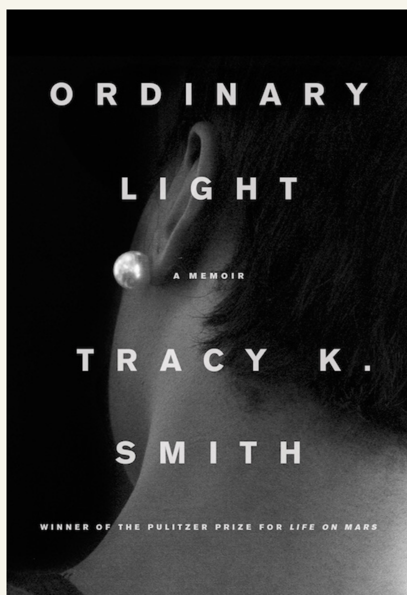
THE EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

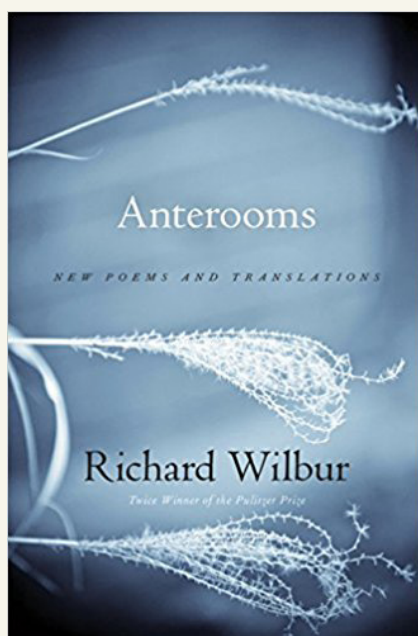
Bulletin

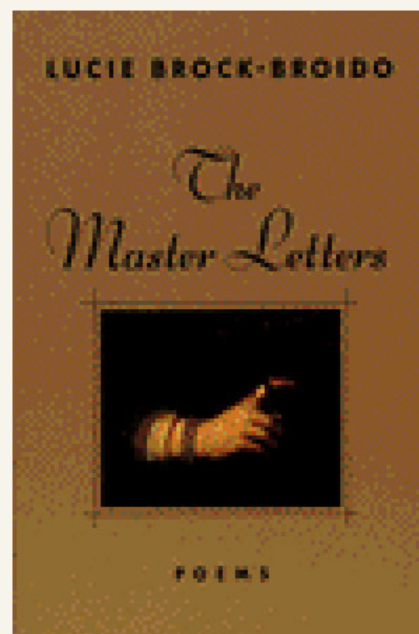
Volume 30, Number 1 May/June 2018

The Wicks they stimulate

If vital light







Inhere as do

the Suns

By

Officers

President:	Martha Nell Smith
Vice-President:	Barbara Mossberg
Secretary:	Nancy List Pridgen
Treasurer:	James C. Fraser

Board Members

Faith Barrett
Renée Bergland
George Boziwick
Antoine Cazé
Paul Crumbley
Stephanie Farrar
Páraic Finnerty
James C. Fraser
Michelle Kohler
Barbara Mossberg
Elizabeth Petrino
Vivian Pollak
Eliza Richards
Martha Nell Smith
Brooke Steinhauser (Honorary Member)
Marta Werner
Jane Wald (Honorary Member)

Legal Advisor:	Louis N. Levine
Nominations Committee Chair:	Páraic Finnerty
Membership Committee Chair:	Elizabeth Petrino
Local Chapters Committee Chair:	Eleanor Heginbotham
Arts Committee Chair:	Barbara Dana
Emily Dickinson Journal Editor:	James Guthrie

Editor, *EDIS Bulletin*: Daniel Manheim

Sustaining Members

Mary Elizabeth Bernard
Richard Brantley
Diane K. Busker
Antoine Cazé
Richard Brantley
Scott Donaldson
Jane D. Eberwein
Robert Eberwein
Judith Farr
David H. Forsyth
James C. Fraser
Trisha Kannan
Helen Koukoutsis
Cristanne Miller
Barbara Mossberg
Martha Nell Smith

Contributing Members

Felicia Nimue Ackerman
Carolyn L. Cooley
Barbara Dana
Marie Esteve
Susan J. Goldwitz
LeeAnn Gorthey
Sharon Hamilton
Linda Healy
Eleanor Heginbotham
Suzanne Juhasz
Rita Brady Kiefer
Niels Kjaer
Eleanor Linafelt
Daniel Manheim
Greg Mattingly
Marianne Noble
Eliza Richards
George T. Slone
Ethan Tarasov
Robin Tarasov
Hiroko Uno
Lingling Xiang

EDIS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial contributions of these members.

EDIS *Bulletin* (ISSN 1055-3932) is published twice yearly, May/June and November/December, by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. Standard Mail non-profit postage is paid at Lexington, KY 40511. Membership in the Society is open to all persons with an interest in Emily Dickinson and her work. For further information, contact Martha Nell Smith, President, EDIS, Department of English, 2119 Tawes Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742, or mnsmith@umd.edu. Annual dues are $50.00 for regular members, $30.00 for students, $200.00 for sustaining members, $113.00 for institutional members, $100.00 for contributing members (all of whom receive the *Bulletin* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*), or $20.00 for associate members (*Bulletin* only). Membership inquiries should be directed to James C. Fraser, 159 Prospect St., Apt 7, Acton, MA, 01720-3654, USA. Membership applications and changes of address should be sent to The Emily Dickinson International Society, c/o Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211-0966, USA. Direct changes of address to jrnlcirc@mail.press.jhu.edu, 800-548-1784 (U.S. and Canada), or 410-516-6987; fax to 410-516-3866. Address submissions for the *Bulletin* to Daniel Manheim, Centre College, 600 West Walnut St., Danville, KY 40422, USA or dan.manheim@centre.edu. Submission deadlines are March 1 (Spring issue) and September 1 (Fall issue). All articles become the property of the *Bulletin*. Back issues are available for $5.00 each from the editor. Copyright © 2018 by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. The *Bulletin* is indexed in EBSCO, Humanities International Complete, and the MLA Bibliography.

www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org

In This Issue

Series

4 *Poet to Poet*
Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith, Emily Dickinson, and "Awe"
By Eleanor Heginbotham
Series Editor, Jonnie Guerra

10 *Dickinson Scholars*
Fixed Points and Widening Diameters: On Albert Gelpi
By Enikö Bollobás
Series Editor, Cindy Mackenzie

13 *Teaching Dickinson*
Finding a Context for Teaching Dickinson
By Páraic Finnerty
Series Editor, Marianne Noble

Features

8 **White Heat**
An Interview with Ivy Schweitzer

15 **Emily Dickinson's Prescient Stages of Grief**
By Daphne Thompson

17 **Thomas Dwight Gilbert's Useful Career**
By Jo Ann Orr and Dan Manheim

20 **A Tribute to Richard Wilbur**
By Judith Farr

23 **An Appreciation of Lucie Brock-Broido**
By Tom Daley

Reviews

26 **New Publications**
Renée Bergland, Book Review Editor

29 **Enikő Bollobás, *Vendégünk a végtelenből. Emily Dickinson költészete [Our Visitor from Infinitude. Emily Dickinson's Poetry]*.**
By Pál Hegyi

30 ***O eu, o outro e o mundo / The Self, the Other, and the World***
By George Monteiro

Members' News

31 **New EDIS Board Member-At-Large, Li-Hsin Hsu**

33 **Hope is the Thing with Numbers**
By Bill Sweet

35 **EDIS ANNUAL MEETING 2018**
Emily Dickinson: In the Company of Others

Front Cover: In addition to Eleanor Heginbotham's interview/essay on Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith, this issue includes two memorial tributes to poets who found a creative ancestor in Dickinson: Richard Wilbur and Lucie Brock-Broido.

Back Cover: In the "Noted with Pleasure" department, the fragmentary manuscript of "How soft the Caterpillar steps" (Fr1523; AC manuscript #229), should serve as another reminder that every poem Dickinson wrote may be "intent upon its circuit quaint," regardless of how it is represented in print.

The Assistant Editor for this issue is Allyson Weglar

Dickinson poems are reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from the following volumes: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition*, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998, 1999 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Copyright © 1929, 1935 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, Copyright © renewed 1957, 1963 by Mary L. Hampson: Little Brown and Co., Boston. Dickinson letters are reprinted by permission of the publishers from *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1958, 1986 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson.

Poet to Poet

Jonnie Guerra, Series Editor

Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith, Emily Dickinson, and "Awe"

By Eleanor Heginbotham

It is my pleasure to feature United States Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith in the Poet to Poet series. Smith is the author of four volumes of poetry, The Body's Question: Poems *(2003),* Duende Poems *(2007),* Life on Mars *(2011), and* Wade in the Water *(2018), all published by Graywolf Press. At the center of Smith's most recent collection, just released in April, is a Civil War suite based on the experience of black soldiers and their families during and after the war. Smith also is the author of* Ordinary Light: A Memoir *(2015), published by Vintage Books, Penguin Random House. A special thanks to Eleanor Heginbotham, professor emerita of Concordia University St. Paul, for providing* Bulletin *readers with an enthusiastic account of the Smith-Dickinson connection in the essay that follows.*

Oh my. If Emily appeared in my class, I would be in awe, in awe of her quiet authority, her fearless willingness to imagine things like eternity and the life of the soul. If she were my student, I would step back and enjoy her." On the phone from her New Jersey office, Tracy K. Smith, director of Princeton University's Creative Writing Program and the newest Poet Laureate of the United States, answers my wildly suppositional first question during our November 28, 2017 interview.

Smith had, of course, already acknowledged Dickinson's powerful influence many times in her volumes of poetry and National Book Award finalist memoir, *Ordinary Light* (hereafter *OL*), in which she described her first meeting with Dickinson:

"From the moment I saw it, sitting toward the bottom of a page in our reader, I couldn't help but memorize a poem whose meter had worked upon me quickly and in a way I couldn't yet understand. Its rhyme scheme cemented, for me, a new sense of inevitability, allowing the lines to slip easily into my ear and stay there:

I'm Nobody! Who are you?. . .

Every now and then, when I was thinking about something altogether different, the first stanza of that poem, by Emily Dickinson, would pop into the front of my mind, drawing me into mischievous collusion with the speaker: *Then there's a pair of us! / Don't tell!"* (*OL* 145-146)

Photo Credit: Rachel Eliza Griffiths

Now, decades later, having received the highest accolades possible for poets – the Pulitzer Prize, for *Life on Mars*; three awards for *Duende Poems* (the Whiting, the James Laughlin, and the *Essence* magazine's Literary Award for Poetry); the Academy Fellowship given by the Academy of American Poets; and more – she reflected on what she owes to and shares with Dickinson.

Smith's memoir reveals deep connections. To begin with, as the youngest of five by a number of years, Tracy was encouraged to explore the large library collected by her reading family. Her memoir, in fact, begins with a description of the oak bookshelves and what they contained that her parents and siblings "pushed" her to read. No one warned her to avoid books that might "joggle the mind," and the wide variety she read did goad her questioning mind. "How many worlds were there, and what did they want from us, there, in our houses, under the low roofs of our lives?" wonders the five-year-old Tracy on Halloween (*OL* 36). No reader of the *Bulletin* needs reminders of Dickinson's similarly persistent questions, especially those of her early letters.

*   *   *

Like Emily, who delighted in her web of Dickinson and Norcross family connections, Tracy values ties with cousins and siblings, particularly an older, influential brother. Tracy's feelings for her parents were appreciative and loving, yet complicated, in part because, like the Dickinsons, the Smiths were more unquestioning in their religious faith than their poet-daughter. Both poets became closer to their mothers as they attended them to their deaths, mind meeting mind "by tunneling," as it were. Smith's parents emerge as vivid, complex subjects in *Ordinary Light*. From an Alabama town named Sunflower, Floyd William Smith (1935-2008), became an optical engineer on the Hubble telescope. He may not have rung church bells to encourage neighbors to see a sunset as Edward Dickinson reputedly did, but the young Tracy was "swept up in the fantasy that my father and I were members of the same royal court" as they listened to music and danced on Saturdays (*OL* 13). He outlived his wife, Kathryn (1936-1994), whose death is the climax of Smith's memoir. Tracy's record of her reaction to her mother's death recalls Emily's reflections when Emily Norcross Dickinson died:

> And then the fact of her death – no, not simply the fact of her death but rather the facts of her death and her life; her presence in this world and the presence of her absence made the whole of what I remembered or lacked; everything she gave and left and what, in leaving, she took – the fact of all that, like a column of thread and promise and light, would flare bright and hot in my mind (*OL* 329).

Of course, many circumstances of Smith's world and experience have been vastly different from Dickinson's. Although Tracy was born in Falmouth, Massachusetts, about 150 miles from Amherst, she was raised in California suburbs, far from the southern roots of her parents who shared with her stories of the Civil Rights struggles of their southern relatives. She attended Harvard, where she was influenced by, among others, Seamus Heaney, Henri Cole, and Dickinson interpreters Lucie Brock-Broido and Helen Vendler. She also joined the Dark Room Collective, a group of established and emerging African American poets. That – and years at Columbia University, where she earned her MFA, and at Stanford as a Stegner Fellow; two marriages (her husband, Raphael Allison, is a scholar of 20th century poetry); three children; and now the high-profile status of Poet Laureate – distinguish her life from Dickinson's.

Although Smith's poetry differs from Dickinson's by its profound concern with social issues – more "we" than "I," as critic Derek Gromadzki puts it – it also sometimes is stunningly evocative of the poet who first inspired her. For example, the opening lines of the first poem, "Something Like Dying, Maybe," in *The Body's Question: Poems* (hereafter *BQ*) are emblematic of Smith's interest in familiar Dickinson terrain, the state between sleeping and waking, life and death:

> Last night, it was bright afternoon
> Where I wandered. Pale faces all around me.
> I walked and walked looking for a door,
> For some cast-off garment, looking for myself
> In the blank windows and the pale blank faces.
> (*BQ* 3)

The horrifying image of the speaker searching for a familiar door, met with "pale blank faces," may well remind Dickinson readers of "I Years had been from Home" (Fr440). I also see strong similarities to Dickinson in the gothic sensibility of Smith's house images in the poem "Ash," first published in the November 23, 2015 issue of *The New Yorker*, included in *Wade in the Water*, and reprinted at the end of this article.

Smith selected this poem for the holograph to distribute to the audience at The Folger Theatre's 2016 Emily Dickinson Birthday Tribute. Indeed, on that occasion, Smith's selection of poems to read and her discussion of them reflected both her affinity with Dickinson and the uniqueness of her own voice. Because her Pulitzer-award-winning *Life on Mars* (hereafter *LM*) reflects the universe beyond Earth, the vast spaces visible with the telescope on which Smith's father worked, the Folger teamed Smith with astronomer David DeVorkin, also a poet. The title poem of this volume, which Dan Chiasson described in his 2011 review as a "wild, far ranging elegy" for Smith's father, weaves together passages about torture at Abu Ghraib, horrifying snippets of ugly, actual news like the kidnapping and rape of a child, and a bleak conversation between two women that calls to mind women coming and going in a world even bleaker than Prufrock's. The use of such referential detail is, of course, not typical of Dickinson. What does evoke Dickinson is Smith's meditation on the earth near the poem's end:

> The earth beneath us. The earth
> Around and above. The earth
> Pushing up against our houses,
> Complicit with gravity. The earth
> Ageless watching us rise and curl.
> Our spades, our oxen, the jagged lines
> We carve into dirt. The earth

Nicked and sliced into territory.
Hacked and hollowed. Stoppered tight.
Tripwire. […]
The earth floating in darkness,
suspended in spin.
The earth gunning it around the sun.
The earth we plunder like thieves . . .
The earth coming off on our shoes.
(*LM* 40-41)

As in this passage, Smith's entire collection resonates with the skepticism blended with triumphant tones of Emily Dickinson, who marvels over "Arcturus," that brightest of stars in the north, wondering "if the 'poles' should frisk about / And stand opon their heads!" (Fr117) and, elsewhere, about the Pleiades, Mercury, Saturn, and Orion. In fact, the major metaphors of telescope and sight or lack thereof, of whirling planets and more link Smith's *Life on Mars* with, among the many other voices it contains, Dickinson's.

