EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

# Bulletin

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

# AN INVITATION TO JOIN "EMILY DICKINSON AT HOME"

For Emily Dickinson, home was the center of the universe, a place "*brighter* than all the world beside." Home for Dickinson meant the lovely valley of the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts, with its winding stream and attractive small towns nestled among her beloved Pelham Hills.

This year, from August 12 to 15, EDIS's Third International Conference will draw several hundred of the poet's admirers from around the world to honor her work and experience the places Dickinson called home —Amherst, where she lived her entire life, and nearby South Hadley, where she attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1847-48.

The principal setting for "Emily Dickinson at Home" will be Mount Holyoke College, founded in 1837 by Mary Lyon, a pioneer in education for women. The campus, recently named the most beautiful in the United States, will offer housing, locales for the twenty panels of papers being presented by nearly seventy outstanding international scholars, and the sites of receptions, a luncheon, and the conference banquet.

Dickinson's home town, Amherst, lies eleven miles north of the college, and shuttle buses will facilitate travel between the two sites. Amherst offers a wide array of Dickinson-related attractions. The town was first settled in 1731, and Dickinsons have been important in its history almost from the beginning. It is home to Amherst College, founded by Emily's grandfather, as well as the University of Massachusetts. Several other distinguished writers, including Robert Frost, have made it their home.

***The Field Gate at the entrance to Mount Holyoke College will welcome participants to the Third Emily Dickinson International Conference. Courtesy Department of Communications, Mount Holyoke College.***

In Amherst, conferees will be able to tour the Dickinson Homestead, where the poet was born and lived most of her life; see the ongoing restoration of the Evergreens next door, where Emily's brother, Austin, and his wife, Susan, lived from the time of their 1856 marriage; visit West Cemetery, where the poet and her family are buried; view the exhibits at the Amherst History Museum; visit area booksellers offering recent and out-of-print Dickinson publications; and enjoy the many other attractions of this charming college town. One highlight will be a reception for conference attendees on the lawn between the two Dickinson houses.

In addition to visiting Amherst's Jones Library and Amherst College's Frost Library, both of which house extensive collections of Dickinson manuscripts and memorabilia, conferees may board buses bound for Cambridge, eighty miles to the east, where Harvard University's famed Houghton Library will present for the first time a comprehensive catalog of its vast Dickinson holdings. A poetry reading in historic Harvard Yard and an evening in vibrant Harvard Square will complete this exciting side trip.

Those wanting to expand their horizons in other directions may wish to drive up nearby Mount Holyoke or replicate a Dickinson family outing by climbing to its summit, which offers splendid views of the river and surrounding countryside. Holyoke and Springfield, the largest cities in the Connecticut Valley, nearby Quabbin Reservoir, and the Berkshire Hills to the west also offer a host of scenic and cultural attractions.

Conference planners look forward to welcoming the poet's many admirers to this wide-ranging scholarly and cultural event, at which Emily Dickinson's spirit will be very much "at home" to visitors.

**A tentative conference schedule appears on pages 14-15. For information on housing, meals, and fees and a registration form, see pages 19 and 27. *Register now!* The deadline is June 1.**

# Ralph W. Franklin
## Our Guide to Dickinson's Legacy

***By Benjamin Lease***

Benjamin Lease, author of *Emily Dickinson's Readings of Men and Books: Sacred Soundings,* is currently exploring the Paul Celan-Emily Dickinson connection in collaboration with his son, Joseph, author of *Human Rights,* a new and widely acclaimed book of poems. Founding editor of this "Scholars" series, Ben has contributed other profiles of prominent Dickinsonians. He is Professor Emeritus at Northeastern Illinois University.

Jane Donahue Eberwein, *Series Editor*

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"Except for a handful of poems, apparently made public against her wishes, her work remained unpublished during her lifetime." Ralph W. Franklin made this observation more than thirty years ago—in the first paragraph of his first book, *The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration* (1967). It is a book that puts into clearer focus the staggeringly complex problems that surround the establishment of printed texts based on the manuscript poems (almost 1,800 of them) that Dickinson left as her legacy.

To illustrate the difficult decisions any editor must face, Franklin points to "Those fair – fictitious people," a manuscript that exists in a semifinal draft with twenty-six suggestions that fit eleven places in the poem. Hundreds of poems pose similar problems. Franklin quotes Thomas H. Johnson's observation (based on the poet's inconsistencies in choosing from her own alternates) "that no pattern applicable to a 'final' text of unfinished drafts can ever be established." Any editor attempting to prepare a reader's edition from material unprepared by the author is necessarily confronted with a seemingly impossible task.

Franklin sums up the tangled history of the manuscript poems (in varied stages of completion) that Lavinia found after the poet's death and that she tried to make known to the world. Each of these manuscript states, Franklin explains, "lacks the sanction of authorial final intention." He provides incisive commentaries on the glaring alterations of the Todd-Higginson editions; on the serious shortcomings of Johnson's variorum edition; and on the circular strivings of critics whose commentaries fail to take into account the unfinished (or inaccurate) state of the texts they are trying to explicate.

*The Editing of Emily Dickinson* was an important first step. The major work that followed, *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* (1981) was a great leap forward. It is a massive publication (two thick volumes totaling 1,466 pages). In his introduction, Franklin explains that Johnson's chronological ordering of the poems had obscured Dickinson's fascicle structuring; these volumes now make "the manuscript books of the poet available for the first time, restored as closely as possible to their original order and, through facsimile reproduction, presented much as she left them for Lavinia and the world" (ix).

Anyone handling a considerable number of Dickinson manuscript poems experiences the power of that calligraphy and gains a sense of the personal presence of the poet among her sprawling lines and words. But I myself never anticipated the overpowering effect of a thousand or so manuscript poems, each so arranged on a gray sheet that it seems to be not a facsimile in a book but the real thing; presented as a sequence of fascicles that reconstructs Dickinson's arrangement; with a printed contents list and descriptive details preceding each fascicle; and with numerous helpful appendices to close out the second volume. *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* has helped make the poet's highly unconventional and highly personal approach to publication accessible to scholars and libraries all around the world.

According to Jane Donahue Eberwein, no publishing event other than Johnson's variorum "has had such exciting impact on Dickinson scholarship." In the aftermath of *The Manuscript Books,* there have been many thoughtful responses to the fascicles: they represent Dickinson's strategy for the kind of self-publication that evades the gender implications of print (Martha Nell Smith); they open insight into editing questions and new ways of reading (Susan Howe); the poet's increasing use of variants within the manuscript poems is evidence of her intentional resistance to closure (Sharon Cameron); fascicle 40 is "a simple conversion narrative" that sums up the narrator's spiritual quest (Dorothy Huff Oberhaus).

A personal note: When Franklin's edition of *The Master Letters of Emily Dickinson* was published in 1986, I was working on a book focusing on the poet's relationships with Charles Wadsworth and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Puzzling to me (and others) was her mysterious statement to Higginson—in a letter postmarked "Apr 26 1862": "I had a terror – since September – I could tell to none –." Franklin led me toward a possible connection between Dickinson's highly charged Master letters and her terror since September.

Johnson had dated the two most impassioned letters as having been written in *"about 1861"* and *"early 1862."* On the basis of a new handwriting analysis, Franklin reversed their order and redated them (*"Early 1861"* and *"Summer 1861"*). This new ordering and redating, along with details in the letters, provided me with strong evidence that they were directed to Charles Wadsworth during a great crisis in his life: In the spring and summer of 1861, the minister was at odds with his deeply divided Arch Street Church congregation and on the verge of accepting a new post at Calvary Church, a world away in San Francisco.

And now Franklin has brought out a new variorum edition, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson,* a three-volume boxed set totaling 1,680 pages. In a searching review (in the last issue of the *Bulletin*), Margaret

Freeman observes that it incorporates more than four decades of new discoveries since the Johnson edition. Among its valuable new features, Franklin's variorum gives equal weight to each surviving version of a poem—in contrast to Johnson, who gave primacy to one and presented the others in smaller print. While retaining Johnson's line arrangements, Franklin clarifies Dickinson's manuscript lineation in his introduction (asserting that it was ordinarily determined by available space) and provides a section below each poem to show her original line breaks.

"If fame belonged to me," Dickinson wrote Higginson in June of 1862, "I could not escape her – if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase –" (L265). Dickinson knew very well what she was up to—and why her poems (in the state in which they were gathered and preserved, in which many were sent out to friends) should not and could not be published. Franklin's new variorum presents the poems in a way that helps us better understand what she was up to.

Freeman has reservations about some of Franklin's editorial strategies—and a lively and useful dialogue among scholars about the new variorum is currently in progress. Reservations aside, there seems universal agreement that Franklin's edition is—to quote Freeman—"a masterly achievement, one that is sure to endure as the major scholarly resource for Dickinson's poetry for many years to come."

Franklin's contributions to Dickinson scholarship have accompanied his distinguished career as director of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. More contributions are on the way. A work in progress will establish the chronology of all of Dickinson's manuscripts, and a single-volume "Reading Edition" of the poems is scheduled for publication this fall.

Step by step, each of Franklin's books and articles has defined and pointed the way to solving the "impossible" task that confronts an editor attempting to transform into print manuscript poems and letters not prepared by the author for publication. Ralph W. Franklin has met that challenge. He is our indispensable guide to Dickinson's legacy.

**Ralph W. Franklin on Dickinson**


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"The Dickinson Packet 14—and 20, 10, and 25." *Harvard Library Bulletin* 27 (3rd Quarter 1979): 348-55.

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"Emily Dickinson to Abiah Root: Ten Reconstructed Letters." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 4, no. 1 (1995): 1-43.

Editor. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition.* 3 vols. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1998.

Editor. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition.* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, September 1999.


## New Dickinson Family Letters at the Jones

A large collection of letters from Edward Dickinson to his in-laws in Monson, Massachusetts, has just been acquired by the Jones Library in Amherst. Daniel Lombardo, Curator of Special Collections, announces the purchase of fifty-eight letters written by Emily Dickinson's father spanning the period 1828-1847.

Most of the letters are addressed to Edward's brother-in-law Joel Norcross. Lombardo reports that several mention "little Emily," and others ask Joel's advice on the purchase of the North Pleasant Street house, express Edward's fears about his career, and indicate that he considered moving his family to Monson and starting a law practice there. Later letters are addressed to Joel's son Alfred after Joel's death.

Rare book dealer Bob Lucas allerted Lombardo to the collection and assisted him in acquiring it, while a generous donation by Betty Bernhard of Amherst made possible the purchase.


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*Poet to Poet*

# MARIANNE BORUCH AND EMILY DICKINSON

*By Jonnie Guerra*

Marianne Boruch is professor of English and director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at Purdue University. Before coming to Purdue in 1987, Boruch held faculty appointments at Tunghai University in Taiwan, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and the University of Maine at Farmington. Since my own arrival in West Lafayette last fall, I have enjoyed Marianne's company and lively wit on several social occasions and appreciate her willingness to be featured in the Poet to Poet Series for this issue.

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

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Marianne Boruch has been writing poetry since the seventh or eighth grade. But it was not until her freshman year at the University of Illinois, Urbana, that she signed up for a creative writing course. The first time she had to present a poem for classroom critique—"it was about walking around graveyards"—Marianne found the experience of having people talk about her work "so upsetting and excruciatingly embarrassing, even though they were saying good things," that she dropped the course. Despite her reticence in the public world, she continued writing poetry throughout her college career.

After completing an undergraduate degree in English, Boruch lived and worked in her hometown of Chicago for four years. She audited two poetry workshops at area universities and eventually applied to every graduate school that offered an MFA in creative writing. (There were only five at the time.) She remembers what "a big adventure" it was for her and her new husband, David Dunlap, to transplant themselves to New England so that she could enter the MFA program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. From 1976 to 1979, she studied there with Donald Junkins and James Tate and lived at 280 Amity Street, just a few blocks from the Dickinson Homestead at 280 Main Street.

A turning point for Boruch came in the early eighties when she received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. At the time, her publication record was eight poems, the exact minimum required to meet the NEA eligibility guidelines. "It was truly a great gift to get that," Boruch recalled, "not just for the financial support, but for the real boost and encouragement to write it gave me."

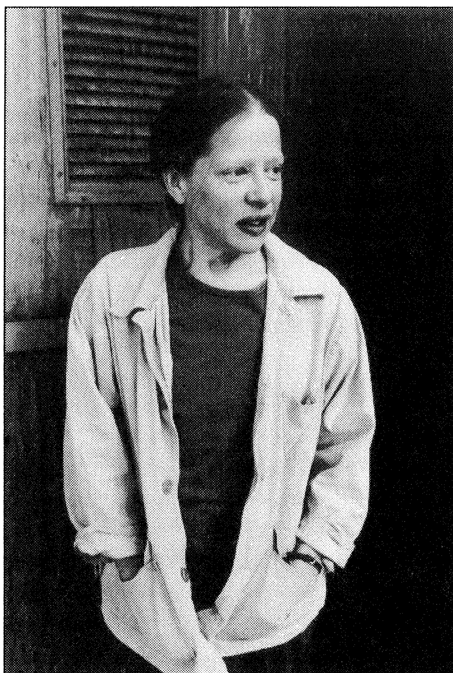

Photo by Joan D. Hackett

Since then, Boruch's poems and essays have been published in the best national magazines, literary reviews, and special collections, and she has earned recognition as one of America's finest contemporary poets. She is the author of four books of poetry and a collection of essays as well as the recipient of several major awards, including the Cecil Hemley Award (1986), a Pushcart Prize (1988), the Terrence De Pres Award (1994), and another National Endowment for the Arts fellowship just this year. Her poem "Camouflage" was chosen for inclusion in *The Best American Poetry, 1997.*

Boruch's first two poetry volumes, *View from the Gazebo* (1985) and *Descendant* (1989), were published by Wesleyan University Press; her more recent two, *Moss Burning* (1993) and *A Stick that Breaks and Breaks* (1997), by Oberlin College Press. In 1995 her essay collection, *Poetry's Old Air,* appeared as a volume in the University of Michigan Press's "Poets on Poetry" series. Its ten essays are energetically written meditations on the nature of poetry and the meaning to Boruch of other poets' work, including Dickinson's.

Boruch characteristically anchors her poetry with a good deal of biographical detail and often writes about subjects completely foreign to Dickinson—stories from her domestic life and relationships with her husband and son, to name one important topic. Beginning in *Descendant* and continuing in her next two poetry volumes, for example, she chronicles a variety of interactions with her son, Will. In his review of *Moss Burning,* David Graham compliments Boruch's "finely calibrated eye for family detail."

But even in works that illuminate their differences, I recognize similarities in Boruch's and Dickinson's creative practices. For both, musings on ordinary things in the external world lead to probings of an introspective, spiritual nature. Boruch shares Dickinson's alertness to landscape and the transformations that occur because of changes in season, light, and weather conditions. And their poems display a common interest in insects, birds, and other occupants of the natural world as well as in the sights and sounds that are these creatures' distinguishing traits. You may enjoy, as I did, reading Boruch's "The Crickets" (*Moss Burning,* 72) alongside Dickinson's "The Crickets sang" (J1104) or comparing Boruch's "Wind Storm, Late March" (*Moss Burning,* 73) to Dickinson's "There came a Wind like a Bugle–" (J1593).

