his college dorm room when he was nineteen; he was opening a window because his lungs were bothering him – a thing that happened often when we were young because he was asthmatic – and when the dog tugged at her leash, and I moved closer to this mirage, I felt his love for me seeping through that window like a velvet breeze; then, he and the window vanished and I was aware of children in costumes knocking on doors. Only later, when a chaplain called from a hallway where my husband was already too sedated to speak, did I understand the meaning behind this astral scene; only then did I see what might have been lost when that shadowy window closed.

When Emily wrote "Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me – / The Carriage held but just Ourselves – / And Immortality" (Fr479), I think she was saying that death comes for us the way morning comes, the way moonlight seeps through our windows, the way snow blows over our porches and fills the branches of our trees; we are living our lives, as my husband did, trying to attend a meeting though he felt a strange ache in his chest; we do not stop for death but find that death has stopped for us, as when my husband's heart developed a hole no surgeon could mend. And when Dickinson wrote "The Stillness in the Room / Was like the Stillness in the Air – / Between the Heaves of Storm – " (Fr591), she gave language to the universal experience of departure and silence, of a body growing cold, the experience of a corpse without a soul, of the loneliness of being left behind and the elusiveness of the afterlife. Where have the creatures and people we love gone? Will we ever see them again? These are the questions the ancient Greeks answered with an underworld in which Charon rowed

Emily Dickinson, Called Back

Emily lived fifteen years beside West Cemetery, watching
those solemn processions toward silence and, just before she died,

she wrote: *Dear cousins, called back*. Her casket was carried
by six Irish workmen and, following her instructions, they circled

her flower garden, walked through a horse barn,
took a grassy path through fields to a grave

lined with evergreen boughs, inside an iron fence;
she was called back the way children are called home

in the evenings, dusk falling over rooftops, wagons
and baseball bats abandoned in the grass, called back

the way dogs are called back from forests, their noses
pointed towards doorways.

– Faith Shearin

a boat over the River Styx, and the dead arrived with coins under their tongues, to a dark shore where they fed on the seeds of pomegranates and forgot the details of their lives; in this place, gates were guarded by a three-headed dog, and heroes might be lucky enough to reach the Elysian Fields. The afterlife, for Ancient Egyptians, was a place in which they would need their organs preserved in Canopic jars, guarded by the heads of Gods, a place where the objects of this life could be recycled: the harp or golden bed, the chariot or canoe; it was a place of judgement where the goodness of a dead person's heart was weighed against the feather of truth. In the midnight blizzard of that Denver hospital I was greeted by a doctor who told me my husband's kidneys were failing; he wore a white coat and a closed expression when he explained: Your husband cannot leave the hospital like this. I did not immediately understand that the doctor meant my husband was going to die; my mind worked first on a plan to push his hospital bed through the cold maze of corridors to the safety of the parking lot, where I imagined he might remember himself.

When Emily wrote "The Distance that the dead have gone / Does not at first appear;" (Fr1781), I see she was also gesturing towards the nine months I have lived without my husband: months when I stopped using the word we and reverted to using the word I, months when I learned to speak of him in the past tense, mornings when I would awaken feeling, for a moment, ordinary, then remember; these were the months when I watched couples talking to one another in airports and felt my face grow hot, months when I opened drawers to expired passports or wilted boxes of hats, months when I tried to take the dog to the vet but left before her appointment because the paperwork required my marital status, months when I looked into photographs where my husband and I went on unfolding blankets for picnics, and dancing under white balloons, his hand on my back, utterly oblivious to the fate that awaited us; the distance to locate my husband's face accurately in memory deepened; the distance between the reality of his presence in life, and the lack of his presence in death, took time to fully reveal itself.

When Emily explained "Death is the Common Right / Of Toads and Men – " (Fr419), I believe she was talking about the fate we share with all our fellow creatures; shortly after my husband died our family dachshund took ill and did not recover; in life she had been a warm, low-slung creature with striped fur and a long snout; she slept pressed against us, her body wrapped around our necks like a scarf; we called her professor of slumber or anxiety medication on legs because her presence calmed us; she barked at everything she found threatening: baby carriages, lawn mowers, tall workmen who came to fix the sink. Our dog had no words, of course, so it was her presence I missed in the weeks after she died, her dark eyes which did not peer into mine, her head which did not rise in the window when I came home, her tail which did not wag when I pulled a roast from the oven; I had a reoccurring dream in which my husband packed a car for our family vacation to Cape Cod, and he was at the wheel, and our daughter sat in the back with our dog, and I was in the passenger seat with maps and books to read aloud, and we were driving towards that coast we loved, where seals sun themselves on the beach, and whales blow a single stream of water into the air at dawn, and suddenly the dog vanished, my daughter's hand resting on nothing; then, my husband disappeared, the steering wheel unsteady, and my daughter and I rode on: our hands in our laps, unsure of the road or the car's direction, not knowing whether we were about to crash, or arrive at a cottage for a family holiday with only half our family.

What Dickinson wrote about death and grief are relevant more than a century later; they are the very things Queen Victoria discovered when her beloved husband, Albert, died and she went on wearing black for forty years: insisting her servants bring a steaming bowl of water and razor to his empty bedchamber, for a morning shave.