"Life on Mars" spreads its existential imagery and dissociations over six pages, lines linked to others through slant rhyme (e.g., "forth" / "surf"), assonance, consonance, repetition; the effect mirrors the central image. It is followed by a villanelle, "Solstice," that opens with a Dickinsonian jolt as in, say, "A Toad, can die of Light" (Fr419). "They're gassing geese outside of JFK," begins Smith's intricate poem, which juxtaposes a meditation on euthanizing geese with news of the 2009 presidential election in Iran. That concatenation of imagery, imagery that veers between the theological, the scientific, and hard news, evokes Dickinson's images of her world collapsing like a tent and speakers falling from plank to plank as disruptions such as the Civil War thrust traditionally accepted ideas and practices into doubt during Emily's lifetime.

Doubts similar to Dickinson's appear throughout *Life on Mars*, as in "The Weather in Space," the opening poem, which begins with these questions: "Is God being or pure force? The wind / Or what commands it?" Many of the poems that follow present shocking glimpses of the life on this earth. "Sci-Fi," inspired by Smith's watching Truffaut's version of Bradbury's *Farenheit 451* and Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, offers glimpses of what is and what might be. However, I also detect an *ars poetica* compatible with Dickinson's aesthetics and the "circumference" toward which she yearned:

There will be no edges, but curves.
Clean lines pointing only forward
History, with its hard spine & dog-eared
Corners, will be replaced with nuance,

* * *

. . . Weightless, unhinged,
Eons from even our own moon, we'll drift
In the haze of space, which will be, once

And for all, scrutable and safe.
(*LM* 7)

"Sci-Fi" is followed by an astonishingly word-luscious poem in tercets, "My God, It's Full of Stars." In that poem Smith imagines heaven as a library, where "The books have lived . . . all along, belonging / for weeks at a time to one or another in the brief sequences / Of family names, speaking (at night mostly) to a face, // A pair of eyes" (*LM* 8). Imagine if Dickinson were reading these poems today: I think she would be feeling the top of her head coming off, as she pondered the problems and savored the possibilities of 21st century life in her own Amherst, the site, during her lifetime, of both cutting-edge astronomical discoveries and the recurrence of religious fervor.

Smith spoke wistfully during our November phone conversation of the value of those rare times of privacy, when she has the "space to disappear into language," to see what it might "unfold for me." About her stunning metaphors, she said, "metaphor can pull you farther from the literal; the distortions that [figurative] language invokes can have the unusual effect of pulling us closer to the emotional truth of a situation," and she spoke of her "intense wonder," on a good day: when lines labored over also surprise her and she asks, "how could that come out of me?" She is at least as much in wonder at the process as at the product of her work. As she told Gregory Pardlo, "every poem, no matter its specific terms, is seeking to collapse the distance between seemingly disparate or incompatible things. I think that's what metaphor is doing; at its best, it's not working to reproduce a literal sense . . . it's striving for purposeful distortion. . . . That sense of distortion is what gives us access to the true strangeness in our most powerful feelings."

Much of the conversation with Pardlo and many other articles about Smith call to mind Dickinson's aesthetics. In response to my question about whether the order of poems in her own chapbooks was intentional, Smith said, "I feel like poems are always speaking to each other. Sometimes the conversation they seem to be carrying on among themselves is surprising.

Arranging them into collections is a way of highlighting this sense of conversation. It also broadens our sense of what individual poems are saying on their own." She could be speaking about Dickinson's fascicles. As her own poetry attests, she reveres Dickinson's respect for language, "her devotion and submission to what carefully and lovingly arranged language can render" as though the poet is "listening to something not necessarily elected, straining toward a truth she did not know she knew." Dickinson's willingness to explore "the soul," to direct her imagination toward that which is "silent, unsayable" is the courageous goal of Smith's own poetry.

Works Consulted

Charles, Ron. "New U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith Reports for Duty." *Washington Post*, 9 Sept. 2017.

Chiasson, Dan. "Other Worlds: New Poems by Tracy K. Smith and Dana Levin." *The New Yorker*, 8 Aug. 2011.

Gromadzki, Derek. "Tracy K. Smith." *DLB,* 372: 233-249.

"Tracy K. Smith Talks to Gregory Pardlo On Poetry, Manifestos, and David Bowie." *Literary Hub*, 29 Oct. 2015. Web.

Ash

Strange house we must keep and fill.
House that eats and pleads and kills.
House on legs. House on fire. House infested
With desire. Haunted house. Lonely house.
House of trick and suck and shrug
Give-it-to-me house. *I-need-you-baby* house.
House whose rooms are pooled with blood.
House with hands. House of guilt. House
That other houses built. House of lies
And pride and bone. House afraid to be alone.
House like an engine that churns and stalls.
House with skin and hair for walls.
House the seasons singe and douse.
House that believes it is not a house.

"Ash" copyright © 2018 by Tracy K. Smith.
Reprinted from *Wade in the Water* with the permission
of the author and Graywolf Press. All rights reserved.

Long-time EDIS member and frequent Bulletin *contributor Eleanor Heginbotham is the author of* Reading Fascicles of Emily Dickinson: Dwelling in Possibilities *(2003). She had the good fortune to meet Tracy K. Smith when the Poet Laureate was giving the introductory talk at the Library of Congress last September.*

Emily Dickinson Undergraduate Essay Prize

The Emily Dickinson International Society offers a prize for undergraduate research on Emily Dickinson. We seek critical essays by undergraduates from institutions of all kinds, focusing on Dickinson's poems or letters. Students at all levels are eligible to submit. Papers should be 15 pages maximum. The winning essay will be published on the EDIS website, and the author will receive an award of $100.

To submit an essay for the prize, send copies of articles as anonymous word attachments, plus a cover letter with contact information to the following address by June 30, 2018: epetrino@fairfield.edu. The essays will be distributed electronically to a panel of nationally recognized scholars for judging. All submissions will be acknowledged and receive a response within a month.

White Heat

Last January, Dartmouth professor and EDIS member Ivy Schweitzer sent the following message to a friend on the Board: "I am happy to announce the beginning of my new digital project, White Heat*, a weekly blog of the year 1862 in the life of Emily Dickinson. The url is* sites.dartmouth.edu/whiteheat/*. . . . We would like participants – faculty, students, fans – who would like to serve as guest responders to the weekly blog. This does not require much. We would send you the blog a week in advance and ask you to compose some kind of response. It doesn't have to be scholarly or academic, or even in writing. That's the beauty of a digital project." A few weeks later Ivy sat down with* Bulletin *book review editor Renée Bergland, happily also a Hanover resident and some-time Dartmouth instructor. What follows is Renée's account of their conversation about* White Heat*.*

If Emily Dickinson were alive today, would she tweet? Although her talents for compression and innovative syntax might gain her millions of followers on twitter, she would likely be a twitter skeptic. How about other digital platforms? Ivy Schweitzer's website, *White Heat: Emily Dickinson in 1862, A Weekly Blog*, demonstrates that the more polyvalent nature of a blog is ideal for exploring Dickinson.

I visited Ivy Schweitzer at her home, to talk about her website *White Heat*. She lives in an old Vermont farmhouse, painted a shade of Dickinson Homestead yellow. A little greenhouse tacked on to the side of the house near the front door adds another echo of the Homestead. Inside, Schweitzer shows me her desk, pointing out the Dickinson volumes stacked around on the wide pine floorboards. She is immersed in Dickinson this year.

Schweitzer is a Professor of English at Dartmouth College, author of *The Work of Self Representation and Perfecting Friendship* (2000), editor of anthologies on Colonial American Literature and the early section of the Heath Anthology. On top of these scholarly works, she has published quite a bit of poetry and fiction. In recent years, much of her work has moved off the page and into other media. She is the editor of *Occom Circle: Digital Scholarly Edition of Papers by and about Samson Occom, Mohegan*: https://www.dartmouth.edu/~occom/. She recently co-produced a film based on one of her courses: *It's Criminal: A Tale of Incarceration and the Ivy League*, A Documentary Film and Transmedia Website, dir. Signe Taylor. http://itiscriminal.com/home.php.

This year, Schweitzer is writing a weekly Dickinson blog called *White Heat*. At year's end, Schweitzer hopes the project will become an e-book available from the Dartmouth College library, but for now, readers have the chance to tune in each week and read Schweitzer's weekly entries, following along as her thoughts develop.

As the two of us drink tea from chunky handmade mugs, Schweitzer explains that the idea for the blog started with the Thomas Johnson edition of the poems. She was fascinated by the amazing idea that Dickinson may have written 360 poems in 1862; roughly a poem a day. At first, she thought she would try to blog the Johnson poems, writing a response every day. She imagined that many of her responses would be creative, and thought maybe by the end of the year she would have written 360 poems or meditations of her own. But as she began to develop the project, she got more interested in how to use the linking properties of the web in a way that would allow readers to find good, solid scholarly information that would make Dickinson's poems more resonant. Schweitzer has noticed that there is a somewhat random quality to the materials her students find on the web. She wanted to bring together some of the best scholarly sources so that students and Dickinson fans everywhere will be able to find them gathered together. Schweitzer says, "My site is on the edge between scholarly and popular. I want readers to be able to geek out about Dickinson, but have a scholarly foundation."

Schweitzer tells me that when she teaches, she tries to push her students away from the questions about what the poems mean, and toward questions about how they mean. "Even if you offer multiple readings," she says, "it closes down the reader's ability to wrestle with the poem." The project of her blog is not so much to offer readings of the poems or creative responses to them (though both are there), but more to open Dickinson's poems up for readers, offering resources that allow readers to consider how the poems work – to notice Dickinson's "concision, depth, richness and resonances." In some ways, this is a formalist project: Schweitzer says she wants "to show readers the form, the structure, the handwriting, and the fascicle context" of the poems, "so they can do their own reading."

At the same time, the blog offers an opportunity to think about the temporal context – to read some of the newspapers and articles that Dickinson might have been reading in 1862. Schweitzer says she is trying to find the balance of timely and timeless: "I want to show the Dickinson who is both of her own moment and also speaks to us now." Schweitzer has come to love reading the *Springfield Republican*; one of the pleasures of *White Heat* is that she links the newspapers and poems in surprising and original ways.

"All of us should be annotating digital editions online," Schweitzer says. Her own longstanding commitment to digital humanities was inspired in part by her husband Tom Luxon's *Milton Reading Room*. Before now, her most significant digital humanities work was the *Occom Circle*. The archival website was supported by an NEH grant in digitizing and annotating the Mohegan leader's writings and many of the letters he received from other Native Americans in the late eighteenth century. In Schweitzer's view, the annotations make digital projects really interesting. One of her purposes in creating *White Heat* is to take full advantage of the capacity to link from site to site. "I am trying to link things," she explains, "so that the encyclopedia and the lexicon – and many other resources – are always at your fingertips. I want to create entry-points into the nineteenth century."

There are plenty of good archival websites on Dickinson – Schweitzer particularly admires the *Emily Dickinson Archive*, the *Dickinson Electronic Archive*, the *Classroom Electric*, and the *Prowling Bee*. "I am addicted to the *Emily Dickinson Archive*," she confesses. "It is an amazing tool." Her own project is something different – it's a more creative, associative project, where Schweitzer allows readers to immerse themselves in a world of Dickinson. There is a serendipitous quality to *White Heat*. Schweitzer feels "the project is working because the responses are so layered." It offers a way to experience a "cumulative, layered, immersive" synthesis of contexts and details. As Schweitzer explains, "I wanted to spend a year in the world of a creative mind, to move out of the critical, into the creative, and to invite readers to join me."

Schweitzer is not building *White Heat* alone. She has a web designer and a tech wizard, and a couple of undergraduate research assistants. As she describes the students who are working with her on the blog, I'm struck by her affection and respect for them – they are very lucky to be working on this project. But as Schweitzer continues to talk about her vision for public humanities, what shines through is that she respects her distant readers – far-flung scholars, undergraduates, amateurs and fans, as much as her own students. The point of her project is to open the nineteenth-century poetic world of Emily Dickinson to every reader who is interested. Schweitzer says, "I think of this as Public Humanities. I want to make Dickinson's world attractive, to work at linking her world to ours. It's important to think about the self in war, the poet in war, in a time of crisis. I see Dickinson's 1862 as a time of crisis, both personal and national, and I think it is particularly relevant for us today, as we face our own national and personal times of crisis."

If you explore the blog, you will find links to letters, newspaper articles, images, even YouTube clips. You might see a poem by a student or by Schweitzer herself, or a reflective essay by a colleague. *White Heat* features a lot of writing by Schweitzer, but she seems to play host as much as author – inviting many others into the world of Dickinson. Schweitzer is a generous host. Since Emily Dickinson herself was so reluctant to receive visitors, it is hard to imagine her hosting a blog. Nonetheless, *White Heat* invites us into possibility in a way that is fundamentally Dickinsonian.

Parodies

By Felicia Nimue Ackerman

Felicia Nimue Ackerman, frequent contributor to the Bulletin*, offers two new parodies to the left. Any resemblance to actual persons, readers will of course realize, is purely coincidental.*

A Slimy Fellow at the Helm

A slimy fellow at the helm
Of this imperiled ship
Is spreading chaos through the realm
He steers along its trip.

He cares not for the ill or poor
Or kindness, truth, or art.
The president whom we endure
Has zero at the heart.

Truth Is as Sharp as Claws

Truth – is as sharp as claws –
Impervious as death
And lies are soft as kittens' paws
And commonplace as breath –

We perish on the day
Our breath is borne away,
For heaven's but a lovely lie –
How terrible to die!

Dickinson Scholars

Cindy Mackenzie, Series Editor

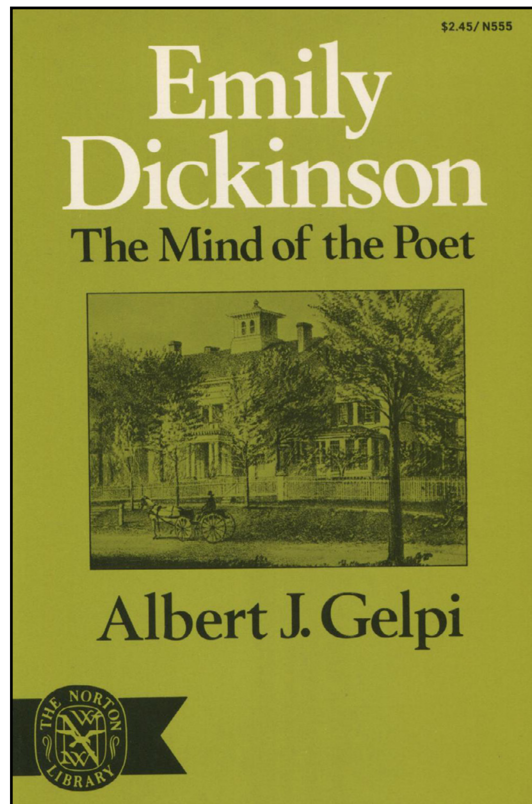
Fixed Points and Widening Diameters: On Albert Gelpi

By Enikö Bollobás

I first heard Albert Gelpi's name mentioned in Toni McNaron's Dickinson seminar in the fall of 1978. I was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, and although I was no novice to Dickinson's poetry (having studied it meticulously as an English major at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), Dickinson criticism was a new territory for me. Back in Budapest we read no theory (apart from the reigning Marxism, which then had nothing to say about poetry) and very little criticism, our department library not being equipped with recent books on "Western" critical thought. At that time of communist totalitarianism, books coming from the West were generally considered a threat to the Orwellian "reality control" practiced by the ruling communists of this geographically and intellectually landlocked country. This applied even more to Western literature criticism, considered especially dangerous for disturbing official Marxist dogmas. But luckily for me, I could spend a graduate year in Minneapolis, where I was busy making up for the loss I had suffered from politics back home, and read as much so-called "secondary" material, criticism and theory, as I could. Toni's weekly seminars were heavily criticism-based: she seamlessly incorporated the newest findings of Dickinson scholarship in her discussions, gave interpretations that always applied critical claims, and had us read some basic critical pieces. And prominent among the critics who came to be part of our discussions was Albert Gelpi.

