

Bulletin

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

Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art

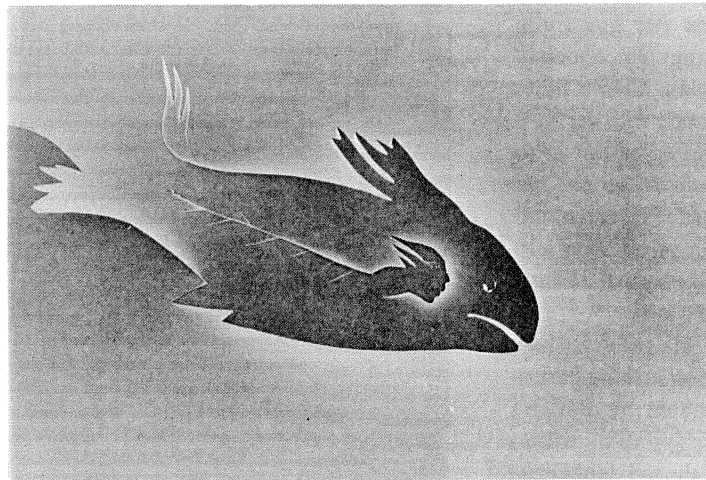
Reviewed by Maryanne Garbowsky

As I walked from the bright March sunlight into the dimmer interior of Amherst College's Mead Art Museum, I was struck by the bold presence of Lesley Dill's *White Poem Dress*. Commanding attention, it stands immediately to the observer's right with forthrightness and authority. It sets a dramatic tone for this unique exhibition. "Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art" marks the culmination of a three-year project by Susan Danly, curator of the show.

Shortly after she arrived at the museum, Danly recalls being handed "a folder" containing "the names of three or four local artists" and being asked to see what she could do with them. Her research uncovered artists with international, national, and local reputations who, working independently, are united by the power of Dickinson's words to inspire them to create.

Lesley Dill's standing dress is balanced by another equally compelling object, a lectern done by artist Carla Rae Johnson. It is a mid-size creation—too small for humans but too large for a doll. It appears to come directly from a church, neat, white, routine—that is, until you go around to the back of it and see the volcano "boiling" beneath it. Danly drew parallels between the sculpture and Dickinson's poems: at first the poems appear to be traditional, but then, like the lectern, they surprise and shock you with the force of the volcano seething within.

These two free-standing objects open



Mary Frank, *Head in Fish*, 1994 ("Go Traveling with us!" Poem No. 1513). Cut paper. Elena Zang Gallery.

the way to a show that visually and mentally engulfs one. Directly across from the entrance hang two banners depicting outstretched hands with the text of Dickinson's poem "I felt my life with both my hands" written on them. The hands appear to reach out and pull one physically into the

show. These two banners, along with other works by Lesley Dill, fill one corner of the main gallery. Her "Poem Swallow,"

copper letters strung together with wire, cascades from wall to floor, spelling out "A Secret told," while four photolithographs invite the viewer to take a closer look. Here the human body becomes the living canvas on which Dill expressively positions the text of Dickinson's poems.

These photolithographs lead to one of Dill's most striking works, *Rolled Up Poem Girl*, a thirteen and one-half foot muslin wall hanging depicting a nude black female with the words "I took my Power in

my Hand" printed on her body. These words speak to issues of both female power and black power; the threads that extend out of each finger appear to be rays of energy animating the words.

The correspondence between objects done by different artists at different times is emphasized by their placement in the show. For instance, Judy Chicago's "Emily Dickinson Plate," which stands across from *Rolled Up Poem Girl*, uses the same poem. Despite radically different styles and media, both address a woman's place in society.

Judy Chicago's work stands between that of two international art figures, Joseph Cornell and Will Barnet, both of whom found a special resonance in the person and poetry of Emily Dickinson. Cornell's boxes, four of which are on display, along with some working notes, relate to the reclusive side of the poet that drew Cornell to this kindred spirit. Like the poet, he traveled in his mind, on the backs of thoughts and words and objects.

Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art is open through June 1, 1997. Hours are 10:00-4:30 weekdays, 1:00-5:00 weekends.

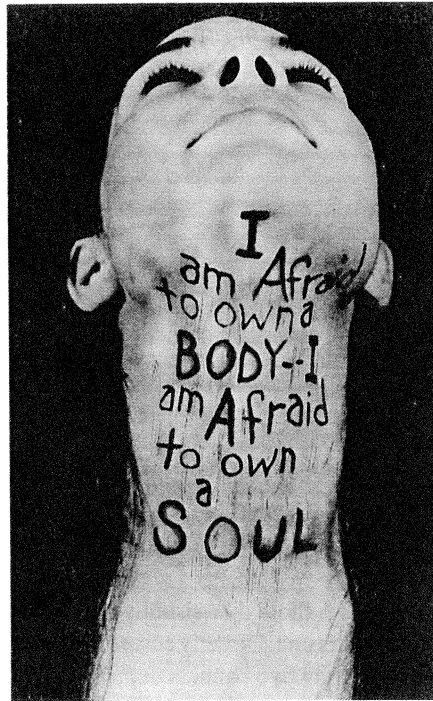
The box *Chocolat Menier* pays tribute to Dickinson's habit of preserving her quick-moving thoughts on scraps of paper. In this instance, she used the wrapper from a chocolate maker—Chocolat Meunier. The original that Dickinson used, with her own notations, is also on view in the case nearest the entrance. Here, along with pages from the fascicles, we see the handwriting of the poet as she wrought words into a meaningful shape.

On the other side of Chicago are the oil paintings of American master Will Barnet, who portrays the woman Dickinson might have become. Relating his work directly to poems, he envisions her gracefully combing her long chestnut hair, a lock of which is also on display. In the other painting, the woman stands with her back to the viewer and is reflected out at us through a mirror in which we see her haunting eyes and a glass of sherry, alluding to Dickinson's description of herself: "and my eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the Guest leaves —."

Before leaving the main gallery, one's attention is fixed by three striking photographs of Martha Graham by Barbara Morgan. Here is an inspiration within another within another: the words of Dickinson's poem prompting the choreography of Graham's *Letter to the World* captured on film by Morgan. Graham's "Kick," with the encircling sweep of her white gown, has the purity and simplicity of calligraphy. Like Dickinson's handwriting on view in the fascicles, Graham's dance gesture suggests the grace and beauty of the artistic presence at work. Here the "letters" of Dickinson's poem are transformed into the fluid and lyrical line of dance.

The Emily Dickinson Reading Room provides a comfortable setting for the poet, then and now. Here the artistic and

the real meet: the real white dress of the poet, which appears to float within its full-size glass case, speaks of her slight stature and her habit of dressing in white. (This, by the way, may be the last time the dress will be on display; it is going into "deep storage" because of concern about the effects of its exposure to light.) Lesley Dill's *White Poem Dress*, in the first room, speaks with a larger and louder voice. One can only imagine the dialogue these two dresses might share.



Lesley Dill, *A Word Made Flesh: Throat*, 1994. Lithograph. Mead Art Museum. Photo by Stephen Petegorsky.

It is in this room that the curator has tried to put the poet together—the body or dress with the face—for in the case next to the dress is the only known photograph of Dickinson, the daguerreotype done when she was about sixteen. Here, along with a lock of the poet's beautiful "chestnut"

hair, is the model for numerous copies and creative changes of the poet's face over the years. Included is the "gussied up" picture of Dickinson with curls and frills done by Laura Coombs Hills. So, too, for the exhibit, Nancy Burson was commissioned to "age" the poet by using a computer to demonstrate how she might appear in her fifties. Hanging next to the case is an artist's collage of the faces of Dickinson and poet Amy Clampitt, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the "aged" Dickinson.

The room contains numerous reminders of how Dickinson has become part of popular culture, her famous face used to advertise, to catch people's attention. From coffee mugs to T-shirts, posters, stamps, and the backs of playing cards, Dickinson's face, an American icon, stares back.

Also on view are continuously played videos, along with a range of adult and children's books that feature the poet's face. In another case are displayed wonderfully delicate and personal artists' books dedicated to the poet and her work.

Returning to the main gallery, the viewer is introduced to the mixed media of Barbara Penn, an artist who uses abstraction to celebrate the poet and her words. In *Make the Yellow to the Pies*, she portrays the poet in the kitchen "bang(ing) the spice for the cake...." Like an expanded or "exploded" Cornell box, *Poem No. 39 "She will stir her pinions"* reiterates the theme that the poet, like the absent bird in Cornell's *Toward the Blue Peninsula*, has escaped to find freedom. In *Letters on Practical Subjects*, Penn presents a laundry list of "to do's" for the proper decorum of the nineteenth-century woman. The most impressive installation, however, is *Poem No. 341 "After great pain, a formal,"* which

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A Portrait of Toshikazu Niikura

By Takao Furukawa

This contribution to the *Bulletin's* series on eminent Dickinson scholars comes from The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan as an expression of its members' gratitude to the organization's founder and their high regard for his contributions to Dickinson scholarship in and beyond Japan. Its author, Takao Furukawa, current president of EDSJ, teaches English and American poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at Okayama University. Among his many publications are *The Poetics of Emily Dickinson* (1992), translations of Dickinson, Thomas Hardy, and Peter Robinson, and twelve books of his own poems written under the pen name Takao Oka.

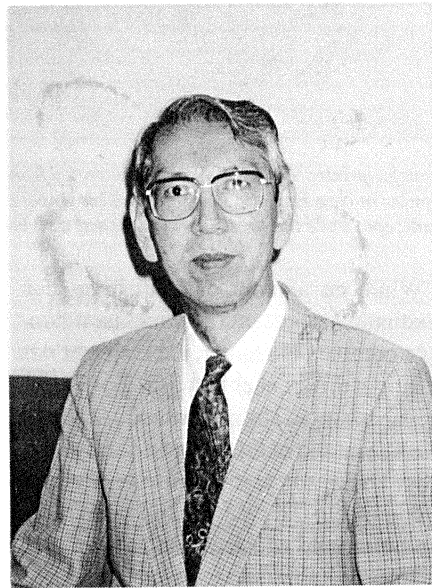
Jane Eberwein, *Series Editor*

"That you glance at Japan as you breakfast, not in the least surprises me," wrote Emily Dickinson to Helen Hunt Jackson, who in 1885 was recuperating in California (L 976). Eleven years later, Mabel Todd, accompanying her husband on an 1896 scientific expedition, first carried Dickinson's message to Japan. Her message, however, was not so "simple" as our Amherst poet had claimed it to be. It had to wait nearly a half century before it was fully disclosed to her favorite few beyond the Pacific. Professor Toshikazu Niikura was one of those gifted scholars whose instinct picked up the key dropped by memory.

Born in 1930, Professor Niikura earned his LL.B. at Keio University and his M.A. at Meiji Gakuin University, where he currently teaches. In 1957 he became a Fulbright student at the University of Minnesota, studying under Allen Tate. It was a heyday of Dickinson scholarship, and he was steeped in the poems and letters just compiled by Thomas H. Johnson.

Upon his return to Japan, Niikura published an introductory book on Dickinson together with his translation of some ninety poems—a torch that allured many younger scholars and led to the

founding of The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan in 1981. Niikura was elected its first president. The highlight of his term was the Centennial Conference on Dickinson in Tokyo in 1986, which was honored by the presence of two distinguished guest speakers, Professors Richard Sewall and Ruth Miller.



It is not an exaggeration to call Niikura a pioneer in the study of modern American poetry in Japan. Suffice it to mention a few of his books: *Songs of Identity: On American Poetry* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1975), *The World of American Poetry* (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1981), and *Introduction to American Poetry* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1993). Besides Dickinson, he has also translated or annotated such diverse poets as Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, and Edward Lear. As you might expect from his encounters with Allen Tate, Richard Blackmur, and Charles Anderson, Niikura based his early approach to poetry on New Critical formalist principles.

In the preface to his translation of *The Oxford Guide to Word Games* (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1981), Niikura asserts that "the Tower of Babel we inhabit consists of word games from top to bottom." From

this vantage point, he can appreciate the wit of both *haiku* and Dickinson's poetry with equal interest. For the Folger Library's Dickinson centennial celebration he delivered a paper on *haiku* and Dickinson, pointing out their similarities, such as their brevity of form, disjunctive syntax, and love of nature, yet their equally great dissimilarities. Taking up a point Roland Barthes made in his book on Japan, *Empire of Signs* (1982), that *haiku* is a "vision without commentary," Niikura wrote: "According to Roland Barthes, *haiku* is wanting in the two basic functions of classical writing: namely, description and definition. Dickinson's poetics is, on the contrary, essentially symbolic like most Western poets in that she tries to define her experience in terms of analogies and metaphors, as she says in one of the poems: 'So I must baffle at the Hint/And cipher at the Sign/And make much blunder, if at last/I take the clue divine —' (P 1099). Although her poetry is charged with meanings, the difficulty of deciphering the Signs in her time produced her peculiar idiom which is often more metonymic than metaphoric."

