

Bulletin

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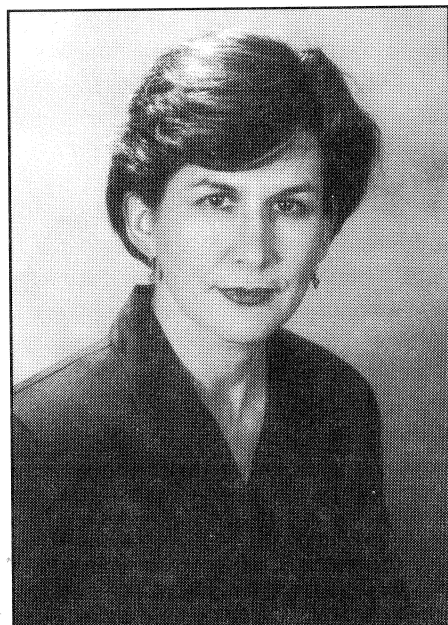
*"The Only News I know / Is Bulletins all Day / From Immortality."***"WHAT A HOME YOU AND I SHALL MAKE, SUE -
DID ANYONE ELSE EVER DREAM OF SUCH A HOME?"***An Interview with Jane Wald by Wendy Kohler*

We sat in Ned Dickinson's bedroom for the interview. Since she was hired as the first professional director at The Evergreens, Ned's room has been Jane Wald's office. Just moments before we began our interview, as I stood at the front door and pulled out the ringer, I imagined for a moment that Sue would be letting me in for afternoon tea. But it was Jane's gracious presence that met me when the door creaked open. Passing the parlor on our left, noting its furnishings pushed to the rear wall, and heading up the stairs framed in faded and peeling wallpaper, I quickly faced the reality of time while still holding on—just a bit—to the aura of the Dickinson world.

The evidence of Dickinson life in The Evergreens is strongly evocative. As Jane said early in our visit, "a mountain of material remains—the corpus of their interests in art, in literature, in all kinds of things." For example, a recent find is a portion of wallpaper, better preserved over time because it was hidden behind a panel and nestled in a dark, protected hallway past Gilbert's room and the maid's room, on the way downstairs as only the servants would go. The wallpaper colors are relatively bright, the design evident. The Evergreens is a house alive with the possibilities of the past, and Jane Wald gets to explore them all.

She started in the profession with an interest in the colonial period. She was born and grew up in Gainesville, Florida, where her father was an agricultural geneticist at the University of Florida developing new varieties of soybeans in

the days before biotech. Jane's lifelong interest in American history began in elementary school and continued through



Bryn Mawr College and graduate school at Princeton. Stops along the way included a graduate program in historical archaeology at the College of William and Mary (the highlight of that program was a summer field school on a small Caribbean island almost untouched by tourism) and a spell as an assistant with *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.

Jane came to The Evergreens from Old Sturbridge Village where, most recently, she was the assistant director for Development and Membership. Hired by the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust last year, she has multifold responsibilities.

The Trust's mission is to preserve and maintain The Evergreens as it was when occupied by the Dickinson family, for the benefit of scholars and the general public. Jane's tasks center on creating an informative and rewarding visitor experience through developing effective interpretation plans and public programs; marketing, fundraising, and constituency development; sustaining strategic partnerships and collaborations with other cultural and community organizations; and advancing preservation, restoration and ongoing maintenance of the buildings, grounds, and collections. No wonder Jane says that "one of the most fascinating things about the job is how many directions one can go in...the endless opportunities to explore and immerse oneself in this family and this community."

Jane's metaphor for her work is apt: "It's such a rich vein," she says, "with much more mining to be done." A great deal has already been achieved. The immediate goal upon Jane's arrival was to put The Evergreens to use in interpreting the full context of Emily Dickinson's life. The trustees wanted the Evergreens up and running as a museum as soon as possible, and last year the house was open for a regular schedule of guided tours from May to December. This year the tour schedule will be expanded on a calendar roughly parallel to that of the Homestead (see p. 5).

The home of Austin Dickinson and his family reveals much about the public face of the Dickinsons in the Amherst

community as well as the family's private face, with all the complexities of relationship among its members, most significantly with the poet herself. Both the tours for the general public and those specifically designed for school groups emphasize the telling of stories about the Dickinsons of Amherst, stories that come alive in this house.

Gregory Farmer, project manager of Preservation and Conservation Projects for the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust since 1991, remains closely involved with ongoing restoration of The Evergreens. It is thanks in large part to his and the trustees' remarkable dedication that so many restoration goals have been met in the last decade. The roof has been replaced, critical structural repairs completed, the foundation reinforced, sills replaced, and portions of the exterior repaired. Exterior carpentry and repainting according to the 1856 color scheme have returned the facade of the Evergreens to its early splendor.

Next will be some landscape restoration and repairs to the rear ell (the dining room, kitchen, Gilbert's bedroom, the maid's room, and the shed), including carpentry and painting renovations. The ell was originally a cottage built by Edward Dickinson in the 1830s. Repairs here will tell us much about the structure of the second floor and will help with further interior restoration projects.

Future fundraising efforts can then focus on the restoration of the interior of The Evergreens. The goal here, says Jane, is to "restore something of the aesthetic environment," including the addition of lost decorative finishes, the repair and conservation of wallpapers, the replacement of window treatments, conservation of furnishings and artwork—"all the lay-

ers and textures of a Victorian environment that function as a setting for the daily life and all those social entertainments" that filled the Dickinson home.

The restoration vision is to be able to represent all periods of the Dickinson occupancy of the house. This presents an interesting challenge, taking the time traveler from 1856, when the house was built, to 1943, when Martha Dickinson Bianchi died. But Martha generously gave us those last thirty years (from 1913, when Sue died, to 1943) with very little change to the house. Just as Martha's touch in the house was "light," so too the Hampsons—Alfred and Mary, who inherited The Evergreens from Martha—lived lightly in the house after Martha's death. Under Jane Wald's able leadership, The Evergreens will be restored to the atmosphere it possessed when the family Emily Dickinson loved best lived there. Jane fully understands the goal to "maintain the authenticity, the patina of an age, a textured and tangible connection that we in the present can have with the past."

"There are so many reasons to love the director's job at The Evergreens," says Jane. "Perhaps the fundamental reason is the opportunity to look into the material and documentary lives of people who lived in times past and have left an enduring legacy. From another perspective, it's a wonderful job because of the opportunity to engage the full range of museum work—collections, research, preservation, interpretation, and shaping the visitor's experience and what they learn at The Evergreens. This work brings daily satisfaction, perhaps most simply and immediately in the astonished reaction of visitors to The Evergreens' interior as soon as they cross the threshold."

Jane shares an interest in history, literature, and the humanities with the rest of her family. Her husband, James Wald, is associate professor of European history at Hampshire College. A true bibliophile, he is also director of the Hampshire College Center for the Book. The couple have one daughter, Marianne, ten. "She's been a dedicated writer from the time she could wield a pencil," says her mother. "She loves music, dance, drama, and, above all, reading."

It was at the time in her career when Jane found public history an especially rewarding and effective form of teaching that she turned to museum work and program development. It is our good fortune that this turn eventually pointed her to The Evergreens. As she develops programs, leads collections research, and promotes awareness of The Evergreens, Jane is assuring the preservation of a community treasure and a magnificent Dickinson resource.

The Evergreens is the home Austin wrote to Sue about "making" nearly a hundred and fifty years ago. Today, thanks to the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, its supporters, and the dedication and talents of Jane Wald, the Dickinson "dream" of 1856 is a burgeoning reality with all its complexities and its historical, social, personal, and literary riches. The door is now open to all of us.

Wendy Kohler is director of Secondary Curriculum for the Amherst Regional School District. A Dickinson scholar, she has served on the Homestead Advisory Committee and was the educational consultant to The Evergreens Restoration Project.

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A PORTRAIT OF S.P. ROSENBAUM

By Cindy MacKenzie

Cindy MacKenzie, best known for *A Concordance to the Letters of Emily Dickinson* (University of Colorado Press, 2000), which recently went into its second printing, teaches English at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her articles on Dickinson have appeared in *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, and she has presented memorable conference papers on Dickinson's poetics. She reports that another essay will soon appear in a collection on the theme of writing and addiction. MacKenzie's major project at present is a book-length study of the materiality of Dickinson's language.

Jane Donahue Eberwein, *Series Editor*

Although every Dickinson scholar is familiar with the indispensable reference book *A Concordance to the Poems of Emily Dickinson*, even nearly forty years since its 1964 publication, most of us know little about the man who compiled it. Having myself recently completed a concordance to Dickinson's letters, and having learned that S.P. (Patrick) Rosenbaum is a Canadian like myself (in fact, he holds dual Canadian/American citizenship), I was curious to find out more about someone who shared these experiences. Moreover, I wanted to "flesh out" this well known name in Dickinson scholarship through an inquiry into both the project and its author's career. I found Rosenbaum in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he enjoys his retirement even as he actively continues his scholarship.

The story of the concordance is an interesting one that began at Cornell University in 1959. Even as he progressed with his doctoral dissertation on Henry James, the Cornell Concordance Committee invited Rosenbaum to work on a concordance for Dickinson's poems to correspond with the recently published 1955 Thomas H. Johnson variorum edition. The committee, headed by Cornell professor Stephen M. Parrish, was formed to explore the possibilities of using computers to make literary concordances. Among the committee members was Stephen E.

Whicher, son of Dickinson's early biographer, George Frisbie Whicher. Rosenbaum dedicated the concordance to the memory of the younger Whicher, who died tragically while the compilation was in progress.



S.P. Rosenbaum reading the first printout.

Rosenbaum agreed to undertake the project for several reasons that seemed practical for a young scholar, but most importantly, he emphasizes, so that he would have "the opportunity of soaking [himself] in Dickinson's poetry while making something that would be useful to other students of her amazing art." His part in the project was to turn Dickinson's poetry into texts that the computer could work on.

Challenged by the idea of making a concordance from a variorum edition, he felt that the most interesting part of the work was approaching Dickinson's poems in such a way that all of her so-called variants would be included with their contexts. Rosenbaum explains the process in detail in the preface to the concordance and in an article, "Emily Dickinson and the Machine," published in *Studies in Bibliography* 18 (1965): 207-27.

The editorial work of preparing the text went on for about six months. IBM cards for each line of poetry were then punched and verified by operators. The cards were next taken to the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory in Buffalo, where they were

transferred to magnetic tape, processed by the computer, and printed for the Cornell University Press. The cards and tapes were supposed to be stored at the laboratory or at Cornell so that future scholars could consult them. Over the years, Rosenbaum has occasionally received requests from people who wanted to work with the "non-significant" words on the tapes that were omitted from the concordance, but unfortunately the cards and tapes were either destroyed or lost.

At the time the concordance was published, Rosenbaum, then at Brown University on a postdoctoral fellowship, hoped to return to Dickinson's poetry and perhaps make use of the concordance to write about her. But his doctoral thesis on Henry James's *The Spoils of Poynton*, as he explains, "metamorphosed into a Norton Critical Edition of *The Ambassadors*, and then my interests in literature, philosophy, and literary history took me to the Bloomsbury Group, where I remain."

Despite enormous changes in computer technology and the recent publication of R.W. Franklin's edition of the poems, Rosenbaum's concordance to Dickinson's poems remains in print. Well received and widely reviewed when it appeared, it had sold 2,775 copies by the end of 1999. The Cornell University Press regards it as the leading volume in the series. But as Rosenbaum modestly concludes, "I would like to think I had something to do with [the book's success], but I'm afraid most of the credit must be given to Emily Dickinson and her devoted readers." He tells me that several years after publication, Cornell asked him to consider working on a concordance to Dickinson's letters, but "they agreed with me that one concordance was enough for a lifetime." I think I agree.

Rosenbaum's illustrious career does indeed focus on the Bloomsbury Group, where he has made a considerable contribution by way of numerous articles and several books, including Virginia Woolf's *Women and Fiction: The Manuscript Versions of A Room of One's Own* (Blackwell,

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PUNISHMENT AND POETRY

EMILY DICKINSON SHARES WITH SHARON OLDS

By Elizabeth M. Mills

It is almost twenty years since I first heard Sharon Olds read her poetry at an Emily Dickinson Birthday Tribute, a December event held annually at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. I was impressed then by Olds's powerful language, by her bold, unflinching metaphors that reminded me of Dickinson's. In the essay that follows, Elizabeth Mills illuminatingly explores Olds's relationship to Dickinson, their likenesses and unlikenesses. I am pleased to present her view of Olds's share in Dickinson's inheritance.

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

When Sharon Olds visited my class at Davidson College in November 1991, she wore a pink sweater, a plaid pleated skirt, pink flats, and pearls—hardly the attire expected of someone whom critics occasionally compare to the Marquis de Sade. But then, Camille Paglia described Emily Dickinson, in *Sexual Personae*, as Amherst's Madame de Sade and catalogued her many Sadean attributes, including her "sodomasochistic surrealism," which aids her "as pioneer among women writers in renouncing genteel good manners" (624, 634). Olds, too, is praised for "boldness" by friends such as Galway Kinnell but damned for "blasphemy" by critic Adam Kirsch. Likewise, she is noted for employing "startlingly surreal images," as a reviewer of her most recent collection, *Blood, Tin, Straw*, claims in the *New York Times*.

Both poets share a love for the mask, Dickinson with her "supposed person" and Olds with her "apparently personal poetry." Both use the "Attar so immense / From the familiar species / That perished by the Door— / We wonder it was not Ourselves / Arrested it— before" (Fr446) and are sometimes faulted for pressing the domestic quotidian, despite Olds's assertion that poetry is "about ordinary things" (*Salon*). Both prize the body, question the providence of a Calvinist god, and seek

to speak the truth, however "slant" their metaphors may be. Olds's poem "Emily Dickinson's Writing Table in Her Bedroom at the Homestead, Amherst, Mass.," first published in *Grand Street* in 1993 and recently included in *Visiting Emily*, clarifies their connection further.