Rereading Gelpi's works now, not only do I recall how often McNaron used Gelpi's insights to frame her own observations but also how often Gelpi is the actual source of the assumptions which I have taken for granted in the past several decades of my own professional life, in my own seminars, essays, and books on Dickinson and other American poets.

Indeed, Gelpi was one of the few Dickinson scholars who erected the pillars of modern Dickinson criticism. His *Emily Dickinson: The Mind of the Poet* (1965) is over fifty years old, yet not a single sentence has lost its freshness or validity over the decades. As he claims in the Preface, he brought together two approaches reigning at the time: biographical and textual criticism, and put them in the service of mapping up "the design of the poet's mind" (where the assumption that a woman poet had a "mind," and was moreover worthy of scholarly attention, was no less revolutionary). At the time when Dickinson's intriguing personal eccentricities were so central to Dickinson scholarship, biography could not be ignored.



But for Gelpi, biography was "applied biography," so to speak, of the same rank with the exploration of cultural currents, serving the higher purpose of understanding a poet's imagination, consciousness, sensibility, or simply *mind*.

Most importantly, Gelpi placed Dickinson in the center of the canon, naming her a "central and radial" figure in the "sweep of the American imagination from Jonathan Edwards to Robert Lowell, from Anne Bradstreet to Marianne Moore." It is hard to comprehend the radicalism of this gesture from the first decades of the 21st century, but in 1965, when Matthiessen's 1941 *American Renaissance* canon, conspicuously ignoring Dickinson, was taken for granted, Dickinson was still considered a figure of personal and poetic oddity, or at best a minor point, as in Roy Harvey Pearce's *The Continuity of American Poetry* (1961).

Gelpi discusses Dickinson not just as a poet but as a thinker, and a radical thinker at that, also assigning the poet a "unique and crucial position in the history of the American mind and imagination." In Gelpi's original understanding, Dickinson occupied a "pivotal point in the tension between Edwards' perception of types and Stevens' elaboration of tropes," in that she was capable of sustaining a balance between the concrete and the universal.

In order to explore Dickinson's mind, Gelpi draws a map showing crisscrossing intellectual currents and international poetic traditions which she was part of or which she affected. In this map, Dickinson holds intellectual affinities with Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman in terms of accepting the simultaneity of "oneness and otherness"; with Thoreau, Hawthorne, Poe, Hardy, as well as Pascal and Melville in terms of her religious dilemma; with Hawthorne and Emerson in terms of her doubts concerning immortality, "the hardest Miracle"; with Shelley and Stevens in terms of the design in the artist's mind and sense of order created by genius; with Byron in terms of her "moments of rebellion"; with Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, Parker, and Channing (all those who in her view saw "New Englandly") in terms of her "double awareness of things"; with Thoreau and Keats in terms of viewing herself "as a craftsman making order out of the fragments of mutability"; and with Gabriel Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, and Lionel Johnson in terms of her masks.

Gelpi devotes the book's central and probably longest chapter to Dickinson's "seeing New Englandly": the "doctrines" of Transcendentalism as they appear in the poems and letters, tracing them beyond the Atlantic coast, to Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, and beyond the 19th century, to Eliot and Frost. Yet Gelpi claims that Dickinson was different from all in having a "determined rigor of sight and mind" and a "flinty honesty" that the others lacked and that made for a complexity of mind rooted not in harmony but dissonance. This is why, Gelpi insists, the range and variety of Dickinson's "emotional experience" will "far surpass that of Edwards, Emerson, Thoreau, or Whitman." And because in her mind "the opposing tendencies that divided the New England mind met at cross-purposes," two very different lines of development could proceed from Dickinson: Eliot's, where the center holds both timeless moments and stretching wastes, and Frost's, where man is alone in an indifferent universe, and where only "perfection of the work provides 'a momentary stay against confusion.'" Gelpi identifies this double consciousness in Dickinson's circumference, a concept that holds divisions and opposites such as pleasure and pain or love and death, and establishes a fundamental connection between Dickinson and Keats.

In his landmark achievement, Gelpi put forward a thematic that dominated Dickinson criticism for the next several decades. Among the themes introduced by Gelpi, one should mention the following: the role of the father in Dickinson's intellectual growth and her assumed pose as a lost child, without parents; her detachment from the "world" and her attachment to those individuals (Wadsworth, Higginson, Lord) who "kindled the spark"; the motivation for her withdrawal from the world (whether she found the world too insubstantial or too substantial); the experience at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, where she suffered the dilemma of "how to live when one could not accept Christ's call"; the choice between "a calling of faith" and a "commitment to the world"; her double vision or double consciousness, the capacity of the mind to hold opposites; circumference as a particular Dickinsonian experience of consciousness (at times double, at times expansive); her gendered masks from virgin to raped virgin to lover and wife; her "Bachelorhood"; her qualities as an Apollonian (vs. Dionysian) poet; her self-empowering sense of creativity (volcano, bee, spider); her distinctive style and fashioning of a uniquely subversive language; her poetic masks, among them that of the child, the virgin-bride, the bride, the flower, the sun, the noon, and the master; her "drift to egocentricity" (linking her to Crane, Williams, Lowell, Berryman, and Ginsberg); and finally, her grand negotiations with "man, God, nature, and language to carry on the business of circumference."

From here on, Gelpi's whole career as a scholar of American poetry followed the design of the concentric circles that he identified as informing the structure of his Dickinson book. Indeed, we have both "the fixed points of reference" and "the widening diameter" around them in Gelpi's whole critical oeuvre, as he moved first to the American Romantic poetic scene, then to the Modernists, and finally to the poets after Modernism.

As the first step towards this larger picture, *The Tenth Muse: The Psyche of the American Poet* (1975) was born, the first of his trilogy of American poetic history. Surveying now poets as "pioneers of the psyche" and "mapmakers of the underworld," Gelpi offers readings, framed by psychological criticism, of "the operations of the poet's psyche – at once private and representative, personal and collective – as it expressed itself in the structure of language." He explores the manifestations of the poetic psyche over a period of some 200 years, presenting a very clear canon of five poets: Taylor, Emerson, Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson.

One helpful paradigm Gelpi introduces to describe the poets is the distinction between types and tropes, or between metaphor as figure of speech and metaphor as symbol, between imagination (or fancy) and Imagination." This distinction, he claims, defines the "underlying dialectic of the American tradition," placing Poe (and the line to Stevens) on the tropological side and Taylor, Edwards, Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman on the typological side, with Dickinson in between," once again occupying a central place (*Emily Dickinson*).

In response to the often repeated question of Dickinson criticism of who the male lover(s) might have been in Dickinson's life and poems, Gelpi makes a radical claim: not a real person nor even God, but rather "an essential component of her personality," the

Jungian animus, or “masculine elements in the female psyche” (*Tenth Muse*). (This argument is further developed and put to use in a memorable essay published in 1977 for the first time, “Emily Dickinson and the Deerslayer: The Dilemma of the Woman Poet in America,” in which he reads “My Life had stood – A Loaded Gun” as the drama of the animus in the historical context of frontier America.) To balance the attention given to the masculine element, Gelpi discusses circumference as a manifestation of Erikson’s feminine “inner space” in the psyche, whose “frontierswoman” Dickinson again was. Here too, Gelpi is at his best in drawing the grand picture: placing Dickinson at the head of both the tradition of women poets in whose poetry the animus-relationship is crucial and of the tradition based on a feminine epistemology relying on specifically feminine forms of spiritual experience.

In *A Coherent Splendor: The American Poetic Renaissance 1910-1950* (1987) Gelpi moves further out on his widening intellectual diameters, now exploring what he rightly terms “the American Poetic Renaissance”: American Modernist poetry as the continuation of Romantic poetry. The reader can again enjoy Gelpi’s two visible strengths as a scholar of American poetry: his monographic scrutiny of eleven individual poets (Frost and Ransom, Stevens, Eliot, Pound, H. D., Williams, Tate and Crane, Winters and Jeffers) and his drawing of the larger picture, the complex context of tradition. His governing thesis consists in the following: bracketed by two world wars, poetic Modernism is Janus-faced, comprised of Symbolism and Imagism (or, what Marjorie Perloff called the Symbolist-Dualist tradition and the “Other” tradition of Indeterminacy [*The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, 1981]), should be explained by the Janus-face of Romanticism itself, the tradition it evolved from (which traditions were most illuminatively articulated by Charles Altieri as the dialectics of transcendence and immanence, going back to Wordsworth and Coleridge, respectively [“From Symbolist Thought to Immanence,” *Boundary II*, 1983]). As Gelpi puts it, “the dialectic between Romanticism and Modernism resides in related dialectics within each which establish continuities between them more abiding and constitutive than the overt discontinuities.” Dickinson figures prominently in the chapter on H. D., as the largely invisible yet still operative model for women poets.

The third volume completing the critical trilogy on the American poetic tradition, *American Poetry after Modernism: The Power of the Word* (2015), presents sixteen American poets and through them a tradition whose distinctive feature is that it is no tradition in the European sense. For “the American poet could assume no given role, no accepted function, and so had to draw from within himself or herself the sources, terms, and ends of literary practice.”

Postmodernism’s relationship to Modernism is as ambivalent as Modernism’s relationship to Romanticism was. As Gelpi puts it, “The Postmodernist break with Modernism serves to define the poetry of the Cold War decades, but just as Modernism defined itself not just against but, in many ways, in dialogue with Romanticism, so Postmodernism defined itself not just in opposition to but in dialogue with Modernism, as the transition played itself out over two generations of poets.” (Gelpi describes in poetry what Linda Hutcheon observed in prose in her own *A Poetics of Postmodernism*: how “postmodernism is both oedipally oppositional and filially faithful to modernism.”) And as “Postmodernism took shape as a poetics of indeterminacy,” the decisive break with Modernism came, Gelpi argues, in the 1970s and 80s when “poets looked back […] to the mid-century Objectivist poets George Oppen and Louis Zukofsky”; these are the Language poets “reformulating Modernism into Poststructuralist deconstruction.” But alongside the Postmoderns, Gelpi identifies another line of descent that, for its persisting “Romantic inclinations,” he calls Neoromantic, characterized by a “persistent effort to confirm the word’s communicable referentiality to reality and truth, even a transcendental truth, extrinsic to language.” Gelpi sees this Neoromantic sensibility in a whole range of poets grouped together in a “roomy rubric,” among them, Roethke, Berryman, Ginsberg, Snyder, Olson, Duncan, Levertov, Rich, and Baraka.

Several other works could be mentioned as representative of Gelpi’s outer circles: the monographs on Wallace Stevens (*Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism*, 1990) and C. Day Lewis (*Living in Time: The Poetry of C. Day Lewis*, 1998); the critical edition of Adrienne Rich’s works (*Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose* [with Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi], 1993); the edited volumes (*The Poet in America, 1650 to the Present*, 1973; *Denise Levertov: Selected Criticism*, 1993; *The Blood of the Poet: Selected Poems of William Everson*, 1994; *The Letters of Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov*, co-edited with Robert Bertholf [and awarded by the MLA as the best scholarly edition of a literary correspondence], 2004); the collection of critical essays co-edited with Robert Bertholf (*Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov: The Poetry of Politics, the Politics of Poetry, 2006*); and the seminal essay on the connections between American literature and American painting, “White Light in the Wilderness: Landscape & Self in Nature’s Nation” (in *American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850-1875*, 1980).

There is one thing about concentric circles: much like circumference, they have a center. And for Gelpi this center has been, for over fifty years, the “fixed point of reference” called Emily Dickinson.

Enikö Bollobás is Professor of Literature at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. She has written several books on American literature, among them monographs on Emily Dickinson and Charles Olson, and award-winning histories of American literature (in Hungarian). *A review of her book on Dickinson appears on page 29.*

Marianne Noble, Series Editor

Finding a Context for Teaching Dickinson

By Páraic Finnerty

Not a single student chose to write about Dickinson, after all of my passion and learning and careful lesson planning. Why? I felt I had let Dickinson down. I’d do better next time, I vowed. That was in 2001. However, finding the way to inspire a love of Dickinson in my students would not come to me as easily I had imagined. This essay is the record of disappointments and a final feeling of having gotten it right.

In October 2001, I first had an opportunity to teach American literature. Although I was very excited about teaching Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Walt Whitman, and Henry James on a twelve-week unit on nineteenth-century American literature, the real bliss would surely come near the end of the unit, with the prospect of a two-hour seminar on Emily Dickinson. As this was my first time teaching American literature, I was only ever one or two classes ahead of the students in terms of my preparation and reading. I was relieved to be getting to the class on Dickinson. Not only would preparation be minimal for it, my PhD dissertation had been on Dickinson and Shakespeare, but I would be at last able to share my love of Dickinson’s poetry.

It did not go as planned. I have to confess I overwhelmed my poor students. The problem was that my attitude and conception of Dickinson at that time was shaped by my belief that Dickinson stood out among her US contemporaries in every respect. I wanted to hammer home exactly why Dickinson was so special, so different from all the other US writers we had covered. Looking back on this first Dickinson class, I think I went too far and something and someone (probably Dickinson) was hurt in the process. In preparation for the Dickinson class I asked students to re-read Emerson’s “The Poet” (1844) and Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846) and to consider how Dickinson’s vision of poetry and the role of the poet differed from theirs. I assigned students some of her poems and some rather leading questions. The first question asked them to assess Dickinson as a writer who refused to play the role of the publishing, public poet by discussing “This was a Poet – It is That” (Fr446), “Publication – is the Auction” (Fr788), “I cannot dance opon my Toes – ” (Fr381), and “I would not paint – a picture – ” (Fr348).

Although the worksheet for the class indicated that the plan was to focus on other poems and topics, we didn’t quite get past the initial question. As a result, we never got to deliberate on Dickinson as poet who critiqued gender roles in her poems “I'm ‘wife’ – I've finished that – ” (Fr225), “She rose to His Requirement – dropt ” (Fr857), “Title divine – is mine!” (Fr194). Nor did we get to evaluate Dickinson as an author who succinctly dealt with complex existential and philosophical issues in “Safe in their alabaster chambers” (Fr124), “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” (Fr340) “I heard a Fly buzz – when I died – ” (Fr591), and “Because I could not stop for Death – ” (Fr479). The subject of female sexuality in “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun – ” (Fr764), “I started Early – Took my Dog – ” (Fr656), and “In Winter in my Room” (Fr1742) remained undiscussed.