In a 1982 review of David Porter's *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom*, Niikura observed that "his analysis of her 'disabling freedom,' her 'puzzling idiom,' and her 'curse of spontaneity' is as sharp as a surgeon's knife." His encounter with Porter set him to the task of exploring Dickinson's text. Thus, his second book on our poet, *Emily Dickinson: Portrait of Absence*, deals with such peculiar features of her text as "Gaps," "chasms," and "cleavings" that reveal the absence of the Grand Narrative in the Modern Age.

One of our distinguished critics, Keiko Beppu, commented on Niikura's book in *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual*, 1989 (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1992) as follows: "A noted scholar of American poetry, ... Niikura tries his hand at a portrait (not a sketch) of the poet,

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Life within the Hedge: Two Dickinson Households

A Special Presentation of Dickinson Objects at the Homestead

By Cindy Dickinson and Gregory Farmer

Most visitors to the Dickinson Homestead in Amherst find the experience deeply moving. Many, though, are disappointed to discover that very few original furnishings remain in the house. This year, thanks to a historic collaboration between the Homestead and the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, a small number of original household objects have returned to the Homestead for a special display. This first-time presentation also includes a selection of furniture, artworks, and accessories from Austin and Susan Dickinson's home, the Evergreens. Together, these objects begin to reveal the nuances of daily life at the two Dickinson households "within the hedge" along Amherst's Main Street.



This dark blue Staffordshire pitcher depicts Lafayette at the tomb of Franklin. It dates from the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The objects, most of which have never been publicly exhibited, are featured on the Dickinson Homestead tour in two different ways. Items originally used at the Homestead, such as Emily Norcross Dickinson's Staffordshire china, are integrated into the present period room displays. Examples of parlor furniture, artworks, and children's toys that were purchased by Austin and Susan for the Evergreens are displayed in a vignette in the Homestead's southeast front room, the Library.



Transfer-printed Staffordshire wares, imported from England, were popular in New England households. This teapot shows an exotic landscape, while the sugar bowl is adorned with large moths.

While no amount of furnishings can adequately represent the Dickinson family's complex character, the display does highlight differences between the two domestic settings. The mature and conservative household of Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson at the Homestead stands in contrast to the younger and more modern household of Austin and Susan next door.

Neither presentation is intended as a decorative arts display. By examining objects from both houses, visitors can consider the variety of consumer goods available in nineteenth-century Amherst, as well as the aspirations, tastes, and cultural influences of the two households.

This special presentation is the first public collaboration between the Dickinson Homestead and the Bianchi Trust, which is overseeing the restoration of the Evergreens. Both organizations are committed to exploring the combined potential of the two adjacent sites. By placing Homestead objects in their original setting, the collaboration enhances the interpretation of Emily Dickinson's home. By providing a preview of resources at the Evergreens, which is not yet open to visitors, the display confirms the commitment of the

Bianchi Trust to public and scholarly access.

A History of the Furnishings

The objects in the Dickinson display are part of the Bianchi Trust's collection at the Evergreens. In 1899, after the death of Lavinia Dickinson, the Homestead and its contents were inherited by her niece, Martha. By 1916, when Martha sold the Homestead to another Amherst family, she had removed many of the furnishings

to prepare the house for its new occupants. Martha kept most of the Homestead furnishings together in the "Emily Room" of the Evergreens, where she worked on editing and preparing her aunt's manuscripts for publication. In 1951, through the efforts of Alfred L. Hampson and Gilbert H. Montague, a selection of books and furnishings (most of which had a direct connection to Emily Dickinson) were conveyed to Harvard University. They are now displayed at the Houghton Library.

In 1970, Mary Landis Hampson, the last occupant of the Evergreens, donated an assortment of furniture and Dickinson accessories from the "Emily Room" to the Dickinson Homestead. Those items have long been on display in Emily Dickinson's bedroom. The Homestead objects now on loan from the Trust further enhance the



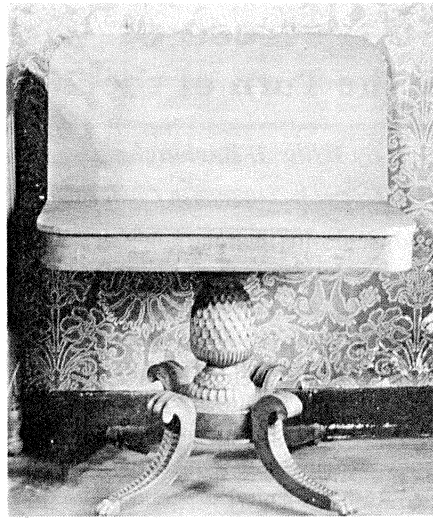
Blue and white transfer ware from China, known as Canton ware, was used at the Dickinson Homestead and at the Evergreens.

Homestead's interpretation of the Dickinsons' lives.

While the Homestead's objects have found new homes over the years, by contrast the furnishings of the Evergreens have rarely left the home for which they were purchased. From the initial furnishing of the house in 1856, Austin and Susan were meticulous about saving receipts, inventorying the household contents, and revealing the motivations behind their particular choice. A wealth of documentary evidence, now housed at Brown University, awaits further research by Dickinson scholars.

Visiting the Houses

The restoration of the Evergreens, begun by the Bianchi Trust in 1992, is progressing with private donations and



This revolving card table with a pineapple base reflects the style in vogue at the time of Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson's marriage.

grants from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and Historic Massachusetts, Inc. Stabilization and critical repairs are now almost complete. The house will be open for limited tours as a restoration in progress beginning in 1998.

The special presentation of objects from the two Dickinson households can be viewed as part of the regular tour of the Dickinson Homestead, which opened for the 1997 season in March and will remain open through mid-December. For more information on tour times and special events associated with the project, please write the Dickinson Homestead at 280 Main Street, Amherst MA 01002, or call (413) 542-8161.

All photos courtesy of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust.

Cindy Dickinson is curator of the Emily Dickinson Homestead. Gregory Farmer is Project Manager for the Evergreens.

Niikura, continued from page 3

who is strangely 'absent' in her poetry and letters. His curiosity about his subject is, however, not so much that of a biographer as of a reader-critic whose interest is in the problem of *écriture*. ...This book is a much appreciated scholarly accomplishment."

As soon as the book appeared, it was widely acclaimed by Dickinson scholars in Japan as a new guide to Dickinson studies. Niikura's most recent work examines the female psyche in relation to women's *écriture*, for "the unconscious is structured like a language," as Jacques Lacan observes. In his recent lecture "Dickinson as Persephone," presented to the 1996 annual meeting of The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan, he touched upon the primordial experience implicit in many of her "wife" poems.

One such poem that he found crucial to understanding her depression is Poem 631, "Ourselves were wed one summer-dear -" which refers to Sue's summer 1856 wedding to Austin. Bereft of all, Emily lost her will to live, confessing that she was "overtaken in the Dark - / Where You had put me down -." In the next lines, we see her abruptly claim her new status of "Wife" in her rivalry with Sue: "By Some one carrying a Light - /

I - too - received the Sign." But the contrast between Sue's warm garden and her own frosty ground in the last stanza proves her high claim futile and meaningless. The poem thus ends, Niikura observed, in a tone of dejection and nostalgia: "And yet, one Summer, we were Queens -." Niikura identified that "Some one" as Dickinson's invention for her own psychic defense.

In another poem of the same year, Dickinson reasserts her status in an even more urgent manner: "Title divine - is mine! / The Wife - without the Sign!" (P 1072). The speaker experiences the "Acute Degree" of being "Born - Bridalled - Shrouded - / In a Day -." According to Niikura, "Empress of Calvary" is a thin disguise for the Queen of Hades in Greek mythology. In *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, C. Kerényi calls the maiden-goddess Persephone a "primordial figure" representing an allegory of woman's fate and death. Dickinson's "Tri Victory," Niikura concludes, lies in her sublime act of self-assertion in the face of humiliating reality.

Although Niikura's Jungian hypothesis may seem to some readers a little far-fetched, it presents an inspiring alternative to more conventional biographical

readings. It is gratifying to have such a pioneering spirit among us; otherwise our Dickinson scholarship in Japan would become dull and futile.

Toshikazu Niikura on Dickinson

Emily Dickinson: Selected Poems, with Translations and an Introduction. Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1962.

[Editor] *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, with an Introduction and Notes. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1967.

[Translator] *Selected Poems of Dickinson, Sandburg, and Frost*. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1968.

[Translator, with Hiroko Uno] Thomas H. Johnson. *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography*. Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1984.

"Dickinson's Poetics: Disseminating Their Circumference." In *After a Hundred Years: Essays on Emily Dickinson*. Edited by The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan. Kyoto: Apollonsha, 1988.

Emily Dickinson: Portrait of Absence. Tokyo: Taishukan, 1989.

[Editor and co-translator, with Takao Furukawa et al.] *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Tokyo: Shichosha, 1993.

Spirituelle Songstress or Warrior Poet?

Imagining Dickinson at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries

By Willis J. Buckingham

"For love of her, sweet countrymen / Judge tenderly of me"

Emily Dickinson has been under judgment for one hundred years. When first published, during the 1890s, her poems and letters occasioned wide interest among American readers. By 1900 commentary all but ceased until the 1920s and 1930s, when new collections of her verse brought her before new readerships. A crucial moment in the life of her work occurred at mid-century when Thomas Johnson prepared scholarly editions of her poems and letters. Since then her reception is the story of an academic growth industry.

The 1890s commentary consists largely of brief newspaper and magazine reviews aimed at general readers of literature. These materials, reprinted in my *Emily Dickinson's Reception in the 1890s: A Documentary History*, address a general reader presumed to be unfamiliar with the new poet's life and work.¹ Commentary today consists almost entirely of articles and books written by Dickinson experts for students and specialists in her work. The incongruence between these constituencies is partially reduced by a visit to the reference room of a good-sized library. There, in biographical dictionaries, in chapters dedicated to her in literary histories, and in anthologies of verse, one finds a contemporary reception literature also aimed largely at nonspecialists.

This essay places before the looking glass two efforts at portraiture, one by journalists and critics writing in the 1890s, the other by writers and editors of reference books published in the 1990s. What do images of the poet produced by our generation look like when seen beside the sketchbooks of a reading community the farthest from our own? This effort at self-examination has an ancillary purpose, that of placing reference books and anthologies into the historical record for the time when our reception period becomes an object of study.²

Constructing the Poet

Three topics preoccupy discussions of

Dickinson's life, then and now: her seclusion, her love life, and her refusal to publish. Of Dickinson's reclusiveness, 1890s accounts regularly employ terms of reverence and mystification. Hers is the "cloistered life" of a "hermitess" or "priestess." Her eruptive manner and voice derive from this self-sequestration: "Isolated from humanity, she cannot turn the current of her thoughts toward it except in intermittent galvanic shocks." Her verses reflect the "musings of a soul insulated in its own privacy...who flashes with sudden and brilliant inspiration."³

While a few reviewers caution against this "unhealthy" degree of seclusion, the poet's isolation appears to cause readers of the period to feel closer, even tender, toward her. Her poems have the quality of "flowers...such as may be found in sheltered nooks of life."⁴ Imagery of childlike quaintness and fragility pervades these 1890s presentations of her life and work. But the poet's integrity and depth of humanity (as social values) are also called forth in these descriptions. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, for example, in his influential "Preface" to her first volume, notes her extreme shyness ("as invisible to the world as if she had dwelt in a nunnery") but remarks equally on the poet's profound devotedness to her friends.⁵

Higginson's effort here is to imbue Dickinson's friendships with rarity and intensity rather than to minimize her seclusion by pointing to her constant contact with family and many correspondents. And it is precisely his use of oppositional terms (shy yet loving) and his insistence on her unsearchable singularity that most separates biographical treatments of the 1890s from those of the present decade. To Dickinson's first readers her life appeals most powerfully when veiled in paradox. Mabel Loomis Todd characterizes the new poet as "intensely picturesque" yet "perfectly simple," "spectral" yet "fearless."⁶

This attraction to mystery does not inhabit biographical treatments of today. The subject of the poet's seclusion, for example, seems almost reluctantly taken up, as if uninformed knowledge of it could lead to false perception of the poet's weakness or infirmity—or worse, to misplaced pity for a life without intimacy. Commentators are quick to note her huge volume of correspondence (rather than the "rare friendships" to which Higginson and Todd allude), and are equally ready to remind readers that hers was "a seclusion by choice (to a loving family) that was at once protective and liberating."⁷

If early readers were attracted to a sensibility selfless and ethereal, modern readers enjoy imagining Dickinson as woman cannily winning from a condition of social alterity ("spinsterhood") a high degree of social, literary, and religious autonomy, even wresting for her poetry the legitimizing favor of a powerful editor like Higginson. This approach, for example, is taken by Wendy Martin for the *Columbia Literary History of the United States*. Dickinson decided she was "born for Bachelorhood," Martin argues, for understandable personal reasons (her eye trouble, her mother's invalidism), while managing to turn to her advantage the Victorian "definition of woman as a private creature" and its "confinement of women to the home," creating in her home a productive "space for her poetry."⁸