Photo by Bill Giduz

The speaker of this "apparently personal" poem is an "I" who perceives first with her eye, then through her remembering flesh, which "can almost / still feel, with [her] buttocks, the maze / of glazed string in the seat." In the process the speaker reclaims an object (the chair, the child) as subject (the child, the poet) and through metonymy links her own poetic identity with Dickinson. As in Dickinson's oeuvre, the most frequently used noun in this poem is "I," and this subjective subject-making illustrates Olds's likeness to Dickinson, as Kinnell notes when he compares the two, remarking that for both of them "inner experience is primary" and that "there is no attempt to portray the outer world without one's self in it" (Smith 2).

Although the poem begins with reference to the "writing table," the main focus

is on "the chair my parents tied me to / that day." Rather than overtly joining herself poet to poet with Dickinson, Olds connects by metonymy of table and chair and through a memory of constriction and restraint. The connection between that table and chair emerges from a painful memory of punishment. However, the leap from writing table to chair to writing table in the first lines of the poem mimics the leap of the shad "rubefacted / with roe," an act of creative survival which the poem itself describes. The image of rubbed redness, a color then connected with fertility through reference to "roe," suggests that from the abrasive punishment the poem recalls comes the future poet and this poem itself.

The chair to which the speaker refers is the cornucopia-backed Hitchcock chair with rush seat made by Lambert Hitchcock in Riverton, Connecticut, between 1825 and 1832, a "cousin" of which is located in Dickinson's bedroom in the Homestead and pictured in its brochure from 1991. Olds's speaker highlights the pain she felt in the chair by avoiding its memory: "I can almost / still feel...[but] / do not remember being tied / to the struts rising from the seat, it makes me / uneasy to try to remember that." Omission here underscores the difficulty of recalling what has happened; readers may recognize this speaker's lacunae as variations of Dickinsonian deletions.

Olds has referred to herself in several interviews as "a survival addict," and the turn in line 16 of this poem shows that propensity, for the speaker's pain finds some succor in "the pleasure of being spoon-fed," the "dense message" seeming readable and sacred, "as if it were / falling, intelligible manna." Referring to ordinary "alphabet soup," as "manna," the speaker moves from simple childhood fare to the miraculous food fed Yahweh's children during their wandering through the wilderness. The association of the parent with the god-figure suggests the power the parent has over the child, not

only physically but spiritually as well. In contrast to her earlier forgetting, about this food the speaker says, "I remember." She also remembers that she "would drift" and "would sing, sometimes, / loaf-shaped quatrains from the hymnal, but when someone / approached I'd be silent."



Photo by Frank Ward, courtesy of the Dickinson Homestead, Amherst College

Readers of Dickinson will remember the poet's own narrative of confinement: "They shut me up in Prose - / As when a little Girl / They put me in the Closet - / Because they liked me 'still'" [Fr445].

The bird, symbol of freedom in Dickinson's poem ("They might as wise have lodged a Bird / For Treason - in the Pound") and traditional symbol for the poet, Olds also connects with poetry when she states that writing poetry brings relief because "to a poet, the human community is like the community of birds to a bird, singing to each other. Love is one of the reasons we are singing to one another, love of language, love of sound, love of singing itself, and love of the other birds" (*Listen*). Olds declares that she is "passionately interested in singing" (Davidson).

The power of the brain, Olds's speaker recounts in her poem, "without pencil or paper—no scissors, / no Scotch tape," will not be still or stilled. Physically bound, the speaker drifts into song, into "loaf-shaped quatrains from the hymnal," that music becoming her sustenance. Thus fortified, Olds's speaker can face the father when he "come[s] into a room

Emily Dickinson's Writing Table in Her Bedroom at the Homestead, Amherst, Mass.

The chair next to her writing table is the chair my parents tied me to that day. Not the same chair, but a cousin of it, a Hitchcock from Connecticut, factory beside sluice gates through which shad leap, rubefacted with roe. My cervical vertebra feels the peneblum. My swayback sways away from the lower bar, and I can almost still feel, with my buttocks, the maze of glazed string in the seat. My wrists do not remember being tied to the struts rising from the seat, it makes me uneasy to try to remember that. But I remember the alphabet soup she fed me, the pleasure of being spoon-fed, I wanted to read each dense message as if it were falling, intelligible manna. When I was alone in the room I would drift...I had never been without pencil or paper—no scissors, no Scotch tape. I would sing, sometimes, loaf-shaped quatrains from the hymnal, but when someone approached I'd be silent. When my father came in, I wonder what it was like for him to come into a room with his child tied to a chair in it, I think he liked it, I think it felt right to him, he had great faith in me. I would be a chair that grew up and spoke well and went to his college. I was the maple they tapped, troughed, I was their Druid, they trusted me, they knew if there was to be sweetness ever come out of that house, it would have to come from me.

First appeared in *Grand Street*, 44 (11.4), 1993.
Reprinted by permission of the poet

with his child tied to a chair in it." The odd syntax and raised, then dashed, expectation also seem Dickinsonian as the line breaks its regular rhythm between "felt" and "right." The speaker's mindful glossing of the distant, observing father leaps from thought to thought without periods until she acknowledges that "he had great faith in me." This surprising recognition by the now adult speaker shifts the dynamic; the power is now hers.

The ironic twist of the final lines echoes that in Dickinson's poem, for although her

parents continue to objectify her ("I would be a chair that grew up"), to wound ("tapped" and "troughed") her, to think they can control her gift ("I was their Druid, they trusted me"), she has willed herself beyond their control. The speaker is no more her parents' bard or Druid, able to foretell the future and perform magic, than Dickinson's speaker is "still[ed]" by her closeting. She escapes her Druidic apprenticeship of pain.

As others have noted, the poem that touches "They shut me up in Prose" in

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“A LIGHT EXISTS IN SPRING”

The New Exhibit in the Homestead Tour Center

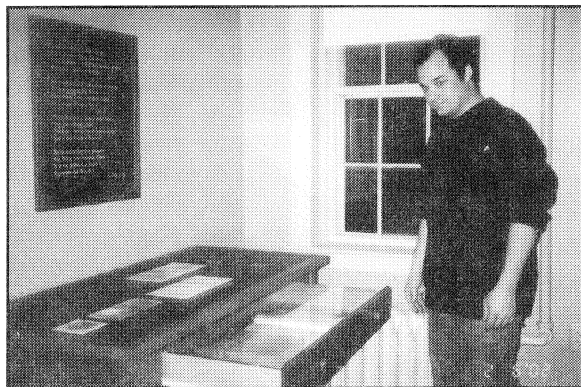
When you arrive in Amherst for your annual meeting this July, you will encounter some changes at the Dickinson Homestead. A year-long project to convert the rear ell of the house to a welcoming Tour Center is now completed! The final touch occurred this winter when the new introductory exhibit was installed.

The exhibit allows visitors to review some of the key elements of Dickinson's life before they tour her home. It introduces them to four especially significant topics: poetry, education, family, and immortality. Throughout the exhibit, quotations from Dickinson enhance the understanding of these topics and bring the poet to life. Three poems are included in their entirety: “This World is not conclusion,” “I reckon, when I count at all,” and “The Brain is wider than the Sky.” In addition, an illustrated timeline highlights milestones in Dickinson's life.

The exhibit was developed by the Dickinson Homestead Exhibit Committee, all members of the Homestead Advisory Committee: Daria D'Arienzo, archivist of Amherst College; David Dillon, architectural critic for the *Dallas Morning News*; and Karen Sánchez-Eppler, professor of English and American Studies at Amherst College. For exhibit material, the committee drew from the wealth of photographs available in the Amherst College Archives as well as from images already on display at the Homestead.

To present the content more effectively, the Homestead hired a professional exhibit designer, Robert Checchi. Now living in Santa Monica, California, Checchi worked from 1994 to 2000 as exhibit designer for the Ellis Island Immigration Museum/Statue of Liberty National Monument. One challenge he faced in creating the Homestead exhibit was the absence of three-dimensional objects. He devised an innovative solution: the two-dimensional materials are laminated onto display tables and one large cupboard that echo in style furniture typical of nineteenth-century

kitchens and work areas. The exhibit cabinetry was made especially for the Homestead by A & A Architectural Woodworking in Westfield, Massachusetts.



Robert Checchi, exhibit designer, reveals the Webster's dictionary.

Although the exhibit is formed primarily from text and photographs, a two-volume edition of *Webster's Dictionary* published in 1844 is a special feature. Included in the section on poetry, the dictionary provides tangible evidence of Dickinson's command of language. The edition is the same as that owned by Dickinson (her copy is in the collection of the Houghton Library). To help preserve the dictionary, Checchi chose to display the volumes in a drawer that visitors pull out for viewing.

In addition to the introductory exhibit, Checchi also designed new reception and display tables for the Homestead's small museum shop, housed in the kitchen. Additional explanatory labels were placed in the kitchen to draw attention to such features as a storage cabinet uncovered during the renovation project. Also on view are a spoon owned by Emily Dickinson (on loan from the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust) and copies of two of the poet's recipes. Not to be missed is an additional exhibit panel in the new bathroom that features Dickinson's poem “Alone and in a Circumstance.”

Special thanks are due to the Exhibit Committee and to Polly Longworth, Douglas Wilson, and Homestead guides who offered suggestions and assisted

with various components of the exhibit. The Tour Center Project was made possible by generous gifts from John and

Elizabeth Armstrong and Alice Garside, and by the support of numerous Dickinson enthusiasts. The exhibit is free and can be viewed during the Homestead's open hours. This summer the Homestead will have an expanded schedule: Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday 1-5 p.m.

Evergreens Views and Previews

During the winter months the Evergreens' electrical system was brought up to modern capacity and safety standards. Old knob-and-tube wiring that had served the house for many decades was replaced by modern wiring, circuits, and a new service panel. Along with the electrical upgrade came the refurbishing of the early wall sconces and chandeliers that have been the main source of light since about 1900. The fixtures were packed and shipped to a firm specializing in antique lighting, where they were cleaned and restored to their original gleaming brass finish. These improvements will enhance the safety and security of the house and will prepare the way for restoration projects still to come.

The Amherst Historical Commission recently recognized the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust's efforts to stabilize the Evergreens and restore it to its 1856 exterior appearance with the presentation of a Historic Preservation Award at the Amherst Select Board's January 28 meeting. Each year the Historical Commission recognizes several restoration projects in the community that maintain architectural and historical integrity in their preservation plans and that enhance the neighborhood's sense of place. The restoration of the Dell, home of early Dickinson editor Mabel Loomis Todd (located one street south of the Homestead and

Evergreens), was also recognized for its contribution to the historic integrity of the neighborhood.

Restoration of The Evergreens in the last several years has enabled the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust to increase opportunities for visitors to tour the house. In 2001, The Evergreens was open for public tours two afternoons a week from June through October. More than 1,650 guests crowded in to see the house and learn more about its fascinating residents and their connections with Emily Dickinson. The success of last year's season has led to expanded hours in 2002, a schedule that parallels more closely that of the Homestead. The Evergreens will be open from the beginning of March through December 7 on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons; during June, July, and August the house will also open on Thursday and Friday afternoons.

2002 Programs at the Homestead and Evergreens

The growing schedule of guided tours is accompanied by several new public programs and special events throughout the season offered jointly by the Homestead and The Evergreens. In addition to the annual Poetry Walk (this year on May 18) and the Birthday Open Houses (December 14), the two houses have organized several new events.

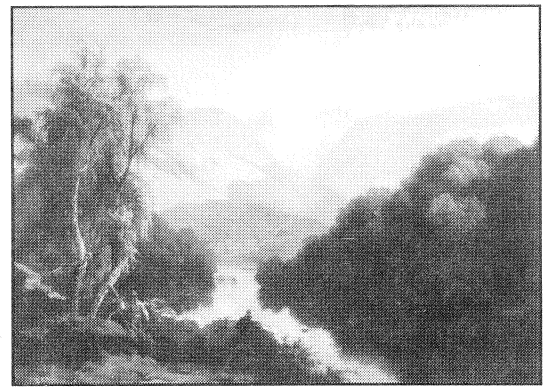
On Sunday, April 21, in recognition of National Poetry Month and EDIS's "Dickinson Alive" week, the two houses hosted a concert by the New World Chamber Ensemble. The featured work on the program was *Letters to the World: A Reflection on the Poems of Emily Dickinson*, composed by Gwyneth Walker. The piece is a combination of spoken poetry and music, with Dickinson poems read aloud between musical interludes. Readers for the performance were Doris Abramson, professor emeritus of theater at the University of Massachusetts; Tom Gerety, president of Amherst College; Jonnie Guerra, president of EDIS; Norton Juster, architect and author; and David Porter, professor emeritus of English at the University of Massachusetts. Partial funding for the concert was provided by the New England Foundation for the Arts and the Amherst College President's Office.

New this summer will be "At Home and Glad," a program of Sunday afternoon tours and tea at the Homestead and Evergreens on June 16, July 7, and August 11. The event takes its name from the contents of a note delivered to Thomas Wentworth Higginson before his first meeting with Emily Dickinson in 1870: "I will be at Home, and glad. . . . The incredible never surprises us because it is the incredible." The Evergreens and the Homestead hope to "surprise" and enlighten visitors by examining domestic life, social customs, and the contrasting forms of hospitality at the busy Evergreens and the quieter Homestead—just what it meant to be "at Home" to callers in the nineteenth century.

In another new venture this summer, the two houses will offer a series of programs examining the Dickinsons' fascination with nature. "**The Angle of a Landscape': Nature and Art in Emily Dickinson's World**" will focus on three aspects of nature and art as they relate to the poet and her work and to the landscaping and collecting interests of Austin and Susan Dickinson.

On Saturday, July 6, "**The simple News that Nature told': Examining the Landscape and Poetry of Emily Dickinson**" begins with a walk through the landscape of the Homestead and Evergreens to consider the properties as they appeared in the poet's own time and how they have changed since. Guiding the walk will be David Spector, associate professor of biological sciences at Central Connecticut State University, and Edward Davis, professor emeritus of botany at the University of Massachusetts. Following the walk, Mary Jo Salter, a poet and the Emily Dickinson Senior Lecturer in Humanities at Mount Holyoke College, will discuss Dickinson's extensive use of natural imagery.