When Dickinson describes herself in a letter to T.W. Higginson she says: "I have no portrait, now, but am small, like the Wren, and my Hair is bold, like the Chestnut Bur – and my eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the Guest leaves – " (L268), I know her face all these years later, without a photograph, because her language is specific, witty, alive; she speaks to me, clearly and accurately, from a small New England town before I was born. After a move across Amherst, Emily described her disorientation in a letter this way: "I am out with lanterns, looking for myself. . . . They say that 'home is where the heart is.' I think it is where the house is" (L182). When I read this I am reminded of how I moved to the first house in which I would be a widow instead of a wife and found my identity was tied up in my relationship to my late husband; I was unsure of how to introduce myself to neighbors; I could not seem to create a cohesive narrative of my life. I said I have been recently widowed and realized I was now defined by his absence. I thought of Emily's image of a lantern moving through the dark, of the way she searched for the same self we all lose eventually: to change, and loss, and, finally, death. I read Dickinson's observation, "Dying is a wild Night and a new Road" (L463) and remember waking up the morning after my husband's death in a hotel room in Colorado, with his suitcase and glasses and laptop; I think of the first meal I tried to eat without him: a pumpkin muffin that stuck in my throat; I remember how I went home to rooms that no longer made sense, of the way our fish languished in the living room aquarium: his red tail fanning the water; I think of how that fish rose to the surface when I fed him and hid sometimes in a hollow log, of the way we lived near one another in our two adjacent worlds – one terrestrial, one aquatic – without any real ability to communicate, of how I watched him with pleasure in that other realm where he moved without legs and breathed water; I thought sometimes that my husband was like the fish: gauzy, submerged. I thought of Emily at the end of her life, just a few years older than I am now, being called back, of the way she wrote on old envelopes in her bedroom, of her poems which included all the words she was considering, written one above the other, of her dashes and half rhymes, of the way she dwelled "in Possibility / a fairer House than Prose – " (Fr466), her poetry a house the way the body is a house, her lantern casting a light for me out here, in a forest of grief, 2019.

Renée Bergland, Book Review Editor

William Logan.
***Dickinson's Nerves, Frost's Woods*. Columbia UP, 2018**

By Michael L. Manson

I recommend reading William Logan's essay collection *Dickinson's Nerves, Frost's Woods* with a cup of coffee in your favorite morning nook or a glass of wine with a view of the setting sun. Logan creates that warm and familiar meditative entrance into poems that mean much to him as well as those invested in the history of the lyric as it has been understood since Brooks and Warren, Richards and Winters. My tastes and interests are larger, but Logan helped me reread poems I knew very well and renewed my appreciation for the material facts that underlie their craft. He is a master of historical trivia, grounding readers in some part of the world in which poets created their work. Like any master, Logan knows his limits, and thus his book periodically reminds readers that speculation might be idle "but idle speculation is not the worst way to attack a poem, so long as it's no more than that." He is that rare critic who sticks with the promise he will never insist on an interpretation.

Dickinson's Nerves, Frost's Woods collects essays that were published in *Hopkins Review*, *Hudson Review*, *New Criterion*, *Parnassus*, *Salmagundi*, and *Yale Review*. Each essay pairs two poems: Frost with Wilbur then later with Dickinson; Lowell with Heaney; Keats with Donald Justice; and Pound with William Carlos Williams. One essay achieves its pairing by examining drafts of Shakespeare's sonnet 2. Other essays pair well-known poems with lesser-known ones: Shelley's "Ozymandias" with a poem on the same subject by Shelley's friend Horace Smith, while Longfellow's *Hiawatha* is discussed along with several parodies, including one by Lewis Carroll. The pairings are best when the poems illuminate each other: Shelley's greatness vs. Smith's inability to achieve profundity; Pound's call to art vs. Williams' refusal to answer such calls. Such pairings provide Logan an opportunity to turn a well-crafted insight: "Ozymandias," for example, "overthrows convention's mild tyrannies about how poems come to be written" or "We're unlikely ever to know who Shakespeare was, he was so many." Such well-turned insights make this book a pleasure.

Other pairs, however, are less illuminating: Lowell's skunks vs. Heaney's, or Frost's horse vs. Wilbur's. Especially disappointing is the pairing of Dickinson's "After great pain" with Frost's "Stopping by Woods," the essay that gives the volume its title. Logan's interpretation of each poem is fascinating, but the pairing only serves the gimmick of pairing. He concludes that Dickinson and Frost are "two very different poets, with a life too opaque and a life not opaque enough. Which was which remains an open question." At such moments, the turn of phrase is more clever than revealing. Separately intriguing, the analyses of the two poems do not cohere into something larger.

I wish I had some better word than gimmick because Logan is so serious about poetry and so little given to foolishness. He is more aware than most that criticism is "idle speculation." The fact that some pairings work better than others is much like the historical trivia he explores. Some trivia produces more insight than others, but all trivia is ultimately trivial. The greatness of the poem remains, inviting readers to further meditation. The pairing of poems is less important than the brute fact that the poems he discusses well reward any effort at understanding any part of their accomplishments, whether those analyses are informed by the New Criticism, cultural studies, the New Historicism, or his own practice of seeking out the lost world of the poem's composition.

