
The Jones Library Dickinson Exhibit

*Reviewed by Mary Elizabeth
Kromer Bernhard*

A rare new exhibit on Emily Dickinson's life and work has as its locus the recently completed addition to the Jones library in Amherst. Having moved into the new wing of the renovated building, the Special Collections Department has acquired both new research facilities and a spacious exhibit hall.

Upon entering this room, the visitor faces a very large panel picture of Robert Frost, as he and Dickinson share the exhibition space with the poet Robert Francis. Areas for the individual poets are circumscribed with vertical panels. By a turn to the left, the full Dickinson exhibit becomes evident with another enlarged photograph, in this case that of the poet's only known daguerreotype.

Suspended from the ceiling of the display hall is an elegant prismatic chandelier that previously hung in the house of George Churchill in Amherst. Three windows on the north wall with a huge half-moon window above provide a flood of light during the day, supplemented where necessary by indirect light. Ultra-violet filtering plexiglass and "state of the art" temperature and humidity controls protect the library's holdings. The various photographs and documents in the exhibit are meticulously framed in natural cherry wood that harmonizes with the rooms' woodwork. Oriental rugs contribute to a setting that *in toto* is impressive in its artistry.

In the Dickinson section, fourteen panels are utilized for the survey of the poet's life from her birth in 1830 to her death in 1886. The figures and forces in her artistic evolution are made visually



explicit in an effort to achieve a depth of interpretation congenial to scholars and to the general public as well. A discerning quotation from Robert Gross's "Turning Inward in Amherst" and a comprehensive chronology serve as introduction to this permanent exhibit, divided as it is into time segments.

The actual panorama of Dickinson's life begins with Orra White Hitchcock's 1833 painting of Amherst and with pictures of Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson and their young children, and ends with a pen and ink drawing by Dorothy Waugh of the family plot in the town cemetery. Sequentially, the poet is revealed through the deft interweaving of photographic images of her closest relatives and friends with scenes of her New England town as she knew it and with striking quotations from her letters and poems. Accompanying documents illu-

minate home life, as well as life at Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. In final panels, those who played some part in the development or recognition of Emily Dickinson as poet—from Frances and Louisa Norcross to Helen Hunt Jackson, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Mabel Loomis Todd—are featured. The explanatory notes are perceptive and lucid, and only occasionally is the interpretation arguable.

Cases along the library wall are topically arranged. They include memorabilia such as trim from Dickinson's bonnet, Dr. Isaac Cutler's account book recording her birth (as daughter of Edward Dickinson but with no mother listed), and a silver spoon from the Homestead. The limited number of Dickinson's poems published while she lived are displayed, and the process is reviewed

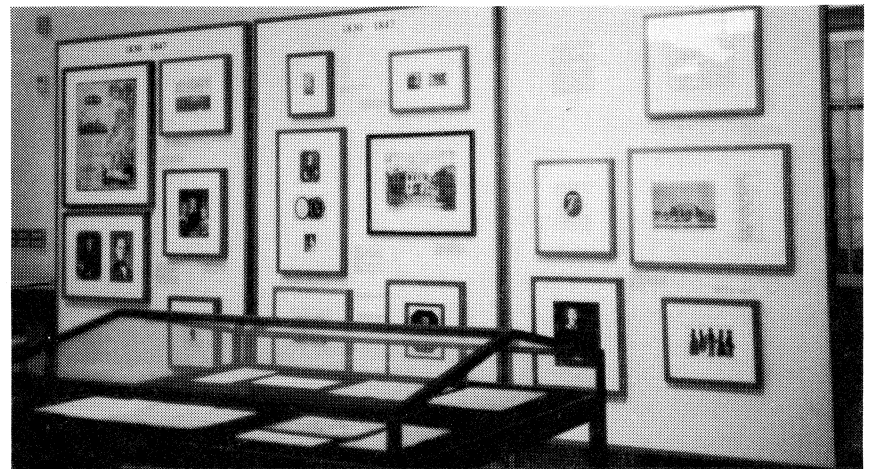
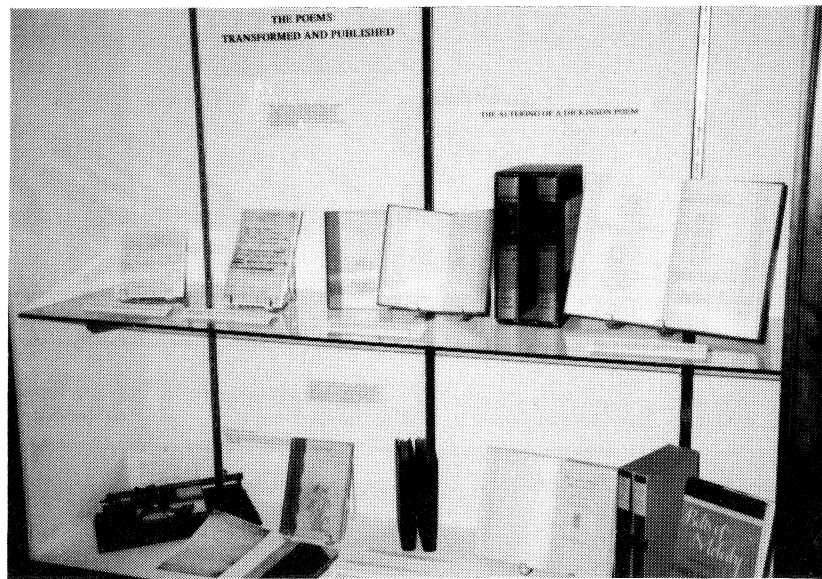
by which a poem passed from poet to editor to publisher and ultimately to restoration of the original. Also displayed are translations and limited editions from a wide range of foreign countries. Dickinson's native town is well represented by Amherst artist Margaret Taylor, whose portfolio of color etchings is keyed to ten landscape poems.

In the center of the exhibit are standing cases containing original poems and letters. One memorable verse was sent by Dickinson to Susan after the death of eight-year-old Gib—"Immured in Heaven! What a Cell!" For viewing of videos relating to Dickinson, an area has been provided in a corner of the exhibition hall with the support of EDIS.

In considering the total exhibit, it is relevant to note that a photograph of special interest shows a reversed image of Dickinson from that seen in her famous daguerreotype (thus her small bouquet is now in her *right* hand) to demonstrate the possible reversal of her image by the daguerrean process. Indeed, I think it is probable that the Dickinson of this photograph is the Dickinson the daguerreotypist actually saw. After all, a characteristic of the early daguerreotype was the lateral reversal of the subject, as seen in a mirror. Although various methods were devised to counter the reversal, the old procedure persisted. Some aspects of the original daguerreotype imply that the poet's image was reversed.

A conspicuous omission in the display is the role of Martha Dickinson Bianchi in the publication of her aunt's works. Whatever criticism may be offered about her interpretation or accuracy, the fact remains that she remembered Emily Dickinson vividly and that she was the last survivor of her family. Yet in this exhibit, only a cursory acknowledgment, under Bianchi's teenage picture, is made of the publication of her eight books. On the other hand, Helen Hunt Jackson's relationship to Dickinson is reviewed in full panoply. Nor is Mabel Loomis Todd overlooked. Perhaps this omission relates to Madame Bianchi's decision not to give her Dickinson manuscripts to the Jones Library.

Many documents and photographs



exhibited are originals; some are copies from other archival sources. The first pictures shown of the poet's parents were taken when they were no longer young. Photographs of the Otis A. Bullard portraits, as substitutes, would advantageously put them in an earlier time frame.

The display will contain no surprises for those who are deeply involved in Dickinson studies. Inevitably it will have greater appeal for the general public and those scholars who are not emphasizing Dickinson. Still, its crisp, informative approach in a museum-like setting should appeal to most. It is an exhibit of unique cohesive quality, carefully conceived and organized.