Although I would not label either a religious poet, both also write poems that explore and exploit the religious culture that informed their early lives. In Boruch's case, the subject is her Catholic childhood, but her perspective—she describes herself as "a lapsed Catholic"—is much more straightforward than Dickinson's views on religious matters. Like Dickin-

son's, Boruch's poems exhibit a varied emotional range, and her work is similarly cited for expressing a dark vision. In fact, after the publication of her most recent collection, Boruch told me, "Friends were calling to see if I was all right—they thought my poems were so dark."

I respond most strongly to Boruch's and Dickinson's equally inventive use of language and figuration. Both exercise the kind of metaphoric virtuosity that rewards the efforts of fastidious readers with new possibilities of language and meaning with each new reading of their poems. Both also write poems characterized by syntactic challenges—ambiguities even—and that regularly employ the tactics of juxtaposition and paradox.

My personal sense of the affinities between the poets aside, I feel obliged to report what Marianne Boruch revealed to me when I interviewed her in February: "I spent a good part of my life avoiding reading Emily Dickinson." As she explained, Dickinson "was taught so badly—as a prissy lady poet"—that she did not find her or her work "interesting." Even during her three-year sojourn in Amherst, where Dickinson was "such a presence," she resisted getting to know the other writer, largely because she was turned off by the "pious feeling" for Dickinson she encountered. It was long after Boruch left Amherst, while she was living in Maine, that her relationship with Dickinson really commenced.

To commemorate the centenary of the poet's death in 1986, the *Georgia Review* invited Boruch to write an essay about Dickinson. That request led her "to read everything she could find about Dickinson" and to begin an "apprenticeship to her." Boruch's reading included not only the complete poems and letters but also the biographies by Sewall and Wolff, some periodicals and works of popular literature that Dickinson herself had read, and twentieth-century tributes and commentaries by other poets.

In the course of the project, Boruch discovered "why Dickinson was an amazing poet" and, in the letters, found Dickinson to be "wry, pretty savvy, pretty prickly," not at all the ladylike character she had dismissed. Particularly astonishing, Boruch said, was the fact that Dickinson had resisted the religious fervors of the time. Boruch's research also challenged the stereotyped view of the poet's total isolation from worldly concerns. She was intrigued to read about the "tremendous loss rate" of young Amherst men during the Civil War: such information persuaded her of the war's "really dramatic effect on Dickinson's poetry and her flood subject of death." Boruch acknowledges that she came to regret not having paid more attention to Dickinson, but blamed her early indifference on "tame editions" that printed Dickinson's poems without her "urgent crazy dashes" and that selected work suppressing daring

*Continued on page 24*

**For Emily Dickinson**

When I stood for a moment
in that white room, vines busy outside
at the screen, I thought
of the moth in you, the rich wool
it desired. I watched it
circle once, twice, nearing
the narrow bed, the little desk
though nothing was diminutive.

And I knew what a lousy daughter knows,
those years ago I lived
not three blocks from your house—idiot child
bone stubborn, never reading your poems much, never
keeping proper vigil. Regret has its
own insect life, that tedious hum
trapped in the head. It can't get out.

But your house was too high, set on a knoll,
a wedding cake crusted
with legend. Here, eat some, my teachers said.
Each one of them would marry you. Still, once
walking past, I invented flowers
for your garden: the dumb, sweet heliotrope, the dull hiss
of lupine, delphinium's brooding reach.
Among them, you stood right up
and squinted. You who noticed everything
made nothing of me, one of the stupid
and unborn, not even the color
of a leaf yet.

*Matty, here's freedom,* you told
your niece one ordinary day, locking the door of that room
behind you, locking both of you in.
My aunt once gave me such a box, a nest
of boxes really, all rushed wooden birds
and fish in a tangle, all intricately carved,
each opening into its secret smaller self.
I lost count quickly. Or maybe
there were seven. I looked up,
too amazed to tell her.

From *Moss Burning* (Oberlin College Press, 1993). Reprinted by permission of the poet.

# Caring for the Emily Dickinson Garden

*By Judith Atwood*

I began work in the garden of the Dickinson Homestead in 1987. The garden had been replanted in 1972 and maintained since then by Amherst College landscaper John Bator. I was hired to provide extra maintenance hours, but the job has become much more than that for me.

*Photo by Cindy Dickinson*

Gardening was not my first occupational choice. I began as an elementary school teacher but switched to study horticulture at the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, and then at the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. My special interest was in old gardens. I have worked for sixteen years at the Amherst History Museum's Eighteenth-Century Garden. When a position at the Dickinson Homestead became available, I was happy to take on another historic garden.

When I first came to the Homestead Garden, it was filled mostly with perennials, not all of them from Emily Dickinson's gardening era. To achieve more authenticity, I researched plant varieties used in historic gardens, purchased many of them—some locally and some from mail order catalogs—and planted them in the garden.

Several sources contributed information about the plants Emily Dickinson knew: the poet's herbarium, the original of which is housed at the Houghton Library at Harvard University; Dickinson's letters, including the 1894 volume edited by Mabel Loomis Todd; and a list of flower references in Dickinson's poetry compiled by Homestead guides from *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson,* entitled "A Horticultural Guide to Emily Dickinson's Poetry."

I also found references in *Emily Dickinson and the Image of Home* (1975) by Jean McClure Mudge, first curator of the Homestead, and in an article by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, entitled "Emily Dickinson's Garden" in the *EDIS Bulletin* 2.2 (November/December 1990). More general information came from lists of historic plants for period landscapes, taken from *Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings* (1978/1991) by Rudy J. Favretti and Joy Putnam Favretti; from several lectures by Elsa Bakalar, author of *A Garden of One's Own* (1994), which were particularly useful for design and content ideas; and from historic garden catalogs found in the Special Collections Department of the Jones Library, Amherst. The Blue Meadow Nursery, Montague, Massachusetts, was a good source for heirloom annuals, and Old House Gardens of Ann Arbor, Michigan, proved to be a good supplier of authentic heirloom bulbs.

Over the years, in working with three Homestead curators to concentrate on different aspects of the garden, I have added the following plants: Bachelor's Button, Bottle Gentian, Heliotrope, Hollyhock, Nasturtium, Pansy, Snowdrop, Sweet Pea, Sweet William, Verbena, Sweet Alyssum, Mignonette, Herb Robert, Love-in-a-Mist, Stock, English Daisy, Japanese Goldband Lily, Feverfew, Globe Amaranth, and a few others. (Although these plants are listed here by their common names, I worked with collections assistant Roberta Lombardi at the University of Massachusetts Herbarium to verify their scientific names.)

There are many perennials in the garden that are not from the correct time period; those plants were chosen for their "old-fashioned" appearance and feeling.

My routine of garden tasks follows the seasons and the Homestead calendar of events. Each spring I plant lots of annuals from the time of Emily Dickinson's gardening years but vary the kinds from year to year. I also divide old plants and replace dead ones. There is lots of weeding, of course, especially in May and June, when everything grows like crazy. In order to keep the bulk of weeds down, I mulch with chopped leaves that John Bator and his staff rake up from the surrounding trees and mow into fine pieces. This mulch looks attractive and does not have a too-modern appearance when the garden has been put to sleep for the winter, and the fine chop allows the spring shoots to erupt easily.

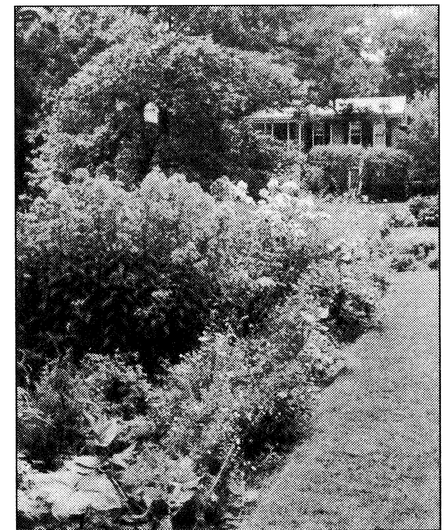

*Photo by Cindy Dickinson*

Watering depends on the weather. I use soaker hoses, automatic sprinklers, watering cans, and spot-watering with the hose. Rain, sun, wind, and humidity vary greatly from year to year, as do the needs of individual plants.

All of the seasons are special to me, since each brings its own unique flowers. The list of plants in the garden is long, so I mention only some of my seasonal favorites. The earliest blooming plants in evidence are Crocus, Narcissus, Glory-of-the-Snow, Siberian Squill, and the

*Continued on page 8*

# Land Is the Only Thing that Lasts

*By Gregory Farmer*

The Evergreens, only slightly less dramatic than Scarlett O'Hara's Tara, provides an interesting case study of land as wealth in nineteenth-century Amherst. The house was built for Austin and Susan Dickinson in anticipation of their marriage in 1856, but the not-so-silent partner was Austin's father, Edward Dickinson. The manner in which Edward assembled the parcel, erected the house, and exercised control over the Dickinson enclave provides insight into family relations within the hedge.

The current Evergreens parcel stretches some 428 feet along Main Street, from the town-owned Gates lot (an open area just east of Sweetser Park) to the edge of the driveway at the Dickinson Homestead. The irregularly shaped parcel encloses just over 1.5 acres. But it wasn't always so. Edward Dickinson began acquiring land west of the Dickinson Homestead in 1834, when he purchased 60 rods (about one-third of an acre) from David Mack Jr. for $300. That small parcel fronted on the old county road (before Main Street was modified) and was bordered by the old Dickinson Homestead (at the time, the homelot of David Mack). It was bounded on the north and west by land owned by Luke Sweetser, another leading figure in Amherst society.

In 1843, while living on Pleasant Street, Edward acquired two more small parcels adjacent to the Main Street land he already owned. Both the new parcels were acquired from Luke Sweetser. They expanded the western border of Edward's property adjacent to the old Homestead and increased it to a total of two-thirds of an acre. The northernmost parcel (now the area immediately west of the Evergreens) was conveyed to Edward with a restriction that "no building is ever to be erected on the premises."

Having established a small but significant holding near the old family Homestead, Edward erected a two-story wood-frame building on the site about 1845. The new building was probably not intended to be a Dickinson residence. Instead, it was rented out as a way to ease Edward's cash flow. The rental property was identified in Edward's accounts in 1850 as "house occupied by W. Ferre." It was valued at $2,000 and insured for $900. From 1852 to 1855, the house was consistently differentiated from Edward's other properties as the house "near General Mack's."

*The Evergreens, ca 1930. Courtesy of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust.*

At the same time, Edward's only son, Austin, was engaged to marry Susan Gilbert and talked of moving to the Midwest to establish his own law practice. Edward countered by offering to build the young couple a new home on the lot adjacent to the Dickinson Homestead if they would stay in Amherst. Edward hired a Northampton architect, William Fenno Pratt, to design the structure, but kept a close eye on costs. In late 1855, when Pratt began building the Evergreens for Austin and Susan, Edward had the former rental property raised onto a higher foundation, reconfigured, and incorporated as a rear ell.

The house that Austin and Susan opened in July 1856 was of generous proportions. It enclosed more than 4,300 square feet of finished space and was valued at a hefty $5,500. The house and land were both owned by father Edward, however, as was the extensive lawn area between the two Dickinson houses.

In the farming towns of the Connecticut River Valley, the extension of parental control in this manner was not unusual. Fathers routinely provided homelots and houses for their sons while still retaining full ownership and nominal control. The message of filial duty and paternal control was not lost on anyone. Only after 1860 did the Amherst town assessor begin listing the Evergreens under Austin's name instead of Edward's, even though the ownership had not changed.

For the first twelve years Austin and Susan lived at the Evergreens, the house and land were owned by Edward. In January 1868, Edward and Austin drew up a deed transferring the Evergreens house and lot to Austin for "$3,000 plus natural love and affection." As of that date, the parcel was identified as 106 rods, or about two-thirds of an acre. Was the transaction driven by Edward's need for cash? (He stipulated that the $3,000 would be paid "in two years from this date with interest annually thereon.") Or was it an acknowledgment of Austin's maturity? He had turned thirty-eight the month before. Either way, the deed was never recorded, so the title to the Evergreens remained with Edward until his death in 1874.

Edward's long ownership of the Evergreens raises a number of issues about how the land was used by both households. It is clear that the lawn between the Evergreens and the Homestead (including the path "just wide enough for two who love") was treated as common property. When Ned Dickinson purchased a new lawn tennis net, he clearly intended to use it in that area.

The Evergreens driveway marked the conceptual eastern boundary of Austin and Susan's property. The drive led directly to a small carriage house and shed

northeast of the Evergreens, but the livestock and carriages for both families were probably housed in the larger barn behind the Dickinson Homestead. Martha Dickinson Bianchi later recalled that throughout her lifetime the Evergreens carriage house held only pigeons and an assortment of specialized garden tools. The carriage house deteriorated and was pulled down in the 1950s.

One puzzle related to the Evergreens landscape is the location of Susan Dickinson's flower beds. The beauty of Sue's flowers was widely acknowledged, and Sue had the assistance of a very talented gardener, Dennis Scanlon, to help keep them in bloom. It is clear from photographs that the current configuration of beds and plantings at the Evergreens could not have existed before the 1938 hurricane took out some major trees. It would seem logical that Sue's flower beds extended west of the house and could be seen from the parlor or accessed through the wide French doors that opened to the veranda. The exact configuration remains to be discovered.

Austin's landscaping efforts are more in evidence. Inspired by writings and conversations with his friend Frederick Law Olmsted, Austin strove for a naturalistic effect. He planted both native and specimen trees in casual groupings as if they had arisen naturally. The majestic oaks, pines, and tulip-poplars are a perfect background for the rhododendrons, wild cherries, and swamp magnolias, and an exotic gingko.

After Lavinia Dickinson's death in 1899, Sue and Martha decided to rent out the Dickinson Homestead. They established a new boundary line just west of the Homestead driveway, thereby incorporating the common lawn into the Evergreens parcel.

Changes were occurring outside the hedge as well. Main Street was "hardened" around the turn of the century, and trolley tracks were laid along the north side. The dimensions of the treebelt varied to accommodate telephone poles and electrical wires. As automobiles became more popular, Main Street was paved with asphalt and the trolley tracks were pulled up. Dutch elm disease had a devastating effect on the streetscape, resulting in the loss of all the graceful elms that Austin had helped plant along Main Street.

The New England hurricane of 1938 wreaked havoc on the landscape of the Evergreens. Several of the largest and proudest trees on the lot were felled by the storm and came crashing down on the fence and gateposts along Main Street. Fortunately, no trees fell on the house itself.

In Madame Bianchi's final years and throughout the Hampson ownership, the old hemlock hedge along Main Street was allowed to grow without constraint. The resulting border of colossal trees radically alters the proportions of the landscape. The low evergreen hedge, arrayed behind a picket fence, originally drew attention to the unusual roofline and tower of the Evergreens while shielding the gardens and verandas from public view. As the hemlocks have matured, the effect is reversed—the veranda and lawn are clearly visible, but the roofline is hidden from view.

Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson were committed to preserving a Dickinson memorial at the Evergreens. Recognizing the limitations of the house itself, they considered the feasibility of erecting a new fireproof building to house the manuscripts and artifacts. Martha approached the Carnegie Foundation for support but found little encouragement. As a result, the lawn between the two Dickinson houses remained open.

When Amherst College purchased the Dickinson Homestead in the 1960s, the boundary between the properties was adjusted one more time. A thin sliver of land from the east end of the lawn was included in the conveyance in order to allow for expansion of the driveway at the Homestead. The old picket fence with its monumental gate posts came down a few years later, as Mrs. Hampson grew frustrated with the "college kids" always knocking it over.

The Evergreens parcel has remained fairly stable since that time and is gradually revealing its history and significance. A Historic Landscape Report prepared by Berkshire Design Group and Rudy Favretti for the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust in 1997 laid out the basic parameters for documentation, maintenance, and restoration. With continued research and investigation, the neglected landscape and gardens will gradually return to their earlier beauty.

Participants in the EDIS conference at Mount Holyoke College in August will be invited to a reception on the lawn between the Dickinson houses Saturday evening. Come experience first-hand the intriguing history of the Dickinson world "within the hedge."

[*Ed. note:* For information on tour dates and times for the Evergreens and the Homestead, see page 20.]

***Cindy Dickinson*** *is Director of the Dickinson Homestead.* ***Gregory Farmer*** *is Project Manager for the Evergreens.*

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***Caring for the Dickinson Garden, continued from page 6***

native ephemerals: Blood Root, Dutchman's Breeches, and Trout Lily.

Late spring fills the garden with Bleeding-Heart, English Violet, Tulip, Johnny-jump-up, Lily-of-the-Valley, Lemon Day Lily, Peony, Pansy, Lupin, Dame's Rocket, and many more. Summer brings Foxglove, Candle Larkspur, Queen Anne's Lace, Madam Hardy Rose, and Summer Phlox to the garden. My late summer/early fall favorites are Aster, Bee-balm, Monkshood, Tiger Lily, and Turk's-cap Lily.

I am always somewhat saddened when the first hard freeze—the "blonde assassin"—kills most things, beginning the long dormant period.

It has been a pleasure working in the Homestead Garden all these years, talking with visitors, and trying to make the place look a little as it did in Emily's time. I look forward to whatever changes the garden may need in future in order best to interpret the work of its original tender.

# Who Was Susan? Does She Stand on Her Own?

*By Dorothea A. Kissam*

It is curious that Susan Dickinson's life has not been given wider attention. As Emily Dickinson's close friend from girlhood and her intellectual mentor, Susan should long since have sparked serious inquiry. In 1978 Jean McClure Mudge argued that Sue "deserves to be lifted and turned in a more favorable light than she has had. Doing so, one has a bonus; a more comprehensive view of Emily herself." At the close of this article, Mudge adds, "That Sue served as confidante, critic, consoler and beloved, makes her the forgotten woman in Emily's century-long rise to international attention. 'Sister Sue,' surpassing her defects and detractors, now deserves a share of that acclaim."[1]

Dorothy Oberhaus too, in her 1983 chapbook "In Defense of Sue," asked, "But why have Sue's words not been taken more seriously? Why have her literary and personal evaluation of the poet been ignored?"[2]

I believe that the legacy left by some of Sue's contemporaries, those whose descriptions focused on her difficult personality and the personal affronts they had suffered, who had perhaps experienced her "grande dame" attitude after her marriage to Austin Dickinson—the "catch of the Town"—may have discouraged scholars from taking up the task of examining Sue's positive contributions. The sources of some of her most severe criticisms also need examination for their accuracy.

John W. Burgess, who graduated from Amherst College in 1857 and later taught there (1873-79), in his *Reminiscences of an American Scholar,* described his student years in Amherst. This is a report by an observer, not one caught up in the emotions that surrounded the Dickinson family. "The society of Amherst was, though limited, really charming in its simplicity, geniality, and intellectuality. In my day there were six chief social rendezvous in Amherst: the Austin Dickinsons', the Mathers', the Clark Seelyes', the Tuckermans', the Jones', and the Stearns'. The social leader of the town was Mrs. Austin Dickinson, a really brilliant and highly cultivated woman of great taste and refinement, perhaps a little too aggressive, a little too sharp in wit and repartee, and a little too ambitious for social prestige, but withal a woman of the world in the best sense, having a very keen and correct appreciation of what was fine and admirable. Her imagination was exceedingly vivid....If she had had sufficient application she would have rivaled Cervantes as a writer of romance and adventure."[3] In Burgess's description, a view of Susan begins to emerge that depicts her strong attributes of intellectuality, along with the negative balance of being at times "too sharp in wit and repartee."

After their marriage on July 1, 1856, Susan and Austin moved into the house known as the Evergreens, which Edward Dickinson had built for them. The house was designed in the Italianate style much favored during those mid-Victorian days, and Susan made it into a charming home, furnished with carved walnut and mahogany furniture, Turkish carpets and, by 1881, dark wallpaper similar to the popular William Morris design. Many pictures adorned the walls, reflecting Austin's and undoubtedly Sue's eclectic tastes. Mabel Loomis Todd, in a journal entry of 1881, commented; "The Dickinson home was very beautifully planned after a generous Italian villa fashion, and fitted up delightfully inside. The pictures were especially lovely."[4]

Who was Susan? In the material until now existing on Susan, the chief references have been in the biographies of Emily Dickinson. Susan exists within these pages always as an adjunct to the main character. Richard Sewall's *Life of Emily Dickinson,* George Frisbie Whicher's *This Was a Poet,* and Cynthia Griffin Wolff's *Emily Dickinson* all have chapters or paragraphs throughout discussing Sue, her 1856 marriage to Austin, and her early friendship with Emily, but often documenting comments by Emily's sister, Lavinia, and Mabel Loomis Todd, among others, remarking on Sue's difficult personality masked by a charming exterior.

This past year, however, has seen the publication of Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith's volume *Open Me Carefully.*[5] Here a different view of Susan is offered. Sue's relationship with Emily, her important role in Emily's life and as the primary recipient of Emily's poetry—all this is underscored. This new volume brings together the correspondence between the two women from 1850 until Emily's death in 1886. What emerges is a view of Susan as a primary figure.

The *Springfield Republican,* which published Susan Dickinson's obituary (unattributed but undoubtedly with input from Martha Dickinson Bianchi—not an unbiased observer), describes her as "a woman of rare quality and a truly distinguished citizen of the town who made her home one of the notable features of the community. She had entertained at her board men and women of distinction in the world of literature and world affairs....She possessed a charming and gracious personality—and unusual gifts as a conversationalist." This underscores the general view of Sue.

The obituary goes on to give brief biographical information: "Susan was the daughter of Thomas and Harriet Huntington Arms Gilbert, the youngest of seven. She lived with her aunt, Mrs. William Van Vranken, Geneva, New York, following her mother's death when Susan was five. There she attended Miss Kelly's private school in Utica, New York." The obituary fails to mention Amherst Academy, which Susan attended along with Emily while living with a sister, Mrs. William Cutler of Amherst, during her adolescent years. It indicates, however, that "she taught [mathematics] at a private school in Baltimore for a year." This was in 1851, very early for a young woman to strike out on her own. The obituary says that Sue was so good at mathematics that "Professor Hadley of Yale, who gave her instruction, stated: 'She ought to go to Yale.'" The obituary adds that she was "a real lover of humanity—observant of Nature: The Evergreens was surrounded with beautiful flowers, shrubs, and trees."

Finally, the obituary includes informa-

tion that to date has not been explored by many writers: that Susan wrote essays, kept journals, wrote poems, and published memorial pieces, book reviews, and letters on current issues to the editors of the *Springfield Republican* and the *Amherst Record*.[6] Some of these literary outpourings are just now becoming available in the materials transferred in 1994 from the Evergreens to the John Hay Library at Brown University.

Before starting research for this article, I had been familiar with the fine obituary Susan wrote following the death of Emily Dickinson. I began to form a stronger picture of her ability as a writer when I read two of Susan's essays. "The Annals of the Evergreens," which she prepared for her children, Martha and Ned, in 1892, is an account of some of the illustrious visitors she and Austin entertained at their home. Ralph Waldo Emerson was an early visitor, coming during their first year of marriage, 1857. In the article, Susan reflects on her awe of such a personage. She had read his works, "in a measure understood him, revered him, cherished him as a hero in my girl's heart...'till there grew into my feeling for him almost a supernatural element, so that when I found that he was to eat and sleep beneath our roof, there was a suggestion of meeting a God face to face....As Aunt Emily said, 'As if he had come from where dreams were born.'"

Other distinguished visitors who came to the Evergreens through the years included the renowned preacher Henry Ward Beecher, Frances Hodgson Burnett (of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* fame), and Wendell Phillips, noted orator and abolitionist. Susan describes each with wit and charm, recounting memories of table conversations and amusing episodes. Frederick Law Olmsted and his colleague, Calvert Vaux, visited the Evergreens during the time they were developing New York City's Central Park, having come at Austin's invitation to design a plan for the Amherst College campus. Sue recalls that "we had fascinating talk with them of shrubs and plants, the habits of trees, and the possibilities of landscape gardening."[7]

The second article was written about 1900 and first published in *Essays on Amherst's History.* In it Susan describes the social customs of an earlier era in Amherst, governed still by the strict religious code that deemed dancing and card-playing sinful. She contrasts the mid-nineteenth century mores with those a half-century later, when dancing, card-playing, and even unchaperoned entertainments are sanctioned. Again, this account displays insight and humorous commentary.[8]

One of my questions was whether the many different kinds of written material described in the obituary for Susan had been preserved. When I began my research at the Jones Library in Amherst, I had a pleasant surprise. The evolving Dickinson website being mounted by Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart was available, and listed by title much of Sue's literary output: essays, poems, stories, and selected letters.[9] The texts being added to this website are being gleaned largely from the Evergreens materials now at Brown University.

Early in her life, Sue began amassing a personal library. These books were given to the Houghton Library in 1950 by Gilbert Montague, who had purchased them from the Bianchi estate. The compilation of the collection is titled "Handlist of Books Found in the Home of Emily Dickinson in Amherst, Massachusetts," which is a misnomer. Of some 900 titles, only 30 are identified as belonging to Emily, while more than 300 bear Susan's name, written either as Susan Gilbert or as Susan H. Dickinson. Others in the collection belonged to Austin, Lavinia, and Edward (many, including legal tomes), some to Emily Norcross Dickinson, and a few to Samuel F. Dickinson; still others are inscribed with the names of Mattie or Ned Dickinson, and there are three that belonged to little Gib. These were books from the Evergreens that *included* those from the Dickinson Homestead.[10]

Susan's interest in literature was broad and continued throughout her life. She read Shakespeare, a bond she shared with Emily. Ruskin, Thackeray, George Eliot, Carlyle, and many more could be cited. Plato absorbed her, along with history, philosophy, and poetry. As a young girl, her books were Shelley's poetry, Schiller, Sir Walter Scott's novels, and Longfellow. I had a chance to examine her copies of Emerson's essays, both volumes, and found underlinings and penciled strokes to indicate paragraphs with special meaning for Sue. *Aurora Leigh,* a long narrative poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, was another volume in which I found passages well marked and words of significance to Sue underlined.

Sue brought this wide range of literature to Emily, whose father, Edward, frowned on Longfellow's *Kavanagh,* for example, fearing such literature might "joggle the Mind," according to a letter from Emily to Higginson some years later (L261).

Austin and Sue subscribed to numerous magazines, including the *Atlantic Monthly.* It was from Sue's copy of April 1862 that Higginson's "Letter to a Young Contributor" came to Emily's attention. In response to it she sent four of her poems to him on April 15, 1862, including the stunning "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" that Emily had revised after Sue's critique (Fr124F). It is curious that, in Emily's first letter to Higginson (L260), she says, "Mr. Higginson, Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive? The Mind is so near itself – it cannot see, distinctly – *and I have none to ask* –" (italics added). Emily had, of course, asked Sue's opinion of that poem. Sue's collection of notes and poems from Emily was carefully saved, including many single verses of longer poems that Emily may have sent for Sue's commentary.

In my review of the Susan Dickinson material at the Houghton Library, I found a prevailing problem. Although Susan wrote insightful finished pieces—the finest perhaps being Emily's obituary—she also wrote on such subjects as architecture, the role of nurses, and many other subjects, often beginning on scraps of paper, and many of these appear to be unfinished. Her poems, when deciphered from her difficult handwriting, show this same characteristic—a number are incomplete.

Lavinia comments on this in a letter to Higginson written in December 1890. After thanking him for his efforts in editing her sister's poetry and having it published, she goes on to say: "If you knew my disappointed endeavors for 2 years before Mrs. Todd & yourself came to my rescue, you would realize my gratitude to you both. Mrs. Dickinson was enthusiastic for a while, then indifferent & later, utterly

*Continued on page 26*

# THE PROTECTED VOICE
## PLAYWRITING AS CRAFT, NOT THERAPY

*by Ruth McRee*

The following paper was presented at the American Alliance for Theatre and Education Conference (Denver 1998) as part of an ongoing discussion about teaching scriptwriting. Some educators feel that young writers should write about their personal lives in this process. My colleague Anne Ludlum and I offered a workshop we called "The Protected Voice: Playwriting as Craft, Not Therapy." Our point was that material that is researched and crafted into a play will, necessarily, be about the writer in some respect, but without forcing exposure of personal details. This paper illustrates this thesis in terms of the creation of my play *Vesuvius at Home.*

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Frustration is a great motivator. It forces us to identify what is actually bothering us and gives us the opportunity to do something about it! Thanks to several frustrations, I was driven to write *Vesuvius at Home*, a play about Emily Dickinson. The wonderful title is, of course, hers (J1705).

My first frustration came from performing in several productions of William Luce's remarkable play *The Belle of Amherst*. My problem stemmed from the fact that in this play there is really no good reason why the reclusive Emily should be prancing around the parlor telling these people (the audience) the things she does. She does not need to be there—she who, notoriously, did not show up if she did not feel she needed to. As a result, the playwright has put her in a situation that makes her appear unstable, perhaps arrested in an adolescent phase of development.

After years of working up my own inner motivations and objectives in order to perform this role, I decided a play should not be that hard on members of the audience. They deserve to know what Dickinson is doing. The playwright needs to share with them a strong reason why she is making these very private revelations.

My second frustration was related to the first. The poems in the *Belle* script do not arise out of any necessity internal to the play. In a play, the poems should be the only, the very exactest, way to say what the character means to say to the audience.

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My third frustration was caused by frequent monographs and books that characterized Emily as a "damaged soul": damaged by a demanding and stern father, a cross-eyed mother, the inhibiting features of pre-feminist life in the nineteenth century—and, endlessly, on. I just could not buy these rationalizations. Yes, she was shaped, certainly, by the world in which she grew and by those she loved. But her poems are strong, exhilarating, piercing, funny, intense, wise, wry, honest—in addition to being searing and brilliant. They are molded in response to her life and world with a mastery that turned poetry in the English language on its head! I believe Dickinson was a woman who dealt with illness, loss, and society on her own terms. She did so with genius and creativity. She did not dwindle. Through her poems she triumphed in her solitude.