Because Logan's method is meditative rather than discursive, Dickinson readers will want to read his essay on "After great pain" on their own. It is one of the volume's stronger essays. Like his other essays, it would be enriched by engagement with literary scholars and historians who have examined more systematically the material and social worlds of these poets. For example, he seeks to understand Dickinson's "hidden romantic life." including especially the addressee of the Master letters, but dwells only on men and even then without reference to current scholarship. In an aside about Samuel Bowles' inability to understand Dickinson's poetry, he observes that Bowles only published poetry "most adapted to the taste of the day" before turning on Dickinson, complaining that her own taste "was conservative and sentimental," including especially a love of "romantic drivel." At such moments,

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.
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Logan fails to exercise a historical imagination. He could have learned much from scholars who have seen how much Dickinson's reading contributed to her genius, learning how to read through her eyes and sensibilities, not ours.

One function of criticism is to criticize, and given that scholars rarely criticize these days, poets have an opportunity to lead. Although Logan has acquired a reputation for controversial pronouncements on contemporary poets, his judgments in this volume of classics are usually pat, unedifying. The contrast between Shelley's masterful "Ozymandias" and Smith's much weaker version leads to a sharp discussion of craft, but the essay on Longfellow's *Hiawatha* is limited by the distance between one era's taste and another's. Logan tries to erase this distance by arguing that as early as 1856 a London reviewer understood that Whitman might "'push Longfellow into the shade,'" but the point remains congratulatory. Nothing in the essay shakes readers from present tastes and concerns. Readers learn a little about the art of parody, and one wants more from an essay subtitled "The Name and Nature of Parody." I was happy to see Logan cite Charles Calhoun's biography of Longfellow because Calhoun helps readers see why Longfellow's contemporaries valued his contributions. Unfortunately, Logan seems to have learned little from Calhoun, and because Logan does not seek out other strong scholars of the nineteenth century, he remains trapped in contemporary tastes that are already a century old. Logan struggles to move his thinking past his own historical moment, but he is masterful at embedding the masters in their history. Readers seeking to see familiar poems in fresh ways will enjoy his "idle speculations" about the world of their composition.

Michael L. Manson teaches in Washington, DC, at Georgetown Day School. His article on Dickinson's metrical grammar appears in Blackwell's Companion to Emily Dickinson.

Dickinson
Apple TV series created by Alena Smith and starring Hailee Steinfeld as a young Emily Dickinson

By Annelise Brinck-Johnsen

The remarkable and often outrageous Apple TV series *Dickinson* presents a twenty-first century kaleidoscope view of the poet: emotions explode in a swirl of supersaturated color while electronic dance music plays loudly on the soundtrack. The effect is dizzying, beautiful, and often absurd. But somehow, it comes together. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Alena Smith, the creator of the series, explains, "People feel very possessive about Emily Dickinson, for a good reason. Because nobody understands her, everybody feels like their little keyhole into her is the right one." The view through Smith's cinematic keyholes are startling and sometimes incongruously twenty-first century, but for this reviewer, they are also often shockingly, weirdly, right.

Although the series does not stake out a clear position on any of the questions scholars debate surrounding Dickinson's personal life, it is emphatically clear about Dickinson's aesthetics and the impact of her poetry today. The show highlights the queer possibilities of Dickinson's poems, and celebrates their radical antiracist and antisexist sentiments.

The series does not strive for historical accuracy so much as it dwells in the possibilities hinted at by Dickinson's poems. Although the series has a loose plot arc, it functions more as an anthology. Every episode offers a distinct gloss on Dickinson as seen through the lens of a specific poem. Each one is titled with a line from a particular poem, which has a relation of some kind to the action of the episode. They all end with Dickinson reciting the poem. Dickinson's language, much more than her life, is the driving force here.

The most widely-reviewed episode, "Wild Nights," portrays a raucous and ahistorical party. In this episode, as in most of the others, the show's characters engage in an unexpected amount of sexual activity. Indeed, throughout the series, sex functions frequently as an easy punchline, driving home the point that Emily Dickinson was a human being who at some point surely experienced desire. There is oral sex of all varieties. There is manual stimulation beneath a Christmas dinner table. There is sex between two minor characters on a desk before a wedding. There is public masturbation. The sex rarely serves to further the plot or showcase emotional relationships, and the effect is somewhere between a Judd Apatow movie and an early season episode of *Game of Thrones*.

I mention the sex because it has been the focus of many other reviews, and its inclusion is a clear artistic choice. Yet despite all the sex, Dickinson the poet is always the focal point of the series. Dickinson changes radically from one episode to the next, while other characters revolve around her in order to draw out different aspects of the poetry. The show is sharpest when Dickinson is contrasted with other well-known figures. John Mulaney's depiction of a fame-hungry and bean-obsessed Henry David Thoreau pulls no punches, and Zosia Mamet's no-nonsense business-minded Louisa May Alcott is deserving of a show of her own. Dickinson's interactions with these characters highlight her positioning within the American literary canon: an iconoclast driven by a love of nature and poetry as opposed to fame or fortune.