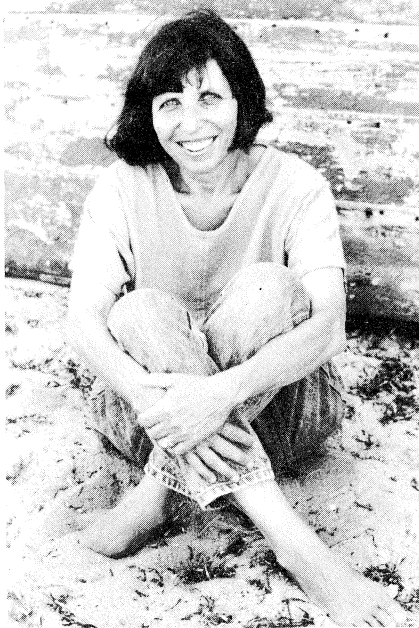
Tuesday, February 9, will be remembered as the day of the reception to

celebrate the opening of the new exhibition hall and the Dickinson display. Curator Daniel Lombardo has planned and executed the exhibit with the assistance of Martha Noblick, while Mark Karnett is responsible for the visual, overall display design. Serving as advisers for this admirable project have been Polly Longworth and David Porter. Such an exhibit simply increases the magnetic attraction of Amherst as the Dickinson Delphi.

Viewing hours for the Dickinson Exhibit are Monday and Wednesday through Friday 9-5, Tuesday 9-9, and Saturday 10-5. For further information, call the library at (413) 256-4090.

Linda Pastan: The Energy of the Ordinary

Jonnie Guerra



More than a century ago, Emily Dickinson expressed admiration for the poetic ability to distill “amazing sense/ From ordinary meanings” (448). Contemporary American poet Linda Pastan shares Dickinson’s appreciation. Throughout Pastan’s more than twenty-year career, she has achieved high critical praise for poetry in which ordinary things, under the transfiguring light of metaphor, become, as she writes in “The Accident,” “lost objects/unexpectedly retrieved.”

As a senior at Radcliffe College in 1954, Pastan won her first major poetry award, the Dylan Thomas Award from *Mademoiselle* Magazine. The runner-up that year was Sylvia Plath. Since the publication of her first book, *A Perfect Circle of Sun*, in 1971, Pastan and her work have earned wide-ranging recognition.

She has been the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Maryland Arts Council and has won the Di Castagnola Award, the Bess Hokin Prize of *Poetry* Maga-

zine, and the Maurice English Award. Her volume titled *PM/AM: New and Selected Poems* (Norton 1982) was nominated for the American Book Award, and another collection, *The Imperfect Paradise* (Norton 1988), was a nominee for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. In 1991, Pastan was named Maryland’s poet laureate.

Emily Dickinson has figured in the story of Linda Pastan’s poetic life almost from its start. In a 1989 interview, Pastan related how she came to read Dickinson’s poetry for the first time: “It was in the seventh grade, and we were told by our teacher the first week of school to each go home and find a poem that we liked and bring it in and share it with the class. This was in the 1940s when there was not poetry in the schools, and although I had been reading poetry quietly to myself since the age of maybe ten or eleven, it had never occurred to me that poetry was anything that was studied or done at school or anything other than a very personal part of my life.”

Pastan went home and searched the family bookcase; she didn’t know which poets were famous, which poets weren’t. She recalled with vividness her discovery of the Dickinson volume: “I remember exactly what it looked like. It was in leather, and it was small, and it was all Emily Dickinson poems.” The book was *Poems by Emily Dickinson: Third Series*, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd, and probably was a later printing of the original edition published by Roberts Brothers in 1896.

Pastan chose a poem titled “Evening” that she “loved” and that she still can recite by heart. Among Dickinson’s poems this one stands alone for her because of when in her life it came:

The Crickets sang
And set the Sun
And Workmen finished one by one
Their Seam the Day upon.

The low Grass loaded with the Dew
The Twilight stood, as Strangers do
With Hat in Hand, polite and new
To stay as if, or go.

A Vastness, as a Neighbor, came
A Wisdom, without Face, or Name
A Peace, as Hemispheres at Home
And so the Night became.

Becoming acquainted with Dickinson marked an important moment in Pastan’s reading of poetry: “Although I think it is

Emily Dickinson

We think of her hidden in a white dress
among the folded linens and sachets
of well kept cupboards, or just out of sight
sending jellies and notes with no address
to all the wondering Amherst neighbors.
Eccentric as New England weather
the stiff wind of her mind, stinging or gentle,
blew two half imagined lovers off.
Yet legend won’t explain the sheer sanity
of vision, the serious mischief
of language, the economy of pain.

impossible for writers to know how any other writer influenced them—critics have to figure that out—I think Dickinson gave me my first idea of what I liked a poem to be. For me somehow the short lyric is imprinted the way a duck imprints its mother when it goes across at a certain phase of development. That’s what a poem is supposed to be: an impact on one page on the reader, and then you go back and back to it. That could have been influenced by my teenage reading of Dickinson.”

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Olga Cabral: Like the Moth

John Shawcross



Photo by Bettye Lane

Influence is often difficult to demonstrate unless there is direct borrowing, as in a recent *thirtysomething* episode on television entitled “I’m nobody, who are you?” The poem “Occupation: Spinster” by contemporary poet Olga Cabral, who was awarded the Emily Dickinson Award of the Poetry Society of America in 1971, offers an incisive understanding of the person Dickinson was and recognizes that there were many women—still are many women—who “burned in that dry spare air” forced upon them by a paternal and male society.

The poem is ostensibly biographical, presenting an Emily whose life story can be read, at least in part, in other women’s life stories. Inactivity of presence is countered by activity of mind, and the vast world outside is reduced to attic or locket. Emily becomes Merope (whose name means “partial blindness”), separated from her sisters, the other Pleiades, because of her shame, from human love outside the family chrysalis.

Merope hid her light from shame at having had intercourse with Sisyphus; it makes no difference to which alleged liaison of Emily Dickinson’s Cabral refers, although we think of Charles Wadsworth. She becomes a “puritan body” while retaining a “sapphic brain.”

Occupation: Spinster

Lawyer Dickinson’s spinsterly daughter
was mad the neighbors said: she
hid inside a snowflake
there being nowhere else to go.
Fallen lightyears
from fields of star-hooved Taurus
into puritan body/sapphic brain
she the lost Pleiad
mourned for the company of her blinding Sisters.

(They come before us, the Victorian women
prisoners of muslin caged in taffeta
with their dim hair and drowning eyes:
women of genius warm and womanly
who burned in that dry spare air to their crystal bones.)

In Amherst Emily lived on
though the world forgot
moving with calm coiled hair through tidy days.
Her face shrank to a locket. She explored
miniaturized worlds known only to moths and angels
walked to the far side of a raindrop—
trespassed
on Infinity.

(How many Emilies
coughed and stitched
died too young in furnished attics
while the Universe boiled over in its
starry Pail?)

The liquid imagery—“a snowflake,” “a raindrop,” the “starry Pail”—suggests the feminine, as does the “muslin caged in taffeta,” the romantic consumptiveness of “coughed,” and the vocation of “stitched.” For Emily, if not for others with the occupation of spinster, the miniaturized worlds were the means to trespass on Infinity.

We are not surprised, therefore, to find in Cabral’s poem a Dickinsonian vocabulary and thought particularly apt: “Worlds known only to moths” recalls “People—like the Moth—/Of Mechlin—frames—/Duties—of Gossamer—/And

Eider—names,” and Emily concludes, “Almost—contented—/I—could be—/’Mong such unique/Society—” (374).

The “miniaturized worlds,” including that of the snowflake, whereby she “trespassed/on Infinity,” may suggest “The Life we have is very great./The Life that we shall see/Surpasses it, we know, because/It is Infinity./But when all Space has been beheld/And all Dominion shown/The smallest Human Heart’s extent/Reduces it to none” (1162).