My final frustration came from a *New York Times* article about a study reporting the good news that about 90 percent of graduating high school students in the United States knew Dickinson was an American poet—and the bad news that they knew her as "The Death Poet." This upset me. My knowledge of her protested that she was much more than that. Her breadth, her wit and humor are often ill-served by anthologies if students come to such a conclusion. Dickinson deserves better.

I have long felt passionately about Dickinson's work. My conviction that her poetry is not morbid and negative about life led me into classroom conflicts when I was young and into the production of numerous programs about her life and work as an adult. My earliest contact with Dickinson's work came in elementary and middle school. I had debates with teachers, and later professors, about the meanings of her poems. I wondered why they did not see humor where I did. This early connection was important for me. It created an alliance with Dickinson that I do not have with other poets.

As a professional actor exploring a historical character, I began with research. The actor comes to understand the inner workings and world of such a character through study. In preparation for my first production of *The Belle of Amherst* I read everything I could find about Dickinson: Richard Sewall's amazing biography was just out, the letters were published, *The Complete Poems* was also available.

Between playing the role in *Belle* and writing my play, I continued to read the poems and everything that appeared about Emily Dickinson. It is the nature of creating a character for the stage that it becomes like another self, or a relative for whom you just can't shake the fascination. I found myself reading articles about her life, essays on her poems, speculations about her seclusion.

In this research I came across a little noted article in the *Markham Review* (vol.

8, Spring 1979), "Banishment from Native Eyes," by Jerry Ferris Reynolds, published by the Horrmann Library of Wagner College. This article made a very convincing case for the possibility that Dickinson suffered from systemic lupus, the same illness that felled Flannery O'Connor. This information was very important to me. It provided me with a context for understanding the poetic descriptions of physical suffering—headaches, pain in writing, fear of blindness, chills, difficulty breathing, paralysis, and so forth. All of these are symptoms of systemic lupus. Reynolds's article gave a sound reason for Dickinson's becoming a recluse that was not petty or sentimental. Her response to such a debilitating, inexplicable series of illnesses fit with other things that I knew were true about her, as well: strong will, pride, and impatience with society's judgments.

When the *New York Times* article appeared, it became my catalyst for a play that was "waiting to happen." I was armed and ready, or ready enough at least to begin.

In crafting the play, I faced four major challenges: First, to identify the motivating force behind Dickinson's encounter with the audience. This was essential. Without a strong reason, she would *never* come out of seclusion merely for a social visit. I/She had to have some powerful reason, some urgent task to accomplish with this audience, for her to be there.

What I came up with for my *Vesuvius at Home* script is this: The time is the end of September 1883. The setting is Dickinson's home, the Homestead. Her brother's younger son, Gilbert (Gib), is suddenly and terribly ill. On a visit to Emily, Gib becomes feverish and complains that the big boys have said terrible things about his beloved Aunt Emily. He is inconsolable and tells her all the rumors he has heard. She can do nothing. Gib is taken home, and she later learns that he has been put to bed and the doctor called. All are very worried.

In my play, Emily's desperation to help is translated into action. She makes the extreme decision to have her sister, Vinnie, invite certain people to the Homestead. Emily's purpose is to set the record straight about the rumors that have so distressed Gib. With all her strength of mind and heart, she will prove the rumors false (text) and thus save Gib (subtext)! The timing of this event is important. Father and Mother, Samuel Bowles and Charles Wadsworth (both dear friends) have all died. The possibility of losing Gib is unbearable.

My second challenge in crafting the play was to identify the points needed to set the record straight. In this effort I chose to limit myself to pre-Freudian possibilities of the nineteenth century. The rumors could not come out of twentieth-century speculation about Dickinson's seclusion. They had to have some plausible base in nineteenth-century Amherst.

Third, I needed to identify the poems that would best make a convincing case as I addressed each rumor. This particular part of the work was problematic in that some of the best poems are too dense to be grasped in one hearing. Dickinson's references are often obscure to the usual twentieth-century listener. Consider, for instance, the difference between: "The ecstasy to guess / Were a receipted bliss / If grace could talk" (J1608) and "Fame is a bee / It has a song – / It has a sting – / Ah, too, it has a wing" (J1763). The poems in a play need to be understandable on one—at most two—hearings.

Finally, I had to address the challenge that comes with developing a play about any historical figure. Because Dickinson actually lived, people know a lot about her, so there are few surprises. How, then, is the playwright to achieve dramatic tension?

I chose to establish the source of the rumors (the big boys) by beginning with the rumor that Dickinson is a ghost. The white dress makes this a plausible rumor. The next escalation is that she is a myth altogether! These are fairly inconsequential rumors and give the character a chance to learn something about her guests before going on. She firmly states that she has her own reasons for seclusion. She offers that she has been "beset by a bizarre variety of illnesses from time to time." At this point several poems—"I felt a Cleaving in / My mind" (J937), "It was not Death, for / I stood up" (J510), and "I breathed enough to take the Trick" (J650)—are used to suggest the nature of some of the illnesses. This section concludes with "I cried at Pity – not at Pain"(J588), which leaves Dickinson firmly in control of her self-respect: "Seclusion makes explanation unnecessary."

Other rumors—that she is "a woman of loose morals" and "crazy about men"—are shocking to some of the guests, so Dickinson assures them that neither of those is the worst rumor. "Far from it." She starts to explain what she means, but changes her mind—too repelled by it to go further. More rumors are offered instead: that she is "half cracked," "a snob," "an idler." As she puts off confronting the worst rumor, she finds she must bring to light much about herself—how she writes ("sometimes a thought will so possess me I can't contain its power..."), her hopes for publication. She shares the poems she sent to Higginson (and is still puzzled that they did not succeed). She shares, and is indignant at, the revisions made to "Success is counted sweetest" (J67) by the *Masque of Poets* editor.

Finally, she can no longer put off dealing with the worst rumor. She has shrewdly lavished many of her poems on the guests to prove in advance that this final one cannot be true. The worst rumor, she tells them, is that she is "the Death Poet!" " I have written only two hundred or so poems about Death. A modest amount considering that I have written over sixteen or seventeen hundred. Death is, after all, *the* great *unknown,* and the unknown *is* the greatest need of the intellect."

I created dramatic tension by having Dickinson *resist* speaking of this very worst rumor that would set the record straight. The "mileage" gained through this provides her the opportunity to pursue circumference. In the process she sheds light on much of her life and her mind. She uses her poems to make her position absolutely clear and to dispel the rumors.

As I wrote the play, I had no intention of writing a play about myself. As I look on the completed script, I realize that it reveals a lot about me. In fact, my response to the poetry is very personal. The things that come home to me as important about Dickinson and her life are so to me because of who I am. Another person would write a very different play because of the experiences and person he or she brings to the work.

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# Leo Smit's Ecstatic Pilgrimage

***By Emily Seelbinder***

When pianist and composer Leo Smit shuffles onto the stage at the start of a performance these days, there is sometimes a barely audible gasp before the audience breaks into tentative applause. Smit looks up as if startled, perhaps confirming the audience's fears that the least rush of air might derail him, and briefly smiles to acknowledge the welcome before he fixes his eyes once again on his unsteady path to the piano. The audience holds its breath once more as he sits and collects himself before he lifts his hands to the keys and begins to play. The music emerges with surprising vigor and aching tenderness.

Smit's program typically includes not only works by his dearly missed friends Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein, but also settings of thirty-three poems of Emily Dickinson, sung by soprano Rosalind Rees. Smit's obvious delight in performing these songs is contagious. "When he plays," a woman behind me said at a concert last summer, "he becomes a boy again."

Smit's actual boyhood seems to have allowed little time for childish pleasures. He began his study of music at the age of five, under the tutelage of his father, a Russian-born violinist who played for several American orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the NBC Symphony. When he was only eight, Smit left his home in Philadelphia and traveled to Moscow on a scholarship to study piano with Dmitri Kabalevsky. Additional scholarships permitted him to study privately with José Iturbi and Nicolas Nabokov.

When, at the age of fifteen, Smit auditioned for the position of pianist with the American Ballet Company, George Balanchine took one look at the young man and said, "You? The pianist?" Then he placed before him a new composition by Alexander Glazunov entitled "Raymonda." Smit recalls that it was "crawling with 64th notes." Without further comment, Balanchine pointed to the score and said, "Go." The terrified Smit did the only thing he could: he played. Three days later he was hired as the company's pianist, in which capacity he met and later worked with Igor Stravinsky.

*Photo by Irene*

Barely a month after his eighteenth birthday, Smit made his debut as a concert pianist at Carnegie Hall, on February 17, 1939, the same year he composed a musical reading of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In his twenties, Smit served as the official pianist of the New York City Symphony. During this period he developed his lifelong friendship with the symphony's musical director, Leonard Bernstein, whose *Anniversary for Leo Smit* is now a frequent part of Smit's concert repertoire.

Smit's fascination with musical readings of texts was established early: his first original composition, written in 1935, was a setting for soprano and piano of a Yiddish poem by Mani Leib, "Zway" ("Two"). In the 1950s he composed *A Choir of Starlings,* a setting of seven poems by Anthony Hecht, and *Academic Graffiti,* described by music critic David Ewen as "a witty setting of a collection of humorous or gossipy quatrains about famous or notorious men and women of history by W.H. Auden." Smit's remarkable range of interests is demonstrated by his having set poems in English by Anne Sexton as well as poems in Russian by Alexander Pushkin.

Smit's interest in Dickinson developed quite late, despite his being aware of other artists' fascination with her work. He was present for a performance by Martha Graham of her *Letter to the World,* which he recalls as "stunning." He has played Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* many times, including the Copland eighty-first birthday tribute at the Library of Congress in 1981, with mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani (recording available from Bridge Records). Still, Smit swears that he never truly knew Dickinson's poetry until August 1988 when, in a bookstore in Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts, he happened across Johnson's edition of *The Complete Poems.*

He was astounded by the sheer number of poems in the volume, but "even more astonished by the look and sound of her verses—the unconventional punctuation teeming with gasping dashes, the magisterial capitalizations of ordinary words, giving them a quality of grandeur and permanent importance, her warped grammar and baffling ellipses." He read poem after poem. "I had the irrational desire to swallow the book whole," he recalls. "I hungered to know every poem she had written." He knew immediately that he had found "a soulmate who answered my emotional needs and stimulated my musical desires," and determined on the spot "to set a cycle of her poems to music, because I loved them so, and I also wanted to know the poet better."

In less than a month, he composed a cycle of twelve songs on music and birds, two of the "special loves" he shared with Dickinson. In the process he felt a keen identification with the poet's musical genius and found his composing process transformed. "I had two ideas in mind before I started work," Smit says:

> to represent the persona of Emily Dickinson through the voice of the

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## THURSDAY, AUGUST 12

**10:00 A.M.** *and all day* REGISTRATION

**3:00-5:00 P.M.**

**Opening Plenary Session**

*Welcome:* Cristanne Miller (Pamona College), President, EDIS; Martha Ackmann (Mount Holyoke College), Conference Co-Director

*Papers and panelists:* "'The Fascination of What's Difficult': Emily Dickinson and the Theory Canon" (Marjorie Perloff, Stanford University); "Dickinson's Place in Literary History" (Heinz Ickstadt, Free University of Berlin). *Moderator:* Gary Stonum (Case Western Reserve University)

**5:00-7:00 Welcoming Reception**

**7:00-9:00 Banquet**
Presentation of the EDIS Achievement Citation to Ralph Franklin (Yale University). *Presenter:* Martha Nell Smith (University of Maryland)

## FRIDAY, AUGUST 13

**8:00-9:00 A.M.** COFFEE

**8:30-10:00 PANELS**

**"The Material Context of Dickinson's World"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Art at the Evergreens: A Study in Victorian Taste" (Susan Danley, Mead Art Museum, Amherst College); "The Poetics of Space at the Dickinson Homestead" (Diana Fuss, Princeton University); "Ceramics and Silver as Indicators of Taste" (Amanda Lange, Historic Deerfield); "The 'Old Castle': A History of the Dickinson Homestead" (Myron Stachiw, East Woodstock, Conn.). *Moderator:* Kevin Sweeney (Amherst College).

**"Contexts and Comrades I"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Helen and Emily: An Amherst Girlhood" (Polly Longsworth, Royalston, Mass.); "'Lawfully as a Bird': Emily Dickinson, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson" (Katherine Rodier, Marshall University); "'In Praise of *Ramona'*: Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson's Indian Novel" (Georgiana Strickland, Lexington, Ky.)

**"Contexts and Comrades II"**

*Papers and panelists:* "'Death, O my Death, come and whisper to me': A comparative Study of the Poetry of Emily Dickinson and Rabindranath Tagore" (Sumanta K. Bhomick, Bhagalpur University); "The Belle of Japan: The Popularity of Dickinson in Japan" (Masako Takeda, Osaka Shoin Women's College); "'To see the summer sky is poetry': Recite and Appreciate Emily Dickinson's Poems on Syram Lake Front" (Chanming Tan, Wuhan University)

**10:00-10:30** BREAK

**10:30-12:00 PANELS**

**"Loved Philology I"**

*Papers and panelists:* "The Cubit in the Firmament and the Horses' Heads toward Eternity" (Costas Iannou, Athens,Greece); "Emily Dickinson and Other Girls" (Jonathan Morse, University of Hawaii); "'Goblin with a Gauge': Teaching Emily Dickinson" (Jay Ladin, Princeton University)

**"Secrets of the Pen"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Emily Dickinson's Double Language" (Rolf Amsler, Schönenbuch, Switzerland, and Margaret Freeman, Los Angeles Valley College); "Emily Dickinson's Handwriting" (Susanne Shapiro, Los Angeles, Calif., and Margaret Freeman); "A Computerized Word Analysis of the Master Letters and Comparison with Letters to Samuel Bowles and Susan Gilbert" (John McDermott (University of Hawaii)

**"Contexts and Comrades III"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Dickinson the Mysterique—A Revision of the Anxiety of Influence and Authority" (Helen Shoobridge, Macquarie University); "Bartleby Visiting Emily : 'I'd Prefer Not To' or The Inevitable Meeting of Two Artists in Defiance" (Yusuf Eradam, Ankara University); "From Reverie to Reality: The Mystical Emergence of Dickinson's Writing" (Helen Koukoutsis, Macquarie University)

**"Mind and Body I"**

*Papers and panelists:* "The Lure of Irresistible Repetition" (Suzanne Juhasz, University of Colorado); "Antigone after Jocasta: Desire of/for the Mother in the Life and Writing of Emily Dickinson" (Terri de Langis, University of Illinois at Chicago); "Aminal/Insectual/Lesbian Sex: Emily Dickinson's Queer Version of the Birds and the Bees" (H. Jordan Landry, University of Colorado)