Taking their cue from Higginson and Todd, readers in the 1890s, by contrast, explain the poet's refusal to publish as the "natural outcome of a singularly introspective temperament."⁹ Todd, it should be noted, worked hard to qualify this perception, but few of her contemporaries wished to take her point. Falling on infertile ground is Todd's linkage of the poet's reticence to an implied social commentary, or at least to an examined rather than a merely temperamental distaste for the world when, on this question, she

quotes Dickinson's poem "Publication — is the Auction / Of the Mind of Man" (709). Todd also attempted, unsuccessfully, to suggest that Dickinson may have been ambivalent on the issue of publication, noting that the poet who wrote of the auction of the mind was the same writer who began another poem "This is my letter to the World" (441) and who chose not to include her poems among the personal papers she asked to have destroyed after her death.¹⁰ Readers, however, hearing an endearing naturalness, humility, and utter lack of ambition in the new poet, kept alive the story that she wished her poems burned.¹¹

This pattern of argument/counterargument also characterizes both decades' efforts to fit intimacy into the poet's life history. And in both cases the dispute is between a woman thwarted and a woman in charge. In the 1890s, Todd repeatedly asserts that Dickinson "had no great love disappointment." She was too "introspective," too "ethereal" a woman for that; her "ideal of love was too holy for practical married life." Henry Park Schauffler agrees: "True, she did love, this we must conclude from the power of her poems, but hers was a love, ideal and spirituelle."¹² For the most part, though, readers of the period prefer a different story. "These things may have been so," replies Charles Goodrich Whiting, "but there are poems here printed in respect to love that never could have been written without experience," and for evidence he quotes "Wild nights — Wild nights!" Others fill in the details of a "sorrowful romance." Her overbearing father prevented her from marrying; out of that loss came her love poems—and her seclusion.¹³

Dickinson is a flesh and blood woman today as well, but with a difference. Instead of a dutiful daughter patiently accepting an imposed emotional starvation, we have a woman "rejecting the idea of subordination."¹⁴ Able to defy patriarchal institutions like marriage, she nevertheless pursues passionate relationships with both women and men. The several lesbian and gay resources surveyed here stress the homoeroticism of her letters and poems to her sister-in-law, Sue.¹⁵ The alternative vision today prefers not to speculate about possible lovers. "Very few

facts are known about her private life, which appears to have been relatively quiet," reports Cynthia Griffin Wolff. She goes on to discuss the poetry, including the love poems, as "'about' no particular series of *personal* crises, not 'about' Emily Dickinson." Like all poets, Dickinson "speaks generally—addressing the *human*-condition, not her individual personal situation."¹⁶

Thus both readerships are ambivalent about eroticizing Dickinson. Arguments for a hot, on-the-edge Dickinson, passionate, eruptive, even "titanic," are answered in both decades by claims for a coolly detached artist rendering universal human truths from the position of one who deliberately placed herself on the margins of everyday life. The two Dickinson specialists of the 1890s, Todd and Higginson, lean toward cool; general readers of their day toward hot. For Todd, cool acceptance of spinsterhood; for others "tragic" consequences of that acceptance. The major distinction in Dickinson portraiture between the two decades is that the earlier reading community feels the allure of secrecy, passivity, even victimhood. They picture her life at the center of a place of contestation between need and renunciation the further to mystify it. Hers is a life *beyond* explanation.

The change, after a century of discussion on this issue, revolves not so much around power as around autonomy. For the 1890s, Dickinson's mesmerizing words are not less complex and powerful, nor do they redound less to her credit, when they are perceived as the unfettered utterances of a keenly receptive and sensitive spirit. If she is "mystical," it is as the feminine, fragile counterpart to such assured geniuses as Emerson and Blake. Current readers who also tend to polarize to the cool or hot view do so only so long as that characterization embodies their valuation of personal autonomy and control, their rejection of any doctrine of inspiration carrying a sense of divination. The difference can be summed up in the following words and phrases from Dickinson's first end-of-century reception that will not be found in her second: quaint, rare, lovely, charming, sweet, elfin, ethereal, simple, mystic, picturesque, spectral, spirituelle, grotesque, morbid,

rude, spontaneous, undisciplined, uncontrolled, random, eccentric, wonderfully pathetic, pleasing naive, witchery, humility, sympathy.

Constructing the Poetry

This distinction between readerships holds as well for the ways they experience Dickinson's poetry. Those of the 1890s place her verse in an arena of contraries in which opposites comfortably coexist. John Chadwick, for example, describes (in the same sentence) Dickinson's verses as "quaint," "lovely," "deep," and "strong." Another reviewer uses the phrase "grotesque power" to describe one poem, and "quaint fancy" the next.¹⁷ The otherness of Dickinson's poetry, the heart of its force and attraction for the 1890s, inheres in its quality of being beyond explanation. "Strange" and "magic" are everywhere in these reviews—often combined. An early notice in the *Boston Evening Transcript* finds the poems "full of a strange magic of meaning so ethereal that one must apprehend rather than comprehend it." To another reviewer, late in the decade: "She followed her urge for self-expression without regard to those modes which were aesthetically proper at the time, and with little thought for making her ideas fully clear to others. But it was exactly this quality of her poems which produced their strange magic."¹⁸ Dickinson achieves this sorcery within the frame of uncontrol/control: thoughtless self-expression.

Another instance of the 1890s comfort with irresolution on the issue of control lies in its use of such terms connoting lack of control as "morbid" "crude" and "grotesque" in describing its feeling for the alterity of Dickinson's poems.¹⁹ The *New York Commercial Advertiser* praises her in 1891 as possessing "daring unconventionality in her love of weirdness, in the homeliness of her vernacular, [and] in her crudity." In allowing into her work unrehearsed, unedited material ("weird," "crude"), this reviewer implies, she is both active and acted upon. Dickinson is positioned in the 1890s as a writer who chooses ("daring") and chooses not to choose—in the sense of not editing for propriety.²⁰

Nevertheless, the two readerships can

be said to converge on “strange” as a term for the poet’s daring originality. The recent *Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* cites her as “one of the most innovative of nineteenth-century American poets.”²¹ Discussions of the 1990s highlight the ways her poetry “pulls in one way or another against the various patterns that impart conventional order to poetry,” with special emphasis on her resistance to male-dominated structures or to a patriarchal God.²² It is the 1890s mystification of “strange” (by linking it to some form of poetic voodoo) that causes current readers to suspect that a violation has occurred. Harold Bloom speaks for today’s generation when he insists that Dickinson’s “canonicity results from her achieved strangeness [emphasis added], her uncanny relation to the tradition.” His “uncanny” distinctly lies outside the provenance of the 1890s’ “magic,” a term that allows the poet to be at once in and out of control.²³

Both decades discuss the intelligibility of some poems. Again, the contrast is on whether uncertainty is intended. “There are some verses,” notes the *Christian Register* in 1891, “as enigmatical and mystical as anything in Browning or Emerson.”²⁴ Some in the 1890s simply decried the poet’s obscurantism, but others, like the *Christian Register*, felt that Dickinson’s oracularity suited the mystery of her person.

If the preferred word in the 1890s is “obscurity,” with its implication of seance-speaking, a century later the term of choice is “difficulty.” Does Dickinson speak as a visionary medium or as one entirely in control of her linguistic resources. Cynthia Griffin Wolff puts it this way, appearing to address, across the divide of a century, Dickinson’s initial readers: “The problem is not that Dickinson is weird or undisciplined in some exotic or clinical way; the problem is that, like John Donne, she is very demanding of her reader. The difference is that most readers of Donne’s poetry are willing to credit the self-conscious operation of genius and talent, while many readers of Dickinson’s poetry cling to some notion of an intensely personal, spontaneous form of writing in her case.”²⁵

Most reference materials from the

1990s, however, do not appear to address readers still adhering to an idea of Dickinson as priestess or as a gifted writer subject to occasional seizures of mental imbalance. *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*, for example, merely takes a problem-solving approach to the issue of intelligibility, suggesting the need to read difficult poems in the context of shared imagery in easier ones.²⁶ In Harold Bloom’s catalog of European and American literature, it is precisely Dickinson’s most baffling poems, in their extraordinarily uncompromised and audacious density, that place her firmly in his “Western canon.” He describes her as “the best mind to appear among Western poets in nearly four centuries.”²⁷

1890s critics are rather far from granting the Amherst poet this nth degree of conscious intellectuality. No poetry, certainly not Dickinson’s, prompts for them the dogged attempts at unriddling characteristic of Bloom and others. But among the modern sources noticed here, Bloom’s commentary, in its tone of stunned bewilderment and respect, most reenacts the bowled-over pleasure 1890s readers take in the glow and flash of Dickinson’s intelligence. So “packed” are these poems “with strangeness, force, [and] suggestion,” writes John White Chadwick for the *Christian Register* in 1890, “they shock us with almost intolerable delight or awe.”²⁸

Favorite Poems

As Table 1 indicates, some poems favored by the 1890s critics retain their appeal after a century, though most do not. The verses of interest to both sets of readers are “Success is counted sweetest,” “A narrow Fellow in the Grass,” and “Because I could not stop for Death.” Gone are such poems as “The Grass so little has to do” and “This – is the land – the Sunset washes.”

Even when the top poems of a century ago are compared with poems intended for the common reader today (as represented in *The Top 500 Poems* in Table 2, again only four 1890s poems reappear: “Success is counted sweetest,” “I taste a liquor never brewed,” “A narrow Fellow in the Grass,” and “Because I could not stop for Death.”²⁹ The right-hand column

reports poems chosen in common by each of three 1990s college anthologies. When selections are made for this somewhat more intellectually demanding audience, it is significant that not a single 1890s favorite survives.

Among the three college anthologies (each containing between 50 and 77 Dickinson poems), a large number—108 poems—appear in only one of the volumes. Thirty poems appear in two and a mere eight make their way into all three collections. That all three selectors agree on so few poems suggests lack of consensus as to which poems represent the “essential” Dickinson. Gary Lee Stonum, in a comparison of Dickinson poems reprinted in three 1980s college anthologies, also finds wide variation in their choices of Dickinson poems. By contrast, he notes, these same college texts agree in their presentation of the most important and the most representative works of such writers as Whitman, Emerson, Melville, and Frost. What is it about Dickinson, he asks, that has not allowed a “cultural consensus” about her best work to emerge, even after she has been subject to as prolonged and intense a scholarly and critical scrutiny as that accorded these other writers? Stonum attributes this instability of perspective to the failure of readers to discover a unifying and all-sufficient perspective by which to judge “her aims and achievements.”³⁰

No unified perspective held for Dickinson’s first audience either. Though favorite poems emerge in the 1890s reviews, an astonishing number and mix of poems receive critical mention during the decade.³¹ A constant in both century-ending decades is the sense of spacious strangeness and alluring unfixedness that her work provokes. Her first audience’s words for this inexhaustibility and shape-shifting, words like “magic” and “witchery,” our century condemns as demeaningly mystifying. This rejection is no mere altercation over terms or preferred poems; it is a war for possession and presentation. And the two centuries clearly prefer different poems. Nevertheless, the constancy of reference, in both decades, to the richly confounding, the nonplusing, the beyond-explanation of Dickinson’s verse, points just as fundamentally to enduring communities of experience.

Table 1. Poems Most Often Discussed, Quoted, or Anthologized

1890s Reviews (8 or more occurrences; in order of frequency)	1990s Sources (4 or more occurrences; in order of frequency)*
67 Success is counted sweetest	712 Because I could not stop for Death
449 I died for Beauty – but was scarce	258 There's a certain Slant of light
322 There came a Day at Summer's full	341 After great pain, a formal feeling comes
1263 There is no Frigate like a Book	465 I heard a Fly buzz – when I died
1463 A Route of Evanescence	67 Success is counted sweetest
214 I taste a liquor never brewed	303 The Soul selects her own Society
919 If I can stop one Heart from breaking	435 Much Madness is divinest Sense
1078 The Bustle in a House	754 My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun
266 This – is the land – the Sunset washes	185 "Faith" is a fine invention
1052 I never saw a Moor	249 Wild Nights – Wild Nights!
1627 The pedigree of Honey	280 I felt a Funeral, in my Brain
288 I'm Nobody! Who are you?	632 The Brain – is wider than the Sky
324 Some keep the Sabbath going to Church	986 A narrow Fellow in the Grass
333 The Grass so little has to do	1129 Tell all the Truth but tell it slant
441 This is my letter to the World	1732 My life closed twice before its close
986 A narrow Fellow in the Grass	315 He fumbles at your Soul
536 The Heart asks Pleasure – first	657 I dwell in Possibility
729 Alter! When the Hills do	288 I'm Nobody! Who are you?
712 Because I could not stop for Death	
319 The nearest Dream recedes – unrealized	

* Four of the poems in this column were unpublished in the 1890s and 5 were published in 1896, when reviewing of Dickinson had sharply declined.