Cabral’s poem plays upon a frequent theme of Dickinson’s poetry, well exemplified by “There is a solitude of space/
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White Dresses and All

Jean Balderston

A wartime Christmas. In Providence, Rhode Island, shifts worked around the clock building battleships, and civilian travel was halted “for the duration.” The ship-embossed bookplates that I found in my Christmas stocking might have seemed prewar leftovers but for their timely caption: “There is no Frigate like a Book / To take us Lands away.” Emily Dickinson had entered my life.

I loved her white dresses, her doughnuts and gingerbread. The other white-clad figures of my childhood couldn’t approach her: not the white-robed gentleman, Jesus, nor the occasional Protestant angel, and certainly not the brides, whose white-gowned glory resulted in babies.

The war ended. I moved with my family—inland. To western Massachusetts. Her hills. Her churches. Her common meter. My Sunday school class’s trip to the Mount Holyoke College observatory, to discover God as revealed through astronomy, would have earned President Hitchcock’s and Mary Lyon’s

approval. I told no one when I peered through the telescope that I didn’t see a thing.

In my teens our minister suddenly died and I had my questions blown wide open. Dickinson’s “*Bareheaded life—under the grass*” worried me “like a Wasp.” It helped to do my worrying in her indelible diction.

Dickinson became my philosopher and I became a philosophy major. The Fifties choice between logical positivism and existential philosophies became academic. “Emily Dickinson—Puritan, Neurotic or Proto-Existentialist?” I asked in my first published paper. My answer: poet.

One spring afternoon a professor examined my prose writing and observed, “You’re trying to write poetry, Jean.” Feeling “physically as if the top of my head were taken off,” I sailed back to my room. We become our choices.

Words are “mighty,” Dickinson wrote. That words can change us led me to



Photo by David Balderston

become a psychotherapist. My faculty raised its collective eyebrows when I proposed a dissertation on Dickinson. What a therapist she was! Her remarkable letter after Mary Bowles’s stillbirth, “Don’t cry, dear Mary. Let us do that for you, because you are too tired now,” laved the pain of my miscarriages.

I wrote my dissertation on the Dickinsons: “The Edward Dickinsons of Amherst—A Family Analysis.” As a transplanted New Englander, I was interested in how they had defined home. Was it where the heart or where the house was? Emily Dickinson’s “I think it is where the *house* is, and the adjacent buildings,” begged for exploration.

“I never saw the Sea—,” she wrote. But she knew seas, and her poems resound with place names, “From Amherst to Cashmere!” Transatlantic liners are as rare now as in my wartime childhood, but when I take off for “Lands away,” Kashmirs or the terra incognita of the next blank sheet of paper, I have her for guide.

“Amherst,” she signed herself. She voyaged to the miracle of her own voice and became her own destination. “What makes a few of us,” she once asked Austin, “So different from others?” My response is to be grateful.

“Miss Emily’s Maggie” Remembers

“I never saw the Sea—”

But sure she saw the sea:
at Boston Harbor, when a girl.
Seemed teacup more than sea, she said.
She said Mount Auburn’s graves made brinier sense,
that seeing all their marble rise like foam
made sea-change seem “rich and strange.”
That was Mr. Shakespeare.
She would do that: knead bread and recite.
It helped the yeast to rise, she said.
She’d often go and murmur lines in the cupola.
I’d see her from the yard,
that is, I’d see a blur of white sway.
It came to me, the way she’d *list* up there—
Miss Emily knew the sea.
That would be Miss Emily,
to tell the Pelham hills to be
the breakers in her head.

Charles Wright: Poet in the Cupola

Eleanor Heginbotham

It isn't simply that National Book Award winner Charles Wright specifically acknowledges the influence of Emily Dickinson on his "malleable years." It isn't just that he speaks of her as the only poet whose work has influenced him at his heart's core: "She is the 'What.' The others are the 'How.'" It isn't even that in "Visiting Emily Dickinson" he mounts the cupola to sit "Where she'd sat, and looked through the oak tree toward the hat factory," watching "the slick bodice of sunlight/smoothed out on the floorboards" and hearing "Voices starting to drift up from downstairs,/Somebody calling my name."

In more ways than these Charles Wright, who has just won the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, was an appropriate choice for a December 1991 Emily Dickinson Birthday Reading at the Folger Shakespeare Library, an event attended by a theaterful of Dickinsonians. In the interview with Sherod Santos quoted above, Wright said, "Her disquietudes are my disquietudes....I like it that she wrote about big things in a short space. Her heart is on her sleeve, but her sleeve is rolled up. She said her business was Circumference, but her diameter was impeccable....In her individual poems, she wrote less and said more than anyone in the history of American poetry."

Wright's comments in another interview, with Elizabeth McBride, suggest how deep the influence is: "Poetry is the most serious way in the world of playing with language," he said. And "I play with words and try to use them as little prayer wheels, as little wafers....They are sacraments. Poems are sacred texts."

Although his lines and his poems are longer than Dickinson's, Wright's focus on structure calls to mind her practices. Being "extremely interested in the way my poems are put together and the way the lines are put together," Wright says, "I'm a fanatic about lineation." Such comments interest readers of Dickinson's

fascicles in the *Manuscript Books*. Wright speaks of the movement "from one meaningful thing to the next, from one strong image to the next, from one musical

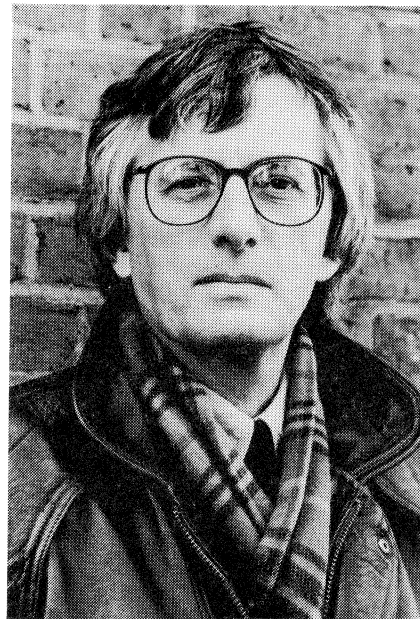


Photo © Nancy Crampton

moment to the next: that's how I like to put poems together, rather than an overall narrative story."

Many of these individual epiphanies resonate against Dickinson's: "I dream that I dream I wake," for example, with "Dreams—are well but—Waking's better." The eerie icy images of "At Zero" (suggesting Dickinson's "Zero at the Bone") in which "The river lies still, the jeweled drill in its teeth" or those in "A Journal of the Year of the Ox" in which "It's not the darkness we die of, as someone said....But cold, the cold with its quartz teeth/And fingernails/that wears us away, wears us away/Into an afterthought" call to mind the pain in Dickinson's "It is easy to work when the soul is at play—" in which she says, "It is simple, to ache in the Bone, or the Rind—/But Gimblets—among the nerve—/Mangle daintier—terrible—/

Like a Panther in the Glove—." Just so, in Wright's nightmare in "Edvard Munch," in which "Hands to our ears, our mouths open, we're pulled on/By the flash black, flash black flash of the lighthouse/We can't see on the rock coast," we feel the surrealistic horror of Dickinson's "I Years had been from Home": "I fitted to the Latch/My Hand, with trembling care/Lest back the awful Door should spring/And leave me in the Floor—/Then moved my Fingers off/As cautiously as Glass/And held my ears, and like a Thief/Fled gasping from the House—."

By no means last, Wright's "Catacombs," in which "the bodies slit in their slots like mail" calls to mind the proleptic visits between adjoining tombs, the compartmentalized dead in Dickinson's "adjoining Rooms" of "I died for Beauty" or the "meek members of the Resurrection" lying/sleeping in their "Alabaster Chambers."

Wright has said, "I write for the ghost of Thomas Hardy and Hart Crane, for Emily Dickinson and Arthur Rimbaud." Indeed, at least one of those ghosts was present during Wright's reading at the Folger. We can imagine that, among others, these words of Wright would please that ghost: "Poems are both reliquary and transubstantiation, as our lives should be."