**12:15-2:00 Luncheon Buffet**

*Keynote Address:* "Dickinson at the Millennium" (Alice Fulton, University of Michigan)

**2:30 Board buses** for trip to the Houghton Library and Harvard University

**4:30-6:00 Reception** at Houghton Library followed by poetry reading in Harvard Yard

**Alternative Afternoon Activities:**

**Roving Open House in Amherst:** Dickinson Homestead, Evergreens, Jones Library, Amherst College Frost Library, Mount Holyoke College Archives

**6:30-9:00 Dinner on your own** in Cambridge or Amherst/South Hadley/Northampton

**9:00 Board buses in Cambridge** for return to South Hadley (arrive about **11:00**)

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 14

**8:00-9:00 A.M.** COFFEE

**8:30-10:00 A.M. PANELS**

**"Roundtable on Editing and Archiving"**

*Panelists:* Ellen Louise Hart (University of California at Santa Cruz); Martha Nell Smith (University of Maryland); Marta Werner (Georgia State University); Daniel Lombardo (Amherst, Mass.); Marcy Tanter (Tarleton State University). *Moderator:* Virginia Jackson (Rutgers University)

**"Themes and Beliefs I"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Emily Dickinson at Home: The Paradox of the Wandering Mind" (Chanthana Chaichit, University of Chulalongkoorn); "Emily Dickinson and the Ideals of the Daoism" (Dali Tan, University of Maryland); "'September's Baccalaureate': Emily Dickinson on the Philosophy of Aging" (Carolyn Moran, Tennessee State University)



***Scheduling information is accurate as of late April but subject to change.***

**"Mind and Body II"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Sadistic Goblins and Hours of Lead: The Language of Pain in Emily Dickinson's Poems" (Traci Abbott, University of Maryland); "'Heavenly Hurt': Dickinson's Wounded Text" (Cynthia MacKenzie, University of Regina); "'Her Head Bowed in Anguish': Dickinson and the Mighty Man of Noon" (Marianne Noble, American University)

**10:00-10:30** BREAK

**10:30-12:00 PANELS**

**"Emily Dickinson's Home as a Crucible of Creativity"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Ministerial Interviews and Fathers in Faith" (Jane Eberwein, Oakland University); "'Let no one beside come': Lavinia as Poet's Apostle in the Triumvirate of Dickinson Women" (Mary Elizabeth K. Bernhard, Amherst, Mass.); "'The Difference – made me bold': Henry Vaughan Emmons and Emily Dickinson" (Alfred Habegger, University of Kansas). *Moderator:* Rowena Revis Jones (Northern Michigan University)

**"Loved Philology II"**

*Papers and panelists:* "The Emily Dickinson Fetish" (Robert McClure Smith, Knox College); "Voice and Visual Poetics: Reading Democratically" (Paul Crumbley, Utah State University); "Emily Dickinson and the Origins of Language" (Bryan Short, Northern Arizona University)

**"Themes and Beliefs II"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Emily Dickinson: Transcendental Trinitarian" (Shannon Johnson, Brigham Young University); "'A little East of Jordan': Human-Divine Encounter in Dickinson and the Hebrew Bible" (Richard S. Ellis, University of Massachusetts); "The Woman in White: Emily Dickinson and Color" (Domhnall Mitchell, Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

**"Contexts and Comrades IV"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Emily Dickinson and Nineteenth-Century Popular (Print) Culture" (Joan Kirkby, Macquarie University); "'Blossoms of the Brain': The Poetics of Emily Dickinson's Correspondence and Women's Culture" (Stephanie Tingley, Youngstown State University); "'I dwell in possibility': Marilynne Robinson's Housekeeping as a Reading of Emily Dickinson" (Thomas Gardner, Virginia Tech)

**12:00-2:00** LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

**2:00-3:30 PANELS**

**"Contexts and Comrades V"**

*Papers and panelists:* "The Maid's Mistress Unmade (Or, Intimacy between Miss Margaret and Her Employer, Miss Emily)" (Aife Murray, Stanford University); "'Unto my Books': Contemporary Poets on Editing Choices and on Dickinson's Fascicle Collections" (Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University); "'Beauty – be not caused – It Is –': Spiritual and Physical Concepts of Beauty in Emily Dickinson, Estee Lauder, and Lesley Dill" (Gudrun Grabher, University of Innsbruck)

**"Themes and Beliefs III"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Dickinson and the Poetics of Whiteness" (Vivian Pollak, Washington University); "Singing 'off Charnel Steps': Soldiers and Mourners in Emily Dickinson's War Poetry" (Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin, University of Georgia); "'Emily Dickinson and the Auction Block: Africanist Influences" (Daneen Wardrop, Western Michigan University)

**"Loved Philology III"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Emily Dickinson and the 'Balsam Word'" (Daniel Strait, Asbury College); "Judicial PUNishment: Legal Wordplay and Judgment in Dickinson's Poems" (James Guthrie, Wright State University); "At Home in Language: Emily Dickinson's Rhetorical Figures" (Cynthia Hallen, Brigham Young University)

**4:00-5:30 Reception Between the Houses**

**6:00-8:00 "Dine-Around"**

## SUNDAY, AUGUST 15

**8:00-9:00 A.M.** COFFEE

**8:30-10:00 A.M. PANELS**

**"Dickinson and the Arts"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Dickinson in the Spotlight: Recovering Two Early Biographical Dramas" (Jonnie Guerra, Purdue University); "Emily Dickinson: An Artful Muse" (Maryanne Garbowsky, County College of Morris, N.J.); "Bringing Emily Dickinson Home: The Musical Readings of Leo Smit" (Emily Seelbinder, Queens College, N.C.)

**"Themes and Beliefs IV"**

*Papers and panelists:* "Feminine Figures: Dickinson's Critique of American Selfhood" (Shira Wolosky, Hebrew University of Jerusalem); "The Loaf and the Crumb: Dickinson and the Aesthetics of Bread Making" (Nancy Johnston, Ryerson Polytechnic University); "Emily Dickinson: Learnéd Astronomer" (Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University)

**"Contexts and Comrades VI"**

*Papers and panelists:* "The Grave Is Mine, the Mine as Home: Emily Dickinson and William Blake's 'Jerusalem'" (Judith Farr, Georgetown University); "Dickinson's Skepticism of Shakespeare" (Paraic Finnerty, University of Kent); "Dickinson's Bawdy: Shakespeare and Sexual Symbolism in the Writing of Emily Dickinson to Susan Huntington Dickinson" (Kristin Comment, University of Maryland)

**"Contexts and Comrades VII"**

*Papers and Panelists:* "Emily Dickinson, Two Twentieth-Century 'Sisters,' and the Problem of Feminine Aesthetics" (Sylvia Mikkelson, University of Aarhus); "Of Humility, Suffering, and Faith: Emily Dickinson and the Medieval Mystical Women" (Angela Conrad, Drew University); "Fictional Dickinson and the New 'Tome of Solid Witchcraft'" (Jenny Weatherford, University of Copenhagen)

**10:30-12:00 Closing Plenary Session**

**"Reflections on the Conference"**

A conversation with Heinz Ickstadt, Marjorie Perloff, and Alice Fulton. *Moderator:* Gary Stonum.

*Farewell:* Cristanne Miller, EDIS President, and Martha Ackmann, Conference Co-Director.

**12:15-1:00 EDIS Annual Meeting**

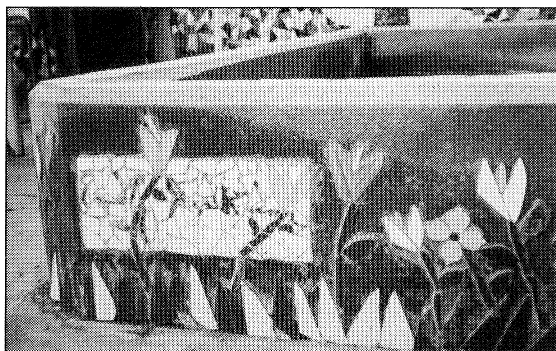
# EN EL JARDÍN DE EMILIA

***By Antonio Olaya***

Dear Emily Dickinson:

You ask me for a few words, Emily Dickinson. But how difficult it is to put together some words to narrate our story. A story that is not a tale. Listen, I'll explain....

Once upon a time, around April 1997, a woman—a "visual artist" she called herself—with a bare looking face, of a relaxed figure, of small size but loaded with emotions and proposals that I could not understand—showed up in my office at the Women's Penitentiary of Barcelona. And I listened.



Well into 1997, in the midst of the stifling Barcelonese summer, your friend and follower Mirta Tocci came again from nowhere to make it clear that she was still in search of a definite proposal. And I listened! In that very instant I heard for the first time the name of someone so important, of whom I was totally unaware. There I heard your name for the first time: Emily Dickinson—poet, determined woman, reserved, an accomplice of her own existence, appreciative of the value of everyday life, prolific in the simplicity with which she shaped the scenery of her own life.

At the start of 1998, Mirta Tocci came back to my office, as usual, by the hand of Emily Dickinson, but this time loaded with provocative projects, with creative, multidisciplinary proposals from avant-garde artists committed to culture and the fine arts, all willing to work in direct contact with the inmates, in the penitentiary of women in Barcelona, the institution, dear Emily Dickinson, where I have been the Director for the last four years.

From that moment on—the visits, the meetings, the suggestions, the difficulties—the hours of work started to add up. We spoke again and again about how—through theater, literature, visual arts, design, history of art, gastronomy, fashion, photography, video, computing, and more—about how it would be possible to build a world that would relate to some of the circumstances that defined your life, Emily Dickinson, and those that nowadays condition the daily routine of the inmates of our penitentiary.

And so—in the fall of 1998—I began to review, one, two, three...and then suddenly fourteen proposals by well-known artists and supportive participants, and to consider them with the professionals who work at the prison. This is how, dear Emily, a unique and atypical proposal was born: "En el Jardín," "In the Garden," according to Emily Dickinson.

No one can imagine the difficulties and complexities of your request. Every day, since the day I gave my consent to this proposal, I have continued to remind myself and everyone else: "This is a prison!"

The result...since the beginning of this year of 1999: About 140 inmates ("presas," we call them)—in their classes and workshops, in their activities, their treatments, their posts, their limited moments of spare time—are producing for and because of the Garden of Emily.

As you can see, we are an institution full of vitality, full of activity and participation. All of the inmates—and I am proud to say this as their Director—have been busy in every moment for a very long time. The secret to understanding how we have received the proposal "In the Garden" is not to study its history but to see how we work with your contributions to the world of culture and adapt them to the seclusion of the women in our prison. Quite a commitment!

One, two, three projects running in January. Four, five, six,...nine, ten workshops started. Inmates, coordinators, professionals educators, artists, designers, bureaucrats...here comes February. Day after day, advancing in this shapeless unity that is "In the Garden," I prepare authorizations, passes; we buy materials, we adjust spaces, we work in the classrooms. But I always remind everybody: "This is a prison!"

You know, "Emilia," there is enthusiasm, responsibility, and commitment, and February comes to an end....And then March arrives. On March 8, to mark the celebration of International Women's Day, we reach the end of a stage. Exhibitions, dossiers, performances, films, narrations, lectures, artistic installations ...and the opening of your garden, the garden of beautiful flowers in the patio that will be finished this week.

As you can see, my dear friend, this is not a simple story. This is a fantastic project. But it is also your story, and the story of all of the women in this prison in Barcelona, in Catalunya, in Spain. "En el Jardín"—and I'm about to finish—is not only a metaphor but also a way of teaching and enriching the fertile, complex, and limited circumstances of the inmates of this institution—a penitentiary.

Thank you for your attention, Emilia. We continue on, but here ends a chapter of your story.

Antonio Olaya, *Director, El Centro Penitenciario de Mujeres de Barcelona*

# In Emily's Garden

*By Maureen Shea*

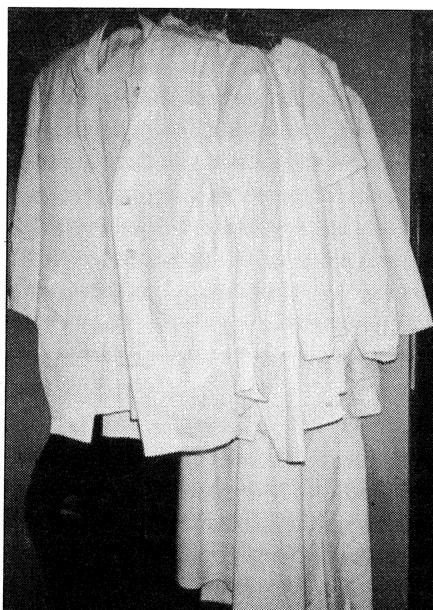
From December to March 1999, approximately 140 inmates of El Centro Penitenciario de Mujeres de Barcelona have been living and breathing Emily Dickinson. This remarkable project, conceived by Barcelona-based visual artist Mirta Tocci, has the women performing in theatre, participating in reading groups, attending lectures, designing programs, posters, and T-shirts, making sculpture and mosaics, painting, embroidering, sewing, designing fashion, cooking, making movies, working on the Internet, writing letters to artists, photographing, singing, and planting a garden. "In the Garden: An Experience across the Media," was inspired by Tocci's reading about the life and work of Emily Dickinson.

Questions: What might be the response of women confined to a woman who *chose* confinement? What is the relationship of Emily's world, the world of small-town Puritan America, to a modern-day penal institution in Spain? How can these women, with volatile lives, relate to Emily, this American "Volcano," this "Vesuvius"? "My life had stood – a Loaded Gun." And to Mr. Higginson: "I am in danger, sir."

From her "small" world, Emily Dickinson made a universe. Could the same thing happen here? What could these women, in the "small" world of their cells, corridors, and patio, learn from Emily? And from the process of creating art with a group of working professionals? And what might these artists learn from them? Transcendence?

These are the questions that fueled the project, that captured the imaginations of the inmates, that attracted the interest of the prison's director, Antonio Olaya. Fourteen artists from different countries, with different interests and backgrounds, worked together with the women to answer these questions. The women self-selected into different working groups. Mirta provided each with a dossier of materials: a brief biography of Emily Dickinson, photographs of her house, her dress, the basket, etc., and thirty-five poems chosen for their resonance with the lives of the women. The artist and projects are as follows:

• Mirta Tocci, project leader/installation artist. *Proposal,* with Manolo Martín, master gardener: To build a garden in the prison's patio. *Concept:* That the prison can be, in a metaphoric sense, a garden, allowing the prisoners a more rich, complex, generous, and creative perception of the circumstances that force them to limit their movements. Build a garden in the prison's patio the size of a typical room in the dormitory where the women sleep, reinforcing the connection between them and the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Create a mosaic mural on the patio wall with flowers and text from Emily Dickinson. Create a garden that holds the garden.



• Lydia Delgado, fashion designer. *Proposal:* Create a collection of thirty dresses. *Concept:* What was Emily's "white election"? What would be the inmates' "white elections"? Work with a group of women designing thirty contemporary dresses in white. The project will culminate in a fashion show.

• Alberto Fregenal, graphic designer. *Proposal:* Create a workshop in seriography. *Concept:* What are the concepts of the other workshops? How do we tell the story of these pieces to the public in graphic art? How do we interpret Emily? How do we interpret the work of other artists in the form of graphic art?