Dickinson's relationship with her family and friends, on the other hand, is more prone to variation. Edward Dickinson oscillates between supportive pride and stern patriarchal force. Emily Norcross Dickinson is played beautifully by Jane Krakowski as a woman so obsessed with homemaking that it verges into parody. Lavinia Dickinson is boy-crazy, but also often more aware of political and social issues than her sister, and Austin Dickinson is an immature man-child who continues to fall upwards because he is the only son in a prominent family. Dickinson's family members are broadly drawn but well-acted, and provide an amusing counterpoint to Dickinson's main relationships. Actress Hailee Steinfeld bounces off the other actors, switching from feminist rebel to petulant teen to perturbed sister to jealous lover in the blink of an eye. She superbly masters dialogue that goes from ridiculous to heartbreaking to hilarious in a single thought. The panoply of Emily Dickinsons that Steinfeld portrays may not be the ones of my imagination, but they are mesmerizing.

Spoilers Ahead

In the first half of the series, the main relationship is that of Dickinson and Sue Gilbert, and Sue's upcoming marriage to Austin Dickinson is the main source of conflict. Dickinson and Sue have a romantic and sexual relationship in the show, as do Sue and Austin, and tensions among the three frequently erupt. This relationship changes with the introduction of Benjamin Franklin Newton half-way through the series. The Newton of this series is shown as a mentor and potential suitor of Dickinson. They discuss poetry, kiss, promise to not-marry each other and exchange not-marriage vows, before Newton unfortunately dies (it is implied that he dies in the Dickinson house with Dickinson herself tending to him). However, Ben is also coded as queer. One scene about Ben's fantasy of a circus shows him kissing a man, while another about Dickinson's nightmare of her own funeral shows Ben announcing that has always been more attracted to Austin. Throughout the series, Dickinson's relationships are passionately ambiguous.

The Carriage held but just Hailee Steinfeld and Wiz Khalifa

Despite the show's clear desire to frame Dickinson the poet as presciently "woke," the show falters somewhat when it comes to race. Wiz Khalifa plays Dickinson's imaginary friend and mentor, Death, and there are other characters of color throughout the series. Despite this inclusion clearly being intentional, the exact message seems muddled. A flamboyantly dressed Asian male peer of Dickinson's proudly proclaims that his father is a samurai, which is why he has access to the most fashionable fans, and the show pauses for a moment to let the import of that statement sink in, before moving on to the next joke. An episode focusing on fugitive slave laws ("I am afraid to own a body") does so through the lens of an amateur dramatic production of "Othello." Dickinson is determined to force the family's groom, who is black, to play the character of Othello despite opposition from everyone including the groom himself. The actual impact of an employer's daughter trying to force a man into amateur theatrics because of his race seems less idealistic than coercive, and the situation is not examined thoroughly. Similarly, in a later episode, the groom remarks ironically to his wife that "these white people really know how to throw a party," when the party is devolving into embarrassing pandemonium. While this remark is amusing, it seems almost negligently ahistorical to pretend that two servants of color would be invited guests to a party thrown by the Dickinson family.

The politics are not fully thought out, but overall I find the ambiguity to be an excellent way to showcase the various ways of looking at Dickinson and her poetry: after all, Dickinson's own thoughts and politics have been hotly discussed for years. More broadly, the show functions as an extended riff on what it means to be relevant and modern in 2019. Dickinson and her peers are all clearly figured as members of Generation Z. They speak like the youth of today (I laughed out loud when Dickinson said "we need to throw one of our classic Dickinson house parties"). They take opium and then dance to Lizzo. There is a minor subplot in which a character gives a nude self-portrait sketch to one suitor, only to have it shown to the rest of his friend group, clearly meant as a sexting analogy. There is even an extended scene in which Lavinia Dickinson and her friends discuss how the Republican Party is the only truly "woke" party, due to its firm anti-slavery stance.

The incongruities among the period set, characters, words, and actions are clearly intended for comedic effect, but the episodes also capture the universality of the emotions Dickinson can evoke in her poems. Although the series is flawed, it was clearly born from love. I can only applaud its desire to introduce Dickinson in all her ambiguities to a younger generation. Since watching it I have been recommending it to all the youths I know.

Annelise Brinck-Johnsen completed a Master's degree Women's Studies at Oxford University and is currently studying law at Columbia. She is a regular reviewer of works of works of fiction, particularly young adult fiction, that involve Emily Dickinson.

Purrless my cat can stroll away
Rejecting human cheer.
To the same corner wends its way
And forms a furry sphere.

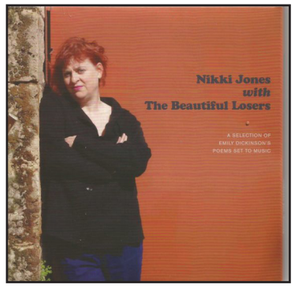
How cordial is the mystery
Of feline solitude.
Until I beckon spaciously
And he returns for food.