Some Reading on Charles Wright

Wright, Charles. *Wright: A Profile*. 1979.

Lake, Paul. "Return to Metaphor: From Deep Imagist to New Formalist." *Southwest Review* 74 (1989): 515-29.

McBride, Elizabeth. "Charles Wright: An Interview." *Ohio Review* 34 (1985): 14-41.

Pankay, Eric. "The Form of Concentration." *Iowa Review* 19 (1989): 175-87.

Santos, Sherod. "An Interview with Charles Wright." *Missouri Review* 10 (1987): 75-95.

Visiting Emily Dickinson

Charles Wright

We stood in the cupola for a while,
JT, Joe Langland and I,
And then they left and I sat
Where she'd sat, and looked through the oak tree toward the hat factory
And down to the river, the railroad

Still there, the streets where the caissons growled
with their blue meat
Still there, and Austin and Sue's still there
Next door on the other side.
And the train station at the top of the hill.
And I sat there and I sat there

A decade or so ago
One afternoon toward the end of winter, the oak tree
Floating its ganglia like a dark cloud
outside the window.
Or like a medusa hung up to dry.

And nothing came up through my feet like electric fire.
And no one appeared in a white dress
with white flowers
Clutched in her white, tiny hands:
No voice from nowhere said anything
about living and dying in 1862.

But I liked it there. I liked
The way sunlight lay like a shirtwaist over the window seat.
I liked the view down to the garden.
I liked the boxwood and evergreens
And the wren-like, sherry-eyed figure

I kept thinking I saw there
as the skies started to blossom
And a noiseless noise began to come from the orchard—
And I sat very still, and listened hard
And thought I heard it again.
And then there was nothing, nothing at all,

The slick bodice of sunlight
smoothed out on the floorboards,
The crystal I'd turned inside of
Dissembling to shine and a glaze somewhere near the windowpanes,
Voices starting to drift up from downstairs,
somebody calling my name . . .

—6 May 1985

LB²: An Appreciation

Ellen Davis

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, they say, there are a hundred poets per square foot. And it's true—you have to be ready for their all-out assault on your intellect and senses, not to mention *sense*. One advantage of this preponderance of poets is that when you want to study, to “workshop,” you have a range of estimable choices of poets as teachers.

I chose my first independent workshop during the summer of 1989. I saw a notice on the window of the Grolier bookstore that Lucie Brock-Broido, Briggs-Copeland Lecturer in Poetry at Harvard University, was teaching a class. I dutifully sent in poems and joined her workshop that summer and the next.

Brock-Broido's first book, *A Hunger*, was published by Knopf in 1988. Helen Vendler wrote a review of virtually unequivocal praise that appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1989. I read it on the beach at Cape Cod in August.

“Too little too late,” my editor said,” Brock-Broido told me in October when we met for coffee at Cafe Paradiso. “First books *never* get reviewed there.”

“She's as up do date as a fax machine,” another, less enthusiastic critic wrote about *A Hunger*. In one sense, it's true—even though she didn't even know what a fax machine was at the time. The *persona* poems in *A Hunger* take on jazzy, improbable, often contemporary voices, from that of eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure, who was rescued from a well in Midland, Texas, in 1987; to members of the MOVE cult in Philadelphia who took on the surname Africa, including Birdie, one of two survivors of the 1985 fire; to Alfred Hitchcock's dinner party at which he was reported to have tinted everything, including the food, blue. White Trash Arcana, to use one of her formulations.

“Each time I write a new poem, I take on a new mask,” Brock-Broido said to Marie Howe, author of *The Good Thief*, whose poems are more directly personal

“All *you* have to do is tell the truth.”

I've studied with both of these poets. And even though my aesthetic is closer to Howe's, the foreignness, the rage for form, the *compression* required by Brock-Broido's fascination with the image of the “terrible crystal” are ideas that I find compelling and essential to my work.

Lucie Brock-Broido is this year's director of the creative writing program at Harvard. Her new manuscript is what she calls, in her notes to the poems published in the *Kenyon Review* and the *American Poetry Review*, “a series of latter day Master Letters.” The editors of *APR* awarded her eight Master Letter poems one of three Jerome J. Shestack Poetry Prizes for 1991, along with poems by John Ashbery and Anne Waldman.

Brock-Broido began her Master Letters project with three prose poems in the fall of 1988 after reading Emily Dickinson's Master Letters for the first time. She began inventing a speaker who is part Dickinson, part Anne Bradstreet, part Anna Akhmatova, part Sylvia Plath, a speaker who writes letters to an imagined lover, editor, friend—to God. All but one of the eight Master Letter poems

in *APR* are in couplets. One sonnet, “Queen Recluse,” was published in the *New Republic*; its speaker is Emily Brontë, but the tone and addressee are in the Master Letters voice. “Radiating Naïveté,” another idiosyncratic poem in five-line stanzas, appeared in the premier issue of *Harvard Review* in the spring of 1992. As in Dickinson's three Master Letters, the “intended recipient” of these Letters remains unstated.

To envision this magestic figure, 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 *APR*, “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 (L 190): “I dont know who it is, that sings, nor did I, would I tell!”

Queen Recluse

If, then, the moon would be a good place to place the Jews,
Then I must stay here in a province of terrestrial jewelled
Heathens, I will stay at home & worshipping. With no promise
Of an afterlife, then I will comb the moors in rainy April
When the heathers are discolored by the rusts of a restless
Consumptive season, the stone walls of the parsonage ablaze
With little germs & breathe my brother's madness, his
Melancholias, take in the liquid punishments of eventual
Seclusion, a hand-bound bottle-green anonymous & fascicled
Collection of some Poetry in hand. Even the dog will die of age
Near me. Where would a Christian do her perishing? Monochrome
Life, a galaxy of light benighted in the planet's time it takes
To reach me wandering this rusted liquid earth of rain & rain, raking
Moors with metronomes of prayer. Earthly lesion, parish of my home.

The Achievement of Thomas H. Johnson

Richard B. Sewall

This article, the second in a series on leading Dickinson scholars, is by Richard B. Sewall, professor emeritus of English at Yale University and author of *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (1974). He recently received the first EDIS Distinguished Service Award.

Benjamin Lease, Series Editor

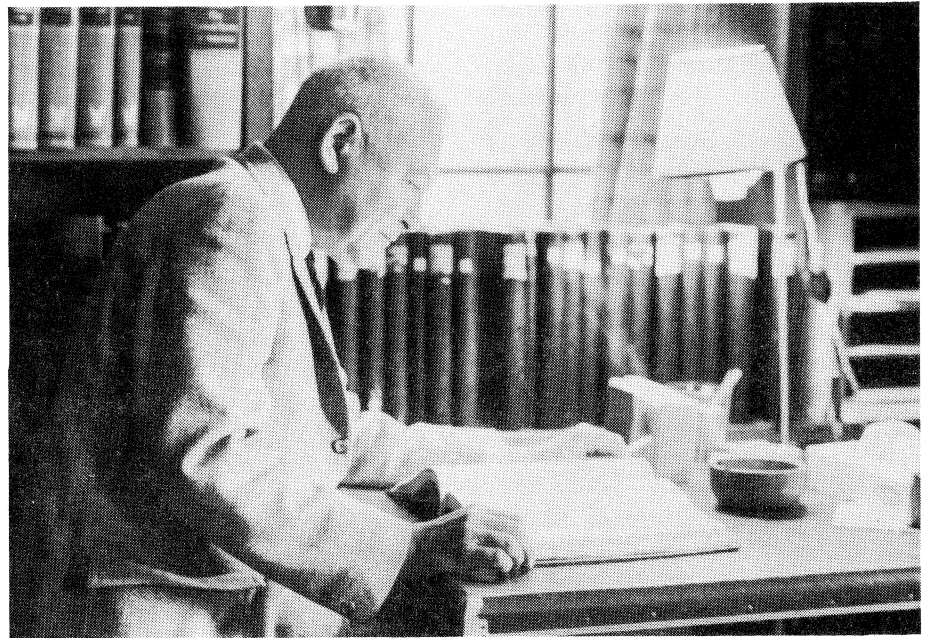
The plain fact of the matter is this: It wasn't until Tom Johnson published his three-volume edition of Emily Dickinson's poems in 1955 and, three years later (with Theodora Ward), the three-volume edition of the letters that the world began to take Dickinson seriously.