Table 2. Poems Selected for 1990s Popular vs. Student Readerships

Poems appearing in <i>The Top 500 Poems</i> , a 1992 collection for the general reader	Poems common to three 1990s college anthologies*
67 Success is counted sweetest	185 "Faith" is a fine invention
214 I taste a liquor never brewed	249 Wild Nights – Wild Nights!
258 There's a certain Slant of light	258 There's a certain Slant of light
280 I felt a Funeral, in my Brain	328 A Bird came down the Walk
303 The Soul selects her own Society	632 The Brain – is wider than the Sky
328 A Bird came down the Walk	640 I cannot live with You
341 After great pain, a formal feeling comes	657 I dwell in Possibility
435 Much Madness is divinest Sense	754 My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun
465 I heard a Fly buzz – when I died	
585 I like to see it lap the Miles	
712 Because I could not stop for Death	
986 A narrow Fellow in the Grass	
1052 I never saw a Moor	

* *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (one-vol. edition), 70 poems; *Nineteenth-Century American Poetry*, 77 poems; *Poetry of the American Renaissance*, 50 poems. All of the above poems except 657 and 754 were published in the 1890s.

Notes

Citations from 1990s sources refer to the appended list of reference works.

1. Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. Cited hereafter as *Reception*.

2. Even entries of a half dozen sentences in biographical dictionaries, though slight, are revealing. Judging by them, both decades appear to agree that the poet's life merits no

less interest than her work. These brief accounts condense Dickinson's biography to the same two points: her unusual seclusion and her refusal to publish. Also invariable are two remarks about her work: its originality of thought and its peculiarity of form. Entries after a century differ only in the approach they take to her poetic manner. The 1897 *Dictionary of American Authors* is condem-

natory, citing her "utter disregard of technique," while today's dictionaries and encyclopedias praise her stylistic oddity as linguistic freedom that has had a "considerable influence on modern poetry." *Reception*, 517; *Larousse Dictionary of Writers*, 260; see also *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia*, 277.

3. *Reception*, 16, 85, 132-33.

4. *Ibid.*, 107, 135.

5. *Ibid.*, 14.

6. *Ibid.*, 11-12.

7. Juhasz, 81.

8. Martin, 617.

9. *Reception*, 527.

10. *Ibid.*, 142.

11. The idea that Dickinson wanted her poems destroyed persists even today; see Olsen, 155.

12. *Reception*, 237, 411, 227.

13. *Ibid.*, 232, 295, 342.

14. Martin, 619.

15. Blain, 291; Hurrelbrinck, 194; Faderman, *passim*. This characterization of the poet represents a terrible distortion of facts to some, including Camille Paglia, who reports her dismay at seeing "T-shirts for sale at a gay resort listing Emily Dickinson" and others "as 'gay'" (*Advocate*, 5 Sept. 1995, 80).

16. Wolff, 121, 125.

17. Chadwick: "The quaintest [poems] are in the fourth book, the loveliest in the third, the deepest and the strongest in the first and second" (*Reception*, 104). "Grotesque power" in "The Clouds their Backs together laid" (1172) and "quaint fancy" in "Death is a Dialogue between" (976) (*Reception*, 118).

18. *Reception*, 61, 534.

19. 1890s charges of morbidity especially upset twentieth-century critics, not so much because the term implies moral censure, as in "the morbidity of a self-centered person who lived an entirely secluded life—" (*Reception*, 116), but because it is taken to imply artistic helplessness before overwhelming emotion.

20. *Reception*, 87.

21. *Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, 258.

22. Wolff, 143.

23. Bloom, 308. Bloom has little interest in the poet's life; his focus is on the poised intentionality of her work. Some 1890s readers distinguished between the two, marveling that so fragile a personality could produce such powerful verse. In the 1990s, portraits of an embattled poet tend to merge the life with the work. According to Suzanne Juhasz, "Emily Dickinson's greatness as both poet and person (for they are inexorably linked), has to do with the creation of such a life—a life of purpose, authority, and achievement—

Continued on page 19

Amherst Connections

David Graham and Ellen Davis both trace their interest in Emily Dickinson to the days they spent in Amherst. Graham graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1980 with an MFA in poetry and is now the Writing Program Coordinator at Ripon College in Wisconsin. Davis earned her undergraduate degree from Amherst College in 1978 and currently teaches in the College of Communications at Boston University. I am pleased to feature their poetic tributes to and personal reflections on Dickinson

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

The Table Within: Notes on Emily Dickinson

By David Graham

How to tell this Story? “Splendor of implication without prefatory statement”—that’s Marianne Moore’s wonderful characterization of Emily Dickinson’s way with a poem, and perhaps the best way to describe what I respond to most deeply in Dickinson’s work. The most agile and breathtaking of lyricists, she seems utterly modern in her disdain for connective tissue, explanation, leisurely development; in her restless explorations of the fragmentary, provisional, and ambiguous.

But telling the full tale of my engagement with Dickinson could not be done briefly, nor am I confident that my story is special in any sense. These will be notes, then, without further prefatory statement; and though my words are indubitably less splendid than Dickinson’s own, much less Moore’s, I comfort myself in knowing that most other poets share my problem.

For me, Dickinson became a live presence when I moved to Amherst in 1978. I was commencing graduate work at the University of Massachusetts and began reading her work intensely for the first time. High school and college had supplied me with *Anthology Emily*, but I had yet to grapple seriously with her mysteries.

I had the good fortune to study with David Porter, whose *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom* was just about to appear; I heard Richard Sewall lecture (listening to him read her work aloud gave me my best entree into how to sound out Dickinson); I discovered important works such as Adrienne Rich’s essay “Vesuvius at Home” (Rich lived just up the road at the time); I learned a bit about Dickinson’s

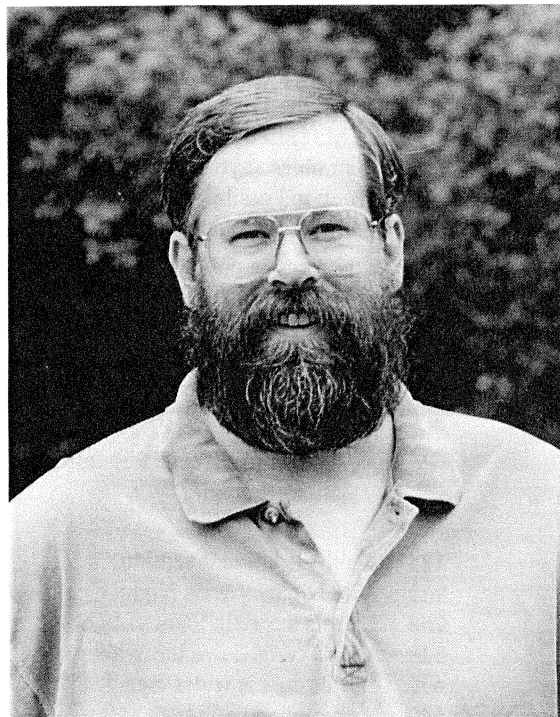


Photo by Lee Shippey

craft from Joe Langland and Madeline DeFrees, my teachers in the MFA program; and of course I visited the Homestead, the one literary shrine I can think of in which studying the view out the window, looking at the furnishings, and so forth, do in fact give insight into the writer’s mind.

What I learned most surely: that legendary quicksilver mind, with its “swarm of mysteries,” in Porter’s words, was not about to be encompassed. When stooping to secure her, she wrinkles, and is gone.

Still, there’s something self-sufficient and sturdy about Dickinson, even in her weakest poems. As the years pass, I am

less concerned with figuring her out, placing her in literary history, more apt simply to page through the collected poems and admire turns of phrase, daring rimes, evanescent but brilliant metaphors. I’m no scholar but a poet—and what may a poet pick up from this most inimitable of voices? I cannot credibly write in hymn stanzas, could not, without feeling precious and derivative, indulge in abstractions like *Circumference*, *Immortality*, and *Destiny*.

Yet she is present to me, and no doubt always will be. Like everyone else, I appreciate her multivalence, her friskiness, her surprise. Perhaps above all, I am drawn toward her bold and firmly American democracy of dic-

tion: I love the “Heft of Cathedral Tunes,” for instance, or that most untrustworthy “Plank in Reason”—phrasings in which she characteristically mingles vernacular and literary language, Latinate and Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. Her link with Whitman is never stronger than here: though hardly positing herself as “one of the roughs,” Dickinson nonetheless glories in the full range of English diction.

Everyone has commented on her gnomic, riddling sentences, often in the form of definitions of the indefinable: grief, death, hope, love, despair, and the rest. What I went to school to her poetry in hopes of learning was and is this: how to approach the unsayable without reduc-

How Straight Up Is Curved: Homage to Emily Dickinson

1. "Who Goes to Dine Must Take His Feast"

The way a horse knows,
the moment he is reined around a bend,
that it is home now to the barn,
I feel the car shiver around me and quicken.
Ears of corn just beyond my taillights
begin to tremble in my wake.
Roadsigns seem familiar, then true,
and finally sympathetic.
I know that over this forest, surely,
in a house set back behind maples
a light is on in an upstairs window.
I know that house I have never seen:
bats and nighthawks flash
across the window light, and if she sees
she is fixed as I am fixed
in this landmark of my arrival.

8. "Drowning is Not So Pitiful as the Attempt to Rise"

I wouldn't like to see balloons
released to the sky—their helium blaze
surmounting the trees, tentative
in gusts but relentlessly rising.
It would be shock to see
how straight up is curved,
how even the air is humped high
like the earth in its hills,
like the very arch of space.
Such balloons never fall to earth whole,
for by the time they rise halfway
to the limit, they burst
from unimpeded success,
and begin falling in tatters,
nearly unrecognizable. Or so
they say who have seen it.
I wouldn't like to see it,
or say that I had seen it.

From *Magic Shows*. Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 1986.

tion. Frost's remark about Emerson could easily apply to Dickinson: "I don't like obscurity and obfuscation, but I do like dark sayings I must leave the clearing of to time."

In my suite of poems "How Straight Up Is Curved: Homage to Emily Dickinson," I began simply with some dark sayings of hers that time had not yet clarified for me. Each line or sentence became the trigger for a poem—not very Dickinsonian in style, but with what I hoped were some glimpses of her glinting wit and rich language. "Who Goes to Dine Must Take His Feast," the first poem in the sequence, takes my favorite Dickinson paradox and uses it to launch an imaginative journey to the Amherst Homestead, envisioned as a nocturnal journey through familiarly unfamiliar landscapes.

The suite ends with "Drowning is Not So Pitiful as the Attempt to Rise": her sentence is neither obscure nor obfusca-

tory, but its implications are not simple. In my image of a balloon that rises uncontrollably, finally bursting "from unimpeded success," I hoped to fashion a symbol reminiscent of one of Dickinson's grand paradoxes, and I tried to bow out of any implied poetic competition with proper humility: my balloon in tatters while hers keeps rising. Whatever I might bring, as a young poet, to the banquet of poetry, I knew that it would have much to do with my grasp of her achievement.

Each poem in the suite was intended to make some sense, if I could, of such dark sayings. My procedures were, as I assume Dickinson's also must have been, almost purely intuitive. One image led to another, or a metaphor implied in her initiating line spun almost out of control in my own rendering. In "Water is Taught By Thirst," for instance, quite unexpectedly I found myself writing about Quabbin Reservoir, which in my own

century had flooded over several villages Dickinson had known in her own.

It's not for me to say how successful these poems are, and in a way I'm not sure I care. For now, fourteen years after they were written, I can see quite clearly how writing them led me deeper into a consideration of Dickinson's work, and reinforced my love for her mind and craft. "The Table is not laid without/Till it is laid within," she reminds us. Dickinson herself helped set my inner table. That's more than enough, as far as I'm concerned.

David Graham has published four collections of poetry, including Magic Shows (1986); Second Wind (1990), an AWP Award Selection; and Doggedness (1991), winner of the Devil's Millhopper Chapbook Award. In the summer of 1996, he was poet-in-residence at the Frost Place in Franconia, New Hampshire.

Looking for ED

By Ellen Davis

A few years ago, I read "Post-Valentine's Day" at the Mt. Holyoke Writers' Conference to an appreciative audience. They knew that other college town north of South Hadley; knew its most famous resident. Emily Dickinson herself spent her sixteenth year pursuing formal studies at Mt. Holyoke until the demands of religious convention—a conversion she refused to force or fake—sent her home.



Photo by Mike Ast

After the reading, someone asked me to say the end words of my sestina. I had to think a minute; I chose them in the course of writing, not to write the poem around: "night," "Amherst," "name" "cry," "man," "them." (Or: "cry," "man," "night," "name," "them," "Amherst.") A play on Dickinson's own "Wild Nights." In one stanza, "cry" becomes "mimicry." In another, "man" becomes "one-woman" in reference to the Julie Harris vehicle—an early teacher told me I couldn't change "man" to "woman," so I did.