• Helena del Rivero, visual artist. *Proposal:* Letters (after Dickinson's letters. *Concept:* How do we encode our anguish and desires in letters? Each of the participants will receive a covered letter, created by me in New York, with an uncovered blank space. The participants will use this blank space to answer the letter they have not opened. In the end, we will open and display both letters.

• María Tatai Huici, master chef. *Proposal:* The kitchen of Emily. *Concept:* We will work/cook with Emily Dickinson's recipes in the kitchen of the prison. The food will be served to all of the inmates so that they can experience her "taste" and her joy in the comfort of food.

• Maureen Shea, theatre director. *Proposal:* Theatre piece. *Concept:* We will create a piece based on the life and work of Emily Dickinson, using her poems, letters, and music. All will wear white contemporary dresses distinctive to each woman. One will wear a replica of Emily's dress. All will "play" Emily. The piece will be

presented three times in the prison theatre.

• Cori Mercadé Durá, visual artist. *Proposal:* The self-portrait as house. *Concept:* Create pieces, oil on canvas, with the goal of focusing on self-portraiture as a way of understanding self-image.

• Mercedes Valdivieso, professor, history of art. *Proposal:* The female self-portrait. *Concept:* To present the history of female painters of Western art. Get close to the individual geographies of individual artists. Note the social changes that have conditioned these women through history.

• Fernando Fernández del Castillo, film student, Emerson College. *Proposal:* Emily's Dream. *Concept:* Participants will write, produce, shoot, and edit a ten-minute video based on the themes in Emily Dickinson. Create a film around a contemporary "Emily," an inmate in the prison.

• Amparo Lozano, art critic. *Proposal:* Writing and life: Commented readings. *Concept:* Explore how writing comes from life, from the self. Read Dickinson's poetry and respond in writing. Use writing as a means of expressing the private, dark self (dreams, fears).

• Begoña Montalbán, visual artist. *Proposal:* Sculpture with voice. *Concept:* Select fragments of Emily Dickinson's poetry and make a compact disc recording that will be a kind of "voice sculpture."

• Assumpta Bassa Vila, art historian. *Proposal:* Critique of representation. *Concept:* Lectures on how women are represented in art. How do we explore and build our identities with images?

• Josep María Martín, visual artist. *Proposal:* Photography. *Concept:* Have a group of women create works from photographs and graphic images, inspired by the themes in Emily Dickinson.

• Akane Asaoka, visual artist. *Proposal:* Constellations. *Concept:* Work with a group of women on the Internet with me in Japan on a project about the constellations, the cosmos, the universe.

On March 8, International Women's Day, the work of these groups culminated in a day-long work-showing, a celebration of the past three months of living with Emily. The day began with the official opening of the garden in the patio, and with a serving of gingerbread and cookies from Emily's recipes.

We then all moved to the theatre to see Fernando's documentary, the women's film, "El Sueño de Emi," the theatre piece "Carta al Mundo" (performed in Spanish, French, Portuguese, English, and Catalan), and the fashion show. In the halls all of the visual work was displayed. With the help of a publisher, we hope in the near future to produce a special edition of work generated by the project.

In a video that Mirta Tocci created for the theatre piece, she walks barefoot through Emily's garden in Amherst, with the camera pointing at her bare feet, in footage shot last summer. She walks barefoot through the corridors of the prison in Spain, with the camera pointing at her bare feet, in footage shot this winter. She edited these pieces together, walking from the garden to the prison, from the prison to the garden. This video is the central metaphor for "In the Garden." All of us in here, in Spain, walking that walk.

We offer thanks to all who have helped make this project possible: Antonio Olaya, Director of the prison; Jesus Martinez, the Sub-Director; the prison monitors and professional staff; the artists; Dan Lombardo; Cynthia Dickinson; Emerson College; and the women of El Centro Penitenciario de Mujeres de Barcelona, whose unfailing enthusiasm, insight, and artistry have given us all a new vision of "Emilia."

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***Maureen Shea** is chair of the Department of Performing Arts at Emerson College, Boston.*

## Notes & Queries

A late addition to the conference schedule is a performance of ***Proyecto Emily*** by Trama Luna Teatro, a theatrical troop from Bogota, Colombia, with an interest in the feminine universe and the poetics of space. The play presents two Emilys, one who wants to leave and the other who wants to remain locked in her house forever. More details will be available in August.

If you haven't yet responded to the **membership questionnaire** in the fall 1998 *Bulletin,* please do so as soon as possible and send it to Margaret Freeman at the address on the questionnaire. We want to know what you like or don't like about EDIS and how the organization can better serve your needs and interests.

The *Bulletin* congratulates **Daniel Lombardo** on his new venture. After seventeen years as Curator of Special Collections at Amherst's Jones Library, Dan—author of *Tales of Amherst: A Look Back* and *A Hedge Away: The Other Side of Emily Dickinson's Amherst*—is leaving the position to work on other projects, first of all a history of Wellfleet, Massachusetts. Dan has been an energetic and highly effective curator of the Jones's growing Dickinson Collection and a generous and gracious host for many Dickinson and EDIS events. Fortunately he will continue to live in Amherst and take part in future Dickinson happenings.

***Continued on page 26***

## "Emily Dickinson at Home": Registration, Housing, and Meals

If you have not yet registered for the conference, you should do so as soon as possible. **The deadline for receiving your registration and fees is June 1.** Accommodations in the area are limited, so you should also make housing reservations immediately. See the registration form (and membership application form) on page 27.

The conference registration fee is $110 for current EDIS members, $160 for nonmembers, and $90 for students (who must provide a photocopy of their current college or university ID). This fee covers the cost of the opening reception and banquet on Thursday evening, lunch on Friday, and morning coffee each day. Other meals are on your own at the area's many excellent restaurants. For Saturday evening, you may wish to sign up to "dine-around" in any of several small groups.

Those wishing to travel to the Houghton Library at Harvard on Friday afternoon should include an additional $15 to cover bus transportation and should check the appropriate box on the registration form.

Traveling companions who wish to attend social events but not panels need not pay a registration fee and, if space allows, can purchase tickets for the meals covered by the registration fee at reasonable cost. Information will be available at the conference.

Participants have many options for housing. Rooms in residence halls at Mount Holyoke College are available for $66 single or $102 double for the three nights; the three-night stay is mandatory. Keep in mind that these are student rooms with an overhead light and a shared bath down the hall, and without air conditioning.

EDIS has also reserved all 45 rooms at the Lord Jeffery Inn on the town common in Amherst. Rates range from $55 to $114 per night. Those interested should call the inn as soon as possible at 413-253-2576. The shuttle bus to Mount Holyoke College will stop regularly at the inn.

For a list of other area hotels and bed and breakfast establishments, check the appropriate box on the registration form.

For directions for reaching Mount Holyoke College and Amherst by air, car, bus, or train, check the appropriate box on the registration form.

For additional information on any aspect of the conference, travel, or accommodations, contact Martha Ackmann, Conference Co-Director, Women's Studies Program, Dickinson House, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA 01075 USA; by phone at 413-538-2564; by fax at 413-538-2082; or by e-mail at mackmann@mtholyoke.edu.

## Academic Meetings

The annual meeting of the **American Literature Association** will be held at Baltimore's Harborplace Hotel from May 27 to 30. There will be two Dickinson panels, one on "Fictionalized Dickinson," to be chaired by Jonnie Guerra, and one on "Paradox in Dickinson," to be chaired by Gudrun Grabher. For further information, contact Grabher at Department of American Studies, University of Innsbruck, Innrain 52, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria, or by e-mail at Gudrun.M.Grabher@uibk.ac.at.

The 1999 meeting of the **Modern Language Association,** to be held in late December in Chicago, will include two EDIS-sponsored sessions. "Emily Dickinson, American Poetry, and Public Culture," to be chaired by Mary Loeffelholz, will include papers by Adam Frank, Jane Eberwein, Elizabeth Hewitt, and Virginia Jackson. A roundtable focusing on "A New Volume of Dickinson's Letters to Susan Dickinson and a New Reading Edition of Dickinson's Poems," chaired by Deborah Cadman, will bring together the views of Timothy Morris, Elizabeth Petrino, David Allen Sullivan, Jeanne E. Holland, and Martha Ackmann. For more information on the meeting, contact Martha Nell Smith at Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 USA, or by e-mail at ms63@umail.umd.edu.

## Chapter Notes

A brand new EDIS chapter will be born shortly in **Mesa, Arizona**. It is being organized by Anne Hall and Elizabeth Horan of Arizona State University. The inaugural meeting, to be held at Changing Hands Bookshop on May 15 ( Dickinson's death date), will feature a reading of Dickinson's poetry. For further information contact Hall at anneh@imap2.asu.edu.

The **Los Angeles chapter** met on March 20 at Midnight Special Bookstore and attracted numerous members of the general public as well as devoted Dickinsonians. Cristanne Miller and Ellen Louise Hart led a lively discussion of the editing of Dickinson's manuscripts with special reference to "Because I could not stop for Death" and "Success is counted sweetest." Hart then discussed and signed copies of her new book (with Martha Nell Smith), *Open Me Carefully*. The chapter's next meeting will be a spring luncheon at the home of Margaret Freeman. For more information, contact her at freemamh@mail.lavc.cc.ca.us.

The **Saskatchewan chapter** recently held a poetry reading that explored Dickinson's use of domestic imagery, particularly the numerous references to fabrics, seams, stitching, and handiwork. The discussion arose from Cindy MacKenzie's new project in fabric art, which she will present at the EDIS conference in August. Using vintage fabrics as a canvas for Dickinson's words, MacKenzie is creating samplers, tablecloths, and similar articles reminiscent of the nineteenth century. For more on chapter activities, contact Cindy at mackenzc@meena.cc.uregina.ca.

## The Dickinson Houses: 1999 Tour Information

The staffs of the Evergreens and the Homestead look forward to welcoming EDIS members to Amherst during the August conference. If your travel plans will bring you to Amherst during another time of the year, the following information may be helpful.

### The Evergreens

The Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust will offer preview tours of the restoration in progress at the Evergreens, home of Austin and Susan Dickinson. The Evergreens previews are scheduled in conjunction with a Homestead tour on selected dates (see box below) from April through September. The tours begin at **11:00 A.M.** and include a 45-minute tour of the Dickinson Homestead, followed by a 30-minute visit to the Evergreens next door. The cost is $7.00 per person. Tours are limited to twelve people each and are not recommended for young children. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling the Homestead at **(413) 542-8161.**

**Evergreens Tour Dates**

| *Wednesdays* | *Saturdays* |
|---|---|
| **April 7** | **April 10** |
| **May 5** | **May 8** |
| **June 9** | **June 12** |
| **July 7** | **July 10** |
| **August 4** | **August 7** |
| **September 1** | **September 4** |

### The Dickinson Homestead

This spring, a new exhibit, "Emily Dickinson and Education," is featured on guided tours of the Homestead. The exhibit was prepared by students in "Emily Dickinson in Her Times," a Mount Holyoke College women's studies seminar taught at the Homestead last fall by Martha Ackmann.

Focusing on several women who contributed to Dickinson's education (including Emily Norcross Dickinson, the poet's mother, and Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary), the exhibit illustrates the breadth and depth of Dickinson's exposure to traditional academic subjects, domestic practices, and social and cultural values. The exhibit can be viewed on regular guided tours of the Homestead and during the Homestead's Open House on Saturday, May 15 (offered in conjunction with the annual Emily Dickinson Poetry Walk).

### Homestead Tour Schedule

***March:*** Wednesdays and Saturdays. Tours on the hour, 1-4 P.M.; last tour at 4 P.M.

***April-May:*** Wednesdays through Saturdays. Tours on the hour, 1-4 P.M.; last tour at 4 P.M.

***June-August:*** Wednesdays through Sundays, including July 4. Tours every half hour, 1-4 P.M.; last tour at 4 P.M. Additional tours Saturday mornings only at 10:30 and 11:30 A.M.

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## In Memoriam: Margaret Dickie (1935-1999): "A clearing at the end"

*Margaret Dickie, the Helen Lanier Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Georgia, former chair of the Department of English at the University of Illinois, and Co-Director of the EDIS conference at Innsbruck, Austria, in 1995, died on January 11. The following tribute comes from Vivian Pollak, president of EDIS at the time of that conference.*

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I mourn Margaret Dickie's untimely passing but celebrate her life. She and EDIS will always be intertwined in my memory, especially in relation to the 1995 Innsbruck conference. She was a tireless worker, and I deeply admired both her organizational talents and her insights into American women's poetry.

Margaret, a 1956 graduate of Middlebury College, was a prolific scholar. Among her books are *Lyric Contingencies: Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens; On the Modernist Long Poem; Hart Crane: The Patterns of His Poetry; Slyvia Plath and Ted Hughes; Stein, Bishop and Rich: Lyrics of Love, War and Place;* and (edited with Thomas Travisano) *Gendered Modernisms: American Women Poets and Their Readers.*

Margaret was one of those dauntless persons who refuse to let circumstances dictate their fate. This was even more apparent after she was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. The diagnosis was a tremendous shock at the time, both to Margaret and to her friends, since she was asymptomatic, as I understand it, and merely undergoing a routine test.

Yet, fighter that she was, Margaret refused to succumb to despair. Her otherwise excellent general health and emotional resilience seem to have bought her extra time. She continued to play tennis and to teach and to delight in her family, which included her beloved grandson Sam, as well as the granddaughter born during this period, the little Margaret who was her namesake.

As she tried therapies conventional and unconventional, Margaret felt people in her immediate circle and beyond rallying to her side. In my dealings with her, her spirits were good, and until the last months she was eager to stay in touch and correspond.

Margaret Dickie, thank you for signing off affectionately and with courage. I honor your accomplishments and your struggles, in death as in life.

Vivian Pollak

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor*

**Bloom, Harold, ed. *Emily Dickinson.*** Bloom's Major Poets Series. Broomall, Penn.: Chelsea House, 1999. 79 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7910-5106-7, $18.95.

Part of a new series intended as an introduction to poetry analysis for high school or college students, the Dickinson volume focuses on three poems: "There's a certain Slant of light" (J258), "Because I could not stop for Death" (J712), and "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant" (J1129). Each poem receives a thematic analysis followed by relevant excerpts from critical essays. The twenty-four excerpts from essays ranging over sixty years represent founding critics George F. Whicher, Austin Warren, and Charles Anderson; formalist critics Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, and R.P. Blackmur; feminist critics Joanne Feit Diehl, Suzanne Juhasz, and Cristanne Miller; and contextual critics David Porter, Shira Wolosky, Cynthia Griffin Wolff, Albert Gelpi, and Jerome McGann. Supplementing the criticism are an introduction by Bloom, a biographical sketch of Dickinson, a bibliography of critical works, and an index of themes and ideas in the poet's work, all in an easy-to-use format. Unfortunately, the book does not refer to critical work beyond 1993.

**Dommermuth-Costa, Carol. *Emily Dickinson: Singular Poet.*** Biography Series. Minneapolis, Minn.: Lerner, 1998. 112 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8225-4958-1, $25.26.