On Saturday, August 10, we will look at other landscapes in a program entitled "**Land Is the Only Thing That Lasts': The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted and Landscape Architecture in Amherst.**" The Evergreens was patterned



In the Cumberland Mountains, by J.N.T. van Starkenborgh (1822-1895), hangs in The Evergreens parlor. Courtesy of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust

after Andrew Jackson Downing's published examples, and the property's original landscape design owed much to Downing's influence. Later in the century Austin Dickinson consulted with landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux on several projects in Amherst and hosted their visits to town and to The Evergreens. Austin's lifelong interest in landscape architecture made a lasting imprint on the town. John Martin, professor emeritus from the University of Massachusetts Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department, will lecture on Downing, Olmsted, and the social and cultural meaning of cultivated and naturalistic landscaping in the nineteenth-century. The discussion will be followed by a visit to four places in Amherst that were intended, with varying degrees of success, to exhibit the influence of Olmsted's designs and landscaping principles.

On Sunday, September 22, "**Lone Landscapes: The Dickinsons as Connoisseurs**" begins with "A certain Slant of Light": Landscape Art at the Evergreens," a lecture by Susan Danly, independent scholar and former curator of American Art at Amherst College's Mead Art Museum, on aspects of the art collection assembled by Austin and Susan Dickinson and the aesthetic taste it represents. Barton L. St. Armand, professor of English at Brown University, will speak about "Angling for a Landscape: Emily Dickinson, Stalking, and the Privacy of Nature," an exploration of Dickinson's deliberate "slantwise" view of nature, how she chose to view and portray landscape in her

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“THE DISTANCE WOULD NOT HAUNT ME SO — ”

TEACHING DICKINSON’S POETRY THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION

By *Connie Ann Kirk*

Certainly by now Emily Dickinson’s poems have been taught in almost every scenario one can imagine—day classes, night classes, creative writing workshops, elementary school classes, etc. Perhaps one of the more recent phenomena in teaching the poet’s work, as well as in teaching any subject at any level, is the increase in technology in the classroom and the impact technology has had on pedagogy as well as on the subject matter under discussion. One can only imagine what the poet who wrote about the arrival of the steam engine in her hometown from the vantage point of a speaker hiding in the woods would think of the lightning speed and accessibility of information in today’s classrooms. In addition, it would certainly be astounding to her as a working poet “at home” who never gave a public reading of her work to envision that work read aloud by an instructor in one room connected by optical cable to a classroom of students in another room hundreds of miles away, in “real” time.

I have had the opportunity to teach Dickinson’s poetry to students in college distance education courses, both through video conferencing and online. My university distinguishes between these two methods of “content delivery” when it sets up a distance education course, though, in fact, the two methods could be and often are used in tandem. Since ours is a state school that serves a fairly large rural area, our video conferencing classes are typically set up for branch campuses in the region, which are often located at other public buildings such as high schools or in hospital meeting rooms. There must be an ongoing commitment at both facilities to house and maintain the equipment necessary for the video hook-up, so typically video conference courses are planned for a group of students who are working their way through a degree program at a distance from the college’s main campus.

By contrast, our online classes are designed to meet the needs of individual “lifelong learners” (older students who

used to be called “non-trationals”) who may or may not be matriculated yet into a degree-granting program but who want to test the waters in coming back to college or to supplement an existing part-time campus schedule with an online course. The online classes are almost always run asynchronously, meaning that there is no set day or time for class when everyone must be online at the same time. Students come to the course website at their own convenience within the week to pick up class notes, drop off assignments, and add to ongoing discussions with the instructor and classmates on a message board or through a listserv.

While visual and auditory presentation is primary in video conferencing courses, students do not see or hear their instructor at all in most of our online courses (though this capability does exist online). Writing skills become paramount in online classes. I have found that, as a writer, I am much more comfortable teaching with words and images online than I am with the very different task of broadcasting my class through video conferencing. Both situations have their limitations, as one might imagine, and the philosophical debate continues over the quality of education in the traditional classroom versus providing access to higher education to today’s lifelong learners (often people who must retrain for changing careers) and to students who live in remote areas many miles from a college campus. I have found that teaching Dickinson’s poetry in both scenarios is both challenging and fascinating.

With the advent of online critical resources, such as the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*, teaching Dickinson online actually becomes an extension of how she is now being taught in the classroom. Professors and teachers at all levels often have computers in their classrooms where they can go to a website for use as a visual aid during class discussion or can ask students to interact with the site as part of their assignments. This is true with

online classes as well. I provide a link to the *DEA* on the course website, for example, comparing Dickinson’s own handwritten manuscript, available on the *DEA*, with the same poem as Johnson, Franklin, and Hart/Smith subsequently edited it for print. We discuss poems in relation to letters, which are searchable on the site, and then I may send them from there to another site to look at old photos of the Homestead or to still other links from which they can compare the daguerreotype of the poet with the debated “Gura” e-Bay photo for a discussion of the mystery and mythology that still surround the poet. During our online discussions, students add annotated links to our list.

While many students say they still prefer to read the poems themselves from print, they do enjoy the mixed media of the internet, which adds an unprecedented richness to their learning experience. One difference with my online students from my classroom students in this area is that online students would like to be able to hear Dickinson’s poems read well online. By contrast, my classroom students can work with the oral aspect of Dickinson’s poetry by listening to my reading of poems, by practicing together, and by watching and listening to the video and audio readings of the poems that I bring in.

The video-conference classes have computer hook-ups as well, which allow for the same kinds of computer demonstrations, but students expect and need to see the instructor in these classes. It’s distracting to them to watch a computer screen on television with an unseen instructor’s voice talking over it for extended periods of time. The camera has to keep moving from the instructor to the screen to the onsite class (those in the same room as the instructor) to the offsite class. In essence, the instructor is producing a television show for students who are expert viewers of this medium and who can all too quickly “tune out.” I find it much more challenging on an on-

going basis to teach a divided single class using video conferencing (as opposed to guest video visits between two distinct classes with different instructors). There are several cameras, monitors, microphones, controlling devices, and wires to contend with, plus time delays in audio relay, frequent disconnects, and other complications that make video conferencing less desirable, in my view.

This doesn't address the biggest problem I see with this method, which is the unfair advantage between the students who have the instructor with them in the classroom and the students who don't. Even in this complex teaching environment, however, I enjoyed a moment of success in going the distance with Dickinson that I'd like to share with other teachers who may be presented with this challenging medium in the future.

The story goes like this: It was my first distance ed. class, and it was to be taught in spring semester via video conferencing. I had to drive forty miles on snowy roads to a branch campus (ironic, I thought, that the instructor had to commute to class and the students didn't), and from that location the class was to be broadcast more than 200 miles away to yet another branch campus. I was away from the main campus entirely, so I did not have the benefit of my office, the library, or office staff, and the class was a night class in a location where not even a copy machine was available. The onsite class met in a lecture room in the basement of a teaching hospital. The students were all nursing majors at both locations. The university did provide me with a technician for the equipment onsite, but the offsite students had mastered running their own equipment at their end in previous distance classes.

The class was a general education requirement, a junior/senior-level capstone in English composition and literature. It is a class heavy in reading and writing, and all of our students dread taking it, but they must take it to graduate. The nursing students, who already deal with life and death in shifts as early as 5:00 in the morning, were not impressed, and because many of them were going through the program as a group, they had become vocally cynical in their attitude toward the course before it even began.

I assigned three dozen Dickinson poems in addition to the seven other book-length works we studied for the semester—mostly, I admit, as a means for my own survival. When the week approached for teaching Dickinson on camera, I wondered what I had done, assigning this most private of poets to be taught in such a public, distant, and machine-cumbersome way. The class had not gone well because it turned out that the offsite students had taken many science and nursing lecture classes via distance ed., where discussion was not expected, and they had become passive in their learning process, watching their television screen with the microphone at their end turned off (so the instructor and onsite classmates couldn't hear them) and not participating, sometimes apparently even talking and commenting during class as though the instructor were anchoring the news. Despite my efforts to speak to them directly and call on them to engage actively in class discussion, the offsite people were a tough group, and this made them seem even farther away than the hundreds of miles that literally lay between us.

One night I put Dickinson's "I've seen a Dying Eye" up on what's called a document camera, which is a device that transmits a picture of whatever you put on it (even 3-D objects) onto a screen. I tried to get a discussion going between these two classrooms of reluctant readers, many of whom had been up earlier than I had that day, walking the halls among sick patients. I asked them to freewrite about the poem, then to share their writing, then respond to one another's ideas.

As usual, the technician moved the camera to each student as s/he read, and as usual most students squirmed over their close-ups on camera and I, as the instructor, enjoyed regaining my preferred classroom position as the "guide on the side." It was then that the magic happened. One offsite student connected the poem to a patient she'd had a few months before whom she'd seen die. She recognized the dying eye and described it for all of us as she'd witnessed it as a future nurse. Her sharing led to a discussion of death that surely the stu-

dents must have studied at some point but had never before discussed in this way as a group. Another student related a personal story of a loved one; still another spoke about the fear she felt about getting too emotionally involved with patients lest this happen. We looked at other poems, such as "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died," "After great pain, a formal feeling comes," and "Because I could not stop for Death"—and most marveled at how Dickinson captured so many of their thoughts about death and loss, as well, seemingly, as the difficulties of those who must be around it on a frequent basis, comforting the grieving at a very critical time.

It was one of those rare, special moments in teaching when you just stand back and let it happen—watch the students really interact with the material and make it their own. Some barrier had been broken that night that cut through the obstacles of distance, machines, passivity, and discomfort. Even with all these obstructions seemingly getting in the way, I realized, the *poetry* was working. How could I have doubted that "my" Emily's poems would do any differently? The papers that resulted from that class discussion were some of the best I've ever read before or since by students of the poet.

For better or for worse, distance education is probably going to be a part of the educational process for the foreseeable future. In the guise of providing access for returning and remotely located students, colleges also make money on distance ed. In addition, sometimes on-campus sections of courses open up that would not open were it not for combining populations of students. Colleges that don't offer online courses for students who want them must compete with those that do. Elementary and secondary schools use elements of distance education to accomplish their charge to prepare today's students for lives in the information age.

Teaching a poet's work is probably still best done the old-fashioned way, face to face, but now the added tools of the computer and internet sites make independent and group study a dynamic and interactive experience. It is heartening to see manifest yet again what most of us already know about Emily Dickinson—not only that her poetry transcends time, but

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LITERARY STUDY IN A MANUSCRIPT CULTURE: KEATS, DICKINSON, ELIOT

By Dorothy Huff Oberhaus

This summer institute, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and held in July 2001 at Illinois State University's campus at Normal, focused on the importance of reading poets' original manuscripts and comparing them with subsequent and published versions. Guest faculty were Matthew J. Bruccoli, who introduced the study of manuscripts and their application to teaching literature; Jack Stillinger, who presented manuscript versions of John Keats's major odes and sonnets, with attention to their evolution toward publication; Christopher Ricks, who analyzed drafts, manuscripts, and published versions of T.S. Eliot's poems, especially the draft of *The Waste Land*, heavily edited by Ezra Pound; and myself, who examined the changes in Emily Dickinson's poems from the fascicles to posthumous publication and stressed the import of reading the fascicles.

Our students were twenty-five bright and highly motivated high school teachers who, having been selected from applicants throughout the country, received three hours of graduate credit for this four-week seminar.

As an example of the differences between Dickinson's handwritten manuscripts and the various printed versions that followed, I presented students with copies of "Because I could not stop for Death" and "The Gentian weaves her fringes" as each appears in Ralph W. Franklin's *Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* and in print versions edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and T.W. Higginson, by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, and by Thomas H. Johnson and Franklin in their 1955 and 1998 variorums.

In our discussion of "Because," we addressed such questions as Todd's and Bianchi's omission of the crucially important fourth stanza; Todd's substitution of "children played, / Their lessons scarcely done" for Dickinson's "Children strove / At Recess—in the Ring"; and both Todd's and Bianchi's substitution of the "ground" / "mound" rhyme for Dickin-

son's "Ground" / "Ground" rhyme. We considered the effects of Todd's titles—"The Chariot" for "Because" and "Summer's Obsequies" for "The Gentian"—and also of Franklin's variorum titles, which italicize the poems' first lines and omit Dickinson's capitals. And we discussed whether "The Gentian" is a single poem, as rendered by Todd, Bianchi, and Johnson, or three separate poems, each comprising a single stanza, as in Franklin's variorum.

We spent considerable time discussing how some of Dickinson's best known, most frequently anthologized poems are illuminated when read in the context of the fascicle in which the poet placed and bound them. To demonstrate this, I assigned a famous poem along with several others in the same fascicle, and asked students—as well as faculty in attendance—to look for recurring motifs, words, and tropes, and to consider whether the famous poem's fascicle context altered or clarified its meaning. Among poems we studied in this way were F7's "A little East of Jordan," F14's "A solemn thing – it was – I said / A Woman white – to be," and F26's "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died." At the request of participants, the Dickinson session concluded with a lively discussion of F34's "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun."

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1992); *A Bloomsbury Reader* (Blackwell, 1993); *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group*, volume 2 (St. Martin's Press, 1994); and *Aspects of Bloomsbury: Studies in the Literary and Intellectual History of the Bloomsbury Group* (St. Martin's, 1998).

In addition to being recipient of a prestigious Carnegie Foundation Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Fellowship, a

Guggenheim Fellowship, a Canada Council Killam Research Fellowship, and several Social Sciences and Humanities Research grants, Rosenbaum has enjoyed many honors: Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; Life Member of Clare Hall, Cambridge; and member of the Editorial Committee for Blackwell's Shakespeare Head Press Edition of Virginia Woolf.

Still an active scholar, Rosenbaum has retired from the University of Toronto to Halifax. His next book will be *Georgian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group, 1910-1914*, to be published by St. Martin's Press.

Throughout my correspondence with Pat Rosenbaum, I was unable to impress on him his celebrity among Dickinson scholars. Perhaps this article will not only inform us of the person behind this vitally important contribution to our study of Dickinson, but also express, albeit belatedly, our gratitude and indebtedness to S.P. Rosenbaum for the compact, dark red book sitting on all our desks.

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poetry, and how other artists have done so in other media.