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

Dickinson Tracks from Perth

By Diana Wagner

There was a time when musical settings of Emily Dickinson's poetry had to be unusual, and so one could expect something innovative and unexpected. Having become more commonplace in the last 20 years, Dickinson-inspired musical settings contain fewer surprises, and may even run the risk of being predictable, at best, or cliché, at worst. Such is not the problem with *Music for Emily,* by Western Australia-based The Beautiful Losers.



Music for Emily *is available at http://www.beautifullosersband.com/music-for-emily/. The Beautiful Losers first formed as a band in the late 80s, continued with varying personel for several years, disbanded, then reassembled in 2014.*

With poetry vocals by Nikki Jones, this 16-track CD opens with a bass-percussion *ostinato* that makes no suggestion that "I went to Heaven – " (Fr577) is the poem to follow. The techno-pop music that emerges, thanks to Hurb Jephasun's organ, seems a bit of a mismatch to the text of this poem. Nevertheless, Jones's reading and sometimes-singing is placed in the musical setting with considerable forethought. She is not simply reading poetry over a musical background.

The less techno-pop "An awful Tempest mashed the air" (Fr224) opens with a piano piece that crescendos into, well, a musical tempest. In this piece, however, the music is merely background and both Jones's reading and the musical piece could stand independently without the listener missing one or the other. In several other tracks on this album, the musical tracks could stand completely on their own, though some of the musical settings are so repetitive that one wishes Dickinson's poems were longer, to allow for more rhythmic and melodic variation.

* * *

Still, there are tracks in this collection that are delightful both for their lyricism and for their musical arrangements. For example, "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died – " (Fr591) opens with Jephasun's electric piano and a cheerful pop rhythm from Shaun Hoffman's percussion. For this much-anthologized poem, Jones sings the poem text and the entire arrangement comes together beautifully. The listener might find him or herself with an earworm, singing "I could not see to see – " for some time after listening to this track.

Jephasun's piano opens a beautiful rendition of "The wind took up the northern things" (Fr1152). The musical arrangement, although sharing the repetitive nature of the other tracks, doesn't distract from Jones's reading of this lesser known, but very lovely poem.

The final Outro track is a brief 1:15 of club pop, with no poetry text and nothing that recalls earlier tracks. This is one of many musical tracks that could stand on its own without any need for or allusion to Dickinson.

The single word track listings in the liner notes would benefit from a reference to the full first line of each poem in this collection. Younger readers of poetry, especially those with a penchant for pop electro music and curiosity about Dickinson, might wish to be able to read the entire poem. The packaging is thoughtfully done. The cover sports the ubiquitous daguerreotype of Dickinson, while the inside contains pages from her beautiful herbarium. The liner notes helpfully include a numbered track listing, a feature from which the back cover of the CD would benefit alongside Nikki Jones's wistful and confident photo.

For teachers working with students from middle school to college, *Music for Emily* may serve as an inventive and contemporary approach to Dickinson. Young readers might be inspired to write their own pop, rock, or urban versions of Dickinson. Anything that gets young people thinking about poetry deserves a listen.

Scholar and folk singer Diana Wagner, who edits the What's Your Story? *series for the* Bulletin*, is Director of Graduate Programs and Associate Professor of English at Salisbury University, in Maryland. She is volunteer programming manager at the community radio station, WBYC, and she has a folk show that runs on the local NPR affiliate, WSDL.*

Jed Deppman, 1967-2019

By Gary Lee Stonum

John Erickson (Jed) Deppman died peacefully on June 22, 2019, age 52, with his family at his side. Jed was a distinguished teacher and scholar who made significant contributions both professionally and personally to EDIS. His passing is mourned by the many who loved and admired him.

Photo Credit: Formosa Deppman

He was born June 13, 1967 in Washington, D.C. and lived most of his youth in Middlebury, Vermont. After a BA at Amherst, he received the MA and Ph.D in comparative literature from the University of Wisconsin. There he met the love of his life, Hsiu-Chuang. The couple braved the two-career gauntlet of academic couples in the humanities, acquiring positions in Kentucky and Texas before arriving together at Oberlin College in 2003. Hsiu-Chuang became a professor of Chinese and cinema, Jed a professor of comparative literature and director of the comp lit program.

It was at Oberlin that he began publishing his best-known, ground-breaking Dickinson criticism. *Emily Dickinson and Philosophy* (2013), an edited collection with an introduction primarily authored by Jed, consolidated his reputation for taking her intellect with utmost seriousness; *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson* (2008) first established that reputation and continues to be one of the most influential Dickinson monographs of the 21st century; numerous contributions to other collections, to the *Emily Dickinson Journal,* and to other venues rounded out his Dickinson scholarship. A regular, valued contributor to EDIS conferences, he is remembered especially for his wit and conviviality on these occasions.

Jed came to Dickinson and indeed to American literature after working primarily in theory. Other scholarly work takes up James Joyce, Jacques Derrida, Paul Valéry, Jean-Luc Nancy, genetic criticism, and translation. He is also the author of an as yet unpublished novel entitled "Taking Chemo with Nietzsche," about which more below.