Designed for advanced pre-teens and young adults, this well written biography combines a clear text with excerpts from Dickinson's poetry and letters, creating a seamless chronological narrative. Black and white photographs of Dickinson's family and friends, Amherst, and her manuscript pages are generously and carefully placed to coordinate with the text. A bibliography and index are included. Presenting a well researched, objective approach to Dickinson's life and work, and using high-quality paper and print, this attractively designed and illustrated volume should appeal to young scholars.

**Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible.*** New York: HarperCollins, 1998. 546 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-06-017540-0, $26.00.

Nathan Price, a tyrannical religious zealot, travels to the Congo in 1959 to oversee a Baptist mission station with his wife and four daughters, who are the novel's five narrators in alternating chapters. "We came from Bethlehem, Georgia, bearing Betty Crocker cake mixes into the jungle," Leah Price reports. The story echoes *Heart of Darkness* and *The Mosquito Coast* as Kingsolver uses humor, keen observation, and moral outrage to chronicle the family's adventures in postcolonial Africa during the social and political upheaval that occurred as the Congo gained its independence from Belgium. One of the daughters, the lame and silent Adah, periodically writes of her love of poetry and of Emily Dickinson, often quoting lines from her poems. Dickinson plays a modest but supporting role in this compelling novel of domestic tragedy and sin and redemption.

**McNeil, Helen, ed. *Emily Dickinson.*** Everyman's Poetry Series, no. 38. London: J.M. Dent, 1997. Distributed by Charles E. Tuttle, New York. 98 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-460-87895-6, $3.50.

A collection of 141 poems, both widely anthologized and less well known ones, this volume includes all 15 poems of Fascicle 17 in a separate section "to give a sense of how Dickinson organized and self-published her work." The Fascicle 17 poems were written during her "flood period" of 1862-63, when she was writing more than a poem a day. Supplementing the Johnson edition poems and numbering are notes on some of Dickinson's revisions, listed by poem number at the end of the collection. McNeil's introductory essay and a chronology of Dickinson's life and times place the poems in a cultural context, making this inexpensive volume a useful survey of Dickinson's poetry.

**Prins, Yopie, and Maeera Shreiber, eds. *Dwelling in Possibility: Women Poets and Critics on Poetry.*** Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997. 373 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8014-3199-9, $49.95. Paper, ISBN 0-8014-8294-1, $19.95.

Twenty-four poets and critics discuss the interplay of genre and gender in poetry, offering multiple perspectives through poetic meditations and critical essays. "Postscripts to Emily Dickinson" consists of excerpts from Susan Howe's recent writings in which she looks at Dickinson's manuscripts "in order to recover an authorial intention obscured by literary history, as well as to discover a precursor for her own experimental poetics." In "'Faith in Anatomy': Reading Emily Dickinson," Virginia Jackson "question[s] the assumption of intention and authorial identity within a tradition of subjectivist reading." Other essays explore poetic voices from Sappho to contemporary women poets. Informed by feminist literary theory, the essays will interest sophisticated readers in women's studies. The lists of contributors and works cited are useful indexes to feminist poetry and criticism.

**Spires, Elizabeth; illusts. by Claire A. Nivola. *The Mouse of Amherst.*** New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999. 64 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-374-35083-3, $15.00.

Emmaline is "nothing more than a crumb gatherer, a cheese nibbler, a mouse-of-little purpose" when she moves into the Dickinson residence "with only a winter

**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 650-321-8146.**

cape, a fleece robe and hot water bottle for the brutal New England winters" and "a small dictionary" to help improve her vocabulary. From her cozy place behind the wainscoting in Dickinson's room, Emmaline observes the poet and responds by writing thoughtful poems of her own. Eight Dickinson poems and seven by Emmaline reveal an empathetic exchange between the two poets. An engaging narrator, Emmaline describes her adventures in the Dickinson household, including her narrow escape from Lavinia's cat, her small role in Mr. Higginson's visit, and her surprise when awakened from a nap in a basket of Dickinson's gingerbread. For readers eight years old and up, this delightful and clever book with delicate pencil drawings introduces Dickinson from a mouse's point of view. Dickinsonians will want to meet the witty and charming Emmaline.

## Book Reviews

**Hart, Ellen Louise, and Martha Nell Smith, eds. *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson.*** Ashfield, Mass.: Paris Press, 1998. 360 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-9638183-7-6, $39.95. Paper, ISBN 0-9638183-6-8, $19.95.

***Reviewed by Marcy L. Tanter***

Susan Dickinson is slowly coming into her own. As the only editor Emily Dickinson trusted, Susan has been largely ignored and has even been rendered insignificant by some scholarship, especially studies that laud and rely on the work of Mabel Loomis Todd.

Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart have made it no secret in their previous works that they believe an intimate, perhaps even erotic, relationship existed between Emily and Susan. In *Open Me Carefully* they acknowledge the intimacy but make it clear that what matters is the shared intellectualism that arose because the two Dickinson women were so close personally and mentally. Or perhaps the reverse was true. In either case, *Open Me Carefully* is a well constructed documentation of Emily Dickinson's dependence upon and trust of her sister-in-law. Unlike the larger editions, this volume consolidates Dickinson's many letters to Sue, giving a true sense of Sue's worth to her.

Unfortunately, Susan's letters to Emily were destroyed after Dickinson's death, but the editors have reconstructed the correspondence insofar as possible, providing brief annotations and descriptions of the extant Dickinson manuscripts. Importantly, they have retained the lineation of the Dickinson manuscript pages rather than regularizing the letters into paragraphs and the poems into "proper" stanzas. The effect is startling because it sharply contrasts with the presentation in the Johnson edition. Johnson altered line breaks, whereas Dickinson usually wrote with a maximum of three words per line; most lines contain only two words.

As originally written—and as printed in *Open Me Carefully*—some of the letters read easily as poems, such as L467, where "receive" and "infamies" appear to be a near rhyme. (Although "receive" is offset by "to[,]" the rhyme still works.) It is interesting to note that William Shurr, when he published *New Poems of Emily Dickinson,* did not retain Dickinson's lineation when he created a "new poem" from the same Johnson text. Retaining Dickinson's lineation allows for fresh interpretations.

Hart and Smith point out instances in which manuscripts show marks of rewriting and notations exchanged between the two Dickinson women. These serve to highlight their working relationship and further elucidate Dickinson's compositional process. We can see her working hard to ensure that exactly the right words are used to express her thoughts, and we can see that Susan took her sister-in-law's career seriously. It will be invaluable if, at some point, the editors are able to publish a facsimile edition of these drafts, either on the Internet or in print.

Hart and Smith cannot be faulted for the two things I feel are missing from this otherwise wonderful book. Publishers' constraints meant that they could not show us manuscripts that had been physically altered by Dickinson's early editors, nor could they delve into a detailed discussion of how Mabel Loomis Todd's alterations greatly differ from Susan Dickinson's. The publishers erred in not allowing more room for these two types of evidence that would have given readers greater insight into Dickinson's relationship with Sue. But the strength of the book lies in what *is* presented, and the book is not greatly marred by the omissions.

*Open Me Carefully* is the beginning of an exciting era in Dickinson studies. Reevaluation of Sue will allow for new perspectives on Dickinson's work. This study starts to fill a long-empty niche, and we can hope the editors will continue their work while other scholars contribute to the ensuing discussion.

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**Lundin, Roger. *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief.*** Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998. 320 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8028-3857-X, $24.00. Paper, ISBN 0-8028-0157-9, $16.00.

***Reviewed by Dorothy Huff Oberhaus***

Roger Lundin's *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* is the latest in Eerdmans' series of religious biographies of such diverse figures as Blaise Pascal, Billy Sunday, Thomas Jefferson, and Aimee Semple McPherson. The aim of this series intended for a general audience is to present books that cross disciplinary boundaries and are free of academic jargon.

Lundin, who is professor of English at Wheaton College in Illinois, has satisfied these aims. His gracefully written biography is a fine introduction for readers who know little about the life of Emily Dickinson. And though Dickinson specialists will find no startling revelations about a life that the poet herself described as "too simple and stern to embarrass any" (L330), they too will profit from Lundin's portrait of her in the context of the cultural, political, and theological issues of her day and of the history of Christian thought.

Though he stresses her reclusiveness, Lundin sees Dickinson as profoundly affected by the Civil War, nineteenth-century gender issues, and scientific discoveries. He describes Amherst's strong initial support for the Union cause, Mary Lyon's passionate commitment to the education of women, and also the way in which the discoveries of Charles Darwin and Sir

Charles Lyell called into question conventional religious belief. He disputes those who claim that Dickinson rebelled against her strict Puritan background, arguing that by the time she was born the Calvinism of William Bradstreet and Jonathan Edwards had been transformed into a gentler profession, one whose emphasis was upon social usefulness and the moral improvement of the self. Citing her letters, he argues that at Mt. Holyoke Dickinson was more ambivalent than defiant about religious matters and felt a sense of guilt at not having been converted.

According to Lundin, Dickinson is not only one of the greatest lyric poets in the English language but also one of the major religious thinkers of her age. Though he views her in the context of such Christian writers as Augustine, Luther, Niebuhr, Donne, and Herbert, his emphasis is upon her American Protestant inheritance. She adapted and transformed this inherited faith, but it remains "clear and unmistakable" in her art. Lundin stresses her reliance upon the King James Bible—"her richest poetic lexicon"—and her affection and reverence for Jesus, the "Tender Pioneer" who comes close to obscuring God the Father. But though she, like Job, wrestled with God—in part because of such challenges to religious belief as Darwinian naturalism—she would not give up God and wrote in his shadow until the end of her life.

*Art of Belief* has no citations in the text and no conventional bibliography, though it concludes with "Notes" and "A Note on Sources." The sources cited in "Notes" are mostly to Jay Leyda's *Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson* and Thomas H. Johnson's *Letters of Emily Dickinson.* The latter is hardly surprising because Lundin draws far more heavily upon Dickinson's letters than upon her poems. "A Note on Sources" includes not only biographical and critical works about Dickinson but also many theoretical, historical, feminist, and theological works that testify to the author's impressively wide command of interdisciplinary readings.

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**Shimazaki, Yoko. *The American Poetic Mind: Dickinson and Stevens,*** ed. Toshikazu Niikura et al. Tokyo: Chusekisha, 1998. 444 pp. Cloth, ISBN 4-8060-3027-9 C1095, ¥10,000.

**Reviewed by Toshikazu Niikura**

The collected essays of the former president of the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan include essays on Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and John Keats, half of them in English, half in Japanese. Unfortunately, Professor Shimazaki did not live to see the publication of her first book. Her death in 1996 stunned and saddened the Dickinson community.

In this posthumous collection of essays first published between 1969 and 1996, the first essay, "Light," begins: "'I find ecstasy in living – the mere sense of living is joy enough.' Such an exclamation came from Emily Dickinson as late as 1870 when she was nearing the age of forty." It was no coincidence that Professor Shimazaki too was nearing the age of forty when she wrote this essay that contains many references to *In Defense of Reason,* written by her mentor, Yvor Winters.

In her succeeding essays on Dickinson she returns again and again to her major theme, "The Business of Circumference." She explores the meanings of "Circumference" with close readings of the seventeen poems in which the word is found. Though the range of meanings varies from poem to poem, Professor Shimazaki believes that the term is key to understanding Dickinson's attitude as a poet.

Quoting Dickinson—"Time feels so vast that were it not/For an Eternity –/I fear me this Circumference/Engross my Finity –" (J802)—Professor Shimazaki asserts that in the course of the poem, the poet is extending her mortal circumference until finally she becomes conscious of that "Stupendous Vision" of the new and divine "Circumference." In her essay "Space" she focuses on Dickinson's concept of space inside and outside the circumference and shows how "Circumference" reflects the whole being of the poet and the relationship between the poet and transcendental existence.

In 1992, at an EDIS conference workshop, Professor Shimazaki compared her Christian approach to Dickinson's "Circumference" with the contemporary critical approaches offered by Professor Katsuhiko Inada and myself. She agreed with Professor Inada that "Circumference" is one of Dickinson's strategies for attaining Heaven. Though she acknowledged the differences in sensibility between Western and Japanese readers, she felt some uneasiness with my more existential approach that finds in Dickinson's poetry a modern absence of the Grand Narrative, i.e., the biblical truth. She conceded that my close textual reading could be interesting and attractive, but believed that such a reading "miss[ed] the most essential part of the poet, the Christian vision of her soul."

Professor Shimazaki began her study of Dickinson's poetry under Yvor Winters at Stanford University in 1955; she also studied at Boston College and taught for many years at the University of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo. In 1986 she attended the Amherst and Folger Library Dickinson conferences, and in 1992, at the first EDIS conference, she presented a paper entitled "A Perspective on Reading Dickinson in Japan," published in the fall 1993 issue of the *Emily Dickinson Journal.*

Professor Shimazaki served both as president of the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan and as a mentor to younger scholars, to whom she extended warmth and encouragement. She made a distinct contribution to Dickinson scholarship, and I am certain that *The American Poetic Mind* will remain a milestone in the study of American poetry in Japan.

***Toshikazu Niikura** is professor emeritus at Meiji Gakuin University and honorary advisor to the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan, having served as its first president. He is the author of* Emily Dickinson: Portrait of Absence *(Tokyo: Taishukan, 1989).*

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**Book Note**

***The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition,*** edited by Ralph W. Franklin (ISBN 0-674-67624-6), will be available from Harvard University Press in September. It includes one version of each of the 1,789 poems included in Franklin's new Variorum Edition. The price will be $29.95.

*Boruch, continued from page 5*

features of Dickinson's craft, such as her "surrealism."

One thing the project did not change was Boruch's opinion that, in the collected Dickinson, "awful poems" are found side by side with "some gems." In her words, "there is a tremendous diversity in the work, and I imagine Dickinson would be horrified that her slush pile ended up with her good stuff."[1] Overall she judges Dickinson's least successful poems to "reflect the excesses of the century" and thus to resemble the "bad verse by women poets of her day," examples of which Boruch read in the *Springfield Republican* and *Scribner's Monthly* during her research.

Following this period of intensive learning about Dickinson, Boruch wrote not only the essay for the *Georgia Review,* entitled "Dickinson Descending" (reprinted in *Poetry's Old Air,* from which I quote), but also the poem "For Emily Dickinson," published originally in *Field* and reprinted in *Moss Burning.* The two pieces were written within a short time of each other and have several themes in common. Both the poem and the essay open with a description of Dickinson's bedroom at the Homestead and thus foreground what Boruch believes to be a "peculiarly American instinct...this passion for place: to be there, to see—as far as a century allows—as she saw, which is to say, *what* she saw" ("Dickinson Descending," 20). For Boruch, this room with "the narrow bed, the little desk / though nothing was diminutive" crystallizes the paradox of Dickinson's life and poetic accomplishment.

Unlike other tributes, Boruch's do not sentimentalize Dickinson as an always-inspiring mentor or a deity in American letters. David Graham's review praised Boruch's "skill at rendering states of emotional ambivalence" (166), and these works on Dickinson are compelling evidence that Boruch richly deserves the accolade.