For more information about all the programs described above or about visiting the two houses, visit the website at www.dickinsonhomestead.org. To contact the Homestead directly, call (413) 542-8161; e-mail info@dickinsonhomestead.org; or write 280 Main Street, Amherst, MA 01002. To contact The Evergreens directly, call (413) 253-5272; e-mail evergreens1856@yahoo.com; or write P.O. Box 603, Amherst, MA 01004-0603.

Cindy Dickinson is Director of the Dickinson Homestead. Jane Wald is Director of The Evergreens.

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that in our time and for today's teachers and students, the reach of her poems knows no limit.

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EMILY'S APRON IS "AT HOME, AND GLAD"

By Teresa Blatt

One strap is badly frayed along an inner edge, and on the sash is a tear where the bow would have been tied, night after night, a thousand times. Other places are mended lovingly with precise white stitches. Two front pockets, large square ones, may have held a handkerchief, or a scrap of paper bearing a recipe for Black Cake or a poem, in Act I. Stress is betrayed at the neck where, in Act II, fingers gently tugged at the bodice for a recitation of "Wild Nights!" and I look for the faint stain of two moist palms anguishing the apron's lap for twelve passionate lines.

One pocket holds some yellow stubble like straw and a pale sliver of wood. To be authentic in her portrayal, the actress had scuffed her shoes and worn no stage makeup. Would Emily Dickinson have kept in her apron a bit of kindling for the tinder box, to light the morning stove? Or a stalk of rowen from the meadow?

The garment arrived in a package from a friend. First I smelled a fragrance that reminded me of Grandma's cold cream; that, and random creases, spoke of the apron being stored away with other intimate relics. Then I unfolded a softness like old batiste, as delicate as a Victorian skirt I once owned. I thought this was a smock. Once I'd dreamed I was a child wearing a pinafore, running through tall yellow rowen in the meadow south of Emily's house. She was watching me from her second-floor window in her father's brick mansion; it was 1830s Amherst.

Back in the present, I saw this was an apron. "A pretty thing," I thought, and was plotting thank-you words for the gift when I slipped the straps over my shoulders and held the sash behind my waist to know how it felt. Only later did my husband and I find the vagabond note, still in the package, confirming in careful lettering: "Dearest Teresa, Emily's apron! Julie."

White, overdyed with a grid of tiny roses in pink and green, the fabric is uniformly faded as if from as many careful washings as something like that can withstand. Bib and hem are inlaid with narrow, almost sober cotton lace; neckline and sleeves are scalloped in nubs

of white tating. Skirt blossoms into a multitude of fine tucks and gathers; hemline skims a place between knee and ankle. Where straps and waistband meet at the small of the back, material is adjusted to match a body's lost inch since the first fitting. It is twenty-five years since William Luce's play *The Belle of Amherst* and Julie Harris, First Lady of American theatre, made Emily Dickinson a stage sibyl.



The apron made its Broadway debut on April 28, 1976, at the Longacre Theatre in New York. I saw it soon after when *The Belle of Amherst* played the Doolittle Theatre in Hollywood. I was just beginning to study Dickinson, and a friend had told me, "You must go and see it!" The following year it played the Phoenix in London, and intermittently for the next quarter of a century it was at home to global audiences wherever Harris gave life to Dickinson's glorious words. At the beginning of the play's silver anniversary American tour, in September 2000 at California's Laguna Playhouse, I saw the apron again and met its wearer.

Two years before, struggling through chemotherapy, I'd had an epiphany on reading these lines: "My loss, by sickness—Was it Loss? / Or that Etherial Gain / One earns by measuring the Grave— / Then—measuring the Sun—" (from J574). On the first anniversary of my remission I began designing textile montages, which I call banners, inspired by phrases from

Emily's poetry. I made Julie Harris a Dickinson banner titled "And shatter me with Dawn" (from J323).

We remained in contact, and Harris sent me the apron after it had served its last Black Cake and curtsy on April 15, 2001, at the Performing Arts Center in Newark, New Jersey. The farewell apron, worn over a replica of Emily's white dress, and the one filmed in the original production, appear to match.

The dress and apron for the original production of *The Belle of Amherst* were designed by Theoni Aldredge, those for the new production by Noel Taylor, now eighty-three and a friend of Harris's since 1947. He has designed thirty-five costumes for her over the years. Taylor executed three dresses and perhaps as many aprons for her Dickinson role, but he says she prefers a costume worn and soft. So even with a platoon of aprons for backup, she may have worn the older garment most often.

In a phone conversation, Taylor identified the textile of the apron as probably 1960s cotton. Lace and tating, he said, were possibly older and reflected the graciousness of a time when an apron might be worn for sewing or indulging in activities other than cooking. When I asked him if the apron was copied from a vintage pattern, I could feel his shrug: "An apron's an apron."

After my Grandma died, I'd have cherished an old rayon scarf of hers as a keepsake. I'd have liked the clinging fragrance, the worn hem, and the pastel colors I'd studied when, as a child, I played with her scarves and held the cool, slippery material to my cheek. Instead, I've inherited *The Belle of Amherst's* apron with its faded roses and its fragrance of something sweet crossed with the scent of a body warm under stage lights. But I require no more reminder of Grandma than Julie Harris needs a yard of cloth as talisman of Emily Dickinson. Like "Wild Nights!" and "measuring the Sun," these things are engraved on the soul.

The apron I keep folded away in a drawer of my old pine chest, where it rubs

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PERFORMANCES

EMILY COMES TO PASADENA

Reviewed by Cheri Langdell

The last Saturday evening of November 2001 was mild in Pasadena, California, and we took up a young opera company's invitation to attend the West Coast premiere of *Emily*, presented at the tiny Balcony Theater at the Pasadena Playhouse—a listed historic landmark (relatively rare in Southern California). *Emily* was described by the composer, Eva Kendrick, as a “one-act chamber opera about the Amherst poetess Emily Dickinson, which shows how those nearest and dearest to her might have understood her through their (musical) interpretations of her poems.”

Since this was a concert version, there was no set and no attempt to represent movement on stage. The singers sat on stage and rose to perform their solos. The composer herself played the poet and resembles a prettier, flaxen-haired Emily. Eva Kendrick, twenty-five, grew up in New England and earned a bachelor's degree in music from Rhode Island College, where she studied with composers Richard Cumming and Robert Boberg.

The program listed the expected cast of characters: Emily, Lavinia, Austin, their parents, and Susan, as well as Mabel Loomis Todd and the Reverend Charles Wadsworth. Additionally, there were characters identified only as Friend and Suitor. Whom they were intended to represent was never clear.

Musically, the evening had much to offer. Kendrick's harmonies are often satisfying, and she made creative use of the differing voices in the cast. She acknowledges Samuel Barber and Aaron Copland as influences on her compositional style, yet strong echoes of Lloyd-Weber were also detectable. The singers engendered a sense of joy, warmth, and delight in communicating through music, and these feelings pervaded the theater by evening's end. But the evening was not well integrated. The first half was made up of settings, by Kendrick and Krishan Oberoi, of poems by Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas, Robert Frost, and T.S. Eliot (whose name

was misspelled throughout the program), sung by the same artists as the opera, which occupied the second half.

Vocally the quality and volume differed dramatically from singer to singer. Kendrick's own controlled soprano voice is beautiful, but although I was sitting in the front row, the accompanying instruments—piano, occasionally joined by flute, trumpet, or saxophone—often overpowered her lovely, soft voice, and we were frequently at a loss to understand some of her words.

Kristine Muscara, who played Emily Norcross Dickinson, sang slightly off-key, but others, such as Elizabeth Wehner, who sang Lavinia, were thoroughly professional. The dynamic Marianne Stone (Mabel Loomis Todd) displayed a strong command of cadence, pitch, and impressive volume, which made the oversoftness of Kendrick's voice all the more apparent. Wehner and tenor Krishan Oberoi (the Friend) are highly trained professionals, pitch perfect, with brilliant voices, and deserve to reach musical stages in New York and other cosmopolitan centers. With better projection, Kendrick too should achieve greater prominence.

The main problem with the opera for me was the libretto. It envisions Emily as a source of concern to her family, a kind of social deviant, shy and odd. Yet the advertising and plot proclaim that she was not a recluse. This Emily has the acerbic wit and buoyancy I associate with the true Emily, but Kendrick has played fast and loose with the details of the poet's life. In Scene 2, for instance, she is seen going out to lunch with Wadsworth, a highly unlikely event in nineteenth-century Amherst. The opera also presents her entire family—Susan and Austin included—sitting around reading Emily's poems aloud, and another scene puts Emily, Susan, Emily Norcross Dickinson, and Mabel in a quartet in which they complain of women's constricted role.

“If You Were Coming [in the Fall]” is made the work's leitmotif, but annoyingly is never given serious treatment. First Lavinia snatches the poem from Emily and sings it mockingly. Then Edward Dickinson is made to read it aloud, half-sardonically, to a gentleman caller, “the Friend,” who intercedes for Emily and diverts Edward from his reading. In the next scene, Emily meets with Wadsworth outdoors and he sings still another version of “If You Were Coming.”

This Emily is bolder with men than the Emily I have in my mind. In one scene, for instance, she flirts with the mysterious Suitor. Yet she never stands up for herself in front of any man in the course of the opera. Altogether the work does not cohere sufficiently to convey its intended point or make a satisfying impact, and its liberties with the facts of Dickinson's life offended my sensibilities and destroyed the work's credibility for me.

While Dickinson's poetry usually lends itself well to chamber music, the unevenness of the performances and the unlikely plot ultimately made the opera disappointing. *Emily* failed to convince me that it is much more than a collection of Dickinson's poems set to music with a narrative thrown very loosely about the sequence, almost by way of afterthought. While I enjoyed witnessing Kendrick's bold attempt, in the end I found myself dissatisfied with the results, an apparent effort to appropriate Dickinson's life and use it for the composer's own purposes. Kendrick's skill as a composer exceeds her appreciation of Dickinson's poetry and her understanding of the poet's life.

In presenting this evening of music, Kendrick had hoped to raise enough capital to fund a full-scale theatrical version of the opera. A combination of late publicity, recent poor weather, and illness in the ranks of the usually stalwart Los Angeles Chapter of EDIS meant that the audience was small, about thirty. A second concert performance was scheduled for Provi-

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NEW DICKINSON SONGS HEARD IN SAN FRANCISCO

By Kelly Sue Lynch

On the evening of February 27, at San Francisco's Davies Symphony Hall, the San Francisco Symphony and famed American soprano Renée Fleming premiered new settings of Dickinson poems composed by Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor and music director of the SFS. The evening before, I was among those privileged to sit in on a discussion of those settings by Thomas and Dickinson scholar Albert Gelpi, professor emeritus of Stanford University, an opportunity, noted Gelpi, to open a dialogue between the scholarly and musical worlds.

Gelpi began by observing that, from the moment her poems were opened to the world, they were considered remarkable, strange, and troubled, and the poet was looked upon as "the eccentric New England spinster," a view that influenced the understanding of her poems for decades. Only in the past twenty years or so, he noted, has she been read more deeply.

Thomas had chosen nine poems for setting: "Down Time's quaint stream," "The Bible is an antique Volume," "Of God we ask one favor," "Fame is a fickle food," "The earth has many keys," three poems combined under the title "Nature Studies" ("To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee," "How happy is the little stone," and "The Spider holds a Silver Ball") and, to end the cycle, "Take all away from me, but leave me Ecstasy."

Asked by Gelpi how he came to set Dickinson's poems, Thomas said he "converses" with her poems every day, keeping Johnson's *Complete Poems* at his bedside, and cannot live his life without them. He enjoys reading them aloud to get a sense of "her particular cadence." Though his settings were inspired in part

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dence in February. The full-scale version is probably still a distant dream.

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by those of Aaron Copland, their immediate inspiration was Fleming, who often performs Dickinson settings. "She asked if I had ever written any Dickinson songs. I told her I hadn't, and that seemed to be the end of it. But in the next few days two or three songs came quickly to my mind...[and I] sent them to Renée." The upshot was that Fleming sang "Fame" and "Of God we ask one favor" only a few weeks later at a Lincoln Center concert.

In the process of composing, Thomas tried to imagine what Dickinson might have been doing when she wrote each poem. In the first, for example, he imagined Dickinson "in a boat." In the second, "She whispers to herself a wry commentary on a pedantic Sunday School teacher." And so on.

Gelpi spoke about the differences between the poems as they appear in print editions and in the manuscripts, where different line breaks evoke different tonalities and meanings that enliven the tension and energy within the poems. Gelpi suggested also that Dickinson's pervasive dashes create spaces in the poems that, when read, can turn into music. Thomas then described the "space" the song opens within the listener. "What I'm most interested in is what remains with the listener when the music is over."

In the question and answer period one audience member asked, "Where does music come from?" Thomas replied that it "starts with little windows of inspiration. The superb test is, can it be sung in the bathtub?"—an answer that brought laughter from the audience. His songs, he said, are "a reentering of melodic and harmonic tunes." He spoke in particular of "To make a prairie," where a painting by Albrecht Dürer inspired him to bring the sounds of the prairie into the music.

The concert's program notes offered further insight into Thomas's reading of Dickinson. He noted that, while most composers focus on the "touchy-feely" poems, he chose to focus on those with a "sardonic, bitter, quite cutting" character and on her work's "ironic quality," its "social criticism—and also on the sense

of appreciation for just being alive, which is so much a part of her work."

The performance the following evening was before a capacity house. The Dickinson songs followed Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy-Overture and preceded Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* and his "Four Last Songs," sung by Fleming, who was making her SFS debut. The enthusiasm of the San Francisco audience for both artists was matched by the obvious emotional bond between them, and this was evident in their performances.

Thomas's settings underline the satirical tone of the poems chosen with jazzy rhythms and unusual orchestral colors, particularly in the brass, wind, and percussion sections. This was especially evident in "The earth has many keys." Thomas's often spiky melodies made extensive use of Fleming's enormous vocal range, powerful lower register, and dramatic flair. Loveliest of his melodic devices was the use of melisma—spreading a single syllable over many notes—as in "To make a prairie," where the voice follows the bee's wandering flight, or in "The Spider holds a Silver Ball," where the melody "unwinds" its threads in the soaring vocal line. The final song, "Take all away from me," turns from the satirical to the noble in a lyrical setting that emphasizes the poignancy of dwelling "wealthily" while others live "in abject poverty."