So—a poem "about" wildness—about youth (youths) and love and (a) place and Despair. A poem that seeks to place a late-twentieth-century woman's college life in relation to the nineteenth-century woman poet's. One that says—suggests—that one poet's life may not be entirely foreign to another's. That Dickinson, *not* the "recluse," the "hysteric" of popular lore and sometimes scholarship, was a woman of flesh and feeling, of parlor and

Post-Valentine's Day

Dear Emily Dickinson,

Here in Brookline, Massachusetts, I think all night of time—lost time—of my college days in Amherst when I acted as if I scarcely knew your name. Instead of studying your slants and dashes, I'd cry and smile, dash to frat parties with some man—even learned beer-drinking. Oh, I had them,

those wild nights—you spoke of them well—did my rowing on the Connecticut River (not at night) collected scores of trinkets. For you, each man was more ethereal. Your life in Amherst, some call it "confined," caused you to cast off mimicry and we're richer for it. Your name

for love's obscure, volcanic, natural. To name you, Dickinson—woman, poet—most readers—

I was among them—

failed to recognize your courage. I could cry. In college, on Parents' Weekend—Saturday night—guess what play we went to? *The Belle of Amherst*—they insisted, not I. Julie Harris in her one-woman

masterpiece. But how interested was I? Some man stood me up: the son of a woman poet I'll not name. After the show, disheartened, I walked through Amherst with my parents, glad to leave them at Lord Jeffery's Inn. But that was just one night of mine. Soon, with my least audible cry,

I gathered courage, heard another's mating cry and managed to fall in love right. What a man! This one transported me away, one snowy January night, from my single bed to Chi Psi—that frat I'll name, since I moved in for two years among them: the cool, tough boys. "First Woman of Amherst

Breaks the Frat Barrier!" my imaginary *Amherst Student* headline read. But *you'd* never make such a cry, remained faithful to your art, didn't traffic with them in the usual manner. Besides your father, more than one man—and one woman—influenced you. Did your poems name your deepest passions? Yes and no. Good night

to those lovely Amherst days and nights when one man, my first lover, caused me to cry his name. I knew them, Emily Dickinson, too. For just one wild night—

garden, of time and place and her own self-creation through language.

That Dickinson speaks to me. Chides me for my early wildnesses, my unmindfulness of her presence there on Main Street until after I'd left Amherst. As an undergraduate, I did study—but as an aspiring scholar rather than a poet; my concentration was in / my attention was for European literature. A worthy path, but one that kept those American energies—Dickinson's, my own—on the very back burner.

The poem is an effort to reconstruct a self I want to project as palimpsest onto my exuberant college days, to make a self

as careful, as willful, mindful and driven to write as I imagine Dickinson to have been. But also an attempt to envision Dickinson's own youthful energy—we know that at least one Amherst undergraduate was the object of her affectionate magic. Yet the poem considers and allows for differences. This is my Valentine to her. "Judge tenderly – of Me."

Note: An earlier version of this poem was published in the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. Davis comments on the changes: "I dropped the word 'Sestina' from the title—it seemed more interesting to let readers see this for themselves. Also, I

changed 'Emily' to 'Dickinson' in the third stanza—I thought 'Emily' was cloying, patronizing. And I changed the end punctuation from an exclamation mark to—you guessed it—a dash."

Ellen Davis teaches a poetry class at Emerson College, nonfiction at Boston University, and creative writing in a summer program for high school students at Brandeis University. Her poems and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in several magazines, including Agni, Blue Moon Review, and Harvard Review.

Language as Object, continued from page 2

takes a poem about death and transmutes it into a poem about life and birth. Eggshells, a nest, a crib, hivelike shapes (or are they breast shapes?) bring new meaning to the poem.

Moving clockwise from the installation in the main gallery, one sees *Pantry DRAWer* by Áife Murray, an altar to the "Art of Service." How could Dickinson have written her poetry without the help of servants like Margaret Maher and Tom Kelley? The curator recalls that it was precisely these servants whom Dickinson chose to bear her coffin to the old West Cemetery. Murray has included not only the service class from Dickinson's day but also today's—incorporating Hispanics and blacks into her iconography. To complete and update her display, the artist interviewed those currently working as domestics in Amherst and collected their comments in individual handsewn books. Their words poignantly reveal how they relate to the work of the poet.

Quietly the exhibition in the main gallery concludes with two artists whose work frames the entrance. On one side, Mary Frank's delicate paper cutouts, linked directly to specific poems, are backlit to demonstrate the precision and purity of her work. On the other side are six photographs by nationally known photographer Jerome Liebling that suggest the intimacy of Dickinson's life—her chair, her basket, her desk—artifacts that resonate with the living presence of the

poet. The Homestead, too, is shown as it was earlier in the century, with the fence that separated the life within from the life without.

In contrast to the dramatic and exciting main gallery, the last room is quiet, with what the curator describes as a "Zen-like quality." The viewer walks into a narrow corridor and is surrounded literally by the words of the poet. To the left are six canvases by Paul Katz—black with red lettering, no spaces, no pauses or punctuation, the whole of each canvas covered with letters that make up the texts of the poems.

Directly in front are four lithographs of mysterious sculptured forms by artist Robert Cumming, and to the viewer's left, hanging directly across from Katz's work, are two drawings by Linda Schwalen. Their proximity to Katz's work is ironic, since the two artists lived within a few miles of each other, yet neither knew the other was at work on Dickinson's poetry. The letters on Schwalen's drawings are side by side, under, on top of each other. The viewer cannot extricate the words they make up. They overlap and mix, as the oil in the graphite mixture she uses blends into the paper and discolors its surface.

The main focus of this area, however, is a large space in which individual block letters of words are scattered about, seemingly at random. These blocks, which resemble a set of children's blocks, are

large and precisely constructed of plastic letters on aluminum. The sculptor Roni Horn has taken a line from one of Dickinson's letters to express the poet. The space the viewer has not felt in the work of the other three artists in this area is here, the viewer almost literally and physically able to enter the poet's words. Here poet and viewer/reader interact, the words becoming part of the viewer's environment.

The show, which began March 28, will be open to the public through June 1. Many other exhibits and events have been timed to coincide with this show. The Archives at the Frost Library are open with a newly acquired Dickinson manuscript (see page 22) on display. A section of the exhibit catalog (see page 16) is dedicated to a portfolio of poets. In addition, readings of poetry and musical performances have been scheduled.

This exhibition is a one-of-a-kind, "must see" show, not only for those with a longstanding love for Dickinson's poetry but also for those unacquainted with her work. Regardless of the viewer's experience, he or she will leave the exhibit with a deeper regard for Emily Dickinson's influence and with a deep respect for the secret wellsprings of creativity that endure in her words.

Maryanne Garbowsky is professor of English at the County College of Morris, New Jersey. She is beginning work on a book devoted to artists inspired by Dickinson.

THE LOST LETTERS

By Rufus Goodwin

Editor's Note: In 1931, Millicent Todd Bingham, at the urging of her mother, Mabel Loomis Todd, began a quest for information on the relationship between Emily Dickinson and Judge Otis Phillips Lord (1812-1884), a close friend of Edward Dickinson and known to Emily from childhood onward. Mrs. Todd had passed to her daughter an envelope of papers—heavily censored drafts of love letters written by Emily Dickinson to Judge Lord in the 1880s, described by Bingham when she first read them as “the holy of holies.” Todd had withheld them from publication at the request of Austin Dickinson.

From that beginning grew a two-decade-long search by Bingham for the originals of letters exchanged by Dickinson and Lord. She never found what she sought, though she believed they might still exist in some boxes of documents passed on by successive legatees of Judge Lord. She described her long search (and revealed the contents of the existing scraps) in *Emily Dickinson: A Revelation* (1954).

Some search stories are made dramatic by a grand discovery at the end. Others, equally fascinating, tell of valiant efforts doomed to failure. At the time she published *Revelation*, Bingham ended the account of her search by “abandon[ing] the trail, leaving to others the discovery of any evidence they [the lost boxes] may contain.” Rufus Goodwin, descendant of three of the principals, now reveals the story's conclusion.

The late Millicent Todd Bingham's long and painstaking search for love letters from Emily Dickinson to Judge Otis Lord of Salem, Massachusetts, led recently to the last remains of some old boxes that my mother handed over to me at her home in England. It is a story whose recent chapters stretch back to the early 1930s, when Bingham first got in touch with my grandmother about the possibility of finding the letters.

The story's preface dates even further back, to 1877, when Judge Lord's wife,

Elizabeth, died, and her sister, Mary C. Farley, and Mary's daughter, Abbie, moved from Ipswich to Salem to care for the judge. Thereafter, when he went to Amherst to visit Emily, Judge Lord was usually accompanied by Abbie and her cousin Mary. Abbie, a close friend of Susan Dickinson (but, according to Bingham, “Vinnie's special aversion”), was said by her later Salem neighbors to be somewhat opinionated, selfish, and “curt spoken.”¹

Judge Lord died in March 1884. My great grandfather, Benjamin Kimball, a Boston lawyer and a cousin of the judge, was executor of his will and inherited his law library.² The remainder of the estate went to Abbie Farley, including “all the articles of household furniture and ornament, including glass, china, silver-ware, watches, and chains and personal jewelry, wearing apparel, piano, pictures and books which are or may be in my house.” Thus any papers left by Judge Lord would have been inherited by Abbie.

In the summer of 1932 Bingham attempted to contact Abbie (by then Mrs. William C. West), but Abbie died on August 15, before a meeting could take place. Bingham learned, however, that Abbie had left a portion of her estate, including several boxes, to her cousin, Miriam Stockton, daughter of Benjamin Kimball.

Thus it was that in March 1933 Bingham contacted Miriam Stockton for information about the materials she had received from Abbie's estate. Miriam, my grandmother, raised in Ipswich and Boston, was the founder of the Laboratory Theatre, the first repertory theater in New York with an acting school. She and Bingham became friendly, and Miriam promised to provide information on any Dickinson-Lord items. She also described for Bingham a meeting she and her young daughter Anne had had with Abbie Farley West in Salem in the 1920s.

According to Bingham's notes from my grandmother's account of the visit, Miriam picked up a volume of Hawthorne

that was on Abbie's table and said, “‘I see you like Hawthorne.’ Mrs. West replied, ‘Like him? I scorn him. He made fun of Salem. He was insane.’” To change the subject, my grandmother turned to a volume of Emily Dickinson's poems and made another pleasantry. “‘Little hussy,’” said Abbie, “‘didn't I know her? I should say I did. Loose morals. She was crazy about men. Even tried to get Judge Lord. Insane too.’”³

In 1936, after a delay compounded by personal tragedy, Miriam opened at least one of the boxes and gave Bingham some of the documents she had inherited from Abbie. Among them were Benjamin Kimball's final accounting of the Lord estate, documents relative to Lord's 1875 appointment to the Superior Court of Massachusetts, his 1869 Amherst College LL.D. diploma, a photograph of Abbie, and a roll of sketch caricatures made by Judge Lord when he was Speaker of the Massachusetts House in 1854. No love letters.

But the box did yield copies of three letters from Emily to Abbie⁴ and a copy of Dickinson's *Poems, Second Series*—the very volume Miriam Stockton had seen on Abbie Farley's table and which I have since inherited. The volume is a second printing that appeared in 1892. On the frontispiece my grandmother, with a date of 1933, has carefully penciled, “This volume belonged to Judge Otis P. Lord and was inherited by me through Abbie C. Farley. It is of the first edition of which there were only 400 printed.” She was, of course, partly wrong. The first edition was printed in 1891 and could not have belonged to Judge Lord, who had died seven years before.

Were there still clues to a clandestine love affair between Judge Lord and Emily among Abbie Farley's possessions? Bingham thought the unopened boxes were the only remaining hope of yielding any letters from Emily actually received by the venerable judge or drafts of his letters to her. My grandmother thought differently. Apparently without opening

the other boxes, she told Bingham that she doubted any letters of Emily's to Judge Lord could have remained. If by chance they had been found after his death, she feared Abbie would have torn them to bits to avoid speculation about the nature of the relationship between the judge and Emily.

Abbie may have been jealous of Emily or may have feared that Emily's relationship with Judge Lord, especially if they married, would hinder her inheritance from her uncle. And both Abbie and her mother may have wanted to protect Mrs. Lord's reputation and the family heirlooms. Judging by the scraps we have, it seems likely too that Abbie would have found in the letters further cause for moral objections to Emily.

My grandmother died in 1941 without giving Bingham a final answer, and the remaining boxes went to my mother, Anne Stockton Goodwin. As my mother moved over the years, the boxes traveled from a cellar in New York to a barn in Connecticut, then to the country house library, back to New York, and finally to England. But somehow, my mother said, she never got around to looking through them, despite repeated entreaties from Bingham.

In 1954 Millicent Todd Bingham gave up the chase. She had learned from a source in Salem, a friend of Abbie's, that after his death, Judge Lord's letters were destroyed at his request, unopened. Furthermore, she did not think any new evidence would change the essential picture she had formed of their relationship. "The nature of Emily Dickinson's feeling for Judge Lord is revealed," she wrote, "unequivocally in her own words as well as the intimation of a similar feeling on his part. While it would be helpful to know more about their relationship, particularly about his feeling toward her, no corroboration in the Salem boxes or from any other source is needed to support the evidence in her own handwriting of the turmoil in her 'enamoured heart.'"⁵

In 1996 my mother, then eighty-four and living in England, packed the contents of the boxes into a dilapidated green cloth suitcase and said to me, "Here. Do what you want with it." I toted it back to the States and opened it, looking for love letters.