The problem I did not anticipate or prepare for was that the students found Dickinson’s poems difficult and most of the class was taken up with interpreting her poems, sometimes word by word. No student chose to write an essay on Dickinson that year, nor, I confess again, in 2002 and 2003. It is clear to me that I didn’t quite find the best way of balancing students’ needs with my own passion and prejudices. The experience also made me realize that in response to the multiple ways in which Dickinson’s poems can be interpreted, students often retreat into the safety of matters of biography rather than tackle the challenge of her poetry.

In 2005, I took a different approach. My thinking about Dickinson had changed over the succeeding years and was now greatly shaped by research on her representations of

gender and sexuality, especially queer readings of her work. That year I had published an essay on Dickinson and Oscar Wilde and was also working on a queer reading of Dickinson and Shakespeare's Sonnets, which was published in 2008. Rather than attempting to cover so many aspects of Dickinson's writings in one class, I decided to pair Dickinson with Whitman and discuss both poets in the context of nineteenth-century US discourses of gender and sexuality. I had students examine examples of Dickinson's erotic poetry in relation to Whitman's depictions of male and female desire. For instance, students read Dickinson's "Wild nights – Wild nights!" (Fr269) and "The Malay – took the Pearl – " (Fr451), and then considered these poems alongside the twenty-ninth bather section from Whitman's "Song of Myself," in which a respectable woman spies on nude male bathers and vicariously joins them in their activity of male bonding. A bit controversial perhaps, but I wanted to challenge the notion of Dickinson as a figure associated with personal confinement and restraint, and to present instead a poet who was daring to expand alternative possibilities in the exemplification of erotic experience and sexual identity and desire.

While students were very interested in this topic, very few chose to write essays on either Dickinson or Whitman. While I am proud of these classes for the ways in which we tackled such important issues for understanding Whitman's and Dickinson's work, I remained disappointed that the teaching and learning environment I created did not facilitate the type of student response I sought. Student preferred to write on *The Scarlet Letter*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and even *The Bostonians* rather than interpret two of the US's greatest poets. But why?

Recognizing the importance of recent scholarship on Dickinson and the American Civil War, and having become very interested in the idea of Dickinson not as a unique writer but one fully engaged with multiple aspects of her culture, I decided to teach Dickinson's and Whitman's Civil War poetry. In class we read the Dickinson poems included in Faith Barrett and Cristanne Miller's excellent *Words for the Hour: A New Anthology of American Civil War Poetry* (2006) alongside selections from Whitman's *Drum Taps* (1865) and over the years this session has become one of the best-attended and most popular classes I teach. I usually begin with Dickinson's words to her Norcross cousins, dated by Johnson 1864: "Sorrow seems more general than it did, and not the estate of a few persons, since the war began; and if the anguish of others helped one with one's own, now would be many medicines. 'Tis dangerous to value, for only the precious can alarm. I noticed that Robert Browning had made another poem, and was astonished – till I remembered that I, myself, in my smaller way, sang off charnel steps" (L298). Noting the sheer number of poems Dickinson wrote during the Civil War period (1861-65), I passionately present Dickinson not as an isolated, macabre poet, obsessed with death, but one who uses imagery of violence, suffering, and death to reflect and express a period when "Sorrow seems more general" and to offer poetic "medicines."

Although primarily alluding to news that Robert Browning had written his first new poems since the death of his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, on June 29, 1861, Dickinson's reference to Browning, I explain, is very provocative and significant in this context. I remind students that Dickinson greatly admired and was highly influenced by Browning, particularly owing to his development and popularization of the dramatic lyric, a first-person poem written from the perspective of someone else. I inform students that a few years earlier, in 1862, Dickinson told her friend and mentor Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse – it does not mean – me – but a supposed person" (L268). As a class we examine some of the poems Dickinson wrote during the Civil War period as dramatic lyrics in which she got inside the mental and emotional lives of her countrymen and women, empathizing with and articulating their experiences at a time of national suffering and anguish. In singing off charnel steps she was not expressing her own sorrow but creating timely "supposed persons" as part of her war effort.

Over the last few years, not only have students engaged enthusiastically with this material, but the assignment question on poetry has become the one that they frequently choose. Clearly, the sympathetic, socially engaged Dickinson I was teaching them about appealed to them more than the exceptional, subversive poet who first attracted me. In January 2018, I was proud of the fact that almost a third of students wrote on Dickinson's and Whitman's poetic responses to the Civil War, but also of their sensitive and thoughtful analysis of this key moment in US history.

The joy of teaching Dickinson over the years has always been times when students challenge my beliefs about this poet and her poems, and ask me to consider her in alternative and refreshing ways. It is a revelation to me, however, that the best way for me to teach Dickinson has been to move away from my own particular research interests and ideas, and to engage with ground-breaking research on Dickinson's complex and nuanced reaction to the Civil War. I needed to approach teaching Dickinson, as I approached teaching other writers, by seeing her anew through the perspectives, theories, and insights of others.

Páraic Finnerty, a member of the EDIS Board and the Chair of the Nominations Committee, began teaching at the University of Kent, where he did his PhD, and has been at the University of Portsmouth since 2004, where he teaches US Literature, Women's Writing in the Americas, and US Masculinities. He is the author of Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare *(2006) and* Emily Dickinson and Her British Contemporaries *(2014).*

Emily Dickinson's Prescient Stages of Grief

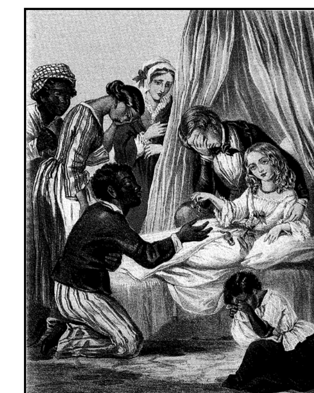
By Daphne Thompson

In "The last Night that She lived" (Fr1100), Dickinson strives to assist the grieving in traversing through their emotions after the death of a loved one in a prescient description that closely mirrors the process Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross formalized a century later in what has become known as the five stages of grief. Both women similarly recognized that such an internal process needed to be embraced during times when reliance on proper public behavior and performative Christianity was waning. Although Dickinson's poem emphasizes the customary socialized and ritualized process of death, the stages she insightfully describes reflect the budding emergence of internalized grieving rituals through which many humans progress to defeat feelings of despair after loved ones die.

Thomas H. Johnson explains facts related to "The last Night that She lived": "On May third of [1866], Laura Dickey, the young wife of Frank W. Dickey of Michigan, and a daughter of L. M. Hills of Amherst, died at her parents' home. The Hills were lifelong neighbors of the Dickinsons, and their property adjoined the Dickinsons' to the east" (*Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography*, 1963). Dickey's death may have led Dickinson to compose a poem that accentuates the emotions of collective first person plural mourners as well as the mysteries of the afterlife. Dickinson's poem illustrates a process that correlates with the five stages of grief Kübler-Ross formalized in 1969 that many humans follow after a loved one dies, to give the grieving structure in a time of disorder: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (which are not necessarily linear, progressive, or all-inclusive). Dr. Allan Kellehear indicates in the forward to Kübler-Ross' 40th anniversary edition of *On Death and Dying* that the value of these stages is that friends and/or family confer about "their reactions to impending death," which encourages "basic understanding and insight into the social and emotional experience of" the one who is facing death as well as in the onlookers. An emphasis on this emotional grieving process that death engenders in the surviving mourners is Dickinson's intent in her poem. In this poem, she ironically eradicates the traditionally comforting last word convention while subconsciously and presciently outlining an orderly and possibly archetypal grieving process.

Although as Nancy Mayer writes in "A Poet's Business: Love and Mourning in the Deathbed Poems of Emily Dickinson" (*EDJ* 6.1, 1997), Dickinson's poems in general "often refute or undermine the comforts of the religious certitude that many" of her literary contemporaries contributed to the public, "The last Night that She lived" makes known "a love for human beings and human life that is both particular and universal and occasionally communal" through the use of plural speakers. Mayer additionally points out that by utilizing collective "We," Dickinson indicates that "while death is solitary, dying is accomplished within the human community – informed by deaths that have happened within one's own life and by witnesses, like Dickinson herself, willing to push imagination to its furthest reaches in order to be our guide." This poem illustrates that, although there is no doubt Dickinson was obsessed with death, she also realized the potential of utilizing poetry – versus or in addition to traditional religion – as a literary means to bolster the emotional and spiritual needs of those left behind in the world of the living.

Dickinson focuses on the emotional response that death plants in surviving mourners even more than on the dying. The poem is composed of seven quatrains, and the collective speakers seem to be struggling through the stages of grief while watching someone on her deathbed. The use of the understatement "It was a Common Night / Except the Dying" shows the speakers could be in the midst of grief's stage one, denial. They mention that they "noticed smallest things – / Things overlooked before" with the assistance of the "great light upon [their] Minds," seeing physical objects with more clarity possibly because they could not accept the emotional reality that their loved one was on the verge of death. Mayer points out that when "poetry focuses on interior reality, time itself stretches or collapses according to subjective emotional importance," making "Nature different." Another reason Dickinson identifies the "great light" could be to illustrate the speakers' near blinding, similar to the



Two 19th-century deathbed lithographs. Left, the death of Little Eva, 1852, by Louisa Corbaux (from The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin, *Gates and Robbins eds., 2007). Eva is in the light; the mourners cover their faces. Right, Edvard Munch,* The Deathbed, *1896 (from* Edvard Munch: The Frieze of Life, *Mara-Helen Wood, ed, 1992). The dying woman is hidden, and responses range from anger, to grief, to acceptance.*

experience of looking directly into the sun, another possible reference to the mourners' disbelief over the dying person's approaching final moments. Here Dickinson portrays the first stage of grief, denial.

In the second stage of grieving, the speakers experience anger. They wonder why "Others could exist / While She must finish," while admitting that "quite / a Jealousy for Her arose." As Mayer points out, "the poem is not, of course, protesting the survival of other people's children; it is enacting the kind of 'jealousy' that arises from loving any one, particular child" who faces certain death. Randall Huff (*Bloom's Literature*) notes that the mourners "went between the final room and other rooms that contained 'Those to be alive / Tomorrow,' [while] irrationally blaming them for continuing to exist" in the face of their loved one's imminent death. This description reflects the mourners' passage through the stage of anger.

Dickinson does not overtly display the next step of Kübler-Ross' model, bargaining, which usually involves the grieving person's attempt to make a deal with God. For example, the griever may say, "If you save this life, I promise never to take anything for granted again." However, here negotiating may be inferred, because who knows what disjointed thoughts flit across the speakers' "jostled souls" and minds as they go through the "narrow time"? Could they be bargaining silently with God to spare their loved one? Mayer points out "the lack of incident" while the speakers are waiting on death. Perhaps the lack of explicit incident is due to the implicit bargaining the mourners attempt to accomplish in their anguish.

In depression – the next to last grieving stage – emptiness seems to surround the mourners as the dying woman "Bent to the Water, struggled scarce – / Consented, and was dead – " without a final triumphant proclamation of having seen a glowing light or God at the end of a tunnel to welcome the newly dying or any last words to comfort the survivors since the dying one "mentioned, and forgot – " anything she may have been about to share. Dickinson offers a faint hint of comfort or hope for eternal life in that the dying woman gives her "consent" to die, intimating that she could be confident where she will spend eternity and therefore does not protest. If the speakers embrace this belief as well, then this fourth stage of grief, depression, will be easier for them to traverse.

Last, the poem's mourners do, as traditions dictate, "regulate" their belief, reflecting Kübler-Ross' final grieving stage of acceptance. Physically, the only item left to order or organize is the stiffening body of their friend or family member, so they follow society's conventions and mechanically straighten her head and hair. Spiritually, the only thing left to order in the "awful leisure" after death is their faith and belief. If survivors can come to terms with believing in the afterlife, then this closing stage of grief, acceptance, will ease their feelings of loss. However, during this time of "awful leisure," Dickinson shows the disquiet some survivors feel, which is compounded if they (like Dickinson) internally question whether death is not, as traditionally considered, a result of God's (possibly vengeful) will or if they ponder whether the afterlife is even real. Dickinson's literary representation of this anxiety could encourage her readers to acknowledge the conflict between modern doubt and past religious certainty.

Even though Emily Dickinson herself had no sense of closure on the issue of immortality, she paradoxically does provide posterity with a sense of closure in the form of presciently describing Kübler-Ross' later-formalized stages of grief through which many humans must travel. Could the dual mindset of Dickinson and Kübler-Ross a century apart be because the specific process of grieving that both describe is an inborn archetype, a component of the collective unconscious? Is it pure coincidence that Dickinson presciently traced almost the exact stages Kübler-Ross formalized so much later? This similarity could be related to one of Carl Jung's archetypal dreams about death. The twin descriptions of the stages of grief almost a century apart lend credence to the notion that Dickinson's poem reflects an archetypal deep-seated human desire to employ order even when challenging the order of the status quo.

The last Night that She lived
It was a Common Night
Except the Dying – this to Us
Made Nature different

We noticed smallest things –
Things overlooked before
By this great light upon our Minds
Italicized – as 'twere.

As We went out and in
Between Her final Room
And Rooms where Those to be alive
Tomorrow were, a Blame

That Others could exist
While She must finish quite
A Jealousy for Her arose
So nearly infinite –

We waited while She passed –
It was a narrow time –
Too jostled were Our Souls to speak
At length the notice came.

She mentioned, and forgot –
Then lightly as a Reed
Bent to the Water, struggled scarce –
Consented, and was dead –

And We – We placed the Hair –
And drew the Head erect –
And then an awful leisure was
Belief to regulate –

Daphne Thompson has taught mostly composition and advanced composition courses in North and South Carolina for 25 years, during which she also spent a decade as a writing center director. She is working on her first novel.

Thomas Dwight Gilbert's Useful Career

By Jo Ann Orr and Dan Manheim

I do feel so lonely, at times dear brother, I [feel] so keenly the loss of a Mothers love, and influence, and that sympathy our Mother alone could give – Is it strange, that I look to you, dear brother, when I feel thus, that I should look to you, and find myself thinking of, and loving you as a Father . . . Now Frank is going to be married, Mattie and I will feel more than ever, that you are the last one left . . . "

Susan Gilbert Dickinson, who wrote that letter to her eldest brother in September 1850, lost both her parents when she was young and passed from one family member to another until she ran off to be a schoolteacher in Baltimore at just 20, "relieving Mr Cutler [her brother-in-law and guardian] for one year." It is not surprising that she would have sought in her eldest brother the love, support, and stability she had needed her whole life.

Whether Thomas Dwight Gilbert welcomed the role of father to his younger sisters is unknown. Sue's "poetical bachelor brother" was ambitious. After graduating from Deerfield Academy, he left his home in Greenfield to seek his fortune in Grand Haven, Michigan, a settlement with, at that time, "about half a dozen settlers."[1] His brother Francis, the soon-to-be married Frank of Sue's letter, accompanied him, and they built a series of business enterprises, beginning with a sawmill that failed in the Panic of 1837, then shifting to warehousing.

The brothers' fortunes prospered. By 1850 they had expanded into lumber and shipping – in a big way. A few years later, they moved to Grand Rapids. Dwight, the elder and dearest to Sue, used to say that during those years he got to know the turns and headlands of the stretch of the river between the two towns so well that he could tell stories about each one during boat trips.

Already at 39, Dwight was prosperous enough to travel for two years, at home and abroad, before settling into his new work. When he returned, he quickly became one of Grand Rapids' founding citizens, presiding over the establishment of the institutions that ground a fledgling city: he became president of Grand Rapids Gas and of the City National Bank, and he had a financial interest in various enterprises that, at the time of his death in 1894, had "made Grand Rapids what it is."