It was about 1959 that one of my colleagues summed it up (and he a twenty-year specialist in poetry from the seventeenth century on): "I never knew what was there." It was then that scholars everywhere could mount full-length studies, and Ph.D. candidates could undertake dissertations on Dickinson.

If Tom Johnson's experience at Williams College was anything like mine (he graduated in 1926, three years ahead of me), he never even heard Dickinson's name mentioned—and she had lived just a couple of mountain ranges to the south-east.

As a lordly senior, Tom was pretty much out of my reach. But I remember that he was considered one of the "intellectuals"; that he was high up in Cap and Bells, the college Dramat; and that, one day, he taught our Shakespeare class (for our sick professor) and gave us one of the liveliest sessions of the year. Maybe it was then that he "found his work."

After graduation, he took a job with The University Afloat as instructor in English and followed that with a year at Rutgers. Then Harvard for an MA. By 1936 he was established at Lawrenceville School—as it turned out, for good. He was chairman of the English Department for twenty-three years. When he retired he was honored by the establishment of a teaching chair in his name.



By then, he held honorary degrees from Williams, Rutgers, and Marlboro. One citation reads, "A born teacher, who helps his students to climb the next step on the ladder and inspires them with the wish to climb higher and higher..."—not a bad description of what he has done for many of us interested not only in Emily Dickinson but in American literature in general.

For instance: when Tom and I were at Williams, American literature was almost completely neglected. In a tiny seminar I took (three students), Dickinson was never mentioned and even *Moby-Dick* was apologized for (as poorly constructed!). Perhaps Tom had it better at Harvard, where from Kittredge and the Witches on, there had been more attention to home stuff. (Perry Miller was getting started.)

But to me in the Yale Graduate School in 1929, American literature seemed a kind of country cousin. I was warned by the only professor committed to it (Stanley Williams) against doing a dissertation in that field. "Win your spurs in English literature first," he told me. You

can imagine how he and his fellow professors felt when Tom Johnson, coming up from Lawrenceville, made one of the most important scholarly discoveries of the year in the vaults of Yale's own library: the works of Edward Taylor. Even the most sceptical professors were impressed. American literature had taken a step toward respectability.

Then, when the Dickinson archive became available—the poems, letters, memorabilia assembled in reasonably adjacent libraries—the idea of "complete" (at last) and professional editions of the poems and letters was inevitable. Tom Johnson, fresh from his success with Edward Taylor, was the logical choice to head the project (for which he was freed, as I recall, from his duties at Lawrenceville). The publications of 1955 and 1958 were greeted, as many of us remember, with the fanfare usually reserved for a new literary discovery.

And in a way it was. We had never seen those poems in that way—with the Dickinson punctuation, especially the dashes, honored; her capitalization retained; and no alterations of diction,

Continued on page 12

New Publications

Recent & Forthcoming

[Information from publishers' catalogs]

Erkkila, Betsy. *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History and Discord.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. 279 pp. ISBN 0-19-507211-1 cloth, \$35.00; 0-19-507212-X paper, \$15.95.

A study of the lives and works of Dickinson, Moore, Bishop, Rich, and Brooks. Erkkila focuses on "the historical struggles and differences among and within women writers and among feminists.... Studying the multiple race, class, ethnic, cultural, and other locations of women within a particular social field, [she] offers a revisionary model of women's literary history that challenges recent feminist theory and practice."

Juhasz, Suzanne; Cristanne Miller; and Martha Nell Smith. *Comic Power in Emily Dickinson.* Austin: University of Texas Press, August 1993. 184 pp. ISBN 0-292-74029-8, \$27.50.

Three Dickinson scholars "take issue with the traditional tragic image of Emily Dickinson by focusing on the comic elements in the poet's art from a feminist point of view." Juhasz looks at "teasing as a form of humor and criticism." Smith examines the cartoons (reproduced) with which Dickinson illustrated some poems and letters. And Miller considers her "humor of excess or grotesquerie."

Olney, James. *The Language(s) of Poetry: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993. 176 pp. ISBN 0-8203-1485-4, \$27.50.

"Olney explores the work of three seemingly disparate precursors of modernism.... Considering the language of the poets' times, their unique ways with language, and the 'nearly ahistorical language' of poetry, Olney arrives at three properties that form a kind of common ground in poetry... a heightened rhythmization of language, an elevated figurativity of language, and a highly personal, distinctive eccentricity that

shapes both the poetic vision and the technical means used to express it."

Shurr, William H., ed., with Anna Dunlap and Emily Grey Shurr. *New Poems of Emily Dickinson.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, September 1993. 130 pp. ISBN 0-8078-2115-2, \$19.95 cloth; 0-8078-4416-0, \$9.95 paper.

Nearly 500 short epigrams and longer lyrics excavated from Dickinson's correspondence but not previously presented in poetic form. These poems use her preferred hymn or ballad meters and unusual rhymes. "Most of all, these poems continue Dickinson's remarkable experiments in extending the boundaries of poetry and human sensibility."

Story, Ronald, ed. *Five Colleges: Five Histories.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. 136 pp., illus. ISBN 0-87023-816-7, \$9.95 paper.

Essays on the history of four Connecticut Valley colleges—Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Hampshire, and the University of Massachusetts. Of particular interest to Dickinsonians is Christopher Benfey's account of the poet's Mount Holyoke experiences and how critics have regarded them.

The fall 1992 issue of the *Bulletin* should have listed the University of Chicago Press as the publisher of **Sharon Cameron's** *Choosing Not Choosing*.

Reviews

Bedard, Michael. *Emily. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney.* A Doubleday Book for Young Readers. New York: Delacorte Press, 1992. 32 pp. ISBN 0-385-30697-0, \$16.00

Reviewed by Cynthia Wise Staudt

Michael Bedard's *Emily*, a newly released children's picture book, introduces Emily Dickinson to children of all ages through a strikingly sensitive visual and verbal portrait of the poet and her closely bound world. Format, story line, and

readability level pitch the work to third and fourth grade readers. Barbara Cooney's detailed full-color illustrations invite children to step into nineteenth-century Amherst and the Dickinson home as Bedard spins an equally graphic encounter between the poet and a young neighbor girl who accompanies her mother, an accomplished pianist, on a command performance for "the Myth."

Bedard's story, however, is deceptively simple. Carefully drawn symbols, highly imagic language, recurring discussions on the nature of poetry, and the inclusion of one of Dickinson's own poems ("Who has not found the Heaven") move the book to another plane and a far older audience. Thus *Emily*, like the poet herself, leaves a highly paradoxical impression—an engaging children's story whose historical verisimilitude and literary nuances appeal far more to adolescents and adults.

The authenticity of the portrayal of both Dickinson and Amherst is above reproach. Cooney's paintings detail the Dickinson house, with its high hedges, the Kingman residence across the road (home of the fictitious narrator), and the winter activities of the townspeople, which Emily might have viewed from her window. The pictures contain other delightful visual details, including the Dickinson parlor with its piano and portrait of the children, and the lighted windows of the poet's bedroom.

Bedard's character study of the poet is equally authentic. Systematically researched, the story offers a glimpse of a woman who loved gardening, music, children, and solitude, who preferred observation rather than direct interaction as her means of knowing the world, and who communicated with select outsiders only through letters, poetry, and chance encounters.

Through the eyes and ears of the child-narrator, the story reveals not only the neighborhood mystique that surrounded the reclusive poet and her approach/avoidance conflict with the adult world, but also her special affinity for both children and nature.