It was full of old papers dating as far back as 1640. There were signatures of colonial governors, George Washington, John Adams, and five other presidents. And there were signs of Judge Otis P. Lord. There was a ten-page catalog inventorying the legal books he bequeathed to Benjamin Kimball, and a copy of an *Essex Statesman* from February 10, 1866, printing a three-column opinion of Judge Lord upon the removal of certain liquor cases to the United States Court. There was a memorial book of the Essex Bar Association proceedings on the death of Otis's elder brother, Nathaniel James Lord, from 1870. There was an invitation for the Hon. Otis P. Lord to sup with Mr. and Mrs. Webster, and an embossed calling card of Mr. and Mrs. Otis P. Lord for Mrs. Michael Farley and daughter, saying the Lords would be at home for the fourth week in October. There was also a letter, dated January 19, 1854, from Edward Everett urging Lord to express an opinion against re-enactment of the fugitive slave law.

One of the more interesting items was an undated, yellowed newspaper clipping from around 1870 entitled "To Be Happy in New England." It read: "You must select the Puritans for your ancestors. You must have a sheltered youth and be a graduate of Harvard. You must know Emerson. You must live within two hours ride of Boston. You should have a professional or literary calling. You must speak low, be a conservative in politics and a liberal in religion. You must drop your r's, be fond of the antique, eat beans on Saturday night and fish-balls on Sunday morning. You must tolerate the Jew, respect the Irish, and love the negro. You must wear glasses, be fond of tombstones and, man or woman, carry your parcels in a green bag. You must be a D.A.R., a Colonial Dame, or S.A.R. or belong to the Mayflower Society. You must be neighborly to the unmarried. You must read the *Atlantic Monthly*. You must shudder at the West, but go to Europe frequently. In age you must live on Easy Street with a little Boston and Albany preferred. You must make sure in advance that your obituary appears in the *Boston Transcript*. There is nothing else."

And there were three signed letters

from Otis Lord to a Kimball cousin, also named Otis, in which he discusses a visit and certain letters and says, "There will probably be a bundle for E . . ." My heart leapt. Emily? No. Not likely. Judge Lord's wife was named Elizabeth.

There were no love letters to or from Emily Dickinson.

Love, I have decided, does not always leave a hard record. Most of us record all that is furthest from our hearts. History is a tissue of random papers and scraps. Yet I could not forget Emily's own lines about privacy: "As there are Apartments in our own Minds that we never enter without apology—we should respect the seals of others."⁶

But to my mind the movie of Emily and Judge Lord's perhaps renounced love is still there waiting to roll, a stylish Ivory Merchant glossy, with the dark-haired Holly Hunter of *Piano* fame playing Emily, standing in Edward Dickinson's Amherst garden, reminding us of what truly matters:

I have no Life but this –
To lead it here –
Nor any Death – but lest
Dispelled from there –

Nor tie to Earths to come –
Nor Action new –
Except through this extent –
The Realm of you – [P 1398]

Notes

1. Millicent Todd Bingham, *Emily Dickinson: A Revelation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 60, 15.
2. Emily Dickinson corresponded with Kimball at this time; three letters to him are included in the Johnson edition as #967, 968, and 1003.
3. Bingham, *Revelation*, 23.
4. My mother sold the original letters to Harvard University's Widener Library; they were later transferred to the Houghton Library and are currently in the Dickinson Collection there. They appear in Johnson's edition of the letters as #751, 987, and 1006.
5. Bingham, *Revelation*, 29.
6. Prose fragment 21, *Letters*, 914.

Rufus Goodwin is a poet and former Vatican and foreign correspondent for United Press International. He is currently writing novels and a book entitled The Story of Prayer.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Bennett, Fordyce R. *A Reference Guide to the Bible in Emily Dickinson's Poetry.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1997. 500 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8108-3247-X, \$49.00.

Bennett provides an ordered list of Dickinson's poems using the Johnson numbers and first lines as titles, followed by citations of lines containing words, phrases, or passages that echo or directly quote the Authorized Version of the Bible. Bible chapters and verses are cited, or directly quoted when brief. Bennett also notes and examines Dickinson's variant lines. Entries often conclude with cross-references to other Dickinson poems or letters or the works of Franklin, Johnson, Leyda, or Sewall. Additional explanatory comments are made where relevant. An appendix includes biographical notes on persons mentioned in the guide. While Bennett does not claim to be exhaustive, his carefully wrought guide is a valuable addition to Dickinson scholarship.

Crumbley, Paul. *Inflections of the Pen: Dash and Voice in Emily Dickinson.* Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1997. 212 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8131-1988-X, \$29.95.

Crumbley analyzes the dash in Dickinson's poetry and letters as a disjunctive mark that interrupts linear thought and suggests a range of voices that both endorse and contradict nineteenth-century cultural assumptions. He also argues for a plurality of readings that include simultaneous multiple voices and meanings. In the poems and letters Crumbley examines, sixteen dash types are used to indicate in print the subtle variations in Dickinson's dashes and to emphasize their role as visual signals. His close readings support his thesis and offer a nuanced approach to reading her work.

Danly, Susan, ed. *Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art.* Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1997. 104 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-55849-066-3, \$19.95.

Published to accompany an exhibit of Dickinson-related works of art at the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College (see review, page 1), this well organized and beautifully illustrated catalog includes three introductory essays (by Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Polly Longworth, and Christopher Benfey) and the works of ten contemporary poets and thirteen artists. Each art entry includes a color illustration accompanied by a short critical essay and the Dickinson text that inspired the work. Although these writers and artists are inspired by Dickinson, their work, whether language based or surrealist, figurative, or feminist art, demonstrates a wide variety of creative responses to Dickinson and her poetry.

Hirschhorn, Norbert, and Polly Longworth. "Medicine Posthumous": A New Look at Emily Dickinson's Medical Conditions." *New England Quarterly* 69.2 (1996): 299-316.

The authors reassess Dickinson's two major medical problems in the light of modern science and conclude that her eye problems resulted from iritis/uveitis, that her death probably resulted from primary hypertension rather than Bright's disease, and that both illnesses probably had psychological underpinnings. They review Dickinson scholarship, search the Dickinson family letters for clinical clues, examine the prescription scrapbook from Amherst's Adams Pharmacy, scan meteorological records to pin down elusive dates, and study recent texts and nineteenth-century medical papers, including those by Dickinson's attending physicians.

Lambert, Robert Graham, Jr. *A Critical Study of Emily Dickinson's Letters: The Prose of a Poet.* Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Univ. Press, 1996. 223 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7734-2270-6, \$89.95.

Lambert's 1968 Ph.D. dissertation focuses on Dickinson's letters as works of art containing "prose so compressed it almost

cracks into poetry." His updated introduction presents his work in the context of present scholarship. Lambert's interest in Dickinson's metrical experimentation leads Willis Buckingham to say in his foreword that Lambert's early recognition of the blurred boundaries between Dickinson's prose and poetry suggests a "cross-genre approach to the presentation of her texts" and is thus relevant to the current interest in editing Dickinson's poetry.

Lombardo, Daniel. *A Hedge Away: The Other Side of Emily Dickinson's Amherst.* Northampton, Mass.: Daily Hampshire Gazette, 1997. 392 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-9618052-6-9, \$15.95.

Lombardo's delightful collection of short pieces portrays nineteenth-century Amherst and Connecticut Valley citizens and the local events and concerns that filled their days. Carefully placed excerpts from Dickinson's letters and poetry, vintage black and white photographs, and accounts of the Dickinson family are woven throughout the book, thus placing the Dickinsons in the context of the larger community beyond their hedge, a community "that was rich with gritty, morally compromised, sometimes violent, and often funny real life." Lombardo "reveals the exploits, celebrations, horrors, and dramas of a lively cast of merchants, ministers, professors, students, housewives, criminals, misfits, crackpots and rakes." Opening his book is like going into an attic and discovering a well-organized scrapbook of gleanings from the local newspapers and archives. Not to be missed is a concluding analysis of a Dickinson poem submitted to Lombardo's computer Grammatik program.

Norris, Kathleen. *The Cloister Walk.* New York: Riverhead/Putnam, 1996. 384 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-57322-028-0, \$23.95; paper, ISBN 1-57322-584-3, \$12.50.

Norris, a poet and married Protestant woman, describes her experience of living

Note: The Bulletin welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books. We would be especially happy to learn of those published outside the U.S. Information should be sent to Barbara Kelly, 444 Washington Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301, U.S.A., or faxed to her at 415-321-8146.

inside a Benedictine community of monastic celibate men. Tracing her spiritual journey through one liturgical year, she explores a range of topics related to the contemplative life. Norris's book begins and ends with quotations from Dickinson's poetry. A specific meditation on Dickinson and recurring references to her work suggest a special affinity with the poet she calls "the patron saint of biblical commentary in the poetic mode." Norris's intelligence, wit, and graceful prose make her philosophical and theological quest an engaging and accessible read. She is the author of *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* and three volumes of poetry.

Ridington, Candace. *Rubicon*. Birmingham, Ala.: Arlington Press, 1997. 496 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-9656773-1-1, \$19.95.

Ridington's novel brings to life the passionate thirteen-year love affair between Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd, the woman who edited Dickinson's poems and letters for publication in the 1890s at Lavinia Dickinson's request. Austin was twenty-seven years older than Mabel, but they crossed their Rubicon, making a commitment to one another that lasted until Austin's death. Ridington recreates nineteenth-century Amherst village and its citizens with imagination and respect for the historical record. The novel may be ordered from Arlington Press, P.O. Box 131021, Birmingham, AL 35213 (include \$4.00 shipping and handling fee).

Shattuck, Roger. *Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 370 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-312-14602-7, \$26.95.

In his study of the sacred and the profane, Shattuck explores myth, literature, and modern science, from Adam and Eve to the Human Genome Project, and includes discussions of Prometheus, Milton, Faust, Frankenstein, Dickinson, Melville, Camus, and the Marquis de Sade. Shattuck admires Dickinson's strategies of renunciation (Poems 239, 421, 439, 1377, and 1430), finding a corresponding theme in Madame de Lafayette's seventeenth-century novel *La Princesse de Clèves*. Both authors found aesthetic delight in self-denial but were paradoxically "as close to epicureanism...as to fear of living." Shattuck's wide-ranging, learned study is an impassioned argument for moral responsibility in literature and

life, particularly relevant to recent discussions of experimental cloning.

Book Reviews

Hogue, Cynthia. *Scheming Women: Poetry, Privilege, and the Politics of Subjectivity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995. 262 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-7914-2622-X, \$19.95

Reviewed by Susan McCabe

Scheming Women reveals how Emily Dickinson, Marianne Moore, Adrienne Rich, and H.D. challenge masculinist versions of the lyric and of identity. While acknowledging the relative privilege of these poets in terms of class and race, Cynthia Hogue posits for them what she terms "an ethical poetic practice," one that foregrounds a divided subjectivity. This book convincingly makes the somewhat perverse claim that these poets dismantle "the very poetic power they assert." She examines their shared use of the rhetorical strategy of equivocation, a "scheme" that simultaneously allows apparent conformity to social and poetic codes of the feminine and a resistance to these codes. Poststructuralist and feminist theories inform without burdening Hogue's close readings of poems.

Hogue's introduction provides a rereading of Julia Kristeva's notion of a provisional "subject in process." While employing the figure of the "repressed maternal," Hogue underscores the contradictions surrounding the image of the maternal for the poets under discussion. She builds on Teresa de Lauretis's theories of sexuality to formulate her sense of an equivocating female subject capable of transforming aesthetic practice.

Especially enlightening is Hogue's examination of the conventions of lyric tradition in terms of Ovidian myth; she reveals how poetic origin has involved a violent exclusion of the feminine. As she succinctly puts it: "woman's disembodiment spells man's gain of poetic inspiration." This study articulates the ways in which Dickinson, Moore, H.D., and Rich variously upset the emplacement of grandiose claims to poetic voice or integrated subjectivity.

The chapter "Emily Dickinson's Semiotics of Presence" cogently demonstrates Hogue's thesis. In analyzing Dickinson's linguistic and grammatical strategies, she argues for the poet's disembodiment as a

resistance to specular constriction. An investigation of Dickinson's revision of the Romantic sublime further supports a poetics of a "divided female subject who does not fantasize wholeness." Unlike male poets of the sublime, Dickinson does not have to externalize and reject difference as feminine; instead, she offers a "'mothering' poetics" that does not demand foreclosure of meaning and subjectivity.

Chapters on Moore, H.D., and Rich, like the one on Dickinson, offer detailed, insightful readings of poems and word etymologies to show "schemes" of subversion. Particularly striking is Hogue's attention to Moore's costuming (wearing the Washington tricorne, for example) as manipulation of the male gaze. As with Dickinson, Moore also evidences a disjunction between form and content that destabilizes lyric privilege. Hogue's treatment of H.D. focuses on the usually neglected *Helen in Egypt* as a touchstone for the poet's refiguring of Freudian conceptions of female sexuality and the maternal. The concluding chapter takes up Rich's activity of naming what has been traditionally unnamed; analysis of the poet's apparently conventional form as a masquerade makes this treatment of Rich unique.

Hogue's book will prove illuminating for Dickinson scholars as well as those interested in feminist poetics. By connecting these poets in terms of redefining subjectivity, Hogue accomplishes the difficult project of adumbrating an alternate "tradition."

Susan McCabe is professor of English at Arizona State University.

Orzeck, Martin, and Robert Weisbuch, eds. *Dickinson and Audience*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1996. 280 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-472-10325-3, \$49.50.