Though he never went to Congress, Dwight Gilbert took numerous political positions. Having earlier served his turn as Sheriff of Ottawa County, back in the '40s, he entered the state legislature in 1861, chairing the Ways and Means Committee and the Banks and Corporations Committee. Returning, he served for many years on the Board of Education, expanding its public school system during a period of its growth from "a small village without railroads or even good wagon roads, all supplies being brought up the river" to a city of 20,000. He spent five years as president of the Board of Public Works, guiding the establishment of the city's water department; and he served as an alderman for his district.

Like his sister's father-in-law, he took an interest in expanding educational opportunities in the growing region. From 1864 to 1875 he was an elected member of the Board of Regents of the State University in Ann Arbor, chairing the Finance Committee, attending to the budgets of that larger institution just as Edward and Austin Dickinson did those of Amherst College.

Dwight Gilbert's obituary refers to him as "an intensely practical, zealous Christian." As one of the city's leading public figures, he not only held various political offices, but he also served as president of the Union Benevolent Association hospital, and helped establish other charitable associations in the city.

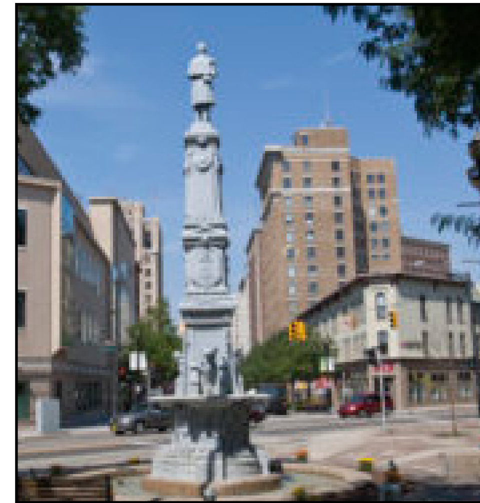
Not long after Dwight Gilbert had moved to Grand Rapids, his future brother-in-law consulted with him about the possibility of establishing himself in the west, before Edward Dickinson settled matters by committing to build Austin and Sue a house on Main Street. Alfred Habegger suggests that Dwight may have sent Austin some house plans of a sort currently popular in burgeoning western towns like Grand Rapids, adding that the Evergreens may have been "based on the Michigan design." The houses the brothers-in-law built at the same time, in the 1850s, are strikingly similar.

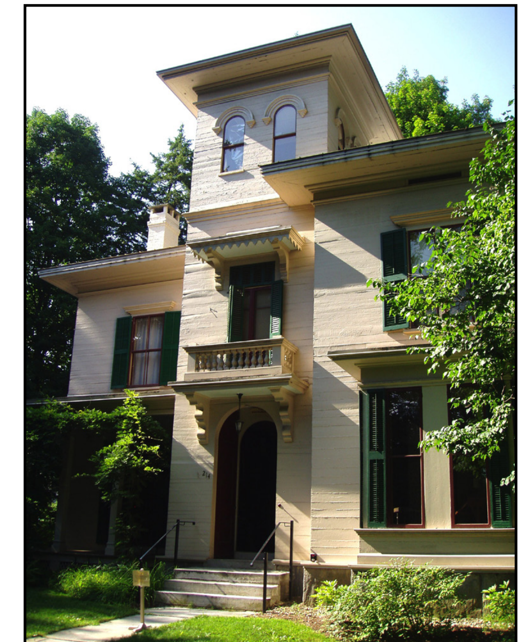
Dwight built a larger house not long after he married in his mid-50s. Mary Angelina Bingham Gilbert is worthy of her own profile. Born in Sault Ste. Marie, the daughter of a missionary to the Ojibwa, she wrote about "the Soo" in later life, and in the words of a 1911 memorial published in *Michigan Tradesman*, the Ojibwa of the Soo "wept as they met and talked with her . . . when they visited [Grand Rapids] . . . , and no one could stand by and hear them talk unmoved."

As president of the Kent County Soldiers Monument Association, Dwight Gilbert directed the commissioning and dedication, in 1885, of the first monument in the United States to pay tribute to the efforts of women during the Civil War. He is buried in the Fulton Street Cemetery, for which he donated the land, and his portrait bust stands in Veterans Memorial Park.

[1]*Obituary in* The Evening Leader*, 19 Nov. 1894. Unless otherwise indicated, historical citations are from this source; quotations from letters, from Jay Leyda's* The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson.

This page: the portrait bust of Thomas Dwight Gilbert in Veterans Memorial Park, in Grand Rapids. Facing page, top row, the Kent County Civil War Monument and Dwight Gilbert's memorial stone in Fulton Street Cemetery; middle row, the Gilbert Brothers' first house, completed in 1858, and on the right, the Evergreens, the house Austin Dickinson had built on his father's property, after consulting with Dwight Gilbert about the plans; bottom row, a 1915 postcard of The Gilbert Building, which once stood in the heart of the city, and the Eastlake style house that Dwight Gilbert built in the late 1870s.
Photo Credit for b/w images: Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids, Mi.





A Tribute to Richard Wilbur (1921-2017)

By Judith Farr

The death in October 2017 of Richard Wilbur – Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, translator, critic and teacher – must grieve all who admire the luminous clarity of his verse and the probity and grace of his intellect. Scholars of Emily Dickinson's poetry have sustained a special loss. For few poets, especially among those called "formalist," could claim to admire her unique genius more than he did, while few who are familiar with the lineaments of Dickinson's life could approach it with such sympathy and – one is tempted to say – tenderness as Wilbur.

I had the good fortune to meet Richard Wilbur in 1961. Having just left the Yale graduate school, I was a novice instructor in English at Vassar College. Mr. Wilbur was invited to visit the college to read and comment on his poems, especially those from *Things of This World* (1956) and *The Beautiful Changes* (1947). Realizing that he greatly esteemed Emily Dickinson's verse and because *American Literature* had just published an essay of mine about Dickinson's interest in the metaphysical poets (Judith Banzer, "'Compound Manner': Emily Dickinson and the Metaphysical Poets"), the department chairman invited me to accompany him during his visit to the college.

Wilbur's kindness to my very young self, his quiet modesty about his own extraordinary achievements, and his vision of Emily Dickinson as a person as well as a poet remain extraordinarily vivid to me today. I remember that as we spoke, I became conscious that he was celebrating what Dickinson achieved despite what he considered the "limitations" of her life and that his own perspective was that of one who had experienced fulfillment: as a devoted husband and loving father; as a distinguished poet – he had already won a Pulitzer as well as the National Book Award – and finally, as a famous and successful man. But he was far from being smug about his "luck," as he called it. Since I was attempting to write poetry, he joked, in fact, about how many times his own verse had been rejected by *The New Yorker*. His current good fortune, however, made him all the more respectful of Dickinson's ability to cope with what he deemed her "disappointment" and to lift from it a beauty and sanctity that he found blessed.

Years later, in 1994 or so, I wrote to Richard Wilbur, asking if I might include his essay "'Sumptuous Destitution," from a book entitled *Emily Dickinson: Three Views* (Amherst College Press, 1960), in the collection of critical essays I was editing for Prentice Hall (*Emily Dickinson, A Collection of Critical Essays*, 1996). Humbly I explained that my emolument for gathering, introducing, and paying authors of the chosen essays was so modest that I expected he might earn very little and I, myself, nothing but the honor of his assent. By return mail, I received his cheerful "Of course!," together with the generous words "Take it for nothing."

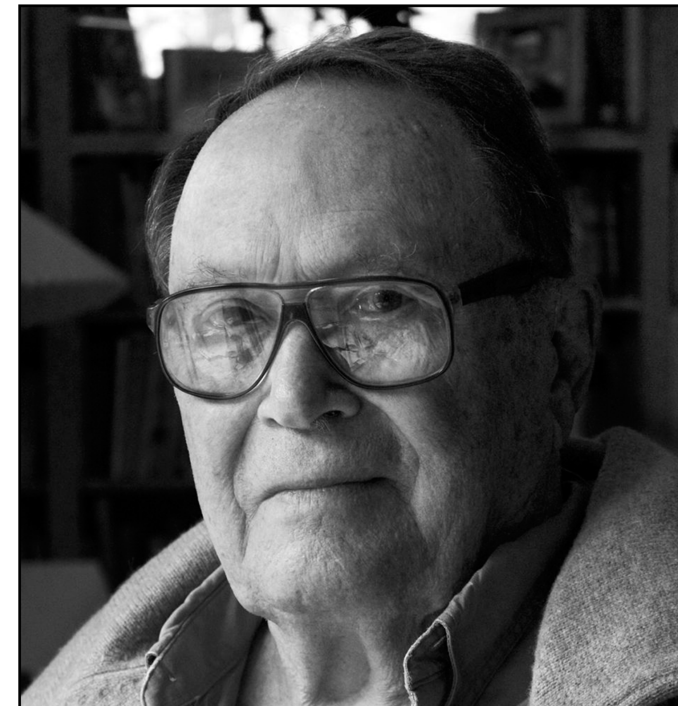


Photo Credit: Vincent Tolentino

"Sumptuous Destitution" was written in 1960. Its title comes from the Dickinson poem that R.W. Franklin lists as #1404, which explores the experience of finding "Joy" in "many and reportless places." It is a joy that is sincere enough but leaves a "nameless" if "sumptuous" and radical emptiness (a condition without hope, indifferent to change, which defies "search" and has "no home"). The word "sumptuous" might seem altogether out of place in a poem about "destitution" were it not for the fact that, as Wilbur argues, Dickinson creates her own vocabulary in which the absence of satisfaction is alluring and to lack all is to possess everything.

When Wilbur wrote "Sumptuous Destitution," Thomas H. Johnson had published his editions of Dickinson's *Poems* (1955) and *Letters* (1960), while George Frisbie Whicher, of Wilbur's alma mater Amherst College, had long since brought out his influential biography of Dickinson, *This Was a Poet* (1938). When I first read Wilbur's essay, together with his other observations about her life and art, I realized that to some degree he agreed with Whicher, who found Emily Dickinson's poetry the product of a mind and heart that were familiar with discontent, even desperation. Indeed, in chapters like "The Leaf at Love Turned Back," Whicher sifted poem after poem for evidence of "emotional crisis" and "tragic frustration" over love denied. Wilbur had written of his own verse that it was meant to say (as two of his biographers put it) that "squalor, failure, pain, and misery occur . . . within a cosmic order" (Robert Bagg and Mary Bagg, *Let Us Watch, Richard Wilbur, A Critical Study*, 2017), a realization that should not be troubling. But in "Sumptuous Destitution," he appears to echo Whicher, when he regards Dickinson's poetry by contrast as "an effort to cope with deprivation." And he explains his diagnosis, "For her there were three major deprivations: she was deprived of an orthodox and steady religious faith; she was deprived of love; she was deprived of literary recognition" (54). Interestingly, although he had access to the essentially correct Dickinson texts and was not dependent on the legend of passion and renunciation, eccentricity, and near-derangement fostered by the Bianchi texts of her aunt's life and work, Wilbur could not have read their antidote: Richard Sewall's magisterial biography *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (Yale 1974).

Nevertheless, to some extent, he anticipated Sewall's decision that the "stress should [always] be on her achievement as a poet," not on Emily Dickinson's possible "disenchantment" with a "society" and "way of life in which she could not be happy and productive" (156). Sewall's great mission as a biographer and as a popular teacher of Dickinson's verse at Yale was to insist that Dickinson was no twisted neurotic with little human sympathy, but a woman whom tragedy might touch but could never rob of what she called her "ecstasy in living." With remarkable tact and delicacy, Wilbur reasoned that Dickinson "dealt with her sentiment of lack" by repeatedly assert-

The Dickinson Sweeting is Born

An apple tree at the Dickinson Homestead bore fruit for the first time in many years, under the attentive ministrations of horticulturalist and Museum volunteer Francis Martin. Apples do not come true from seed – that is, the seed from last week's golden delicious that you've lovingly tended and sprouted will not produce a golden delicious tree, but at best a remote facsimile. As Michael Pollan has put it, "if not for grafting . . . every apple in the world would be its own distinct variety." He calls this "genetic variability" of the apple a kind of "ineluctable wildness" (*The Botany of Desire*, 2001). The new produce of the Homestead orchard will be something entirely new and original.

It is fitting that the "wild prosperity" (Fr1616) of the apple should spring out from among the hidden, withdrawn precincts of those venerable woods. Since Martin has identified it as a descendent of an heirloom variety, the Tolman Sweet, introduced in 1822, the new apple, however far from that early tree its genetic fall turns out to be, has been named the Dickinson Sweeting (after exceptionally close voting among participating Museum members). Appropriately enough: Pollan says apples used to symbolize sweetness itself: they "were part and parcel of a sweet landscape. . . . To call land 'sweet' was a way of saying it answered our desires."

These wild apples from Kazakhstan show how variable the apple's form may be. Photographed by Beck Low, permaculture practitioner and writer.

ing the paradox that to renounce is to possess. He observed that she even warned callers whom she refused to see that "We shun because we prize."

Furthermore, for Wilbur, Dickinson's chief source of a near "contempt" for everyday life and "earthly circumstance" originated in her awareness that the poetic impulses that visited her were what she calls "Bulletins … / From Immortality" (Fr820, "Sumptuous Despair"). Heaven was what she looked for in all things lovable and desirable in this world, and for her, only the inspired words of a poem could anticipate God's far-off paradise. He liked to say that "the clarity and repose" of heaven came to Emily Dickinson not through love or creeds or fame but in what she called her "work." From this, her art, she claimed that she could not "lift [her] Forehead" in "Curiosity" about what other people call life (Fr995).

Some readers might object that, by focusing so intently on what he considers Emily Dickinson's superiority to earthly circumstance, Wilbur seems to neglect the immense delight she took as a poet in the people and things of this world. While he admired her snake and hummingbird lyrics, he lavished finer attention upon her poems about eternity, immortality, and the grand vistas of an imaginary second Eden that marked "the reunion of souls in Heaven." But one might ask, What of her flowers, so carefully described: the clover (her "Purple Democrat"), the gentian, the daisy?

What of the trees tossed by storms, the birds, the moon?

Readers today might wish that Wilbur acknowledged more fully the pleasure he took from Dickinson's pleasure in homely detail: buckets, shawls, buzzing flies. For he himself was a poet who sang of "crab legs," "Merry-go-round rings," "fine / Ruddy-skinned pears," laundry, lilacs, and (famously) that "underground grower," "beautiful only to hunger": the potato. And while it is true that Dickinson was deprived of some of the greatest experiences – of being a mother or rearing a child, for example – she spoke warmly about them occasionally in letters but never wrote of desiring them for herself. In this way, she was apparently satisfied with leading her circumscribed life in what she thrillingly called "my palace in the dew" (L89).

Many of Richard Wilbur's poems are about heavens on earth, even as one of Dickinson's poems imagines rowing in an earthly Eden where lovers reunite. She never declared as simply as Wilbur did in a late poem, "Psalm": "pronounce it / Good to have been born." Yet, although Wilbur's poetic voice was essentially one of praise, its music included the complications of loss, of grief and disappointment. Such complexity enabled him to value the minute attentions Emily Dickinson paid to discerning what he thought of as the motions of her soul.

In an inaugural poem called "The House," of a last collection entitled *Anterooms* (2010), Wilbur wrote a tribute to his beloved wife Charlee, who died in 2007. In language reminiscent of Dickinson's in elegies for a lost lover, it recalls the dream Charlee often had before waking of a "white house" that was to be her "haven." Faithfully, he evokes her description of it: a white gatepost, terrace, fanlight, "a widow's walk," and "salt winds that ruffle the surrounding firs."

The grieving narrator (admitting he is "foolish") asks a momentous question of a listening but unresponsive universe: "Is she there now, wherever there may be?" And in the beautiful last line that expresses his devotion, hope, and yearning, he addresses his dead wife:

Night after night, my love, I put to sea.