Jed was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer in 2008, with an expectation of only a few years to live. During the ensuing, remarkable eleven years before his death, he taught full time, helped raise two beautiful and accomplished daughters, traveled the world, lived abroad including several year-long stints in Taiwan, and wrote some of his best work. Except for the baseball cap covering chemo-induced balding, you would have hardly known he was ill,

He also continued to teach a freshman seminar in the art of dying. The class, in addition to the usual readings and classroom work, paired the students with residents of a nearby old-age facility who would predictably have different perspectives on death than Oberlin 18-year-olds. Jed actually began to teach this course several years before his diagnosis and could not have known its personal relevance.

The aptly uncanny link of that course with the last decade of his life is redoubled by his attention to Dickinson, a poet not inaccurately understood as someone fascinated by death and the dying. In his final essay, "Coda: Living and Dying with Emily Dickinson," forthcoming in The Oxford Handbook of Emily Dickinson (eds. Cristanne Miller and Karen J. Sanchez-Eppler), he concluded: "We can identify impressive moments we have witnessed or imagined, work them into dynamic images, and use them to organize our attitude toward life and death. Similarly, we can always rethink the limits of who and where we are. We have always been connected to so much – our loved ones, people who have died already, our childhood, our past and future selves, our past and future places – that we can always think about new ways to belong to them."

Jed's long and statistically remarkable survival after the diagnosis depended on extended bouts of chemotherapy, radiation, and experimental treatments. These form the factual basis of "Taking Chemo with Nietzsche," which concerns two cancer patients, a retired professor (who resembles Jed not at all) and a punk kiddo (ditto) nevertheless fascinated by and continually quoting Nietzsche. Spoiler alert: they die. But the point or at least one of the points of the text is that it is a comedy. Laugh out loud funny at many points and profound at others.

That would be Jed. If I may be permitted personal observations, because we were friends and wound up living a few hours'

drive away, my family and his enjoyed our visits together most every year, watching the girls grow up and later feasting on the lunch the grown-up Formosa and Ginger prepared for us in nearly his last year. Followed by a joint string recital. Are they the little kids who chalked our driveway a few years before? The one who is now at Yale?

Not that I always got his jokes. Driving back from an Amherst conference, Kate Allen (née Dunning) sitting shotgun and Jed at the wheel of my trusty Prius, they listened to her tape of Foucault discoursing on Heidegger. They kept giggling at points which I, no francophone and wishing that M. Foucault would at least actually quote the German rather than some French translation, well, I just smiled politely, snuggled down in the back seat and wished that like Jed I had a near-native command of French, not to mention his fluency in Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin.

* * *

Jed is survived by Hsiu-Chuang and their two daughters, Formosa and Ginger, as well as his parents, siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Comparative Literature program at Oberlin College in Jed Deppman's memory or to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance, 1025 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 1066, Washington, DC 20005.

Please contact his sister, Ann Deppman at adeppman@oberlin.edu with any questions.

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.

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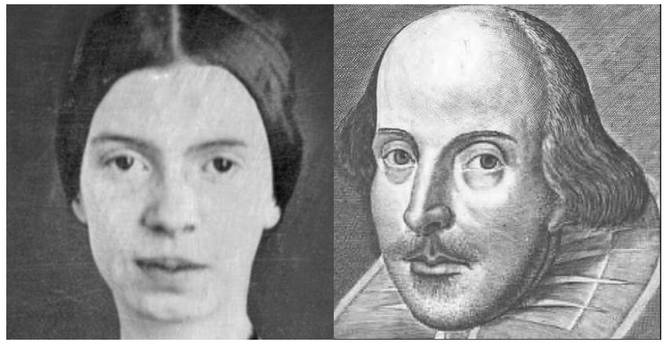


"Stratford on Avon – accept us all!" Dickinson and Shakespeare

In collaboration with the Emily Dickinson Museum, the 2020 EDIS Annual Meeting will be held July 31 to August 1 in Amherst. This year's focus is Dickinson's great love of Shakespeare and this theme will shape the usual features of our Annual Meetings such as reading groups, tours of the Dickinson Museum, performances, readings, seminar-style discussions, and talks.

Come join EDIS's own Shakespeare Reading Club to consider if Dickinson was correct when she declared "While Shakespeare remains Literature is firm" and "He has had his Future who has found Shakespeare." The plan is to read some of Dickinson's favorite works by Shakespeare, such as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello*, and to discuss his relevance for the poet and her culture and his place in our twenty-first-century society. The good news is that the Dickinson family's 8 volume edition of Shakespeare has been digitized by the Houghton Library, Harvard and is available via this link: https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/24/archival_objects/1787359.

Call For Submissions: Special Issue of *The Emily Dickinson Journal* International Dickinson: Scholarship in English Translation

Because English is the dominant language in Dickinson studies, scholarship published in other languages is often overlooked. With the goal of promoting scholarly dialogue across languages and cultures, we invite submissions for a special issue of *The Emily Dickinson Journal* devoted to translations into English of recent critical work on the poet published in other languages. As Domnhall Mitchell and others have noted, interest in Dickinson's writing continues to grow in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and other parts of the world: currently there are major translation projects underway in places like Japan, Taiwan, China, and Brazil. Global interest in Dickinson's work, however, has surpassed global scholarly communication networks, which tend to be restricted by national and linguistic boundaries.