Reviewed by Erika Scheurer

When I first saw *Dickinson and Audience*, I felt vaguely unsettled by the choice of cover art, a version of the retouched daguerreotype in which Emily Dickinson appears with wavy hair and a white ruff. The doctored likeness, created at the urging of Lavinia Dickinson to make her sister look less severe, is rarely used now. Not until I was well into the collection of twelve critical essays did the reason for the choice of cover art occur to me: the likeness represents Dickinson's image being altered for her readers, her audience.

This is how we often think of Dickinson

and audience: the ways in which her work was altered by early editors through regularized rhyme and punctuation in order to make it palatable to readers of the time. But how did Dickinson, often called a “private” poet, herself consider audience? What was her relationship to particular readers? To the concept of audience popular in her time? In *Dickinson and Audience* Martin Orzeck and Robert Weisbuch present a collection of essays that respond to these questions, broadening and complicating the concept of audience in regard to Dickinson’s work.

To rhetoricians, the concept of audience has two poles, with various levels in between: “audience addressed” (actual readers of a text) and “audience invoked” (the audience that an author creates in a text). *Dickinson and Audience* covers the ground between and including both of these poles.

The editors have arranged the essays into three categories: Dickinson’s theory of audience as invoked by the poems (David Porter, Charlotte Nekola, Robert Weisbuch, Virginia Jackson, and R. McClure Smith); particular letter recipients (Martin Orzeck, Betsy Erkkila, Stephanie A. Tingley, and Richard B. Sewall); and nineteenth-century cultural concepts of audience (Robert Regan, Willis J. Buckingham, and Karen Dandurand). The critical approaches represented range from biographical and historical studies to poststructuralist and feminist analyses.

In this space it would be impossible to summarize the substance of these valuable contributions to Dickinson scholarship. Instead, I will point to a few key concepts that stand out as important additions to our understanding of Dickinson and audience.

First, readers often assume that because the poet’s style is so elusive and because she did not publish widely in her lifetime, she ignored audience altogether, remaining a “private poet.” As Porter notes, however, direct communication was not her purpose in writing; rather, she “chose to preserve the intensity of performance” (20). Also, as Nekola shows, being clearly understood by an audience posed a threat to nineteenth-century female gender identity.

Second, as direct audiences for Dickinson’s writing, Abiah Root, Susan Dickinson, Elizabeth Holland, and Helen Hunt Jackson (in different ways) contributed to Dickinson’s development as a writer.

Finally, it was fascinating to learn that Dickinson’s collegial model of audience built upon the popular Victorian concept of

the writer-reader relationship and that given reprinting practices of the time, the handful of poems published in Dickinson’s lifetime may have reached a far broader readership than we have previously assumed.

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Wardrop, Daneen. *Emily Dickinson’s Gothic: Goblin with a Guage.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996. 225 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-87745-549-X, \$22.95.

Reviewed by Cynthia MacKenzie

Daneen Wardrop’s critical study recognizes Emily Dickinson as the preeminent American gothic poet, a position previously overlooked in large part because the gothic genre is defined by fiction, not poetry. Wardrop furthers the exploration of Dickinson’s gothic begun by critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Cynthia Griffin Wolff, and Joan Kirkby to locate it not only within Dickinson’s gothic images but also within her poetic strategies that induce responses of fear and uncertainty in the reader. Whereas the “dark center” of the gothic text is the entrapment of the main character, the Dickinson gothic embodies the psycholinguistic entrapment of the poet, an entrapment the reader also experiences by way of Dickinson’s “spectre-syntax.”

Working from Dickinson’s own theory of reading a poem as stated to T.W. Higginson—“If I read a poem [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry”—Wardrop examines the physical sensations induced by reading a Dickinson poem. Dickinson wants reaction, she concludes, “unabashed follicle-reflex,” because art, for this poet, is the “goose-bump business.” Wardrop’s delightfully witty descriptions of the reader-response are nonetheless astute and original. *Lire feminine*, the term Wardrop coins to describe the way in which Dickinson’s linguistic strategies cause bodily reactions of surprise and horror, also serves to emphasize the study’s recognition of women’s gothicism and Dickinson’s place in it.

Emily Dickinson’s Gothic clearly and convincingly establishes the gothic tradition in Dickinson’s oeuvre which, in turn, succeeds in placing Dickinson securely within a literary genre and a sociohistorical context. Working from within the tradition

of gothicism, from “eighteenth-century castle-enclosure and the devices of gothic romance convention, through nineteenth-century use of doubling, to the early twentieth-century existential void” and finally, to the “postmodern realm of signification,” Wardrop rigorously considers Dickinson’s place in the genre in terms of American writers and women writers.

To accommodate Dickinson’s several kinds of gothic—romantic, parodic, fantastic, metagothic—Wardrop works from a definition of gothicism that aspires to be a description of a process rather than a static definition. In this way, she clearly establishes the way in which the gothic determines Dickinson’s aesthetic.

Wardrop concludes with a close reading of the source of the book’s subtitle, poem 414, “‘Twas like a Maelstrom, with a notch,” to illustrate how the image of the goblin underpins all the gothic language and imagery in the canon: the goblin-monster, the goblin-ravisher, the goblin-editor, and the goblin-poet. As such, the reader becomes a victim of the manipulations of the poetic strategies in the text, suspended in the suspension of the closure of the poem, left to answer the agonizing question of its last line, “Which Anguish was the utterest – then – /To perish, or to live?”

Although a scholarly work, *Emily Dickinson’s Gothic* is highly readable as a result of the exhilarating (yet appalling!) selection of poems Wardrop has brought together, as well as the compellingly witty way in which she records her reading of them. In the end, Wardrop’s reading succeeds in enacting her own theory, for in *Emily Dickinson’s Gothic*, she records her own respectfully fearful response to Dickinson’s cryptic and encrypted language.

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Book Notes

Polly Longworth’s *World of Emily Dickinson* has recently been reissued in paperback (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997, ISBN 0-393-02892-5, \$17.95).

Harvard University Press recently reissued *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* in a single-volume cloth edition (1,056 pp., ISBN 0-674-52627-9, \$75.00).

Songstress, continued from page 9

in the teeth of everything that her culture put in her way to deny it to her." *Modern American Women Writers*, 77.

24. *Reception*, 135.

25. Wolff, 132.

26. Hurrelbrinck, 194.

27. Bloom, 305. See also Juhasz, 78: "an intelligence and a passion unsurpassed in literature."

28. *Reception*, 63.

29. Regarding Dickinson poems chosen for a 1990s general audience, additional sources deserve to be part of the record, though they are not included for statistical purposes in compiling favorite poems for this study. In his daily five-minute program on National Public Radio, "The Writer's Almanac," Garrison Keillor read three poems for December 10, 1994: "I think To Live – may be a Bliss," "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!" and "I dwell in Possibility." On the same program, March 19, 1996, he read "A Light exists in Spring." Deepak Chopra, in his "Way of the Wizard" series of televised talks for the Public Broadcasting System, read both quatrains of "This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies" in a program aired March 5, 1996.

30. *The Dickinson Sublime* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 3, 4

31. See "Index to Poems" in *Reception*, 597-616.

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Great Women Writers. Ed. Frank N. Magill. New York: Holt, 1994. 128-32. Biography and analysis of a half-dozen poems.

Greenspan, Karen. *The Timetables of Women's History: A Chronology of the Most Important People and Events in Women's History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 220. Notes Dickinson's date of birth.

Hurrelbrinck, Nancy. "Dickinson, Emily." In *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*. Ed. Claude J. Summers. New York: Holt, 1995. 191-95. Stresses Dickinson's love for Susan Gilbert Dickinson.

Juhasz, Suzanne. "Emily Dickinson." In *Modern American Women Writers*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Scribner's, 1991. 77-89. Biography and analysis of a half-dozen poems.

Larousse Dictionary of Writers. Ed. Rosemary Goring. New York: Larousse, 1994. 260.

Martin, Wendy. "Emily Dickinson." In *Columbia Literary History of the United States*. Ed. Emory Elliott. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988. 609-26. An overview that describes several crises in Dickinson's life and discusses about a half-dozen poems.

The New Quotable Woman. Ed. Elaine Partnow. New York: Facts on File, 1992. Quotations from 36 poems.

Nineteenth-Century American Poetry. Ed. William C. Spengemann. New York: Penguin, 1996. 352-96. An anthology containing 77 Dickinson poems.

Olsen, Kirstin. *Chronology of Women's History*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994. 146, 155. Notes the 1876 publication of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*, a novel supposedly based on the poet's life, and Dickinson's death in 1886.

The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States. Ed. Linda Wagner-Martin and Cathy N. Davidson. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995. 280-93, 569-70. Contains 7 Dickinson poems.

Poetry of the American Renaissance: A Diverse Anthology from the Romantic Period. Ed. Paul Kane. New York: George Braziller, 1995. 322-51. 50 Dickinson poems.

Saffioti, Carol Lee. "Dickinson, Emily." In *Handbook of American Women's History*. Ed. Angela H. Zophy and Frances M. Kavenik. New York: Garland, 1990. 157-58.

Sewall, Richard B. "Dickinson, Emily." In *The Reader's Companion to American History*. Ed. Eric Foner and John A. Garraty. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991. 285-86.

Stewart, William. *Cassell's Queer Companion: A Dictionary of Lesbian and Gay Life and Culture*. New York: Cassell, 1995. 69.

The Things That Matter: An Anthology of Women's Spiritual Poetry. Ed. Julia Neuberger. New York: Thomas Dunne Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995. 27 poems.

The Top 500 Poems: A Columbia Anthology. Ed. William Harmon. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992. 728-42. 14 poems with a biographical sketch and commentary on each poem.

Trager, James. *The Women's Chronology: A Year-by-Year Record, from Prehistory to the Present*. New York: Holt, 1994. 337. Notes the 1890 publication of Dickinson's *Poems*.

Vendler, Helen. *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1997. *Passim*. 16 poems with commentary.

Continued on page 20

PERFORMANCES

Between Immortals

By Niels Kjær

Brev til Verden (Letter to the World), a new Emily Dickinson play, was given its first performance in Denmark in November 1996. Producer for the event was Projekt Teatret, which has formerly put on two other Dickinson productions, *Emily Dickinson Live* (see *Bulletin* 3, no. 1) and *For Everything There Is a Season* (*Bulletin* 6, no. 1).

In this new play we meet the immortal Emily Dickinson in conversation with two immortal Danes, Hans Christian



Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. These three authors resemble one another in

some ways. All experienced love but none of them married. All wrestled God, but their responses to "the eternal questions" are not identical.

The poems and quotations were selected by myself and Agnete Bjørn. Ms Bjørn takes the role of Emily Dickinson; Martin Strange also performs.

Niels Kjær is director of the Emily Dickinson Center in Lyø, Denmark.

Saint John, Barbara. *Emily*. Mystic Pilgrim Music Productions (BMI). TPT: 50:25. MP002. Available from Mystic Pilgrim Music, P.O. Box 22-0051, Greenpoint Station, Brooklyn, NY 11222-0051.

Reviewed by Sara Hopkins

"Emily" is the second song on this varied CD, Barbara Saint John's second recording. Her interest in Emily Dickinson began with a visit to Amherst; her acquaintance with the poems deepened upon reading Johnson's complete edition and listening to Julie Harris's readings.

Her song was inspired by Jean Houston's *Public Like a Frog*, a book she

praises, contrasting it with numerous psychological studies dissecting Dickinson's alleged neurosis, and praising it as "the only one which correctly identified Emily Dickinson's perceptual genius."

Be that as it may, I like her "Emily." Its chorus sums up her appreciation of Dickinson's personality and achievement: "Oh, Emily, in your hideaway/Gifted perception, odd within your day/Swift-minded bird with your stone poised to hurl/Killing off giants, and conquering the world." The verses convey a flavor of Emily's personality, mentioning her kitchen, her garden, and her love for children, as well as "the lexicon inside her brain." The tune

is attractive and well sung in a light, folk-like mix of belt and head voice, accompanied by acoustic piano, classical guitar, violin, cello, and bass.

The other songs are an attractive mix of the down-to-earth and the quirkily spiritual, notably "Mother Ann Lee." "Liquid Ruby" is inspired by Wisdom personified as a woman and is influenced by gospel music. Dickinson fans who enjoy eclectic, personal music should find Barbara Saint John to their taste.

Sara Hopkins currently teaches voice at both Penn State University and Bucknell University.

Songstress, continued from page 19

Warner, Carolyn. *The Last Word: A Treasury of Women's Quotes*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1992. *Passim*. 11 Dickinson quotations.

Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. "Emily Dickinson." *The Columbia History of American Poetry*. Ed. Jay Parini. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1993. 121-47. A biographical critique of the "myth" of Dickinson, followed by readings of about 15 poems.

Willis Buckingham is professor of English at Arizona State University, Tempe, and author most recently of Emily Dickinson's Reception in the 1890s: A Documentary History.

Notes on Research Projects

Jane Eberwein, editor of the *Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, reports that the project is progressing well, with publication anticipated in 1998. "Nearly 100 hard-working contributors," she says, "and one praiseworthy graduate student have made all this possible."