It is, in fact, the relationship to children, which Bedard so carefully develops through dress, actions, and parallel scenes, that makes the book most appealing to young readers. Both the child and the poet wear white. Both plant their gardens in spring. And both observe the adult world as spectators once removed, hiding their actions and persons, not out of necessity but out of choice.

From the moment the youthful narrator sits at the top of her darkened stairs eavesdropping on the conversation of her parents as they discuss the surprise invitation to Emily's house, to the girl's furtive foray to the top of the Dickinson staircase, where she surprises Emily herself eavesdropping on the arranged recital below, Bedard illuminates the special bond that unites the two, a bond made explicit by the exchange of gifts. The child presents two lily bulbs surreptitiously removed from her father's stock; Emily, a scribbled poem she bids her young intruder to hide away.

Primary-grade children, however, will fail to grasp the subtler appeals of the text. The symbolism of the snow-laden setting, which gives way on the day of the visit to the first approach of spring, and the significance of the girl's selection of two lily bulbs as a gift to repay Emily's initial offering of dried bluebells, go unnoticed by young readers.

So, too, does Bedard's precisely poetic prose, with its imagery and off-rhyme reminiscent of Dickinson's own. The road "full of mud and mirrors," the yellow house that "slipped down behind the hedge" as the narrator approached, and the bedtime song whose "words fell to the sheets" for the child to hear "them fall and fall asleep" remain for older readers to discover and enjoy.

The same is true for the presentations of creative experience that dot the story. Children can relate to the mysterious nature of creativity emphasized throughout the story, whether it be the growth of a flower, the interpretation of a musical score, or the development of a poem. When the narrator questions "What is poetry?" children nod at her father's response, "You can't explain it, really; it's mystery," like the power of music or the power of the lily bulb.

To this definition, however, Bedard adds another dimension as the child watches Emily's pencil stub flash across a scrap of paper in time to the music from the parlor below—a visual image of the poetic impulse as a quicksilver flash of heightened awareness in the midst of everyday experience, a transformation the child-narrator now recognizes as she, too, listens to her mother's music and "hears it breathe." For most children, though, this image, like Bedard's finer connections between bulb and poem, are lost. Emily's suggestion to the narrator that both hide their gifts in the hope that "in time they both will bloom" is one more comprehensible to adults. Latent potential has little meaning in the immediacy of children's here-and-now world.

Yet this dichotomous audience appeal does not diminish Bedard's work. Rather, it signals the ageless dimension of quality children's literature, that quality that will allow the owners of *Emily* to pull it from their shelves years from now and discover new enjoyment and food for thoughtful reflection, just as Dickinson's poetic gift to the child-narrator will increase in meaning as she matures.

[Cynthia Staudt, assistant professor of English at Walsh University, tested this book with third through ninth graders and college students of children's literature.]

Turco, Lewis. *Emily Dickinson, Woman of Letters: Poems and Centos from Lines in Emily Dickinson's Letters.* Albany: State University of New York Press, July 1993. 164 pp. ISBN 0-7914-1417-5, \$39.50 cloth; 0-7914-1418-3, \$12.95 paper.

Reviewed by Sarah Wider

In recent years, as Dickinson's exquisite crafting of fragmentation has stimulated the eye of literary criticism, attention has turned increasingly to her letters. Now, in a form that seeks to be as evocative as Dickinson's own, Lewis Turco has compiled a combination of responses to Dickinson's epistolary words. They might be thought of as letters from differing worlds in correspondence with each other.

The book is a curious one, bound to

raise conventional eyebrows. It not only breaks "scholarly decorum" by mixing poems, poetic essays, and scholarly articles, but it constructs a notion of intertextuality that some readers may feel too radically rearranges the categories of text and context.

The book opens with Turco's poems, a collection entitled "A Sampler of Hours." Readers will eerily hear Dickinson's voice speaking through Turco's lines, for the poems themselves are based on her words. For those who know her letters it will come as no surprise that lines from a letter become lines in a poem.

In his poetry, Turco practices his own version of an Emersonian "creative reading." In some, as with a piece he calls "Poetry" and describes in his introduction as a "found poem" (6), he has essentially taken words from Dickinson's letters to Higginson and given them a shape we visually recognize as poetry.

In other cases, Dickinson's presence appears less in the direct quotation than in Turco's re-creation of her cadenced images. Seraphim stitch samplers (27), mushrooms are slain (37), speakers live in "lethargies of loneliness" (29) and roam through the "seldoms of the mind" (24). Turco plays with the rhythms, the transformed abstractions, the undertow of urgency that we associate with Dickinson's writing.

In the second section of the book, four essays address the complex relationships within Dickinson's works. Although each essay turns upon a different area of Dickinson's writing, all center on her poetics of ellipsis.

The section opens with Jeanne Holland's exploration of the ways in which a poet could write in the father's language without violating the mother. Holland takes this by now familiar question and crafts a convincing reading of poem 1325 and its responsive revisions. Reminding her readers of the physical evidence provided by Dickinson's manuscripts, Holland demonstrates how loudly Dickinson's silences speak.

The second essay addresses another form of silence, a silence, Ellen Louise Hart would argue, that lies in the reader's perception and not in Dickinson's prose.

Continued on page 12

Turco review, continued from page 11

In her discussion of the letters and poems sent to Sue, Hart reminds her readers that the poet was by no means silent in the years traditionally associated with the cooled rapture of that friendship.

David W. Hill's essay takes a different look at the boundaries within a "correspondence," contrasting Emerson's notion of an ulterior meaning behind ministering words with Dickinson's emphasis on the moment of language itself.

The section of essays ends by returning to questions initially raised by Holland. Marta Werner's reflective prose joins the conversations on silence, reading the "Master Letters" in a series of short paragraph meditations on Dickinson's own mastery of indeterminacy. Distancing herself from the notion of argument, Werner appropriately defines her own form of fragmentation to discuss writings in which "words are scattered beyond grammar's recollection" (150).

The collection thus ends with a challenge to form, a challenge that Turco himself poses in his poems. Whose words do we evoke in our speaking? Whose silences do we hear in our reading? The readers of this unlikely collection will undoubtedly respond with a variety of comments, a veritable correspondence of their own.

Linda Pastan, continued from page 3

An early poem titled "Emily Dickinson" suggests the nature and depth of Pastan's literary relationship to Dickinson. During the interview, Pastan situated the poem's composition in her poetic career: "When I began writing as a serious writer—that was in the 1960s, I was in my middle thirties and had just begun to publish, a very little bit here and there—I saw a contest advertised. Someone was looking to do an anthology of poems about Emily Dickinson." Pastan decided to enter and, in preparation, reread the poems and bought and read two biographies.

Although her poem was rejected for inclusion in Marguerite Harris's anthology, *Emily Dickinson: Letters from the World*, it then was accepted by the *New York Times* and published on the OpEd

page. Pastan remembered: "That was a kind of breakthrough publication for me. I grew up in New York, so being in the *Times* was a big deal. That poem, I think, expresses as well as anything possibly can exactly what I feel about Dickinson and her work."

Pastan agreed that her tribute to Dickinson was also a poem of identification and self-assertion: "Those three things at the end express what I try to do in very different ways and in a more open kind of form than she writes. That's what I say that I aim for."

Two decades later, the poetic agenda Linda Pastan proclaimed in "Emily Dickinson" continues to be a relevant statement of her concerns and goals. In her most recent volumes, *A Fraction of Darkness* (1985), *The Imperfect Paradise* (1988), and *Heroes in Disguise* (1991), Pastan demonstrates that, for her, "sanity/of vision" still depends, as it did for Dickinson, on risking that sanity through confrontation with the darker aspects of existence.

Although during the interview Pastan expressed concern that her poems are darker than she wants them to be, I find much evidence in her recent work of the compassion and generosity that, together with "a fraction of darkness," are the staples of her poetic "goal" of sanity.