Seeking to represent a nationally diverse range of critical perspectives on Dickinson's work, the editors invite scholars to submit abstracts in English of no more than 500 words proposing the translation of a peer-reviewed essay or book chapter published in a language other than English in the last five years. This may be work you published or work familiar to you; if the work is not your own, please secure the permission of the author to translate it into English as part of your proposal. We will review the abstracts and extend invitations to scholars to translate the proposed work into English in full or in part for publication in the fall 2020 issue of *The Emily Dickinson Journal*.

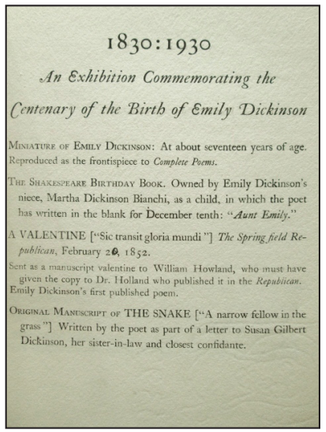
To maximize the diversity of the scholarly work presented in the issue, a second section will feature abstract-length presentations of books, chapters, and peer-reviewed, published articles. We therefore also invite scholars to send 500-word summaries of recently published or forthcoming work, to be published in abstract form. For a third section, we seek abstracts (250-300 words) of PhD dissertations on Dickinson defended in the last five years, or still in progress. It is our hope that this issue will bring new perspectives to an international readership. The issue offers a unique opportunity for international scholars to make their work more widely available, and for English-speaking scholars to enrich their critical perspectives on Dickinson.

Please submit abstracts for all three sections to all 3 editors of this issue, Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau (achevrier.bosseau@gmail.com), Li-hsin Hsu (hsulihsin@yahoo.com) and Eliza Richards (ecr@email.unc.edu). Provide any necessary permissions, the bibliographical information for the original publication or dissertation, and a short cv. Deadline for submission: January 15, 2020.

The Emily Dickinson Centennial Exhibition at Yale University

By Krans Bloeimaand

Of the three major exhibitions of Emily Dickinson-related artifacts mounted between 1930 and 2017 for which detailed catalogs were issued, the event that took place nearly ninety years ago in Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University is probably the least known about. One possible reason is that only 75 copies of the exhibition catalog were printed. Of these scarce volumes, at least 20 copies are held in various libraries, leaving 55 copies unaccounted for, less the one in my collection. By comparison, 1,800 total copies of the 2017 Dickinson exhibition at the Morgan Library in New York were issued in a series of two press runs. The fact that the Yale catalog was essentially made-by-hand with text printed on English watermarked paper using an Albion hand-operated press, made this rare ephemeral item attractive to Dickinson bibliophiles, then as now. Credit for the completion of this project is owed to the guidance of Carl Purington Rollins (1880-1960), who was the first Printer to Yale University and founder of the Bibliographical Press in Sterling Memorial Library. Rollins founded the Press to teach students the art and craft of letterpress printing. His team of student type-setters, printers and binders were largely responsible for the production of the catalog.



1830:1930

An Exhibition Commemorating the Centenary of the Birth of Emily Dickinson

Miniature of Emily Dickinson: At about seventeen years of age. Reproduced as the frontispiece to *Complete Poems*.

The Shakespeare Birthday Book. Owned by Emily Dickinson's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, as a child, in which the poet has written in the blank for December tenth: "*Aunt Emily.*"

A valentine ["Sic transit gloria mundi"] *The Springfield Republican*, February 2[illegible], 1852.

Sent as a manuscript valentine to William Howland, who must have given the copy to Dr. Holland who published it in the *Republican*. Emily Dickinson's first published poem.

Original Manuscript of THE SNAKE ["A narrow fellow in the grass"] Written by the poet as part of a letter to Susan Gilbert Dickinson, her sister-in-law and closest confidante.

The first page of artifacts in the exhibition.

Using materials that were most likely already on hand for the project, Rollins and his team produced a thin octavo consisting of sixteen pages. The case featured a narrow tan cloth spine and tan paper-covered boards decorated with fragile-looking leafy stems. The boards lacked stamping or labels of any sort. The student printers hand set the type using four varieties of Cloister: light face, medium face, italic and old style. The paper was off-white "Linton" from moulds made by W. Green Son & Waite for the English paper merchant F.J. Head & Company. The paper bears the watermark of "FJH" and was introduced to the market in the 1930s. There are three additional watermarks: the shrouded head of Christ, the date 1399 and a raised hand with a ring on the thumb, a possible reference to the Pope. None of these have any relevance to Emily Dickinson, but might be interpreted as the paper mould-maker's homage to "mediaeval laid patterns and watermarks." Before being cased in, the text pages were stitched together with string, not unlike a Dickinson fascicle. The resulting product is not without its faults. There are several typos in the text, the most egregious being the dropped "g" in Rollins' middle name ("Carl Purinton Rollins"). Three other typos are acknowledged under the heading "Errors Discovered in the Press" on the verso of a flyleaf. The entire project, from type setting to hand binding, probably took less than three weeks to complete.