The power of Dickinson's poems, combined with Thomas's music and Fleming's beautiful voice and expressive performance, brought Dickinson's poems alive, giving them fresh meaning. The setting of "To make a prairie" in particular, with the actual sounds of the prairie sweeping through the orchestra, brought tears to my eyes.

One can only hope that these new settings will soon be available in recorded form.

Kelly Lynch has just completed her dissertation on Dickinson at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California.

WILLIAM H. SHURR (1932-2001)

By Marcy Tanter

One ordinary day last November, I found a message on one of my Dickinson listserves telling us that Bill Shurr had died on October 24 from a heart attack. Two years ago I might have been touched by the news; on this day I cried. I didn't know Shurr well, but over the previous nine months or so we had struck up an occasional email correspondence. It began when I posted something to a listserv that he thought was funny. He wrote me a private email teasing me about it, and thus began an email friendship. I enjoyed our repartee and his appreciation of wit and sarcasm.

I had known of Bill Shurr's two Dickinson books, but my experience of his scholarship was limited. I had not reacted favorably to his book of "new" Dickinson poems some years before. When he asked my opinion of his *Marriage of Emily Dickinson*, I had to admit I had not read it. He then sent me a copy, saying he wanted my opinion. When I sent him my reservedly reactionary comments, he replied very graciously that negativity was easier to take when it came from a friend.

Since his death, I've learned more about Shurr. As a young man he became a Jesuit priest but later resigned from the order and eventually married and became a father. I am intrigued to imagine his take on Dickinson's own struggle with religion. I learned also that he enjoyed sailing, a sport requiring considerable skill and affording a way of viewing the world that might have appealed to Dickinson. I discovered too that he helped found a writers group in Fearington, North Carolina, where

he and his wife, Georgia, retired about five years ago. At the time of his death he had written four novels, and his agents were shopping them around. According to Bill's own blurb, they have topics as diverse as a humorous look at academia and "a memoir of a misspent youth."

Shurr was also a serious scholar whose achievements were not few. After earning his PhD at the University of North Carolina in 1970 with a dissertation on Melville, he taught at Washington State University and later was professor of English at the University of Tennessee until his retirement. He was the author of many articles, focusing primarily on Melville and Whitman but also on a wide range of American authors, including Anne Sexton and Benjamin Franklin. His first book was *The Mystery of Iniquity: Melville as Poet, 1857-1891*, which won the SAMLA prize for 1971. In 1981 he published *Rappaccini's Children: American Writers in a Calvinist World*.

In 1983 came *The Marriage of Emily Dickinson: A Study of the Fascicles*. Based on Ralph Franklin's newly published reordering of the poems (in *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*), Shurr suggested that Charles Wadsworth was Dickinson's "Master"—an identification first advanced by Martha Dickinson Bianchi in *Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson* in 1924 but more recently rejected in favor of Samuel Bowles, Kate Scott Anthon, Susan Dickinson, and still other candidates. More disturbing was his assertion that their relationship was consummated and that Dickinson underwent an abortion. I

recall the storm raised by Dickinson scholars at an idea that seemed both unrealistic and unsubstantiated. Interestingly, the Wadsworth candidacy has recently received renewed endorsement in Alfred Habegger's new biography of Dickinson [see review on p. 00], but no one has published a defense of Shurr's abortion theory.

In 1993, Shurr published *New Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Gleaning what he saw as poems from prose passages in Dickinson's letters, Shurr and two co-editors formatted the lines into poetic form and presented them as 500 new poems. This too caused much controversy among Dickinson scholars. Some accused him of relying too heavily on print editions rather than on the manuscripts; others objected that Dickinson herself had blurred the distinction between prose and poetry in her letters; while still others objected to his outright altering of her arrangement of her words. Whatever scholars and critics thought, the book sold widely.

Bill Shurr's original and provocative works may have caused a stir among the Dickinson community, but we who read and study Dickinson love nothing more than a good debate about her life and work, and Bill Shurr contributed much to that debate. Whether or not we agree with his views, he helped keep Dickinson very much in the forefront of American literary study.

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HASS DELIVERS DICKINSON LECTURE

By Barbara Kelly

Observant of "the raw early spring in mid-Pennsylvania, snow melting, crocuses up," Robert Hass, Poet Laureate of the United States (1995-97) and professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, delivered the 2002 Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry at the

Pennsylvania State University on March 18. His reading included several poems by Dickinson, more than half a dozen of his own poems, and his translations of Czeslaw Milosz's poem "O!" and Matsuo Bashō's haiku. Hass punctuated his readings with personal responses to the po-

ems, including informational comments, personal stories, and humorous asides.

Referring to Dickinson as our "grandmother in poetry," Hass added that her poetry includes "sassy and sexy poems"; he recited lines from what he called the "best valentine": "Put down the apple,

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A FAREWELL AND AN INTRODUCTION

By Georgiana Strickland

In December 1988, as I walked into a Dickinson session at an MLA meeting in New Orleans, someone handed me a piece of paper announcing a new organization devoted to Dickinson. Intent on the papers being read, I slipped it into my briefcase and didn't actually read it till I got home. I'd been studying Dickinson on my own for several years, and this new organization sounded like a chance to connect with other ED admirers and find out what was happening in Dickinson scholarship. So I mailed off the membership application, little knowing what lay in store for me.

A few months later the mail brought me an eight-page newsletter bearing the title EDIS *Bulletin*, and in a few months more came a second issue. This one had a brief note saying that EDIS was looking for an editor for its newsletter. Well, I'd been an academic editor for thirty-some years, so the idea intrigued me, and after a few day's thought, I sent off a two-page letter of application. No letter I've ever sent has had such unanticipated consequences.

Now, a dozen years later, I look back on three international conferences, numerous annual meetings, several years on the EDIS Board, and the editing of twenty-three issues of what I think is a pretty good little rag. I certainly can't take sole credit for the quality of the *Bulletin*. Dozens of Dickinsonians have contributed wonderful articles over the years, articles I've been delighted to publish. Their enthusi-

asm for Dickinson, their writing skills, and their friendship have brought me some of the happiest experiences of my life, both professional and personal. To all who have contributed their time and talent over the years, especially my wonderful book review and series editors, and to all who have told me how much they enjoy reading the *Bulletin*, thank you, many times over. As I turn now to my own research interests, I intend to maintain the friendships formed and to remain a devoted and active member of EDIS.

I say farewell to the *Bulletin* with a touch of sadness, but also with the feeling that the time is right for a new editor with new ideas and fresh enthusiasms. And I'm delighted to introduce that person. Getting to know Michael Kearns over the past few months has been a great pleasure, one that all *Bulletin* readers will have the chance to share beginning with the fall 2002 issue.

Michael comes to the *Bulletin* with outstanding credentials. After several years at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, he has just accepted the chairmanship of the Department of English at the University of Southern Indiana. He holds a B.S. from MIT in engineering and humanities, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in English from the University of California at Davis. A published poet and author of many articles on American literature, Michael is author also of two

books: *Metaphors of Mind in Fiction and Psychology* (1987), which won the Midwest MLA Book Award, and *Rhetorical Narratology* (1999). He is now at work on a book tentatively entitled *Reading, Writing, and Authority on the Edge of the Center*, which will focus on Melville and Dickinson.

Michael has also been faculty advisor to his university's literary magazine for the past five years, and thus brings to the *Bulletin* much pertinent experience. Most important, he brings obvious enthusiasm to the task. "I value the role played by *Bulletin*-type publications," he says. "They humanize us in a way that our refereed articles often don't. As editor of the *Bulletin*, I will keep that function foremost."

Michael was born in Ohio. He and his wife, Amy, are raising his two daughters from a previous marriage and are expecting a new baby in September. Michael will join us at this summer's annual meeting in Amherst. Anyone wanting a sneak preview can look in on his home page at: http://www.utpb.edu/UTPB_admAcademicAffairs/CollegeOfArtScience/DeptOfHumanitiesFineArts/ProgramOfEnglish/Faculty/Kearns/index.htm.

Asked how he feels about taking on his new duties as *Bulletin* editor, Michael says that for a while "I know I'm going to feel like a newborn!" EDIS, the *Bulletin*, and I extend heartiest welcome, Michael.

A PUZZLE AND A QUERY

Jonathan Morse

For many years in the last century, each day's *Honolulu Advertiser* carried on its front page a brief inspirational text contributed by the Rev. Paul Osumi, a local minister. The text for September 15, 1887, read: "If I can live to make a pale face brighter, and give a second luster to some tear-dimmed eye, or even impart one throb of comfort to an aching heart, or cheer some wayward soul passing by; if I can lend a strong hand to the fallen, or defend

the right against a single envious strain ...my life shall not have been in vain." Mr. Osumi attributed this rhyming paragraph to Anonymous.

My first thought on reading this was that it must be a paraphrase of Dickinson's "If I can stop one heart from breaking" (Fr982). The existence of such a paraphrase would not be remarkable; Dickinson's poem has been popular ever since its publication in Todd and Higginson's

first collection. But more than a century after that edition, the poem's popularity has become a problem. How are we to read it now? In fact, why *should* we read it? In "Vesuvius at Home," Adrienne Rich probably spoke for most of the twentieth century when she called the poem "remarkably untypical of Dickinson's oeuvre" and added, "It is a verse which a hundred or more 19th-century versifiers could have written."

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MEMBERS' NEWS

FIRST SCHOLAR IN AMHERST AWARD PRESENTED

By Jonnie Guerra

EDIS is pleased to announce that the Rogosa Scholar in Amherst Award, the first such award by the Society, has been presented to Paraic Finnerty. A native of County Carlow, Ireland, Finnerty holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Kent in Canterbury and is currently an instructor at the School of English and American Studies at Kent. He is working toward completion of a book based on his dissertation titled "'Stratford on Avon—accept us all': Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare." While in Amherst, Finnerty will use historical materials at the Amherst College, University of Massachusetts, and Jones libraries and at Mount Holyoke College to document Shakespeare's local reception in Dickinson's Amherst and in nineteenth-century New England.

Dickinsonians who attended the Mount Holyoke conference in 1999 or last summer's Trondheim conference may recall

Finnerty's papers on Dickinson and Shakespeare. His book, he writes, will "show that Dickinson participated within many aspects of Shakespeare's paradoxical reception and that her conception of and engagement with Shakespeare was complex, mediated through and informed by the culture in which she read and by her class, gender, race, and nationality."

For 2002, the \$2,000 Scholar in Amherst Award will be named in honor of Vivian Pollak, EDIS's second president, and is funded partially through a gift from her mother, Sylvia F. Rogosa, who also generously funded the 2001 award. The 2002 award will again be made to an individual with demonstrable need to do research on Dickinson at institutions in the Amherst area. It may be used for expenses related to that research, such as travel, accommodations, or a rental car. A mini-

mum stay of one week in Amherst is required. Recipients may also use the fellowship to initiate a lengthier stay in the area. Preference will be given to persons with completed PhDs who are in the early stages of their careers.

To apply for the 2002 Scholar in Amherst Award, please send three copies of a curriculum vitae, letter of introduction (written by the applicant), and a two-page project proposal and a brief bibliography, by October 15, 2002, to Jonnie Guerra, President, EDIS, Cabrini College, 610 King of Prussia Rd., Radnor, PA 19087 USA, or to jguerra@cabrini.edu. Inquiries may also be addressed to Suzanne Juhasz, Vice President, EDIS, Department of English, UCB 226, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309, USA, or to juhasz@spot.colorado.edu. Letters of recommendation are not accepted as part of the application packet.

ACADEMIC MEETINGS

This year's meeting of the **American Literature Association** will be held May 30-June 1 in Long Beach, California. As in the past, EDIS will sponsor two panels. The first, chaired by Paul Crumbley, will focus on "Dickinson and Politics." Speakers will be Maria Elena Caballero-Robb, University of California, Santa Cruz, on "Poetics and the Public Sphere: Poetry, Participation, and Uncommon Speech"; Elizabeth Hewitt, Ohio State University, on "Dickinson's Democracy"; and Coleman Hutchison, Northwestern University, on "Dickinson's Visions of Lincoln."

The second panel, chaired by Rob M. Smith of Knox College, will address "Dickinson as Precursor." Speakers will be Christopher R. Miller, Yale University, on "Emily Dickinson and Amy Clampitt: A Poet Looks at War"; Gudrun Grabher, University of Innsbruck, on "Emily Dickinson and Adelaide Crapsey"; and Robert Sedarat, Tufts University, on "Escaping New England: The Rejection of Landscape in Emily Dickinson and Wallace

Stevens." For additional information, e-mail pcrumbley@english.usu.edu, or see www.americanliterature.org.

The 2002 meeting of the **Modern Language Association** will be held December 27-30 in New York City. EDIS will again sponsor two sessions. The first, "Seeing Dickinson, Sounding Dickinson," chaired by Mary Loeffelholz, will feature Wendy Pauline Shilton, University of Prince Edward Island, on "Musical Mediations: Dickinson's Taxonomy of Sound-Sense"; Eva Heisler, University of Maryland, on "'Best Witchcraft is Geometry': The Dickinson Line as Geometric Object"; and Cristanne Miller on "Sounding Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century."

The second session will be a roundtable titled "Dickinson as Historical Guide." Vivian Pollak, Washington University, will chair the panel. Other panelists will be Marianne Noble, American University; Jane Eberwein, Oakland University; Shira Wolosky, Hebrew University of Jerusa-

lem, Mt. Scopus; Betsy Erkkila, Northwestern University; Cheryl Walker, Scripps College; and Jonathan Morse, University of Hawaii.

For additional information, contact Mary Loeffelholz at Department of English, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115-5000, or at m.loeffelholz@neu.edu.

The second international conference of the **Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW)** will be held in Fort Worth, Texas, September 24-27, 2003. Calls for papers will be released shortly. For information, see the Society's website, www.unl.edu/legacy/SSAWW1.html, which also offers a membership application form that can be downloaded. As an affiliate member, EDIS will sponsor panels at the Fort Worth conference. Similarly, SSAWW will sponsor panels at this year's ALA meeting in Long Beach. EDIS members attending that meeting are invited to the SSAWW reception there.