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1. Although, during our interview, Boruch did not specify poems she would relegate to the "slush pile," in "Dickinson Descending" she discounts poems like "Not at Home to Callers" (J1590) as "sentimental wisecracks" (24) and categorizes the frequently anthologized "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (J288) and "There is no frigate like a book" (J1263) as "mealy choices" (28).

When I asked her directly about my interpretation, she shrugged off my suggestion that there was "something uneasy" in her relationship with Dickinson. What makes her uncomfortable, as she sees it, is what we agreed to call "Dickinson mania," a phenomenon that leads people to view Dickinson in a glorified way.

In her poem, for example, Boruch suggests that Dickinson's putative grandeur in the eyes of Boruch's teachers was a factor in her own "bone stubborn" refusal to read Dickinson or to "keep proper vigil." And the conclusion of Boruch's essay expresses the strong conviction that the homage to Dickinson has been overdone "until it seems something crucial to our survival to remember her, something the Chinese know by their hurried care, in the hours following a death, to put out food for the new ghost, to appease its inevitable anger at such abandonment" (34). Moreover, she insists, "No doubt we worry too much about this ghost" (35).

Boruch received an honorable mention in the 1987 *Pushcart Prize Collection XII* for "Dickinson Descending." I recommend that you read the essay in its entirety for several reasons. First, Boruch's insightful analysis is delightful fun to read. In addition, "Dickinson Descending" is so wide-ranging in its perspectives on the poet that any summary would be reductive. For example, Boruch "thinks" about Dickinson in relation to a variety of topics and other artists, including—to name a few—Adrienne Rich, Allen Ginsberg, Julie Harris, Martha Graham, Louise Bogan, Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Anne Sexton, and Robert Francis.

One of Boruch's favorite sections of the essay explores Dickinson's reading of Frederick Fargus's novel *Called Back.* She refers to the 1884 work as Dickinson's "pulp romance, her beach book," and reminds us that Emily was "past fifty, certainly not a kid anymore" when she read it. That Dickinson loved this "silly, melodramatic" novel "loosens and deepens the poet...[a fact that Boruch finds both] puzzling and welcome" (26-27). What I like about "Dickinson Descending" is the renewed appreciation Boruch's analysis gives me for poems such as "There's been a Death, in the Opposite House" (J389), "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died" (J465), and "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun" (J754).

If Boruch's essay evaluates Dickinson's public meaning in American literary history, her poem "For Emily Dickinson," reprinted here, focuses more exclusively on Dickinson's private meaning within Boruch's personal history. Stanza three presents a good example of Boruch's trademark humor and draws attention to another interest she shares with Dickinson: gardening. In surreal fashion, Dickinson rises up in the Homestead garden and is unable or unwilling to see the younger poet. In my opinion, Boruch's fantasy conveys more than simply a comic justification for why she, like "a lousy daughter," maintained so much emotional distance from Dickinson's legend and influence during her early years as a poet. Intentionally or not, Boruch captures the anxiety a beginning poet must feel to be writing within a tradition that already includes a formidable poetic talent like Dickinson. To use the terms of Boruch's metaphor, the fantasy portrays a new writer/gardener entering the garden of poetry only to discover that all the flowers have been previously named by an earlier writer/gardener.

Ultimately, however, Boruch has written a poem of reconciliation. In another memorable metaphor, she compares Dickinson's room with its legendarily locked door to a box like "a nest of boxes.../each opening into its secret smaller self" that she once received as a gift from an aunt. The image of her own speechless amazement calls to mind what she herself asserts to be most praiseworthy in Dickinson: "The strain and silence in Dickinson's best work suggest something not finally and perfectly etched, but willfully incomplete, broken off—sometimes violently" ("Dickinson Descending," 34-35). Marianne Boruch's own best work suggests no less.

**Work Cited**

Graham, David. Review of *Moss Burning. Sycamore Review* 6.2 (1994): 166-68.

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***Jonnie Guerra,*** *current vice-president of EDIS, has edited the "Poet to Poet" se-*

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*The Protected Voice, continued from page 12*

My personal links to Dickinson come out of something of a shared context. Although I was born more than fifty years after she died, our worlds had a lot in common: a small community, the father of

social standing (mine was a pastor, a leader in his denomination), a religious context with a Trinitarian core. Very importantly shared also were the hymnody of Isaac Watts, the stories from the Bible, confidence in one's own inner voice. I appreciated her attitude toward God (doubting and cautious), her ecstasy over the world, nature, and the smallest wonders. I responded to the way she offers her insights about this life, poses her questions, and recognizes that that brutal bird is one who "unrolled his feathers/and rowed him softer home..." (J328). Her poems describe, and help me to understand, my own experience in wonderful ways.

Finally, I have always had a fear of condemnations. Since I was a child I have needed to defend almost anyone who is badly spoken of. I no doubt rationalize the intentions of evildoers because I am afraid of being unjustly written off or not given another chance myself. I am sure this makes me appear weak and silly at times—or, God forbid, uncritical. Nevertheless, my fear of condemnation has created enough passion in me to craft a play about a woman who is not here to defend herself against a lot of silly speculations and the unfair label "Death Poet."

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***Ruth McRee** is a professional actress and educator. At present she teaches performing arts in Seattle, Washington.*

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*Leo Smit, continued from page 13*

singer, and to lend every syllable its own note, giving the words maximum clarity and comprehension.

But as I started to sketch out the first song, I did something I had never done before [in more than fifty years of composing]. The usual process was to begin with either a melodic or a harmonic idea. This time I penciled the words within the bars, without notes, into a natural rhythmic flow, a verse or two at a time. All the elements of music seemed to emerge simultaneously, shaping the song in close approximation to its final form.

The poet became his collaborator: "I believe I was composing the music without first hearing the tones, led on by the rhythms and the stirring sounds and meaning of Dickinson's poems. Her words created my song cycles, which, in turn, helped me understand her poems, her premonitions of immortality."

By 1991 Smit had composed six song-cycles, collectively titled *The Ecstatic Pilgrimage.* In choosing the almost eighty poems that make up the cycles, Smit followed his usual criteria for selecting poems for musical settings: He chose the ones that "moved, charmed, or mystified" him. "Dickinson's words did all three, and much more. The rhythm of her lines—the eights and sixes of Congregational hymn forms—and the haiku-like brevity and intensity of her many short poems, appealed to me instantly." His last criterion was that "the subject matter must be of abiding interest." Here, too, Dickinson more than satisfied.

Each cycle explores a particular theme of interest to both Smit and Dickinson. *Childe Emilie,* devoted to memories and fantasies of childhood, begins with "I was the slightest in the House" (J486) and builds to a declaration of independence: "I'm ceded – I've stopped being Theirs" (J508). The second cycle, *The Celestial Thrush,* explores Dickinson's love of music and birds, beginning with the humble phoebe of "I was a Phebe – nothing more" (J1009) and concluding with "I shall keep singing!" (J250). This cycle also includes the poem in which Dickinson names her favorite composer, "perfect Mozart" ("Better – than Music! For I – who heard it" [J503]).

Cycle III, *The Marigold Heart,* provides readings of fifteen poems of love, loss, and renunciation, including "There came a Day at Summer's full" (J322), "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun" (J754), and "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!" (J249). The longest cycle, tentatively titled *Beyond Circumference,* contains twenty-one poems of death, faith, and immortality. These include "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died" (J465) and "After great pain, a formal feeling comes' (J341), but not "Because I could not stop for Death" (J712), because "Aaron [Copland] did that one already."

The fifth cycle, *Tinted Mountains,* exploring light and landscapes, includes "There's a certain Slant of light" (J258) and "Image of Light, Adieu" (J1556). The final cycle, conceived as a triumphant conclusion, is *The White Diadem.* It includes only seven poems, on poets and poetry.

Smit and Rees premiered the first two cycles in New York and Cleveland in 1991. In October 1995 they performed these two cycles in Amherst at the Jones Library. The final cycle, *The White Diadem,* was premiered at Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the fall of 1996. In June 1997, Smit and Rees spent four days in a New York studio recording these three cycles for Bridge Records. Editing these recordings has taken much longer than expected. They hope to have a compact disc ready for release later this year. The other three cycles have yet to be developed for performance or recording.

Working with Smit has been, Rees says, one of the most delightful experiences of her career. Known as a "composer's singer," she has premiered more than a hundred songs by twentieth-century composers, including William Schuman, Elliott Carter, Louise Talma, Ned Rorem, and Gregg Smith. As a singer, Rees has always approached a song first through the words. Most composers—her husband Gregg Smith included—approach songs first through the music. Smit's settings of poetry are distinctive, she says, because of their attention to language. His songs are therefore a joy to sing.

Asked to describe his creative process, Smit quotes Mozart: "I have all these ideas in my brain. I don't know where they came from." Dickinson, he says, was like Mozart in her writing of poems: "She once said that whenever her words were fluent she suspected them to be false. But speed is a relative thing. Her 366 poems written in one year testify to a Mozartean tempo, incredible to ordinary mortals. But, like Mozart, she must have composed mentally, before jotting down her words on odd scraps of paper. Later she would work them over at leisure and with great care."

The three years he spent setting *The Ecstatic Pilgrimage,* Smit says, were "the happiest of my musical life, thanks to Emily Dickinson." He composed the songs "in a continuous haze of excitement. I cannot recall the details of their making and am constantly surprised by the reality of their existence."

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*Who Was Susan? continued from page 9*

discouraging. I naturally looked to her first (with you) for help, supposing 'twould be her highest pleasure, but I found my mistake....Mrs. Dickinson has fine ability but lacks mental energy to complete. She has many ideal plans for work worthy of her talent, but the world will (probably) not see any finished."[11]

Susan later explained in a letter to Higginson (also in December 1890) that she had been planning a volume of Emily's poems to be printed privately. "I have been held back from arranging them to be published the past years by your verdict of 'un-presentable.' My own taste must be my own, but a market judgment I have none of, and shrank from going contrary to your practical opinion in the matter. I think this much is due myself—my life long intimacy with Emily, my equally long deep appreciation of her genius."[12] This comment dovetails with Susan's extraordinary taste in literature. There is no question but that she knew fine writing.

One paragraph in the obituary for Susan reveals another facet of her personality. It describes her as an enthusiastic traveler and one "much admired, who shone in the cosmopolitan society of Rome, Nice, and Paris. She followed European politics." In the summer of 1897, two years after the death of Austin Dickinson, Sue, Mattie, and Ned set out for a European tour with an extensive itinerary, returning to Amherst that fall. Ned, never a robust individual, became ill soon after their return and died in May of 1898. The following year Sue and Mattie began a pattern of living away from Amherst for months at a time. They lived in New York City, choosing to become members of the National Arts Club, a congenial environment for Sue and her daughter, who was developing her skill as a pianist.

In 1902, when Sue was seventy-two, they embarked on another extensive European trip. Their itinerary included Paris, Nice, Cologne, Dresden, Zurich, The Hague, London, and the Italian cities of Rome, Verona, Venice, and Florence. Sue kept a journal of this trip, which was among the papers transferred to Brown University. Gregory Farmer, Project Manager for the Evergreens, has verified the existence of this journal, but it has not yet surfaced from the enormous volume of material sent to Brown. Some journal entries written on pieces of paper no longer in the original binding do exist and reveal a few comments by Sue. Upon seeing an Alpine peak, for example, she found it "so wholesome after Paris." She also reveled in the "architectural majesty of the churches."[12]

It was during this trip that Martha met and married Captain Alexander Manuilovich Bianchi, on July 24, 1903, at the church of the Russian embassy in Dresden. One rumor says that Sue accompanied the Bianchis on their honeymoon. This has not been verified, but it is true that she was abroad with them. The three returned to Amherst in October 1903. Captain Bianchi had a government position in Boston briefly, which enabled him to remain in the United States, according to an announcement in the *Amherst Record* that month.

Their stay at the Evergreens was short-lived, however. The same newspaper announcement indicated that Sue and the Bianchis would go to Florence until December 1903 and spend the winter in a villa in Nice. The pattern was repeated the following year. But when Sue and Mattie finally returned to the Evergreens in 1906, they were without Captain Bianchi, who had abandoned Martha, although they continued to communicate until about 1908. Sue and Martha lived together at the Evergreens until Sue's death in 1913, at the age of eighty-two.

To repeat the question with which I began: Who was Sue, when seen through unbiased eyes? There is much more to be discovered and written about her. Her prose work, for example, should be brought under one cover. Her poetry is certainly not in Emily's class, but, writing talent aside, she was a personage in Amherst, a noted hostess, a recognized intellectual who was largely self-educated. She had an instinctive affinity for great literature.

The fleshing out of the years following Emily Dickinson's death in 1886 until Susan's own death in 1913 is just now occurring and eventually will give us a more comprehensive picture. Although Susan's personality traits were not always agreeable, she was a brilliant and accomplished woman who stands as a person in her own right—to be reckoned with by future scholars. They will be able to use the treasure trove now becoming available at Brown University.

### Notes

1. Jean McClure Mudge, "Emily Dickinson and 'Sister Sue,'" *Prairie Schooner* 51.1 (1978): 90-108.

2. Dorothy H. Oberhaus, "In Defense of Sue" (Chap Book), *Dickinson Studies*, no. 48 (1983): 5.

3. John W. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1934), 60-63.

4. Mabel Loomis Todd, journal entry for Oct. 1881, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale Univ.

5. Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith, eds., *Open Me Carefully* (Ashfield, Mass.: Paris Press, 1998).

6. *Springfield Republican*, May 12, 1913; *Amherst Record*, 1908-1912.

7. Susan Dickinson, "Magnetic Visitors" (Amherst: Amherst College, 1981), 8-15, 27.

8. Susan H. Dickinson, "Two Generations of Amherst Society," in *Essays on Amherst's History* (Amherst: Vista Trust, 1978), 168-88. Originally found in box 10, Houghton Library, by Mudge and Longsworth.

9. Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart, "The Dickinson Hypermedia Archive" Website: http://www.iath.virginia.edu/dickinson/articles.html

10. "Handlist of Books Found in the Home of Emily Dickinson in Amherst" (Cambridge: Houghton Library, 1940).

11. Millicent Todd Bingham, *Ancestors' Brocades* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), 87.

12. Ibid., 86.

13. Gregory Farmer says that loose pages of the missing journal were found in desk drawers and scattered among other papers at the Evergreens. The scraps now available may originally have been parts of a bound journal.

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***Dorothea A. Kissam** has been a guide at the Dickinson Homestead for the past eight years.*

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*Notes & Queries, continued from page 18*

**Niels Kjær**, who founded and has directed the Emily Dickinson Center in Lyø, Denmark, for many years, is retiring and moving his office—and the ED Center—to Aarhus, where he plans to devote much of his time to further study of Dickinson. The Center will remain an active site of Dickinson events and an important resource for Dickinson scholars in Scandinavia.

The February 1999 issue of *Art in America* carried an article about **Lesley Dill**'s billboard project in the Tampa/Clearwater, Florida, area. It combines photographic images with lines from Dickinson poems.

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