The House
By Richard Wilbur

Sometimes, on waking, she would close her eyes
For a last look at that white house she knew
In sleep alone, and held no title to,
And had not entered yet, for all her sighs.

What did she tell me of that house of hers?
White gatepost; terrace; fanlight of the door;
A widow's walk above the bouldered shore;
Salt winds that ruffle the surrounding firs.

Is she now there, wherever there may be?
Only a foolish man would hope to find
That haven fashioned by her dreaming mind.
Night after night, my love, I put to sea.

From Anterooms: New Poems and Translation *by Richard Wilbur. Copyright 2010 by Richard Wilbur. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved.*

An Appreciation of Lucie Brock-Broido (1956-2018)

By Tom Daley

Re-reading her remarkable oeuvre in the wake of her sudden and untimely demise, one gets the sense that the poet and teacher Lucie Brock-Broido was constantly preparing herself for her ending – and for our own. In the very first poem of her collection, *The Master Letters*, poems that act as a kind of elegant amplification, a baroque expansion, of Dickinson's much commented on trio of letters to an unknown "Master," Brock-Broido finishes, "I / remember how cold I will be" (from "Carrowmore"). Answering Dickinson's "The Figures I have seen / Set orderly, for Burial, / Reminded me, of mine" (Fr355), Brock-Broido calls to mind, with characteristic sharpness, "The tear in the body's tailored skin / Like the Siberian boy in autopsy / Stitched shut at last, & asymmetrically" (from "Housekeeping").

Brock-Broido's four books of poetry have been highly acclaimed, starting with critic Helen Vendler's enthusiastic but measured *New Yorker* review (August 7, 1989) of her first collection, *A Hunger*. As director of the poetry concentration for Columbia University's writing program and a leader of a renowned workshop at her home in Cambridge, Massachusetts (which I was privileged to participate in, albeit as a somewhat contrarian student), Brock-Broido trained many of the leading and emerging lights of today's academic poetry world.

Emily Dickinson served, not as a muse exactly, but as a companion in the confrontation with creation that was Brock-Broido's work. Her engagement with Dickinson's letters afforded her springboards as opposed to beacons. The poems were less of an inspiration. Nevertheless, "Dickinson," Brock-Broido told Henri Cole in an interview for *Harvard Review* (Fall 1995), "has written the great poem that has to do with real life: 'First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go – .' Most poems, for me, don't necessarily have to do with real life. But #341 [Fr372] is the most accurate poem that I've ever read, with the exception of the erotic, galloping, sexy poems of Wyatt. Much other Dickinson work is not so real to me; it is much more mystical and less bodily." She was somewhat less kind about Dickinson's poems in an interview with Carole Maso for *BOMB* magazine ("Lucie Brock-Broido" by Carole Maso, October 1, 1995): "I had always turned away from Dickinson's poems, I thought she was precious; I didn't get it. Then I began to read her letters. These, I fathomed. And if there were such things as visitations, then I would have had them. Though, just for the record, no one has appeared in a white dress by my fireplace."

Photo Credit: Lawrence Schwartzwald

In her prose poem, "To a Strange Fashion of Forsaking" (*The Master Letters*), Brock-Broido approximates a Dickinsonian progression. Speculation ("I think I may have never touched your linen, nor your skin") precedes dreary assessment, buttressed by a place-based analogy (Dickinson's "vats along the Rhine" fall away to "a small Berlin of snow"): "It is winter again. What with crimped winds . . . I think it will be always this one way." But even the chill fails to smother the small thermals of passion on which the speaker floats, birdlike: "I am seized with a small fever now; I cannot get small enough."

Like Dickinson, Brock-Broido experienced writing as a duty, a compulsion, something not to be set aside, regardless of the cost. She was not unaware of her genius, her uniqueness, and, perhaps like Dickinson, understood that there wasn't anyone else who could solve the problem of poetry the way she did. Writing made it possible for her to shave the chin and ear hairs of her demons and plait them into tropes – not to restrain them, but to charm and co-opt them. If the speaker of Dickinson's "Of Bronze – and Blaze" (Fr319) could talk slightingly of her "Splendors" as a "Menagerie," Brock-Broido exploited exoticism as much as the quotidian. Her caterpillars spun a silk from evening news-hour

tragedies, from literary and historical allusions, from shatteringly cogent private images – and she fashioned them into a brocade polished to a high gloss with the chamois of her febrile imagination.

A little shy of the contemporary American academic prejudice against rhyming poetry (most of her workshop participants considered my full rhymes regrettably passé), she pointed out to me in private that much of her poetry rhymed (to say they "chimed" would be more accurate – consonantal and assonantal repetitions in the couplets or between the couplets, *à la* some of Emily Dickinson), but that most people didn't notice it.

If Dickinson, as stories had it, would regale guests at parties at the home of her brother Austin and his wife Susan with her haphazard piano playing and her anecdotes, Brock-Broido was renowned as an entertainer, too. Blending daiquiris (rum provided by the students) for participants in her annual twice-weekly summer poetry workshop at her Cambridge home, she would animate the pre-workshop social hour with a ribald cackle and a crinkling coo. Some of her long-time students would trade barbs and quips with her. No one could ever accuse Lucie, as Dickinson did the "Gentlewomen" of Amherst, of "dimity conviction" (Fr675). When she complained about the humidity, using the Yiddish word for "sweating," "I've been schvitzing all day!" one wag retorted, "Lucie, ladies don't schvitz."

The furnishings in her house would not have seemed out of place at Austin and Susan's manse, The Evergreens. The air of her lair was lush with velvet drapes, her windows blockaded with white cotton curtains. Her domain constituted a chapel of antiques – a couch in the shape of a sleigh, a fat, old dictionary on a stand proud as a book of the Gospels on a lectern in a cathedral. Emily Dickinson had her brown Newfoundland, Carlo; Lucie had her succession of Maine Coon cats, one of which, she bragged, was to have had a fellowship named after it at Columbia. Many of the books in her library were arranged by the color of their spines, but she could always find one she was looking for in a flash. Perhaps as an homage to Dickinson, her preferred garb was a shin-length white gown, often secured at the waist by a weightlifter's belt and brushing the tops of black boots.

She seldom initiated gossip, but she relished the savory tidbit, the ridiculous send-up, the puerile parody of someone's German name that lent itself to punning. She and I would stay up till all hours (she often didn't sleep until noon) after the workshop the one summer I actually was enrolled in it (I was honored to think she thought of me as a colleague as much as her student), and when I would visit in subsequent years as a kind of guest critic. We would evaluate the progress of different poets (some of whom took the summer off from my workshop to join Lucie's crew for alternative instruction) in the group, trade rumors, and debate the merits of various living poetic luminaries. She would grin slyly as I compared calf muscles of the men who had worn shorts that evening,

When a poem was workshopped, Lucie would carefully yet swiftly inspect its jugular, and after gently accessing that vein, she would pump the blood of the poem through her own remarkable dialysis-capable critical imagination and produce something utterly cleansed and reconstituted. She always honored something of the original in this process, and while some participants would be devastated by the radical metamorphosis, most of them appreciated the extraordinary creation that resulted. While I valued the lively debate that would ensue in response to her retrofitting (she discouraged sycophancy in students by being perfectly respectful of any opposition), I wasn't sure having a teacher, even one as brilliant as Lucie, rewrite one's poem was such a good way to learn how to compose. I would sometimes argue she was paring away the meat of the fruit with the rind. She respected my judgment, and sometimes conceded I might have a point about something, but was rarely swayed from her initial impulse.

She had a touch of the shaman about her, but a shaman who might have been more at home working her tongue-in-cheek sleight-of-hand on a stage in the borscht belt than in a room rinsed out with sage smoke (tobacco was her preferred herb, anyhow). She was utterly convinced of a spiritual realm, but uninterested in abstemiousness or self-mortification as a gangway to cross over to that realm. Though the speakers of her poems had grand visions of reincarnation, and were even occasionally vainglorious about their psychic powers, she had a sense of humor about it all, and no doubt would have smiled a wide smile whenever she came across that famous exchange in *Henry IV, Part I*:

GLENDOWER
I can call spirits from the vasty deep.
I can summon spirits from the deep ocean.

HOTSPUR
Why, so can I, or so can any man,
But will they come when you do call for them?

Theatrics were part of the persona. The first time I heard her read (at Adams House at Harvard), she was seriously, ridiculously late. One of Lucie's acolytes asked another, when she finally breezed in, "Should we stand up?" Lucie, who would never apologize for something as insignificant as keeping a crowd of seventy-five people waiting for half an hour, began her reading by announcing, with bad-girl bravado, "Professor Vendler just told me there's a rule at Harvard where students can leave after twenty minutes if a professor doesn't show up." She could be sure no one had left before her entrance.

Many years later, I saw her perform a bit of pure and glorious drama at a reading during an Association of Writers & Writing Programs conference in Boston. Lucie took the stage with breathtaking panache. Striding across the platform in her ten-league boots, her swaggering gown bleached whiter than a disc of snow, she blended histrionic humility with a casual imperiousness. She would shiver her famous mane of blonde hair that reached to her keister as she intoned the lines from her poems with lips painted in the hussy-tint of some scarlet experiment.

As much of a public personality as she was, she had some of Dickinson's penchant for reclusiveness. She would often disappear in late autumn and early winter to concentrate her extraordinary faculties of poetic composition, and only a small circle of her beloved, including her three sisters, was granted access to her during her hibernation.

"The Poets light but Lamps," Emily Dickinson wrote, "Themselves go out" (Fr930). It is hard to believe that the flame of Lucie Brock-Broido's memorable personality, comedienne-cum-sage-cum-bard-cum-master teacher, has been snuffed out. I don't believe in an afterlife, but I know that Lucie was quite certain that "This World is not Conclusion" (Fr373). I am not sure that she knew the poem, but I imagine that she would have been enthralled with the notion that, rather than summoning an angel with a harp and candle, Death could carry "the Waning lamp / That lit the Drummer from the Camp / To purer Reveille!" (Fr322).

Opposite is a Brock-Broido poem (from *The Master Letters*) in which resonances with the Dickinson project can be discerned – the aphoristic impulse, the grandiloquent gesture, the taut phrasing. The title, as the poet notes, "is taken from the Prince's speech in the last act, final scene of *Romeo & Juliet*" The last line slightly twists Mercutio's curse on the Montagues and Capulets, "A plague o' both your houses!"

Tom Daley is the author of House You Cannot Reach—Poems in the Voice of My Mother and Other Poems *(FutureCycle Press) and a play,* Every Broom and Bridget—Emily Dickinson and Her Irish Servants*. His poems, essays and reviews have appeared in* Harvard Review, Prairie Schooner, Fence, Witness, Crazyhorse, Denver Quarterly*, and the* Emily Dickinson International Society Bulletin.

A Glooming Peace This Morning With it Brings

The sedative of frost composes
Its infinity of dormant melodramas

On the glass. It consoles one,
The solstice of the hour's no

Apparent motion, standing still.
It contents one, the solace of

Form & phantasm, of sieve
& specter, root & disposition.

The difference between desire & compulsion
Is that one is wanting, one is warding off.

Consort—submission is a form of brawling
Of the hearts, & one is Sped—a stroke or flaw

Inflicted northward, southward, pardoned still.
A plague on both our wills.

"A Glooming Peace This Morning With it Brings" from The Master Letters: Poems *by Lucie Brock-Broido, copyright © 1995 by Lucie Brock-Broido. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.*

From "LB²: An Appreciation, by Ellen Davis, Bulletin *5.1, 1993*

To envision this majestic figure [of the Master], Brock-Broido reads, as she put it, "any *heroic* I can get my hands on" – Donne, Lowell, Michelangelo's sonnets. All of her current poems are Master Letters, addressed to an absent Beloved. As she puts it in her notes to the group published in the September/October 1991 issue of *American Poetry Review*, "On the fabrication of the Poem: I have come to the Faith that all poems are letters to God. Else – failing that faith – then all poems are railings against the fact that there *is* no God, after all." One poet asked her this: When will the Master write you back?" An oblique Lucie answer was to quote Emily Dickinson (L190): "I dont know who it is, that sings, nor did I would I tell!"

Reviews of Publications

Renée Bergland, Book Review Editor

Ben Lerner
***The Hatred of Poetry*. Farrar Strauss and Giroux 2016.**

Robert Hass
***A Little Book on Form: An Exploration into the Formal Imagination of Poetry*. HarperCollins 2017**

Jill Bialosky
***Poetry Will Save Your Life: A Memoir*. Simon and Schuster 2017**

Matthew Zapruder
***Why Poetry*. HarperCollins 2017.**

At the height of the Elizabethan era, Sir Philip Sidney responded to a flurry of publications debating the social importance of poetry with his *Apology for Poetry*. In 1821, as romanticism crested, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote his *Defence of Poetry*. Although it's not clear that Ben Lerner, Robert Hass, Jill Bialosky or Matthew Zapruder have written the sorts of books that will endure for centuries, it is striking that the past year or two have called forth so many defenses of poetry. Maybe it's a bad sign: Poetry is under attack. On the other hand, maybe it's a very good sign: Perhaps we are living in a golden age.

Ben Lerner's slim paperback, *The Hatred of Poetry*, distills the quintessence of Brooklyn hipster-poet into an elegant green booklet that is a perfect accessory for an afternoon at a pour-over coffee shop. One struggles to resist making fun of it, and yet – it is really good. Lerner is witty and at times he is a little too knowing, but he is perceptive, insightful, critically sharp, and swooningly romantic / bitingly post-romantic. Spoiler: Lerner doesn't hate poetry, though he claims that everyone who cares about poetry half hates it because it always falls short of the ideal. At first, Lerner is ironic. He quotes Sidney's disdain for those who "cannot hear the 'planet like music of poetry,'" and then he instantly follows the quotation with a parenthetical, Marianne-Moore style one liner: "(I, too, can't hear it.)" Later on, Lerner's *Hatred of Poetry* drops the quotation marks, and takes up Sidney's phrase – "the planet-like music of poetry" – as its own expression of a twenty-first century poetics.

Although *The Hatred of Poetry* was published in 2016, context clues reveal that Lerner had been working on the book for years. Lerner defends Barack Obama for having invited Elizabeth Alexander to read at his inauguration in 2009, and responds to jeremiads against contemporary poetry by George Packer (on *The New Yorker* website in 2009) and Mark Edmundson (in *Harper's* in 2013). Lerner sees Packer and Edmundson as white male universalists, and he draws on the works of Alexander and Rankine (and a host of others who don't identify as universalizing white men) to argue against a white male upper middle class standard of "greatness." His best examples come from Dickinson, and make this brief polemic particularly interesting to Dickinsonians. Lerner concludes, "All I ask the haters – and I, too, am one – is that they strive to perfect their contempt, even consider bringing it to bear on poems, where it will be deepened, not dispelled, and where, by creating a place for possibility and present absences (like unheard melodies), it might come to resemble love." It is a compelling, if slightly twisted, plea. I am reading Learner's book in 2018, and times have changed. I like his complex, ironic stance – exemplified by urging that we "perfect our contempt" for poetry, but it makes me nostalgic for that long-ago time, two years ago, when we had time for such subtleties.