In terms of craft, the poems in these volumes attest not only to Pastan's deft, emotionally intense metaphors, but also to her evolving interest in experimenting with a variety of poetic forms and metrical patterns. She writes poems that are easily accessible on the surface but that display the same mischievous linguistic power as Dickinson's to "explode" in provocative new meanings after several readings.

Perhaps as a result of her mother's death several years ago, Pastan has identified as an important poetic issue for herself "the economy of pain," particularly the relation between the poet's saving of pain in poetry and the consequent continuum of consolation between herself and the audience. Finally and most powerfully, for Pastan, sanity, linguistic possibility, and consolation continue to be most vitally realized, as they were for Dickinson, in poems whose

energy derives from rendering the mystery within ordinary experience.

Olga Cabral, continued from page 4

A solitude of sea/A solitude of death, but these/Society shall be/Compared with that profounder site/That polar privacy/A soul admitted to itself—/Finite Infinity" (1695).

The source for the classical allusion may indeed lie in Dickinson's "I had a guinea golden" (23) with its dismissal of a "traitor" hearing her "mournful ditty": "I had a star in heaven—/One 'Pleiad' was it's name—/And when I was not heeding,/It wandered from the same./ And tho' the skies are crowded—/And all the night ashine—/I do not care about it—/Since none of them are mine."

The contrasting voices of "Occupation: Spinster," emphasized by the parentheses and the indentions, underscore the presence of Emily in stanzas one and three and the perspective of time in stanzas two and four. That presence—tone, approach to expression, line construction—emerges in other poems by Cabral, for example, "Rose," with lines such as "I walk into the flower/room after vivid room/doors of silk shut behind me/I am the prisoner of the flower" or "I think I can leave when I want to/I think when I return I will be different/you will not know where I have been."

T.H. Johnson, continued from page 9

rhythm, or rime to suit conventional taste. Listing the variant readings opened up a whole new dimension of speculation. The tentative chronology—largely, I gather, the work of Theodora Ward (with Jay Leyda at hand to check on known facts)—gave us something, at least, to work on.

The *Letters*, beautifully edited, organized, and annotated, added glory unto glory. We could now see Emily Dickinson, if not "steadily and whole," better than we had ever seen her before. Her standing as a world-class figure was assured.

When I spoke to Tom sometime in the mid-1950s about my projected *Life*, he gave me the best possible advice, disguised in a prediction: "It will take twenty years." He was right almost to the month.

The Dickinson/Higginson Papers: Boston Public Library

Laura V. Monti

"Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?" With this seemingly innocent question, Emily Dickinson began her correspondence with Thomas Wentworth Higginson. With her note she sent four poems: "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers," "The nearest Dream recedes—unrealized," "I'll tell you how the Sun rose," and "We play at Paste" (the last now on exhibit at the Jones Library).

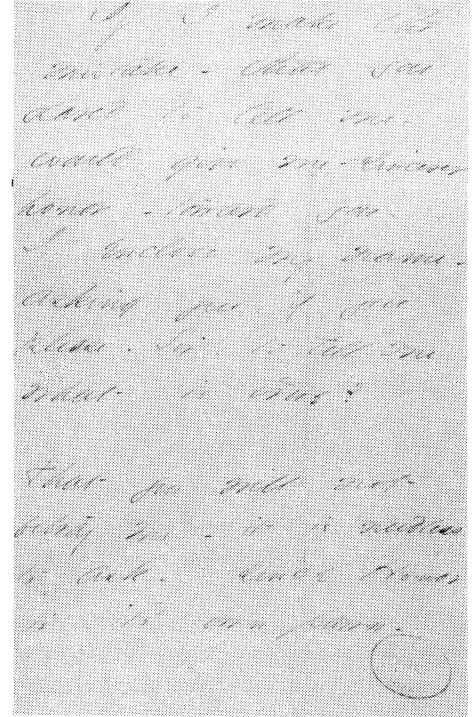
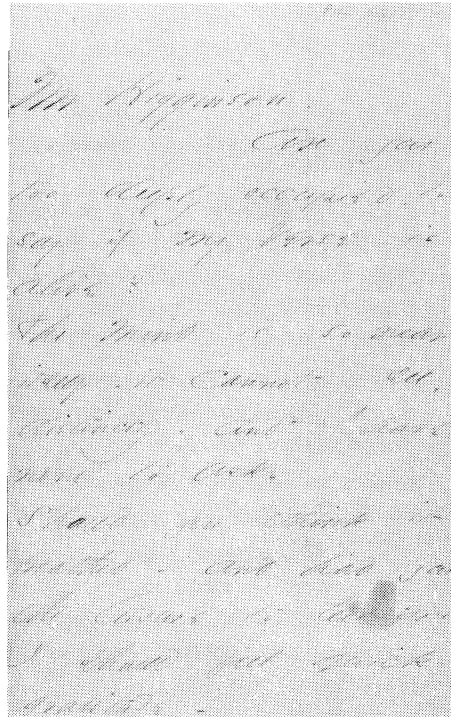
Scholars interested in one of Dickinson's most important literary relationships are indebted to the Boston Public Library, the repository since 1911 of the Dickinson/Higginson papers. Also of particular interest at this stage of Dickinson studies is the rich collection of Higginson's personal papers. Laura V. Monti, Keeper of Rare Books and Manuscripts there, has provided the following profile of the collections.

Daniel Lombardo, Series Editor

The Emily Dickinson Collection at the Boston Public Library is small compared with other collections of her papers in the United States but certainly no less important, as it contains the correspondence of Dickinson with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, her "tutor" for much of her life. It was given to the library in 1911 by Higginson himself and is part of the Galatea Collection.

A great many of the letters were undated, and the date now assigned was guessed by the addressee, according to Mabel Loomis Todd in her introduction to the second edition of her *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1931), where she reproduces a letter to her from Higginson in 1893: "Here are the manuscripts and printed letters, arranged as best I can in date."

Most of these letters (seventy-three of them) are signed "your scholar" or "your gnome," as Dickinson was trying to hide behind the signature. They show her respect and affection for Higginson and her apparent dependence on his opinion.



Among the many important manuscripts in the BPL Collection is this, the first letter Dickinson wrote to T. W. Higginson. Dated April 15, 1862, and unsigned, the letter was accompanied by four poems.

With the correspondence there are also forty-two autograph poems by Dickinson and transcriptions of five poems sent by Todd to Higginson and published by Thomas H. Johnson in 1955. With this publication the collection has perhaps lost its uniqueness, but it has gained in conservation of the material and dissemination of the contents. There will always be scholars who wish to see the original letters to compare the writing, which varies so much, to be certain of the content, to delight in Dickinson's manner of illustrating some of her letters, to examine the various drafts of her poems, or to enjoy the warm feeling of having in their hands the soul of a real poet transcribed into letters or poems.

In addition to Dickinson's manuscripts, the collection contains various editions of her published poems, the more important studies about her, and newspaper clippings. Included also are letters of

Mabel Loomis Todd to Higginson regarding the publication of Emily's letters. Undoubtedly they were given to the library by Todd after their publication.

If a scholar wants to know more about the man who played such an important role in Dickinson's life, the library possesses a collection of letters and manuscripts of Higginson's covering the years 1854 to 1907 and most of 600 letters addressed to him.

The collection is located in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department of the library, at 666 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02117. It is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 5:00. The collection may be consulted with appropriate picture identification and a Boston Public Library card. For those lacking a faculty or graduate ID, a letter of introduction is required in order to consult the manuscripts. Telephone inquiries can be made to (617) 536-5400, extension 425.

Members' News

Discovering Dickinson: The EDIS 1993 Annual Meeting

"Would you like summer? Taste of ours."