The catalog's Prefatory Note was written, appropriately enough, by Martha Dickinson Bianchi (see below) and dated The Evergreens, November 13, 1930. Martha's involvement in the exhibition wasn't limited to the catalog's preface. She officially opened the celebration with an address and lent to the exhibition twenty of the sixty-six items displayed. These included the 1847 daguerreotype of Emily, thirteen Dickinson poems in manuscript originally sent by Emily to Susan Dickinson, Emily's personal copy of *The New England Primer*, the original manuscript with corrected proof sheet of Susan Dickinson's memorial tribute to Emily that appeared in the May 18th, 1886, issue of the *Springfield Republican*, and so on. Mabel Loomis Todd's work is represented by eleven Dickinson-related books that she edited or co-edited. It was Madame Bianchi's involvement that made the Yale exhibition "the official celebration of the centenary." Alfred Leete Hampson was also given credit for his "assistance in the compilation of [the] catalogue." The chief cataloger, however, was William H. McCarthy Jr., who prior to December, 1930, had already established a relationship based on friendship and trust with Madame Bianchi and Hampson. Beginning in the mid-1940s, it was McCarthy who cataloged all of Bianchi's Emily Dickinson holdings and it was he who brokered the sale of all the poems, letters and other artifacts that Hampson inherited from Madame Bianchi to Harvard University in 1950. Made by hands long vanished, the Yale catalog, as an emblem of Emily's centenary, artfully represents the important role played by books and reading in the life of the poet.

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Thanks to Lee Schrunk and Joanne Alexander for their assistance in identifying the type faces used in the printing of the catalog.

Finally, thanks to Charles Beecher Hogan (1906-1983), the original owner of my copy of the catalog and ardent bookman and bibliographer, for his careful stewardship of the book now handed down to me.

The following "Prefatory Note" was written by Martha Dickinson Bianchi for the 1930 Dickinson Centennial Exhibition at Yale. (See previous page.)

Prefatory Note

Emily Dickinson discovered for herself that "the admirations and contempts of time show justest through an open tomb," and that –

> The dying, as it were a height,
> Reorganizes estimate.

Denouncing publication as "the auction of the mind of man" only justifiable by poverty, not one of the volumes herein catalogued forty-four years after her death had her own eyes beheld. She was the expositor of her own faith; the reserve of one "born New Englandly," enforced by the mystic in her make-up, shunned the market place and as far as possible kept her own mind –

> Impregnable to inquest,
> However neighborly.

Yet how whimsically she was elfing her 'Boston pedant' if she exclaimed, "This then is a book!" –

For her father's library, always under her hand, climbed from floor to ceiling, – including not only complete sets of the more sedate British poets but various editions of the works of Lord Byron – that elegant object of the lifted eyebrow of a hundred years ago. Books were the accompaniment of her days and nights from her youth up; and her three poems beginning "Unto my books how good to turn," "A precious mouldering pleasure 'tis to meet an antique book," and "There is no frigate like a book," are among her most familiar and oft quoted lines.

Her "bulletins from immortality" were set down without thought of an outside audience, and not even the scant few of her friends mentally nearest her were aware of the extent of her work. Certainly no one could have been more unsuspecting of the honours in store for her – except as chrysalis infer firmament.

It seems indeed the final paradox of a supreme Paradoxer that Emily Dickinson, who fled all publics, all renowns, should only have run the faster toward her own. Yet it is in entire accord with her definite statement sent her "Sister Sue" –

> Eternity will be
> Velocity, or pause,
> Precisely as the candidate
> Preliminary was.

Martha Dickinson Bianchi

Citation

Emily Dickinson, Yale University Library, December Tenth MCMXXX (1830:1930, An Exhibition Commemorating the Centenary of the Birth of Emily Dickinson). New Haven: The Bibliographical Press in the Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, December, 1930.

Elegy for Anne-Marie

To Ann-Marie Vinde
Translator of Emily Dickinson and Ford Madox Ford

Translation was her expertise.
She moved from word to world in grace –
Interpreting the gist of truth
With love that helped her hand replace

One sentence for an equal thought –
One meaning for another sense –
She captured idioms of time
In native lyric resonance.

She taught the brilliant and the meek –
She crossed the channel for her friends –
Secured the children of her nest –
Bequeathed her heart – bestowed her best.

She guided me from Park to Hägg
At Stockholm's University –
Propounded works that Poets make –
Translating Light's diversity.

And now she moves to other realms –
Traverses new dimensions there –
Reversing mortal pains to odes
That celebrate a brighter sphere.

I see her at the Blue Hall feast –
I see her walking on the stairs –
I see her greeting loved ones gone –
I see her free from this life's cares.

Her Presence honors one and all –
She wears a sapphire velvet Gown
While dancing in the Golden Hall
Of laureates and Triple-Crowns.

Cynthia Hallen, 1 February 2018, Provo Utah

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