Robert Hass's *Little Book on Form* was published in 2017, but Hass started working on it in 1995, when he was teaching at the Iowa writer's workshop. Like Lerner's, Hass's title is deceptive. The book is not little at all – it is long (446 pages) and, paradoxically, almost formless – a shaggy compilation of notes, studded with numbered lists. Hass describes it as "a book about the formal imagination in poetry." It is not clear where to shelve this book, or how to use it; it may be a little too informal and unmethodical to assign for a class, but it is a little too useful to leave out. It is chock full of good stuff: Poets and aspiring poets will find inspiration and insight; critics and teachers will find themselves wanting to crib the good lines and the explanatory strategies. Like many books of poems, this is not a book for reading cover-to-cover; it is one for sustained (and repeated) browsing. It is no accident that the book is put together this way: Hass is very smart about form, and he has structured the book to encourage exploration.

Matthew Zapruder and Jill Bialosky's books respond more directly to our current mood of crisis (in the world, in the United States, in English Departments). *Poetry Will Save Your Life* by Jill Bialosky is part memoir, part anthology, and part defense of poetry. The book contains 32 very brief essays ("Discovery," "Danger," "Wonder," and so on). Each chapter starts with a few paragraphs describing a memory, presents a poem, and then explains what the poem means to Bialosky. She is a clear writer, sincere and direct. At times the brevity of these essays is frustrating. It's not possible to get completely caught up in the narrative and her comments on the poetry can't go very deep. But the structure works, largely because Bialosky has such a good eye for a poem. Familiar verses by Robert Frost or Emily Dickinson feel new in this context, while less familiar poems feel exciting. Bialosky concludes by describing poetry as "that flicker of light in a dark wood." Her book offers many flickers of hope.

Finally, I turn to Matthew Zapruder's thought-provoking and wholly engaging *Why Poetry*. This volume is more an invitation than a defense. Zapruder says, "I'd like to think that this book is, itself, an example in prose of Keats's famous concept of negative capability, saying no to a certain kind of rigidity in thinking, to open up the creative possibility of a new form of attention, of understanding." Like Bialosky's book, *Why Poetry* is "a combination of memoir, analysis and argument" – but since Zapruder went to Amherst College as an undergraduate and then returned to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst for his MFA, his memoir will be of particular interest to Dickinsonians. Zapruder confesses, "Often I used to visit her grave in Amherst, Massachusetts, when I was first studying poetry, to ask for help or just put a little trinket on top of her gravestone. . . . Perhaps, in my worst, most desperate moments, I expected her to answer." As I read through *Why Poetry*, I began to believe that Dickinson had answered Zapruder's call.

In the Afterword, "Poetry and Poets in a Time of Crisis," Zapruder's questions echo Bialosky's. "What, in these times, must we do? Can poetry help save us?" His answers are hopeful: "Poems are imaginative structures built out of words, ones that any reader can enter. They are places of freedom, enlivenment, true communion." Zapruder declares, "The role of poetry in our time of crisis is the same as always: to preserve our minds and language so we may be strong for whatever is to come. And also, to preserve the possibility of mutual understanding, not by arguing for it, but by demonstrating it." I am convinced that Zapruder's lifelong attention to Dickinson helped him to formulate this remarkably inclusive poetics of possibility.

Taken together, Lerner, Hass, Bialosky and Zapruder offer four compelling discussions of the importance of poetry. It shocks me that in two short years we have moved from Lerner's elegant postromantic ironies to Zapruder's wholehearted romanticism, but it comforts me that in all of these books, poetry offers sustaining possibility. In different ways, Lerner, Hass, Bialosky and Zapruder kindle hope on this dark planet.

Taisia Kitaiskaia
***Literary Witches: A Celebration of Magical Women Writers*. Hachette 2017**

Julia Pierpont
***The Little Book of Feminist Saints*. Random House**

Reviewed by Annelise Brinck-Johnsen

I spent last summer listening to Lorde's *Melodrama* on repeat. Eventually, I bought a flow-y black cotton slip and told all my friends I was embracing the "modern witch aesthetic," which prominent Millennial publications from Vox to Medium assured me was "very in." Unfortunately, I was never able to buy all the crystals and tarot cards I needed to accessorize the feminist/witchy lifestyle. That stuff gets expensive.

Many social critics have ruminated on the current glut of feminist products that seem to have little connection to any form of principled or philosophically grounded response to patriarchy. As for me, I am not sure if I am thrilled or appalled that this commodified feminism has infiltrated my favorite genre of literature: mass-market works tangentially related to Emily Dickinson.

This spring sees the arrival of two surprisingly similar books that touch on Dickinson. First there is *Literary Witches: A Celebration of Magical Women Writers* by Taisia Kitaiskaia, illustrated by Katy Horan (Hachette 2017) and then there is *The Little Book of Feminist Saints* by Julia Pierpont, illustrated by Manjit Thapp (Random House 2018). Both books present a collection of women, Dickinson among them, lovingly sketched on pages facing bite-size descriptions of why these women are cool.

The introduction to *Literary Witches* explains "the mantle of "Literary Witch" is the highest honor we can bestow upon an author. The thirty writers included here inspire us deeply, urging us to be creatively courageous. We've crafted their portraits in art and writing to pay homage to their presences, and access their spirits through our own mediums." Meanwhile, Julia Pierpont's introduction says, "I would argue that all the women in this book have done something with their lives that makes them worthy idols. So let this be the little, secular book of feminist saints."

The women collected in both books are undoubtedly inspiring, even if the books themselves do not feel particularly original. They hark back to Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party," with its massive triangular table with specific hand-painted

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.
Send information to Renée Bergland, 3 Barrett Road, Hanover, NH 03755, U.S.A.
Email: renee.bergland@simmons.edu

tableware and hand-embroidered decorations for prominent women, including Emily Dickinson. Chicago's work was ground-breaking and complex, valorizing traditionally female artistic pursuits and remembering women whom history often overlooks. I imagine that the creators of these books see their reclamation of the title "Witch" or "Saint" as a similar feminist interruption of male historiography. Perhaps feminists need to continually re-insert women into historical, religious, and literary narratives. Maybe the work of re-claiming is never truly finished.

Yet despite the explicitly stated political intentions of these books, they cannot help but feel de-politicized and de-fanged. Chicago's yonic pottery was deemed shocking in 1979 and initially struggled to find a permanent home. In contrast, *The Little Book of Feminist Saints* was made to be sold at an Urban Outfitters by a bored teen making minimum wage – indeed since reading it I have seen it at every single bookstore I have entered, next to other similarly well-designed books. Maybe this indicates a "win" for feminism. For better or worse these books feel more like tokens than works intended to spark serious challenges to misogyny.

A collection of inspiring women is a perfect thing to buy a girl you vaguely know on some occasion on the way to adulthood – Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Quinceañera, high school graduation, 18th birthday. If you don't know her, why not buy a book where she can learn some basic facts about women's history that may recently have been scrubbed from her school's syllabus?

The quotidian commercial nature of our present moment suffuses every page of *The Little Book of Feminist Saints* despite Thapp's colourful illustrations (Dickinson, in white against a purple background). Unlike Pierpont's unflinchingly grim and well-received debut novel, *Among the Ten Thousand Things* (2015), *The Little Book of Feminist Saints* bends over backwards to make itself accessible and upbeat. The inspirational goal of the book becomes clearer the more entries one reads. Dickinson, "The Matron Saint of Verse," is noted as being "not shy," and valorized in the most Lean-In terms: "Though this major American Female poet published little in her lifetime, she actively sought out professional connections." If Pierpont's book inspires nothing else, the idea of Dickinson's letters to Thomas Wentworth Higginson as an early form of LinkedIn could surely lead to another book.

Like Pierpont, Taisia Kitaiskaia has earlier literary credentials under her belt, though hers are more witchy – she wrote *the hairpin's* "Ask Baba Yaga" column, which was turned into a 2016 book of the same name. *Literary Witches* is surprisingly multivalent: beguiling and disturbing. In addition to short biographies (similar to Pierpont's), each of Kitaiskaia's entries includes imaginative descriptions of each literary woman's suitably witchy behaviour: "YOU MIGHT notice a comely mink in the Amherst woods, whispering to a pond. Every year, Emily possesses this particular mink to recite her new poems, in mink language, to her best reader, the black pond." Further, Kitaiskaia includes a miniature recommended reading list for each of her subjects. For Dickinson she recommends Franklin's *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* and a few selected poems clearly chosen by Kitaiskaia herself. Despite my dour outlook on commercialized feminism, I was charmed by *Literary Witches*. Perhaps, to paraphrase Donna Haraway, I would rather be a witch than a saint.

Listening to an album or buying a dress does not a true witch make; conscious feminist consumption and coffee table books are no replacement for tangible progress towards political goals. These books are intended to serve as feminist celebrations of women. This is well and good, but despite the clever design and carefully crafted paragraphs, binders full of women are inadequate. The women, including Dickinson, are flattened out, made the same, tokenized. Both of these books are perfect as inoffensive gifts for someone with nascent feminist tendencies, but that is hollow praise. On the bright side, it is worth noting that much like patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism, Dickinson's relevance endures.

One of Kitaiskaia's selected Dickinson poems is also a favorite of mine: "I dwell in Possibility – A fairer House than Prose." I can think of no better mantra for facing these dispiriting times.

Annelise Brinck-Johnsen is a graduate student in Women's Studies at Oxford University.

Briefly Noted

BBC In our Time, May 11, 2017: Emily Dickinson.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08p5lbp

If eavesdropping on the conversation in an Oxbridge Senior Common Room sounds interesting to you, then you might enjoy Melvyn Bragg's *In Our Time*, a high-culture weekly show on BBC Radio Four that is available as a free podcast or streaming. On May 11, 2017, *In Our Time* focused on Emily Dickinson and featured scholars Fiona Green, Páraic Finnerty, and Linda Freedman. The episode offers a good introduction to Dickinson and a remarkably pleasant 53 minutes of intelligent talk.

Reviews of Publications

Enikő Bollobás
***Vendégünk a végtelenből. Emily Dickinson költészete [Our Visitor from Infinitude. Emily Dickinson's Poetry]*. Budapest, Balassi, 2015.**

Reviewed by Pál Hegyi

Hungarian readers have been no strangers to Dickinson's poetry: already in the 1930s some of the best Hungarian poets published their translations in the most prestigious literary journal of the time, Nyugat [West], presenting them as the surprising works of an eccentric "lady poet." Then in the 1970s there came a Dickinson fad of sorts, when a new generation of readers was taken by her poetry. The bright green volume containing nearly two hundred poems in the translation of the leading woman poet of Hungary, Amy Károlyi, soon sold in over ten thousand copies. And although the canon was somewhat eclectic, and Hungarian Dickinson's voice was somewhat mannered and affected, the phenomenon looked quite authentic and powerful. With Károlyi's superb introduction and the selection from the letters framing the volume came the promise that, no matter how peculiar and difficult, this poet was knowable.

Dickinson as a scholarly subject came to be rigorously explored in Hungary in the 1980s, primarily through the efforts of Enikő Bollobás: radio programs addressing the general public and conference talks and essays, both in Hungarian and English, geared toward the academic community. Her work of several decades culminated in a monograph, published (in Hungarian) in 2015 with the title, *Vendégünk a végtelenből. Emily Dickinson költészete [Our Visitor from Infinitude. Emily Dickinson's Poetry]*.

The book starts with a scholarly *Auftakt* pulling the reader into the core of Dickinson's "strangeness" and modernity: the discussion of uncertainty and unknowing as the condition humaine through the analysis of "I heard a Fly Buzz" (Fr465) and of Dickinson's idea of order through the reading of "Four Trees," complemented by a short presentation of the ebbs and flows of scholarly reception. Five chapters follow this introduction, devoted to the poet's life, the formal and linguistic aspects of poetic voice, modes of addressing topics, tropes and cognitive processes, and her gender roles.

Biography is presented as a string of puzzling facts complemented by possible answers to the questions posed by Dickinson's life record. Moreover, facts are presented both in the context of current biographies and current critical thematics such as Dickinson's Calvinism, her idea of celibacy, the possible men in her life, the possible identity of the Master, withdrawal from the world, friendship with Carlo the Newfoundland, illnesses, and poses.

Poetic voice is the topic of the next chapter, dealing with the peculiarities of syntax, semantics, orthography, punctuation, as well as verse form, including stanzaic structure, prosody and rhyme scheme. Performing her readings on the original English texts in this chapter (as opposed to the rest of the book where Hungarian translations are interpreted), Bollobás systematically surveys Dickinson's defamiliarization techniques at the various levels of language, deviating from the received norms not only of poetic language of the time, but of American English itself. Dickinson writes in a prosody of approximation, or *vers libéré*, which Bollobás in another essay connects with the style of Symbolism or high modernism ("Measures of Attention: On the Grammetrics of Lineation in William Carlos Williams' Poetry." *Poetry and Epistemology. Turning Points in the History of Poetic Knowledge*, eds. Roland Hagenbüchle and Laura Skandera [1986]). But Dickinson also prefigures the prosody of the other modernist tradition, the radical modernism of Pound and Williams, which develops its specific visual rhythm punctuated by lineation to correspond to the units of attention, and with the function of de-automatizing the reading process. This is the verse form that, as Bollobás and Donald Wesling claim in their "Free verse" article in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, is suited to the poetic sensibility capturing, in a manner typical of Dickinson, one-time events (as opposed to repetitive events) and poetic voice that is "thickened by sound and visual effects that will not be echoed later on."

In the section devoted to thematic Bollobás does not discuss the individual Dickinsonian themes themselves but rather the ways Dickinson addresses her various topics. Among these the author gives detailed analyses to the aesthetics of process, modes of introspection and self-examination, her explorations of consciousness and the psyche as remnants of Puritan spiritual exercises, her determination to try to understand cognitive and even pre-cognitive processes side by side with her doubts of knowing, the Self as the locus of all explorations, and its recurring *mise en abyme* type conceptualizations.

Exploring, in the longest and perhaps most important chapter of the book, the close correspondence between ways of knowing on the one hand and figures and tropes on the other, Bollobás surveys the outstanding tropes of this most "polytropic" poet. She suggests, for example, that the recurrent impulse to deny – her "philosophy of no" (quite similar to the one described by Gaston Bachelard much later) – is actually an impulse to reconcile and adjust, provoking paradox and oxymoron as its figurative vehicles. Similarly, metaphor is the trope fitting Dickinson's ethos of transition, her careful attention to transformation and metamorphosis, and her insistence on internal-external correspondences, while catachresis – and here Bollobás is further developing her thesis expounded in her *Emily Dickinson Journal* essay (Spring 2012) – is the trope of the "unthought," the unknowable, the unthinkable, or the trope of pre-cognition and Whiteheadian "prehension." The author also discusses Dickinson's metonymy as the figure of a discourse of evasion, and synecdoche as the vehicle of *mise en abyme*.

The discussion of tropes continues in the final chapter in which Bollobás differentiates between two modes of performativity in Dickinson's poems on gender roles: the performance of existing social scripts and the performing of acts that do not rely on existing scripts. Further developing her theses expounded in her writings on performativity and trope (for example, "Performing Texts/ Performing Readings," "Troping the Unthought"), Bollobás claims that metaphor is the trope of gender performance (since gender normativity is carried by metaphor) while catachresis is the trope of gender performativity (since gender alterity is carried by catachresis).

Language, thinking, tropes, and gender: these are perhaps the keywords that run through Bollobás's Dickinson monograph. She discusses a canon that both includes the long-time favorites and expands to poems that do not fit the received Dickinson image. Bollobás's readings are informed by a non-native speaker's subtle attentions to language as well as her intimate familiarity with the Dickinson corpus and criticism.

Pál Hegyi is Assistant Professor at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, teaching 19th and 20th century US literature. He has a monograph on Paul Auster; his upcoming book delineates similarities in the poetics of early 19th-century and contemporary American popular fiction.