Summer is the season Emily Dickinson mentioned twice as often as the others combined. Deep summer in Amherst is a lush, low-tempo time to explore the town and settings where the poet can still be sensed. The EDIS Annual Meeting in Amherst the midsummer weekend of July 31-August 1 offers the chance to stroll the town, explore Dickinson sites and special exhibits via a self-guiding map, and join in several gatherings planned by EDIS. To "Reel—thro endless summer days—" call for accommodations from the list below. Remember, "To see the Summer Sky/Is poetry, though never in a Book /it lie—/True Poems flee—."

Weekend Schedule

Saturday, July 31

To Begin: Start your day by registering at the Jones Library on Amity Street and viewing the Emily Dickinson Exhibit recently opened in the library's handsome new addition. Exhibit hours are 10:00 to 5:00.

Dickinson Homestead: Six small-group guided tours of Emily Dickinson's Main Street home occur from 1:30 to 4:00. Reservations must be made in advance by calling (413) 542-8161.

Amherst College Library's Special Collections: Many original Dickinson poems, letters, and artifacts from the college's archives will be on display. Do you doubt the poet had red hair? Exhibit hours are 10:00 to 4:00.

Other sites: Follow your map to Dickinson's grave in West Cemetery, visit the fascinating Amherst Historical Society on Amity Street (exhibit hours are 1:00-4:00), peek from the sidewalk at the Evergreens and Mabel Loomis Todd's house, browse among the Jeffery Amherst Bookshop's complete stock of publications about Emily Dickinson.

A self-guiding map will be available at all places mentioned above.



4:30-5:30: Slide lecture and update on the Evergreens by Gregory Farmer, Project Manager of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, at the Jones Library's new meeting room.

5:30-6:30: Cash bar reception at the Amherst College Library's Department of Special Collections.

Dinner on your own. A restaurant list will be on the self-tour map.

9:00 P.M.: "Split the Lark," a musical performance by the local Da Camera Singers, presenting a program of songs Dickinson knew. At the Woman's Club, Main Street.

Sunday, August 1

11:00 A.M.: EDIS Annual Meeting in Emily Dickinson's garden at the Homestead, Main Street. (Rain plan: Meet at the Woman's Club.)

Noon: Box luncheon picnic at the Homestead, \$7.00 per person. Garden and house will be open for informal viewing during this occasion.

Polly Longworth

Accommodations in Amherst

Allen House (B&B) (413) 253-5000
Amherst Motel (413) 256-8122
Campus Center Motel (UMass) (413) 549-6000

Country Belle Motel (413) 586-0715
Emily's (B&B) (413) 549-0733
Friendship Inn (413) 584-9816
Ivy House (B&B) (413) 549-7554
Lord Jeffery Inn (413) 253-2576
University Motor Lodge (413) 256-8111

More accommodations are available by calling the Chamber of Commerce in Northampton, Hadley, or Deerfield.

An Invitation to the Homestead

I am delighted that EDIS has chosen Amherst as the site for its 1993 Annual Meeting. If you will be attending the meeting, or if you're planning a trip to Amherst at some other time of year, I invite you to include a tour of the Homestead in your activities. Our tour schedule is as follows:

Selected rooms of the Homestead are open for tours from 1:30 through 3:45 Wednesdays through Saturdays from early May through October, Wednesdays and Saturdays only in early spring and late fall.

Admission is \$3.00 per person. Reservations are advised: call (413) 542-8161 or write well in advance to the Emily Dickinson Homestead, 280 Main St., Amherst, MA 01002.

I look forward to seeing many of you this summer.

Carol Birtwistle, Curator

ALA Sponsors Two Meetings

The American Literature Association will hold its annual meeting in Baltimore May 28-30. EDIS will sponsor two sessions there, one a workshop on editing Dickinson texts, led by the EDIS Editing Collective; the other on Dickinson and popular culture. For more information, call Alfred Bendixen (213) 343-4291.

ALA's newly inaugurated Symposium on Women Writers will be held in San Antonio September 30 to October 3, 1993. The EDIS Editorial Collective will present a panel on Ellen Louise Hart's and Martha Nell Smith's edition of Dickinson's correspondence with Susan Dickinson, and a panel on Dickinson and American women writers featuring Vivian Pollak, Paul Crumbley, and Annette Debo. For more information contact Jeanne Campbell Reesman, Department of English, University of Texas, San Antonio, TX 78249; phone (210) 691-5347; fax (210) 691-5366.

New Reference Works in Progress

Canadian graduate student Cindy Mackenzie is working on a **concordance to the letters of Emily Dickinson**. The KWIC (Key Word in Context) concordance should be completed within a year. So far publishers have not appreciated the value of such a reference tool. Mackenzie asks that Dickinson scholars submit letters endorsing the project, to be included in future inquiries to publishers. Send letters to Cindy Mackenzie, Department of English, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4S 0A2.

Dickinson scholars are invited also to write or review entries for the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, a comprehensive

dictionary of the words in Dickinson's poems. The lexicon will be published by the Greenwood. If you would like to participate, contact Cynthia L. Hallen, 3076-H JKHB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; phone (801) 378-2020 or fax (801) 378-4649. (Query from Cynthia: Would the person who left a message on my phone mail in January please try again? Your address was lost.)

Eighteen translators have submitted papers for a volume of **Emily Dickinson in translation**, which may appear as a special joint issue of *Delos* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. Gudrun Grabher, of the University of Innsbruck, has agreed to join Margaret Freeman in editing the

volume. It will include an introductory essay by Roland Hagenbüchle on translation, a special section of translations and commentary by the eighteen translators on one poem, and a selection of the papers on the six poems discussed at the conference. For further information, contact Margaret Freeman, Department of English, Los Angeles Valley College, 5800 Fulton Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91401.

The **EDIS Editing Collective**, which is preparing new Dickinson editions for publication, would welcome new members. Those interested should contact Martha Nell Smith, Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

Poet **Thomas John Carlisle**, an EDIS member from the beginning, died at 78 this past fall. Carlisle, a Presbyterian minister in Watertown, New York, published more than 1,500 poems in his lifetime, many referring specifically to Dickinson. His poem on her handwriting appeared in the May/June 1990 issue of the *Bulletin*. EDIS extends sympathy to his family.

Congratulations to poet **Charles Wright** (profiled on page 6), who has just been awarded the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize by the Modern Poetry Association

and the American Council for the Arts. The \$75,000 prize is the largest award for poetry in the United States.

Carlton Lowenburg's collection of 11,000 Dickinson items, including 700 musical scores and many books, is now housed at the University of Nebraska Library. Scholars and musicians interested in using the collection should contact Eva Sartori, Special Collections, Love Library, University of Nebraska Libraries, Lincoln, NE 68588-0410.

Paulina Tananko seeks information on a fictional biography of Dickinson dealing primarily with her relationship with Judge Lord. It may have been written by a woman, possibly in the 1950s. If you have information on such a work, please write her at 1034 South Cochran Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90019-2857.

Thanks to **Miriam E. Phelps** for pointing out an error on page 3 of the fall 1992 *Bulletin*. Zelda Fitzgerald's biographer should have been identified as Nancy Milford.

Emily Dickinson International Society Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

Please check if this is: new address membership renewal

Annual Membership Category (check one): Contributing (\$50) Regular (\$35) Special (\$15)

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Name _____

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Use additional page for further gift memberships.

I have included an additional tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____ to support the Society's programs.

**Please make check or money order payable (in U.S. dollars) to EDIS, Inc., and send to:
Martha Nell Smith, Treasurer, EDIS, Dept. of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742**

Editor's Note

"The Poets light but Lamps—/Themselves—go out—," wrote Emily Dickinson. For many in the years since, Dickinson's lamp has illumined their own poetic paths. This issue's feature, "Poet to Poet: Encounters I," focuses on five contemporary poets who continue to cherish her light and reflect it in their work. The Roman numeral I indicates my hope that other poets and their admirers will come forward with further editions.

For the Fall 1993 issue, I invite articles dealing with representations of Dickinson and her poems in the visual arts. Write me soon if you'd like to contribute.

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