Cynthia Hallen, editor of the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* project, reports that most of the dictionary entries have been completed, and she and her contributors are now involved in intensive final editing. Those interested in helping with editing may contact her at the Linguistics Department, 2140 JKHB, Brigham Young University, Provo,

UT 84602, USA, or by e-mail at Cynthia_Hallen@byu.edu.

Cynthia MacKenzie has signed a contract with the University Press of Colorado to publish her *Concordance to the Letters of Emily Dickinson*. The long-awaited work will appear in both desk copy and CD-ROM versions by December 1997.

For information on the *International Bibliography* project, see the report by editor **Robert Means** on page 23.

Watch the *Bulletin* for further information on these important projects.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Annual Meeting Again in Amherst

For the second year in a row, EDIS will hold its Annual Meeting in Amherst, Massachusetts, hometown of Emily Dickinson. This year's meeting, to be held May 30 to June 1, will celebrate Dickinson in the fine and performing arts. A major event will be the exhibition "Language As Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art" at Mead Art Museum at Amherst College (see review, page 1).

In addition to an opportunity to participate in several exciting events and meet other Dickinson enthusiasts, this year's meeting is being used to help raise funds to support the two Dickinson houses and the Mead Art Museum. The registration form (page 23) indicates several categories of support. It should be returned by May 15. If you plan to attend, you'll need to make housing arrangements immediately, since Amherst College is holding its alumni reunion that weekend.

We hope to see many of you there!

Friday, May 30

5:00-6:00 p.m.: Book signings. *Jeffery Amherst Bookshop*. (Signed books will be

available throughout the weekend.)

8:00 p.m.: *Emily Unplugged* by Sleeveless Theatre. *Kirby Theatre, Amherst College*.

Saturday, May 31

8:45-10:00 a.m.: Private EDIS tour of "Language As Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art." *Mead Art Museum, Amherst College*. Continental breakfast at 8:45; short presentations by curator Susan Danly at 9:00, 9:20, and 9:40; tour of exhibition. The museum opens to the public at 10:00, but members may stay as long as they wish.

11:30-1:30: Lunch and an informal discussion of new and forthcoming Dickinson projects. *Jones Library Large Meeting Room*. Those wishing to make presentations should e-mail Marcy Tanter at tanter@econs.umass.edu.

1:45-3:15: Walking tour of Dickinson's Amherst led by artist Margaret Taylor. Limited to 25. Gather in *Room 207, Converse Hall, Amherst College*.

1:45-3:15: Walking tour of Amherst based on Áife Murray's "Kitchen Table Poetics" (part of the Mead exhibition), led by Marcy Tanter. Leaves the *Jones Library after lunch*.

3:45-4:45: Presentation on *Amherst Sabbath*, Noel Tipton's new musical play. *Jones Library Large Meeting Room*.

8:00: Slide lecture by Lesley Dill and discussion of issues raised by the Mead exhibition. *Jones Library Large Meeting Room*.

Sunday, June 1

9:00 a.m.: Demonstration of Dickinson Electronic Archive Project by Martha Nell Smith. *Jones Library Large Meeting Room*.

10:30-12:30: Annual Meeting. *Jones Library Large Meeting Room*.

12:30: Box lunch. *Dickinson Homestead lawn, weather permitting*.

1:00: Address by Cindy Dickinson, Homestead curator. Tours of the Homestead by reservation (call 413-542-8161).

Chapter News

The February meeting of the **Utah Chapter** was held in conjunction with the Desert Language and Linguistics Society Symposium on February 20-21 at Brigham Young University. Margaret Freeman, first president of EDIS, and her husband, Don, were keynote speakers. Margaret's address focused on cognitive linguistic approaches to Dickinson's poetry.

The August meeting, to be held in Logan, will be directed by Paul Crumbley, professor of English at Utah State University.

The first Canadian chapter of EDIS, the **Saskatchewan Chapter**, held its first meeting, organized by Cindy MacKenzie, on February 6 at the University of Regina. Dickinson lovers heard a lecture and performance of nine poems set to music by Professor Thomas Schudel, including "There's a certain Slant of light" and "I

died for Beauty – but was scarce." Refreshments included Emily's black cake and lemon water. The chapter plans to meet biannually, with the next meeting in September. For more information, contact Cindy MacKenzie at 306-585-4560.

The **Los Angeles Chapter** met April 6 to elect officers and make plans for future meetings. Elected were Doug Saxon, chair; Cheryl Langdell, secretary; and Barbara Nicolosi, publicity chair. Proposals included a draft revision of the EDIS policy on local chapters; holding a public meeting yearly to attract new members; and developing publicity materials for the chapter. The next meeting will be held in mid-May. For information, contact Doug Saxon by e-mail at saxon_doug@mptp.com or by phone at 818-760-5934.

Academic Meetings

The 1997 meeting of the **Modern Language Association**, to be held in Ottawa, December 27-31, will include two panels on Dickinson. "Unfastening the Fascicles: A Roundtable Discussion," will be moderated by Martha Nell Smith, with speakers Robert Bray, Paul Crumbley, Eleanor Heginbotham, Marget Sands, and Daneen Wardrop. "Intertextual Dickinson," chaired by Vivian Pollak, will feature papers by Paula Bennett, Faith Barrett, and Nancy Johnston. For further information, contact Pollak at the Department of English, Washington University, St. Louis, MO 63130 or by phone at 314-935-4406.

Remember also the two Dickinson panels at the **ALA** meeting in Baltimore, May 22-25, 1997. For information, contact Gloria Cronin, 3134 JKHB, Brigham Young University, Provo UT 84602.

Note to *Journal* Subscribers

Suzanne Juhasz, editor of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*, announces that it will no longer be published with the University Press of Colorado. She is in the process of working out arrangements with another press. As soon as plans are settled, publication of the *Journal* will resume.

Obituary

The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan announces the loss of another outstanding Dickinson scholar. Midori Ando, who died December 6, was an active member of EDSJ and participated in both EDIS conferences, Washington and Innsbruck. Her Innsbruck paper appears in the fall 1996 issue of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. EDIS extends sympathy to her family and colleagues.

Amherst Acquires New Dickinson Manuscripts

The Amherst College Library recently received gifts of a new version of Dickinson's poem 311, "It sifts from Leaden Sieves," and a note that Dickinson sent, apparently with flowers, to the Rev. Edward S. Dwight of Amherst, probably in 1860 or 1861, when his wife was ill. The note, published as Letter 237 in the Johnson edition, was presented to the library by Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Hamill.

Dickinson sent the new version of poem 311 (the fifth known) to Thomas Wentworth Higginson in 1871. It differs slightly from all previously known versions in the last two lines: the snow "curls itself in Capricorn/Disputing that it was." The poem was given to the library by Evelyn F. Hitchcock, who acquired it from a niece of a woman who received it from Higginson in 1897.

John Lancaster, curator of special collections at the library, noted that "although the vast majority of known Dickinson manuscripts are in institutional collections, primarily at Amherst and Harvard, there are still some in private hands, not known to anyone but their owners. It is always a thrill—and the occasion for renewed scholarly interest—when one of those turns up."

Letters to the Editor

In 1979 I attended an Emily Dickinson seminar at the Modern Language Association and was greeted warmly by the chairman because my attendance meant that we "represented fifty years of Dickinson scholarship." My reaction was mixed. Although I was well past seventy, I had not yet begun to think of myself as old, and while I was proud of my 1929 contribution to *American Literature*, I did not fully appreciate the importance of its publication or the generosity of Jay B. Hubbell in including my student work. Now, nearly twenty years later, I find it all but forgotten and resent that just as much as I resented being remembered. There exists, I conclude, no way to appease authorial vanity.

The Fall 1996 number of the *Bulletin* thus gave me both pleasure and pain. James Saucedo has rediscovered the real Thomas Wentworth Higginson portrayed in my 1963 *Dear Preceptor*, but apparently has never heard of my work. Judith Farr in *I Never Came to You in White* has offered a fictional treatment of Dickinson's relationship with the founder of Mount Holyoke, Mary Lyon, which seems to me to miss the point, but again without reference to my work published in the *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly*. In fact, it seems that not only my work but readily available original source material is being ignored by recent Dickinson scholars.

My interest in Higginson was sparked originally by his twenty-five year correspondence with E.D. My work on him introduced me to several other biographers and several aspects of the man still not widely known by Dickinson scholars. A Unitarian minister, Transcendentalist, Abolitionist, "Colonel of the Black Regiment," crusader for women's rights, poet, historian, and essayist, he was the man Emily Dickinson chose as her confidante from the whole roster of nineteenth-century literary men with whose work she was acquainted.

As for Ms Farr's fictional correspondence, the daring of anyone who tries to imitate Dickinson's style of course invites failure as well as admiration. But the conflict between the girl Emily and the woman Mary Lyon is a microcosm of

nineteenth-century religion and feminism that deserves careful historical analysis, and even with it may well evade our understanding. If Ms Farr's treatment seems superficial and dated, it suggests a need for further scholarly work.

But finally, the notes on recent publications challenge all my prejudices. Until the 1992 conference in Washington, I would have asserted positively that Dickinson was untranslatable. And now the Japanese are writing about her humor. Her letter to the world somehow reached me in a Mount Holyoke classroom forty years after her death. Now it has reached across the world, defying the limitations of language as well as those of death and time. It must be true that genius outperforms the Internet.

Anna Mary Wells

Mary Elizabeth Kromer Bernhard's illuminating account (in the last *Bulletin*) of the Parke family's half-century residency in the Dickinson Homestead may be supplemented by a recollection of my visit there many decades ago. I was, of course, only one of the thousands graciously welcomed by Mrs. Ethel Parke over the years. But it was only after she apologized for not being able to show me Lavinia's room (her sister was convalescing from a serious illness) that I became aware of the depth of her commitment to Dickinson—and to those making pilgrimages to that "magnetic house."

It is true, as Bernhard observes, that "The question of whether Mrs. Parke discovered any of Emily Dickinson's poetry in the Homestead remains unanswered." But it is also true that a Dickinson manuscript poem *was* there—had been presented to the Parkes by Martha Dickinson Bianchi when they took possession of the house. Mrs. Parke left me alone for a magical moment with "Immured in Heaven!" (P 1594)—carefully encased in celluloid. I say more about my visit and the poem in the prologue to my *Emily Dickinson's Readings of Men and Books: Sacred Soundings*.

Benjamin Lease

The Emily Dickinson International Bibliography: A Progress Report

By Robert Means

The idea for an international bibliography on Dickinson has been on the minds of scholars for some time. There are already several fine Dickinson bibliographies focusing on studies published within the U.S., but no comprehensive bibliography of international sources with English annotations.

In October 1992, twelve scholars met at the EDIS conference in Washington, D.C., to discuss the possibility of such a project. They agreed that both the need and the desire were there. EDIS then invited Blaine Hall, English Literature Librarian at Brigham Young University, to begin the project. Last September I took over from Blaine when he retired and began relaying international articles to scholars willing to write English annotations for them.

For the bibliography to be more than simply a list of international sources, it must be annotated by Dickinson scholars fluent in the source languages. So the project has become a collaboration involving the membership of EDIS. A number of Dickinson scholars are currently working on articles I've sent them, while others are annotating bibliographies or international articles they've compiled themselves.

The bibliography will encompass all types of materials published outside the United States: articles, monographs, and translations. It is a collaborative project open to all interested Dickinson scholars, and your participation is welcome—indeed, invited: annotating, sharing bibliographies, or simply providing leads and references.

I've received a favorable response from a publisher, but the project will certainly be in the works for two to three years. In the meantime, Lynne Spear at the University of Colorado has established a link on the EDIS homepage to make the results of the bibliography immediately available to ED scholars via the WWW.

To participate in the international bibliography, please contact me via e-mail at robert_means@byu.edu, or by snail-mail at 5224 HBLL, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 U.S.A.

Robert Means is the English Literature Librarian at the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. He has been involved with the international bibliography project since its beginning.

Registration Form for EDIS Annual Meeting, May 30-June 1, 1997

Name: _____

Address: _____

____ I plan to attend the annual meeting and will contribute at the following level:

____ Graduate Student Supporter	\$ 25.00	____ EDIS Friend	\$ 75.00
____ EDIS Member or Guest	\$ 45.00	____ EDIS Patron	\$100.00

I am unable to attend, but I would like to support EDIS initiatives with a tax-deductible contribution of \$_____.

____ I want to order Saturday lunch: ____ Vegetarian ____ Non-vegetarian (Add \$6.00 to your registration fee.)

____ I want to order Sunday lunch: ____ Vegetarian ____ Non-vegetarian (Add \$7.00 to your registration fee.)

____ I /we want to participate in Margaret Taylor's walk; number of participants: ____ Registration limited to 25.

Total enclosed: \$_____

Please make checks payable to EDIS and send by May 15 to Daniel Lombardo, Jones Library, 43 Amity St., Amherst, MA 01002.

Emily Dickinson International Society Membership Form

Name _____

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Please check if this is: new address ____ membership renewal ____

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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:
Gary Lee Stonum, Treasurer, EDIS, Dept. of English, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH 44106 U.S.A.

These forms may be photocopied for multiple use.

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