"DICKINSON ALIVE"

The fall 2002 issue of the *Bulletin* will carry a report on the Society's newest project, "Dickinson Alive," which is taking place April 14-21, as this issue of the *Bulletin* goes to press. Members have been encouraged, individually or as chapters, to sponsor events during this week that recognize the lasting impact of Dickinson and her poetry on our lives. The celebration was planned to coincide with National Poetry Month in the United States and the timing of Dickinson's famous letter to editor T.W. Higginson asking him to tell her whether her verse was "alive."

Those who commemorate the poet in some special way during this period are asked to send information about their contribution to the project, by August 1, 2002, to Jonnie Guerra, EDIS president, either via email at jguerra@cabrini.edu, or via snail mail at Cabrini College, 610 King of Prussia Rd., Radnor, PA 19087 USA.

CHAPTER NOTES

Connie Ann Kirk is organizing a new EDIS chapter for **New York State**. She hopes to hold the first EDISNY meeting in 2002, and will be contacting members who live in the state with information about the chapter. A report on the chapter's inaugural event will appear in the fall *Bulletin*. Anyone wanting further information should contact Connie at ckirk@mnsfld.edu.

The **Los Angeles chapter** will hold a "High Tea" from 3:00 to 5:00 on May 11, close to the anniversary of Dickinson's death, at the home of Cheri Langdell in Pasadena. Each member is asked to bring a poem to share. Refreshments will include Dickinson's black cake. Cheri and Linda Fraser are hosts. Anyone in the area with an interest is invited. For further information, go to clangdell@calbaptist.edu.

Emily's Apron, continued from p. 11

shoulders with several antique silk shawls. They have stories to tell one another.

Teresa Blatt is a fabric artist who lives in North Hills, California.

MAY/JUNE 2002

NEWS FROM JAPAN AND DENMARK

Hiroko Uno, professor in the School of Letters at Kobe College, reports that the **Emily Dickinson Society of Japan** held its seventeenth General Meeting at Konan University in Kobe on June 16, 2001. The featured program was a special lecture on post-Dickinsonian poets by Professor Sanehide Kodama, who is professor emeritus at Doshisha Women's College and now teaches at Hiroshima Jogakuin College. Professor Kohji Omoto, who has just published his second bibliography of Dickinson studies in Japan, lectured on his bibliographical work. In addition, Akemi Matsumoto presented a paper on "Emily Dickinson's 'Circumference'" and Aya Yuki offered a paper on "Emily Dickinson and Tanka."

The next annual meeting will be held at Keio University in Tokyo on June 15, 2002. There will be a lecture by Professor Masako Takeda and a symposium on approaches to Emily Dickinson's letters.

From Denmark, Niels Kjær, founder of the **Emily Dickinson Center** in Aarhus, writes that an article of his on translating Dickinson appeared recently in a Danish journal published by teachers of English. And this coming summer, as part of a cultural conference being held in western Denmark, August 17-30, he will lecture on Dickinson, alongside lecturers on Dostoyevski, Kierkegaard, and others. Perhaps the most exciting Dickinson news from Denmark is that in the summer of 2001, all students of English in the country were asked to write an essay on Dickinson's poem "Much Madness is divinest Sense" (Fr620). Anyone wanting more information on these activities can write Niels at [Snogebæksvej 36B, 8210 Aarhus V, Denmark](mailto:Snogebæksvej36B,8210AarhusV,Denmark).

The *Bulletin* thanks Hiroko and Niels for these reports.

NOTES & QUERIES

The *Dickinson Electronic Archives* project now has copies of a new CD available to EDIS members and others at no cost. The CD will introduce the *DEA* to new users and will make it easier to access the various files. It does not include all of the material on the *DEA*, but it features a range of the site's offerings, from Gwendolyn Brooks reading about the influence of Dickinson, to Dickinson family Civil War history, to manuscript productions by Emily Dickinson, and pedagogical models developed by *The Classroom Electric* project. To receive a copy, email Martha.Nell.Smith@umail.umd.edu.

Thanks to the efforts of the Society's legal counsel, Martha Sjogreen, the **EDIS logo**—our name in type resembling Dickinson's handwriting—is now a registered trademark.

The **Amherst History Museum's** current exhibit will be of special interest to EDIS members. "Listening to Nature's Story: The Visual Art of Mabel Loomis Todd" features thirty images of plants and flow-

ers painted by Todd between 1875 and 1909. In addition to being Dickinson's first editor, Todd was a founder of the Amherst Historical Society. The exhibit will be displayed at the museum, located next to the Jones Library, through December 6. Those attending the EDIS annual meeting in July will have the opportunity to visit this exhibit. Admission is \$5.00 for adults, \$4.00 for children and seniors. For more information, call 413-256-0678.

An hour-long documentary film entitled *Loaded Gun: Life, and Death, and Dickinson*, had its premiere at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts on April 24. Funded primarily by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the Independent Television Service, and the LEF Foundation, the film was written and directed by Academy Award nominee Jim Wolpaw and produced by Wolpaw and editor/cameraman Steve Gentile. Polly Longworth and Daniel Lombardo served as advisors to the producers and appear in the film. *Bulletin* readers may recall a preview of the film in the Spring 1998 issue. For further information contact the film's associate

Continued on p. 24

EMILY DICKINSON IN SONG

THE 2002 EDIS ANNUAL MEETING

In 1992, Dickinson enthusiast Carlton Lowenberg published *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere: Emily Dickinson and Music*, his compilation of musical settings of Dickinson's poems composed since 1896. The astonishing total was 1,615 settings of 650 poems by 275 composers. As Lowenberg noted in his Introduction, "What had been a trickle of Dickinson settings throughout the 1920s became a stream in the 1930s and 1940s...[and] the stream became a flood after 1950." By 2002, the flood has become a tidal wave. The total number of Dickinsons settings is now estimated to approach 3,000—probably more than for any other American poet. As composer Alan Leichtling told Lowenberg, "I suspect that a sizable amount of American music would not exist but for [Dickinson's] poetry."

This summer, EDIS will gather in Dickinson's hometown to enjoy some of the gems from this musical treasure chest through a series of sessions bringing together performers, composers, and Dickinsonians. We invite you to join us in Amherst July 26-28 for "Emily Dickinson in Song," a weekend of good talk, superb music, and the many charms of Dickinson's hometown.

The event begins Friday afternoon with an array of possible activities: tours of the two Dickinson houses (see the note at right about making reservations for these tours); visits to the Dickinson collections at the Jones and Frost libraries, featuring special exhibits of manuscripts and music scores; an exhibit of Mabel Loomis Todd's flower paintings at the Amherst Historical Society; a book signing; and self-guided walking tours of the many other Dickinson-related sites in Amherst. The afternoon winds up with a reception and open house hosted by the Homestead and The Evergreens.

The evening's program begins with a festive banquet followed by a keynote address by Judy Jo Small, author of *Positive as Sound: Emily Dickinson's Rhyme*. Her topic will be "'A Music Numerous as Space': The Musical Appeal of Dickin-

son's Poetry." We'll close the evening with a performance by Mirror Visions Ensemble offering a set of fascinating musical works they commissioned under the title "A Visit with Emily."

Saturday morning we'll join with invited musicians and Dickinson scholars to examine the work of two prolific composers of Dickinson settings, Ernst Bacon and Leo Smit, and two contemporary women composers, Lori Laitman and Libby Larsen. We'll hear a demonstration of Dickinson's poetic rhythms performed on the "talking drum," an instrument from Ghana, and other percussion instruments. And we'll compare settings by various composers of two frequently set Dickinson poems. These will be informal sessions with lots of opportunities for discussion. Knowledge of music is definitely not a prerequisite. Love of Dickinson's poems is our starting point.

Saturday afternoon will feature a master class led by Martin Katz, dean of American vocal coaches, and former EDIS president Cristanne Miller. They'll be leading selected vocal students through their paces in interpreting Dickinson settings. Join us for a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how singers hone their craft and develop their interpretive skills. We'll conclude the afternoon with a reception and exhibit at Amherst College's Frost Library.

The weekend's high point will come Saturday evening in a concert by five superb professional singers: Janet Brown of Syracuse University; Virginia Dupuy of Southern Methodist University; Rosalind Rees; Melinda Spratlan of Mount Holyoke College; and Paulina Stark of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. They'll perform Dickinson settings in varied styles dating from the 1920s to the present decade, including several world premieres.

Sunday morning will open with an informal gathering to discuss ongoing research projects, followed by a panel of contemporary composers, including some whose works were heard the evening be-

fore, to tell us how a poem becomes a song.

Following the annual EDIS business meeting, the weekend's activities will wind up with a box lunch—on the lawn at the Homestead, weather permitting—and a talk by Christopher Benfey of Mount Holyoke College and noted photographer Jerome Liebling, who recently collaborated with Polly Longworth and Barton Levi St. Armand on the handsome new book *The Dickinsons of Amherst*. Last, but certainly not least, will be the traditional pilgrimage to West Cemetery for readings and singing at the Dickinson gravesite.

Headquarters for our meeting will be the Amherst College Alumni House. Other parts of the program will take place in nearby sites, all within easy walking distance. A registration form appears on page 27. We urge you to register as early as possible. Please note that registration forms mailed after July 12 in the U.S. (earlier abroad) must be sent to the Jones Library.

Amherst College has made available to us a limited number of very reasonably priced single dormitory rooms. They must be reserved by June 1 along with your meeting registration. Other accommodation sites are listed on the opposite page; reservations should be made directly with those sites. Amherst is a busy town in summer and we urge you to reserve your rooms as early as possible.

Several organizations have generously provided financial support for the musical portions of this meeting: the Amherst Cultural Council, the Ernst Bacon Society, the Leo Smit Performance Fund administered by the Jones Library, and the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. EDIS is grateful for their assistance.

"*My business is to sing!*" wrote Emily Dickinson, who was herself a fine musician. We invite you to join in celebrating the music of her poetry, the unique aura of her hometown, and some of the many musical translations of her poems produced over the past century.

THE EDIS ANNUAL MEETING, 2002: TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Friday, July 26

10:00-5:00 Homestead tours; 1:00-5:00 Evergreens tours (see information below); Jones Library exhibit; 1:00-4:00 Frost Library exhibit; 12:30-3:30 Amherst Historical Museum exhibit

1:00-6:00 Registration, Alumni House

3:00-4:30 Book signings, Jeffery Amherst Bookshop

4:30-6:00 Reception and Open House, Homestead and Evergreens

7:00-9:00 Banquet, Alumni House; Judy Jo Small, speaker; music by Mirror Visions Ensemble

Saturday, July 27

9:00-6:00 Registration, Alumni House

9:00-10:00 and 10:30-11:30 Small-group sessions (see article), various locations

11:45-1:15 Lunch on the town

1:30-3:45 Master Class with Martin Katz and Cristanne Miller, Jones Library

4:00-5:00 Reception and exhibit, Frost Library

5:00-7:30 Dinner on the town

8:00-10:30 Concert, Grace Episcopal Church

Sunday, July 28

9:00-10:00 Share your research, Alumni House

10:00-11:00 Composers' panel, Alumni House

11:00-12:00 EDIS annual business meeting, Homestead lawn or Alumni House

12:00-1:30 Box lunch, Homestead lawn or Alumni House; Christopher Benfey and Jerome Liebling, speakers

1:00-5:00 Homestead tours

2:00-3:00 Walk to the cemetery; poetry reading and singing by participants

"Musicians Wrestle Everywhere"

2002 would appear to be the year of "Emily Dickinson in Song." In addition to the EDIS annual meeting (see this and the opposite page), and the recent San Francisco concert that included new settings by Michael Tilson Thomas sung by Renée Fleming with the San Francisco Symphony (see the review on page 13), still another program devoted to Dickinson music will take place in Austin, Texas, May 21-23. New Texas Music Works, in conjunction with the Institute of American Song, will sponsor this three-day seminar as part of the Ninth New Texas Festival.

Organized by EDIS member Virginia Dupuy, the seminar will include an introductory lecture by Dickinson scholar Emily Seelbinder; a roundtable discussion led by Doris Abramson, professor emerita of drama at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; poetry readings by Abramson and others; master classes led by Dupuy, pianist Tara Emerson, and composer William Jordan; a choral reading session directed by Craig Hella Johnson; and recitals by Dupuy and master class students. A special guest will be Jake Heggie, composer of the acclaimed new opera *Dead Man Walking*. Heggie will coach master class students in his own Dickinson songs and will accompany Dupuy in a performance of three

Tour Schedules for the Dickinson Houses

Regular tours of the Homestead and Evergreens will be available the weekend of the EDIS Annual Meeting but must be reserved ahead of time with the two houses. Those registered for the meeting will receive a \$1 discount from the regular tour price of \$5 (\$4 for seniors) for each house.

Friday and Saturday Homestead tours begin on the hour from 10:00 a.m., with the last beginning at 4:00 p.m.; Sunday tours begin 1:00 to 4:00. Evergreen tours begin at 1:00, on Friday and Saturday, with the last tour starting at 4:10. The Evergreens will not be open on Sunday.

To reserve a tour of the Homestead, call 413-542-8161. For Evergreen tours, call 413-253-5272. Or check the houses' websites: www.dickinsonhomestead.org or www.dickinsonhomestead.org/evergreens.

of his unpublished Dickinson settings.

For information on the seminar, go to www.main.org/newtexas; call 512-476-5775; or write New Texas Music Works, 2832 E. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 103, Austin, Texas 78702.

Amherst Accommodations for the Annual Meeting

Amherst College has reserved a limited number of dormitory rooms for those attending our meeting. These must be reserved through EDIS with your registration. See the form on page 27. Because the number of rooms is small, be sure to reserve early.

Here are other accommodations in the area. Room costs are variable; some offer discounts; some include breakfast. Asterisks indicate those within easy walking distance of our meeting sites.

*Allen House Inn (B&B), 599 Main St., Amherst, 413-253-5000. *The Amherst Inn (B&B), Main St., Amherst (opposite the Homestead), is under the same management.