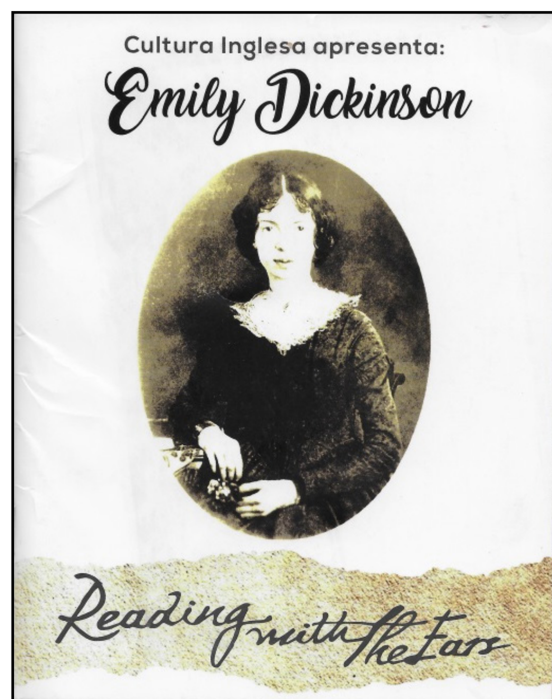
O eu, o outro e o mundo / The Self, the Other, and the World

By George Monteiro

On October 25, 2017, in its series entitled "Reading with the Ears," the Cultura Inglesa (São Paulo, Brazil) devoted an evening to the poems and letters of Emily Dickinson read in the original English and in Portuguese translation. The texts were chosen by Munira Mutran and Antonieta Celani, who put the program together. The performance was commemorated in this 48-page, undated booklet published by the Cultura Inglesa.

This bilingual booklet reproduces the Dickinson letters and poems read on the occasion.

The full letters (translated by Fernanda Mourão) are 187, 261, and 265 (as they appear in Thomas H. Johnson's *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, 1958) and three short quotations from unidentified letters (translated by Munira Mutran). The poems included are "This is my letter to the World" (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "Love – thou art high – " (trans. Isa Mara Lando), "Love – is anterior to Life – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "My life closed twice before its close – " (trans. Manuel Bandeira), "My River runs to thee – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "You left me – Sire – two Legacies – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "Too scanty 'twas to die for you" (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "Bee! I'm expecting you!" (trans. Isa Mara Lando), "My friend must be a Bird – " (trans. Jorge de Sena), "For each ecstatic instant" (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "The Heart asks Pleasure – first – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" (trans. Carlos Daghlian), "The soul selects her own society" (trans. Paulo Vizioli), "Of Course – I prayed – " (trans. Isa Mara Lando), "I asked no other thing – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "Because I could not stop for Death – " (trans. Alcina Brasileiro Hall), "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (trans. Augusto de Campos), "I died for Beauty – but was scarce" (trans. Cecilia Meireles), "Pain – has an Element of Blank – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "I reason, Earth is short – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "Nature rarer uses Yellow," (trans. Isa Mara Lando), "Tell all the truth but tell it slant – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes), "What is – 'Paradise'" (trans. Carlos Daghlian and Rogério Choclay), and "Our share of night to bear – " (trans. Aíla de Oliveira Gomes). Cherise Silvestri read Dickinson's original texts. Lígia Cortez read the translations.



Illustrated throughout with several familiar portraits and photographs, the booklet is dedicated to the memory of Carlos Daghlian, Brazil's foremost Dickinson scholar, who died on September 16, 2016, at the age of 78.

New EDIS Board Member-At-Large

Li-Hsin Hsu

Li-Hsin Hsu, the newest member-at-large of the EDIS Board, expands the international representation on the Board of this international society from two to three. She will join the Board in August 2018. "I have been a beneficiary of the generous support of the Emily Dickinson International Society in the past," she says, "and I am keen on contributing to the society by promoting EDIS to a broader audience outside the US."

She hopes to help expand EDIS membership and generate interest in Dickinson internationally by engaging more pedagogical as well as academic societies and institutions in Asia to form partnerships with EDIS. She would like to strengthen a tighter connection between EDIS and the Far East by working with scholars from EDIS's chapters in Japan and China to arrange Dickinson-related symposia, translation workshops and poetry-reading events for local high schools, universities and international book festivals. To that end, she would bring more international Dickinson scholars to Asia. Sponsorship of the Taiwanese government would facilitate the possibility of lecture tours in Taiwan and around Asia, "so that the attention of more Asian poetry readers, students and scholars could be brought to understanding and appreciating Dickinson's works." Moreover, she hopes that collaborations between the US and Asia could also be increased with the involvement of local artists, poets, musicians and translators to work with Dickinson scholars through electronic media to generate cross-cultural, experimental artworks and translations.

Li-Hsin is an Associate Professor of English at National Chengchi University, in Taipei, where she serves as chief editor of the international journal, *The Wenshan Review* (the Literary Mountain). She has taught a regular course in Emily Dickinson Studies for the postgraduate program of her department and has helped increase the number of students working on Dickinson in the past few years. In 2014 and 2017, she gained Taiwanese government sponsorship to bring two international Dickinson scholars to deliver public addresses throughout Taiwan.

Her interests extend to translation as well. She collaborated with Stephanie Farrar on translating six of Dickinson's poems into Chinese during the 2014 Dickinson conference in Shanghai, and last December, she organized a poetry-translation workshop, inviting a well-known Dickinson translator in Taiwan to give a talk on the challenges of translating Dickinson into Chinese. She has held poetry-reading salons in her department, featuring translation works of Dickinson, and as editor of *The Wenshan Review*, she has sought to bring local interdisciplinary literary and cultural studies to a wider audience.

Her research interests include Dickinson studies, Romanticism, transatlantic studies, reception history, Orientalism, and ecocriticism. Most recently, she has been working on a project funded by the Taiwan Ministry of Science and Technology involving Dickinson and two Taiwanese poets. Part of the project explores Dickinson's Asian receptions and aesthetic connections by looking at "Asia's Dickinson" in a contemporary Taiwanese context.

As a member of the EDIS Board, she hopes to continue her efforts to bring Dickinson to Asia, to explore connections between Dickinson and Asian artists and poets, expanding the audience of each, and to promote cross-cultural conversations on scholarship and translation.

2018 EDIS Scholarship Awards

Graduate Student Scholarship

Vivian Delchamps

Vivian Delchamps is an English PhD student at the University of California, Los Angeles. Delchamps works on nineteenth-century American literature and disability studies, medical humanities, and gender studies. Her dissertation will contemplate the literary writings of both doctors and patients in nineteenth-century America.

Project Description

In her project, "Emily Dickinson's Medical Knowledge," Delchamps surveys a wide range of critics from the late 19th century to today who use Dickinson's poetry and letters to assign her a medical diagnosis, or who interpret her poems as mere reflections of an underlying illness. Delchamps juxtaposes these diagnostic readings with Dickinson's own writings about doctors, diagnosis, and medical treatments. Dickinson perceived a connection between medicine and literature, appropriating medical methods in her writings even as she crafted metaphors and metonymies that challenged diagnostic claims to truth. By arguing that Dickinson had an intellectual interest in the medical practices of her day and was an acute observer of the enigmatic nature of health, Delchamps aims to contribute to the establishment of Dickinson as a significant figure in medical humanities and disability studies.

Dickinson Scholar Award

Ryan Heryford

Ryan Heryford is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at California State University, East Bay, where he teaches courses in 19th and 20th century American literary and cultural studies, with a focus in eco-criticism and the environmental humanities. His current book-length project, "The 'Snugness of Being': Nineteenth Century American Literary Vitalisms," explores the influence of 19th-century environmental and bio-medical philosophy on constructions of self and subjectivity within the works of Poe, Dickinson, and Melville.

Project Description

Heryford reconsiders critical debates surrounding Dickinson's lyricism and construction of a lyric "I," suggesting the existence of alternative pathways in the poet's configurations of human and non-human personhoods. It is within such spaces of dynamic and precarious subjectivity, he suggests, that we best find Dickinson's politics, implicating her work in national conversations around rights and being in the moments leading up to the Civil War, as well as affording opportunities to resituate Dickinson's environmental poetry within ongoing conversations around collective ethical commitments in the face of rapidly changing ecosystems. As the award recipient, he plans to further inform this work through visits to the Dickinson archives in Amherst and around New England.

EDIS Supports Dickinson Scholarship

The Emily Dickinson International Society presents the Dickinson Scholar Award and the Graduate Student Scholarship to promote new research on Dickinson. For the Scholar Award, the project need not be devoted solely to Dickinson, but her work should be a substantial focus. The award of $2,000 may be used for any expense incurred to advance the project. Applicants must have completed the PhD.

The Graduate Student Scholarship awards $1,000 in support of graduate student scholarship on Dickinson. Again, the project need not be devoted solely to Dickinson, but her work should be a substantial focus. The award may be used for any expense incurred to advance the project. Preference will be given to applicants in the dissertation stage or writing a work aimed at publication.

Application for the awards involves submission of a cv, a cover letter, a 600-800 word project description, and a brief bibliography. The Scholar Award also requires submission of a preliminary budget. Materials should be sent to Michelle Kohler at mkohler@tulane.edu. Information may be found at www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org and any further questions may be directed to Michelle Kohler.

Hope is the Thing with Numbers

By Bill Sweet

In seeking to learn how our words can be mined to uncover who we are, Professor of Statistics Nicholas Horton introduced his students to Emily Dickinson as not just a poet, but the generator of a complex data set.

Photograph Credit: Takudzwa Tapfuma

For a recent segment of his course "Data Science," Horton and his students explored Dickinson's poetry as they would any stream of information, be it linguistic or numerical.

To get a sense of their subject beyond mere words on the page, though, the class went to where the poet generated the data: her Amherst home. On a quiet, snowy morning, students toured the bedroom, parlor, library and other rooms where Dickinson wrote close to 1,800 poems, and where she died, largely unpublished, in 1886.

The purpose of the class is to connect the past with the future, Horton told the students. "To do that in any kind of reasonable way requires a little bit more knowledge than just 'Here are the poems – start extracting data from them.' So that's why we're working with the Emily Dickinson Museum, to let you explore this building where a lot of the writing was done."

Use of the museum as a classroom space is nothing unusual, said Elizabeth Bradley, program coordinator. Just a stone's throw from campus, Dickinson's home has seen visits from over 200 Amherst College students in the past year for private tour groups and on-site classes. The museum employs about a dozen students as assistants and guides, and partners with the College for undertakings like a recent exhibit and reading with the campus literary magazine *Circus*, she said.

"Data Science" takes students through "practical analyses of large, complex, and messy data sets leveraging modern computing tools," according to the course description. "Computational data analysis is an essential part of modern statistics and data science."

"Machine and machine-learning algorithms are now making decisions that affect us profoundly," said Horton. "How do we train students, educated citizens, to be able to make sense of that? The course is designed to really get their hands dirty and then periodically have the opportunity to come back up and ask the big questions: What does it mean to have no privacy in the 21st century? What does it mean to bring these things together that on their own are pretty innocuous," but, when you look at the big picture, can seem more sinister?

Using *Modern Data Science with R*, a textbook that Horton co-authored dealing with R, a software environment for statistical computing and graphics, the course started off with students "scraping" *Macbeth* and Beatles songs, extracting data from the texts.

For the Dickinson segment, Horton never knows quite where the students are going to go with the data, he said. Using a web application called Shiny, students are basically let loose with Dickinson's poetry. Horton started them off by creating a page where, at the click of a button, the application returns a poem selected at random.

"I say, 'This is my beginning, you can do better than that,'" he said.

Don't look for dashes in this data set, though. Because of the complicated history of the ownership of Dickinson's poetry, the students are using the public-domain, early printed versions of the poems, which were shorn of the poet's idiosyncratic dashes and capitalizations.

In past semesters, students have created output such as charts and maps of the most-used words (Dickinson liked "like," for instance), or lists of synonyms and antonyms in the poet's lexicon.

"What I'm really excited about, in teaching statistics at a liberal arts college, is the idea of helping students to make sense of the data in the world around them," Horton said. "What could be more of a liberal art than that?"

This article, slightly modified from a piece by Bill Sweet, first appeared in the "News and Events" pages of the Amherst College Office of Communications web page. The Bulletin *is grateful to Amherst College for permission to reprint.*

EDIS Membership Form

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

Name, title & affiliation ____
Mailing address ____
____
Telephone (home)__________________ (office) __________________ (fax) __________________
email ____

Please check if this is: new address___ membership renewal ___

Membership Categories and Rates:

Joint EDIS-ED Museum	_____$110
Regular	_____ $60
Student	_____ $30
Associate (receives only the *Bulletin*)	_____ $20
Institutional	_____$125

Contributions (added to membership fee)

Sustaining Member	$_____($150 or more)
Contributing Member	$_____($50 – $149)
General Contribution	$_____
Scholar Travel / EDIS Institute	$_____
Total Amount Enclosed	$_____

Gift Memberships

Name, title & affiliation ____
Mailing address ____
____
____
Telephone (home)__________________ (office) __________________ (fax) __________________
email ____

Use additional page for further gift memberships.
Please make check or money order payable, in U.S. dollars, to
Johns Hopkins University Press Journals
Publishing Division
P.O. Box 19966
Baltimore, MD 21211-0966
www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org

TEL: 800/548-1784; FAX: 410/516-3866
FED ID #: V52-0595110/Canadian GST #: 124004946RT

Members are invited to endow a named award. To do so involves a gift of $1000 to the Society.

EDIS ANNUAL MEETING 2018 AMHERST, AUGUST 3-4

Emily Dickinson: In the Company of Others (Otherness *as* Company)

Photo Credit: Sean Garcia

In collaboration with the Emily Dickinson Museum, the 2018 Annual Meeting will be held Aug. 3-4 in Amherst. "Emily Dickinson: In the Company of Others (Otherness *as* Company)" will feature a keynote address by Vivian Pollak, Professor of English at the University of Washington, St. Louis and one of the original founders of the Society. Pollak is the author of *Dickinson: The Anxiety of Gender* (1986) and most recently, *Our Emily Dickinsons: American Women Poets and the Intimacies of Difference* (2016), nominated for the MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize.

In addition to the prestigious EDIS Critical Institute and an open Research Circle, the meeting will feature panels on Dickinson and pedagogy, addressing Dickinson and others, Dickinson in secondary education, and embodied Dickinson. There will be reading seminars on Dickinson, race and gender; and poetry groups on Dickinson's reading cultures and her notions of solitude and community.

Special events at this year's meeting will feature a lecture by the celebrated composer, conductor and teacher, Alice Parker (featured in the Spring 2015 issue of the *Bulletin*) and an original performance about Dickinson's life and work by Laurie McCants, called *Industrious Angels* (featured in the Fall 2017 issue). Friday evening there will be a Concert Reading of poems and letters organized by Barbara Dana, and performed by Dana with actors Amelia Campbell and Elizabeth Morton, and scholars Christopher Benfey and Cindy MacKenzie.

There will also be literary walks and tours of Dickinson and Todd sites in Amherst; a presentation in the Amherst College Archives; and a picnic on the grounds of the Dickinson Homestead with a view of the Pelham Hills.

A full program for the Annual Meeting appears on the EDIS webpage.

Above, Vivian Pollak; above opposite, Alice Parker conducting; below opposite, Laurie McCants during a solo performance.

Photo Credit: Nathaniel Allen

229

How soft
a Caterpillar
steps -
I find one
in
my Hand
From such a
velvet world
it came
comes - came
such plushes at Command
Its journey never wakes
my Hand
till poising on a
turn
its soundless travels
just arrest
my slow - terrestrial
eye
Intent upon its own
career - circuit
Intent upon
its mission quaint
circuit
quaint
what use
has it
for me -

Follow us on facebook

"Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS)"

www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org