*Emily's B&B, 71 North Prospect St., Amherst, 413-549-0733

*Lord Jeffery Inn, 30 Boltwood Ave., Amherst, 413-253-2576

Black Walnut Inn, 1184 North Pleasant St., Amherst, 413-549-5649 (price includes breakfast)

Campus Center Hotel, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 413-549-600

Econo Lodge, 237 Russell St., Hadley, 413-584-9816

Holiday Inn Express, 400 Russell St., Hadley, 413-582-0002

Howard Johnson's, 401 Russell St., Hadley, 413-586-0114

*University Motor Lodge, 345 North Pleasant St., Amherst, 413-256-8111

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Malroux, Claire, translator. *Avec amour, Emily: Lettres aux amies intimes.* Paris: Librairie José Corti, 2001. 255 pp. Paper, ISBN 2-7143-0744-2, 18,30 euros or 120 francs (approximately \$17.00).

Written in French, this volume gathers selected letters that Dickinson wrote to her intimate friends Abiah Root, Jane Humphrey, Susan Gilbert Dickinson, and Elizabeth Holland from 1846 through 1885. In a preface that serves as a helpful guide, the author describes how the letters reflect Dickinson's varied friendships. The letters to Abiah and Jane exhibit a youthful exuberance and sentimentality, a search for identity, and an early self-awareness of Dickinson's "difference" from others. When Abiah marries, their correspondence ends with Dickinson withdrawing, recognizing her own reclusive tendencies. Dickinson's letters to Jane exhibit more abandon, expressing the poet's peevishness against domestic life and Christian virtues and confiding her poetic aspirations, thus prefiguring her relationship with Sue. The letters to Sue reveal a complex relationship and the transformation of Dickinson into an accomplished stylist. An appendix shows how Dickinson and Sue collaborated on "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers." Malroux portrays Elizabeth Holland as a mother substitute, someone to whom Dickinson could express, in a progressively more poetic fashion, the disappointments and joys in her quotidian life. The author characterizes Dickinson's letters to her friends as "a dialogue between herself and herself, before a privileged third person," upon whom Dickinson lavished "a generosity without equal."

Warren, Joyce W., and Margaret Dickie, eds. *Challenging Boundaries: Gender and Periodization.* Athens, Georgia: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2000. 296 pp. Cloth,

ISBN 0-8203-2123-0, \$50.00; paper, ISBN 0-8203-2124-9, \$25.00.

Dedicated to the late Margaret Dickie, this volume contains thirteen essays on American women writers, including Emily Dickinson, Margaret Fuller, Frances Harper, Amy Lowell, Adrienne Rich, Mary Rowlandson, Gertrude Stein, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Edith Wharton. The editors question the boundaries of literary periods, calling for a revised literary canon. In "Emily Dickinson in History and Literary History" (185-201), Dickie challenges the widely held notion of Dickinson "as an eccentric woman isolated from the concerns of the day." Stating that the Civil War was a "formative influence" that "touched all that she wrote," shaping and sharpening the poet's language, Dickie notes that "Dickinson wrote almost half of her poems between 1861 and 1865," the war flooding the poet's imagination in her most productive years. Referring to more than a dozen poems and letters to support her argument, Dickie argues that "directly and indirectly Dickinson wrote poetry that detailed the psychological reality of the war," including psychological dislocation as expressed in a letter she wrote in 1863 to Thomas W. Higginson: "War feels to me an oblique place" (L280). Dickie believes the war made the poet into a modern writer and suggests that "Dickinson's work might serve as the beginning of a reconsidered American realism that would feature the women novelists as well and run through the last half of the nineteenth century."

West, Michael. *Transcendental Wordplay: America's Romantic Puns and the Search for the Language of Nature.* Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 2000. 518 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8214-1324-4, \$59.95.

In his study of linguistic humor found in American Romantics Dickinson, Emerson,

Melville, Thoreau, and Whitman, West focuses on puns, hoping "to rescue this nineteenth-century art form from critical neglect and contempt." He asserts that Thoreau is "the best linguist and best punster among the era's major literary figures" and gives him the most attention. But in "Savoring the Wiles of Words" (334-69), he turns his attention to Dickinson. Commenting on her use of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate language, West says "her etymological sensitivity helped her tap the energy trapped between different strata of the language more effectively than any other nineteenth-century American poet." He notes Dickinson's youthful reputation as a cut-up and the wicked wit found in her poems and letters to demonstrate her early ability as a punster, capable of both silly and increasingly sophisticated puns. He says her love affair with dictionaries and her study of Latin contributed to her interest in etymology, to antithetical meanings, and to what Friedrich Schlegel calls "Romantic irony." West is generous with examples from Dickinson's poetry and letters to illustrate and clarify theoretical concepts: noteworthy is his five-page explication of "These are the days when Birds come back—" (Fr122) in his discussion of Romantic irony. Well researched, this long book contains more about the history of language than some general readers will want to know; but West writes with energy, clarity, and wit, and his book will interest and delight "punsters, philosophers, philologues, pedagogues, and other *grammaticis personae*."

Winter, Jeanette. *Emily Dickinson's Letters to the World.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002. 34 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-374-32147-7, \$16.00.

This well designed small volume, "about the same size of some of the paper on

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.

which Emily wrote,” introduces young readers (4 to 8 years old) to Dickinson and her poems. Narrator Lavinia begins, “My sister Emily was buried today.” Missing her, Lavinia recalls Dickinson’s domestic habits, a select few that young children will remember. Then one day Lavinia finds a drawer full of Dickinson’s poems. Author and illustrator Winter presents the poems in a typeface designed to evoke Dickinson’s handwriting. Complementing the poems, the simple illustrations are alive with saturated color; they dance across a flattened space, recalling Chagall’s richly colored, dreamlike paintings. In her white dress, Dickinson is present on every page, whether stepping “from Plank to Plank” or riding “indefinite” on the back of a “Meadow Bee.” Some of the Johnson poems, even though presented in abbreviated stanzas, will be too sophisticated for young readers, but this is a book to grow into over time; the poems’ rhymes and rhythms and the clever, often witty illustrations will captivate young minds. With its many design details, this delightful book will reward close attention.

Book Reviews

Bulgheroni, Marisa. *Nei Sobborghi di un Segreto: Vita di Emily Dickinson (In the Suburbs of a Secret: The Life of Emily Dickinson)*. Milan: Mondadori, 2001. 352 pp. Cloth, ISBN 88-04-45290-0, L 42,000.

Reviewed by Daniel Lombardo

Marisa Bulgheroni has produced a deeply perceptive and lyrical biography of Dickinson. The foremost Dickinson scholar in Italy, she has been writing about the poet for nearly forty years. Bulgheroni’s landmark *Emily Dickinson: Tutte le Poesie* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997) is the first edition of the “complete” poems in Italian, and a beautifully bound and boxed edition it is. This new biography adds considerably to Italy’s already rich trove of Dickinson-related works and to our understanding of the poet in any language.

Marisa and I had hoped to have a reunion in Italy last September, but, like Bowles attempting to visit the poet, things did not go as planned. Far from reclusive, Marisa was traveling elsewhere when I

had arranged to be in Milan. Coincidentally, we were to be at Lake Como at the same time, but the Italian telephone system defeated efforts to contact each other. Marisa seemed to be everywhere, nevertheless: I found her book prominently displayed in bookstores, even in the small lakeside town of Menaggio.

Since 1933, when Giacomo Prampolini’s translations of five Dickinson poems appeared in the poetry review *Circolo*, Italy has had a deep interest in Dickinson. Writer Patricia Thompson Rizzo has gone so far as to claim Italy as the European center of Dickinson studies. Emilio and Giuditta Cecchi co-wrote the first Italian monograph on Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1939). Her “verbal daring,” her “intense passion, unrelenting introspection, and sharpness of perception,” and her “fascination for the mystery of infinity and death” were noted. The authors attacked the myth of the poet as a fragile recluse, focusing on genius rather than eccentricity. In 1945, the Nobel Prize-winning poet Eugenio Montale gave further exposure to Dickinson when he published his translation of “There came a Wind like a Bugle” (Fr1618). The general public in Italy was introduced to a large body of the poet’s work when Medieval philologist Guido Errante published 400 of her poems in 1956 (*Emily Dickinson: Poesie* [Milan: Mondadori]).

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, such critics as Mario Praz, Agostino Lombardo, and Bianca Maria Pisapia wrote of Dickinson in relation to European existentialism and twentieth-century metaphysical poetry. Bulgheroni changed the direction of Italian criticism beginning in the 1960s, eventually contextualizing Dickinson against the Civil War and other women writers of nineteenth-century America. Her work culminated in the previously mentioned *Tutte le Poesie* and the present biography.

Bulgheroni’s approach to biography is deeply analytical, yet sensual and poetic, a combination inseparable from Italian culture. It is an approach that is eminently appropriate for Dickinson. Her first chapter explores the relationship between Dickinson’s parents and the effect of that relationship on the poet. She observes “la reticenza sulla passione” (reticence on the

theme of passion) in the Edward Dickinson–Emily Norcross letters and describes it as a landmine buried in the subsoil of the family that would eventually explode in the offspring (“una mina sepolta nel sottosuolo familiare, che esploderà nei figli”). For evidence Bulgheroni compares a letter written by Edward to Dickinson’s “She rose to His Requirement” (Fr857) and a painting by her mother to “These Fevered Days—to take them to the Forest” (Fr1467).

The author sees Dickinson’s adolescence as a bittersweet time—ravaged by her blunt exposure to loss and death, played out within a family of old-stock Puritan New Englanders. She developed in an age when Twain was redefining America. Dickinson, like Huck Finn, existed in the margins. Huck, haunted by his father and wary of the civilizing influence of his aunt, set out for freedom and to reinvent himself. Dickinson, however, did not represent herself solely as a supplicant or the dispossessed child; she articulated the anguish and drama of her contested identity. Most important to Bulgheroni, Dickinson *chose* a life written in the margins, an “emarginata elettiva,” and *chose* the many masks she would wear in navigating that life.

The author’s European viewpoint inspires a broader context for the poet: references to Anaïs Nin, Proust, Pushkin, and many others offer fresh insights. As noted above, the book is a thorough, scholarly treatment, yet it is infused with a very personal, Italian sensibility. Bulgheroni’s flights of language soar very close to the poet’s realm. In describing Dickinson’s transformation from child to poet, she writes of her using “l’ago e il filo della poesia per ricucire, punto a punto, le lacerazioni della mente,” the “needle and thread of poetry to re-sew, point to point, the lacerations of her mind.” In Italian, phrases like this are indeed beautiful.

Unique among Dickinson’s biographers, Bulgheroni places herself, ever so gently, within her narrative. We’re with the author as she walks the streets of Amherst, imagining Austin and Emily as children walking along the dusty road before the Homestead as horses and carts rattle by. Her style is immensely readable, yet never trivial.

Bulgheroni's convincing portrait is of a tough-minded poet, one who reinvented herself day by day, wearing the masks of the scholar, the gypsy, the monastic, occasionally the sorcerer, and, most profoundly, the guerilla in rivalry with God. Early on, Dickinson became aware of herself as one of the dispossessed. The series of deaths, separations, and alienated relationships she suffered informed her poetry, her letters, and her way of being in the world. She lost the childhood intimacy she had with her brother, Austin, as his courtship of Susan progressed, but gained an intense intimacy with Susan. According to Bulgheroni, Dickinson, like Shakespeare's Viola, Portia, or Rosalind, "played the boy" with Sister Sue. Dickinson shaped the relationship of the three—she, Austin, and Susan—into "un'incestuous utopia" (an incestuous utopia), which was to last only briefly before crumbling, leaving the poet, once again, dispossessed. Bulgheroni traces somewhat analogous arcs in relationships between Dickinson and Samuel Bowles, Kate Anthon, Charles Wadsworth, and Otis Lord. In every case Bulgheroni loosens the knot between Dickinson's austere quotidian life and the woman who revealed in poetry that "we got a Bomb – /And held it in our Bosom" (Fr508).

The biography's title refers to the author's conviction that we can only approach the perimeter, the "suburbs," of Dickinson's universal secret. Some questions will remain forever unanswered. For example, the well-worn question of the place of passion in Dickinson's life and work leads Bulgheroni to ask: "Did love drive her poetry, or rather, did poetry require the risk and the test of passion?" She concludes that *whom* Dickinson loved is immaterial. She experimented with love, but it was the conquering of language that enchanted her more than any lover.

For the author, the essence of Dickinson is perhaps revealed most fully when the poet takes the mask of the gypsy, in references such as "My Gypsy face – transfigured now" (Fr349). In *Nei Sobborghi di un Segreto* we see the marginalized writer transformed by hope and loss, in revolt against her Puritan background, against the strictures of the

Victorian age. Through Marisa Bulgheroni's Italian eyes, we see a poet who, in her time, could only live as a gypsy, on the edge of society, "nei sobborghi." We see Dickinson as an emotional Ishmael in exile everywhere, one who creates and recreates the world she inhabits. One who dared to question the very God before whom her ancestors and her contemporaries bowed.

Daniel Lombardo is former curator of Special Collections at the Jones Library, Amherst.

Coghill, Sheila, and Thom Tamaro, eds. *Visiting Emily: Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of Emily Dickinson.* Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 2000: 126 pp. Cloth, ISBN0-87745-734-4, \$34.95; paper, ISBN0-87745-739-5, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Kelly Sue Lynch

Visiting Emily is a delightful book of poems by a host of diverse poets celebrating Emily Dickinson's life and work. Arranged alphabetically, the seventy-eight poets express unique and individual voices. Through inspiration and creativity they connect with a poet who in "The Poets light but Lamps –" (Fr930) seems to predict the dissemination of her poems across ages, times, and cultures:

The Poets light but Lamps –
 Themselves – go out –
 The Wicks they stimulate
 If vital Light

Inhere as do the Suns –
 Each Age a Lens
 Disseminating their
 Circumference –

Visiting Emily represents a generous gathering of poets, both living and deceased, who have been touched by Dickinson's words.

Coghill and Tamaro, teachers at Minnesota State University, Moorhead, note the incentive for assembling the poems: their interest in Dickinson and in teaching her poetry led them over a course of years to find and collect poems inspired by Dickinson. The editors ask, "Who among us can resist the urge to speak with her, to connect with her and her world, to find

words for our own intuitive and emotive responses to her life and work?"

A foreword by poet Robert Bly is aptly based on a quote from a Sufi poet, Shabistari: "Everything is always aware of its source / And so it is always making for the throne of the King." Featured on the cover of *Visiting Emily* is Barry Moser's remarkable engraving of Dickinson based on the familiar daguerreotype image.

At the heart of *Visiting Emily* are the poems, each of which stands alone; yet when read together the poems find an expressive unity within the life-work of Dickinson. Andrea Carlisle's "Emily Dickinson's To-Do List" made me laugh aloud. Carlisle captures an image of Dickinson as portrayed by popular culture and at the same time shatters that image with humor because it is too simple. I wish every poetry workshop leader would paste up on the board at the beginning of every workshop Jayne Relaford Brown's poem "Emily Dickinson Attends a Writing Workshop," an example of creative writing and useless criticism.

I read *Visiting Emily* more than once—forward and backward, then I opened randomly to poems and was struck by how little I had fully comprehended them. Poems need to be lived with for some time, not read quickly or superficially. Perhaps this is what draws us to Dickinson. I place *Visiting Emily* within a very exciting and growing area of Dickinson studies: the adaptation of her life and works to the creative arts, wherein responses to her poems are limited only by lack of imagination.

I once dreamed of visiting Emily: I was in her room, asking her if she would publish. She said emphatically no. This book evokes the feeling in my dream, where I am able to meet with her, face-to-face for a fleeting moment. *Visiting Emily* provides a window not only onto Emily but also onto the creative expressions of poets who have brought their dreams of "visiting Emily" alive in words.

Kelly Sue Lynch has just completed her doctoral dissertation on Emily Dickinson at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo, Alto, California.

Habegger, Alfred. *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson.* New York: Random House, 2001. 764pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-679-44986-8, \$35.00.

Reviewed by Domhnall Mitchell

Books are not cars: new books do not make old books redundant. And yet it has been apparent for some time that Richard B. Sewall's standard biography, *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (1974) is no longer as roadworthy as it once was. It is partly a matter of what Sewall did not do (look independently at enough primary materials) and partly a matter of what he could not have done: recent finds and new perspectives on known materials have made another biography necessary and inevitable. (Cynthia Griffin Woolf's 1986 biography proved theoretically limited and often inaccurate.)

Positive reevaluations of the poet's relationship to her sister-in-law, Susan, as well as better estimates about the dates of certain documents (making it impossible, among other things, for Samuel Bowles to have been the "Master" figure), mean that the warranty on major areas of Sewall's biography has long since expired.

In order to understand a life that has attracted so much posthumous speculation (victim of childhood abuse, secret bride, rejected lover, unofficial nun, lesbian suitor), Alfred Habegger's approach has been to go back to original sources—diaries, engagement books and correspondence, sermons, real estate documents, tax records, school and college records, contemporaneous newspapers and magazines, account books, town lists, census archives, and medical treatises. He reads poems and letters in manuscript, for instance, rather than relying solely on Johnson and Franklin—and he is not afraid to correct their mistakes.

Habegger's footnotes alone prove that this is incontestably the best informed and most reliable biography of Dickinson yet written: Habegger has traveled widely and well, for the records of the poet's life are scattered all over the United States. One of the many joys of reading this book is watching the biographer as he hunts sources, finding a reference in Amherst that he pursues to private and public archives in Boston, Cambridge, Dart-

mouth, New Haven, New York, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Springfield, and Worcester. The author is indefatigable, and that makes his biography relentlessly convincing and trustworthy.

And yet one of the strange things to emerge from Habegger's comprehensive, impeccable scholarship is that beneath the myths there appear to be occasional truths. In his opinion, the "Master" is most likely to have been Charles Wadsworth; Dickinson indeed often wore white (and commented on it in letters); she rarely left the grounds of her father's house after her thirtieth year; and she did receive (and postponed answering) a proposal of marriage from Otis Lord.

These are familiar elements, and the question with this (as with any biography) is whether it represents alchemy or discovery—the changing of the known into the semblance of the new, or the finding of things that are valuable, useful, and true. What is compelling about Habegger's interpretation is its judicious originality and overwhelming accuracy, in addition to the very real sense of development imparted (for the first time) to Dickinson's life and career.

Where Sewall gave whole chapters over to the supporting cast of family and friends, Habegger never loses sight of the central player: everything revolves around her gravitational pull. And there are different takes on the satellites: Samuel Fowler Dickinson's collegiate martyrdom is questioned, Edward's severity is considerably toned down, Emily Norcross is made slightly more active and visible, Austin becomes less important with the years, and Samuel Bowles is seen as a friend and not as a lover. Susan Dickinson is given the prominence she deserves but without exaggeration. The result is utterly addictive and readable: despite the massive amount of historical documentation accumulated during the researching of this book, it never interrupts the main narrative.

This is a major achievement, and it is written in a language that makes it accessible to academics and general readers alike. For once, Dickinson seems clearly, consistently, and fully pictured: though there are aspects of the genius that remain

necessarily inexplicable, Habegger does a brilliant job of identifying the forces—personal, social, cultural, historical, and familial—that help us better approach understanding her. One gets a fuller sense of the absolute inescapability of religion in Dickinson's life than previously, and also a magnified wonderment concerning her various strategies of resistance to its local manifestations. And more than ever before, one sees the combination of courage, intensity, playfulness, and generosity that made her humanly exceptional as well as intellectually astonishing.

Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, makes a useful distinction between *studium* and *punctum*: *studium* is a response to a photograph that "requires the intermediary of an ethical and political culture, one that derives from an average affect, almost from a certain training," while the *punctum* "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces." Habegger is aware that biography is closest to *studium*, to life recreated from an aggregate of the historically everyday. It is the poems that edge around one's ethical and political training and seem to have (but no doubt do not have) an effect that is unmediated by convention, to give small shocks, to pierce. The excellence of *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books* is that it makes Dickinson approachable but never average. Like all biographies, there is something tantalizing about it—a sense of likeness or truth just behind the curtain of words that almost eases the ache for explanation.

It seems appropriate, then, though curious (because Sewall did something similar with an unlikely image nearly thirty years ago), that Habegger commits himself to an as-yet-unauthenticated albumen print of Emily Dickinson when most of the evidence seems circumstantial. (Typically, however, he does a tremendous job in attempting to contextualize it.) But this is a minor point; there is much that is brave and useful here—the redating of some Bowles letters, for example, and the objectivity with which Samuel Fowler Dickinson is treated (rightly so, on the grounds that his bankruptcy was foreseeable and avoidable, and because it affected many innocent parties). Habegger is fully versed in New England culture, but

he never lets it obscure our sense of Dickinson's uniqueness or her grandfather's lack of responsibility.

Alfred Habegger is a Jamesian, and *that* Master once wrote: "To live over other people's lives is nothing unless we live over their perceptions, live over the growth, the change, the varying intensities of the same—since it was by these things they themselves lived." The Master would have approved, one thinks, for this is now the definitive biography, and it will continue to illuminate the paths and roads of Dickinson travelers for decades to come. For which, thanks.

Domhnall Mitchell is professor of nineteenth-century American literature at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology at Trondheim and the author of *Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception*.

Hass Lecture, continued from p. 14

Adam, / And come away with me." Humorously identifying the narrator of "There's a certain Slant of light" as "someone with low blood sugar," he gave a serious, close reading and explication of the poem, finding it expressive of "yearning and melancholy."

In light of this poem, he finds it breath-

taking that Dickinson did not have a conversion experience while most of her school and community succumbed to the religious revivalism that swept through New England. In this poem Dickinson speaks intimately: the punctuation (for example, the normally unnecessary comma between *meanings* and *are*) reflects the hesitation in her own mind; she is "at once stuttering and precise." Because death was women's work in the nineteenth century, he says that the poem is "remorseless": when pain comes, "Shadows—hold their breath."

Introducing his reading of "O!" by Milosz, Hass said that the 91-year-old Nobel Prize-winning poet is still inventing new ways to write poetry and has been translating Dickinson poems into Polish.

Before reading from his own long poem "Regalia for Black Cat Dancer," Hass noted that Dickinson is present in the poem and gave him a "rhythmic hint": "There ought to be some single word for the misery of divorce. / (What is the rhythm of that line? Oh, I see. Four and three, / Emily's line!—)." When reading his translations of Bashô's haiku, Hass said that Bashô, like Dickinson, is a poet of longing and absence.

During the question and answer period, Hass circled back to his opening theme, reciting from memory Dickinson's

"Wild Nights – Wild Nights!" calling it another of her "gorgeous and sexy poems." He noted that "she seemed to like the solitude—and the spacious compass—of her own mind," finding "the solitariness of human feeling piercing and necessary." Again reciting from memory "After great pain, a formal feeling comes," he commented on Dickinson's identification with Christ and her unique choice of words in the poem.

Born and raised in California, and the first Poet Laureate of the United States from west of the Mississippi, Hass began reading Dickinson's poems in earnest when he fell in love with a woman who read and loved them. He is currently a visiting professor in the Iowa Writers' Workshop and chairman of the Board of Directors of River of Words, a program he started in 1995 while Poet Laureate. Reflecting his own interests, the program focuses on environmental awareness expressed through art and poetry, annually sponsoring an international contest that brings eight K-12 students to Washington, D.C., to celebrate their prize-winning art and poems. Hass's most recent book of poetry is *Sun Under Wood* (1996).

Barbara Kelly is book review editor for the *Bulletin* and the current secretary of EDIS.

Notes & Queries, continued from p. 17

producer, Lisa Perkins, at lisaperkins1@attbi.com.

New York's new **Bowery Poetry Club** will be the site for a marathon reading of Dickinson's complete poems, starting at noon on Saturday, June 8, and estimated to run for twenty hours. The event, titled "Called Back," was inspired by the attack of September 11. Numerous people have been invited to read for fifteen minutes each, and audience members will also have opportunities to read. The club is located at 308 Bowery. Admission is \$5.00. For more information, go to www.emilyreading.com.

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst will once again present its popular "**Emily Dickinson's World Week-**

end," October 11-13. The two featured speakers will be Alfred Habegger, author of the recently published biography of Dickinson, *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books*, and Professor Christopher Benfey of Mount Holyoke College, one of the authors of *The Dickinsons of Amherst*, which features Jerome Liebling's photographs of the Dickinson houses. The weekend will also include tours of the Dickinson houses and a coach tour of Amherst, visits to the Dickinson exhibit at the Jones Library and the Dickinson family graves in West Cemetery, a Victorian tea at the Amherst History Museum, a performance by the Cantabile Singers, and a poetry reading by Doris Abramson. The cost for the weekend, including five meals and two nights' lodging, is \$295. For further information, see Unitar@crocker.com or call 413-253-2848.

Poet **Marilyn Nelson**, who was profiled in a recent issue of the *Bulletin*, was honored recently with two awards for her book *Carver: A Life in Poems*. She received the 2002 Newbery Award and the Coretta Scott King Award. EDIS offers heartiest congratulations.

The **Folger Shakespeare Library** held its annual celebration of Dickinson's birthday on December 11, 2001, cosponsored by the Poetry Society of America and with additional support from the Lanham Foundation. Poet Susan Howe was guest of honor and led a special seminar. A dinner honoring Howe ended with guests enjoying black cake and wine while the poet autographed her books. As in past years, Jim Fraser and his wife, Diana, hosted an EDIS exhibit that attracted many visitors.

Fascicle 21 is “This was a Poet” (Fr446). The depiction there of the poet as distilling “amazing sense/From ordinary Meanings” seems applicable to Olds’s speaker’s wresting her song from such a dark childhood experience. The “sweetness,” which is poetry coming from the speaker’s own homestead, is her creation, not her parents’.

In the first poem of her first collection, *Satan Says* (1980), Olds’s speaker sings what Olds elsewhere calls a “womanifesto,” saying of her parents, “I love them / but I’m trying to say what happened to us / in the lost past.” That “love” and, as her speaker claims in what is probably Olds’s most anthologized poem, “I Go Back to May 1937,” the ability “to tell about it,” do not let the parents lie sweetly. In fact, she feels a constant pressure to word the truth. As Donald Faulkner, associate director of the New York State Writers Institute, said when presenting Olds the Walt Whitman Citation of Merit for Poets and naming her the sixth official New York Poet Laureate (1998-2000), “She does what few Americans are willing to do. She tells the truth” (Virtanen).

Olds explained her poetic form to my class by claiming, “I can’t tell the truth in a sonnet.” To Dwight Garner she said, “Art...has something to do with wanting to be accurate about what we think and feel” (*Salon*). In her interview with Michael Virtanen, Olds mused, “As poets we have a desire to put into language, or record the language that’s already in a part of us...to make something.” From the somatic experience of her captivity, from the “alphabet soup” she was spoon-fed, Olds’s speaker makes poetry.

The activity—feeding, creative rumination, poetic response—recalls Caedmon, the first recorded poet in English, and his mysterious creative process, as well as Dickinson’s “tremblingly partook” “word made Flesh” (Fr1715). She told my class: “I want to make something, to bring forth what’s within me—a vision—not a rational vision, but an object, something I walk into. The poem is an object and I try to transfer it on to paper without altering it, without falsifying it.”

Olds’s recognition of her deeper con-

nection to Dickinson appears to have been emerging. In *Titanic Operas*, a transcription of readings given at a centenary tribute for Dickinson held in 1986, Olds commented on the family’s “power relationships,” saying, “I look at Emily Dickinson and I see the way in which power relationships were important to her.” She also said she had been thinking of Dickinson “as a mother of us all” (10). She remarked: “I connect with her as a passionate woman. As an obsessed woman,” and added that her own hand shook “in special honor of Emily, but it always shakes whenever I read poetry” (2). Such intense physical reaction recalls Dickinson’s method of recognizing poetry by its effect upon her body: “If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know *that is poetry*” (L342a).

When Olds spoke to my class, she began by saying we should “sing to our foremothers,” and she opened that song with Dickinson’s poem “Wild Nights – Wild Nights!”—a poem Olds’s readers might parallel to the bold sexual poems for which she is famous. Leaving the comparison unstated, Olds followed that reading with a discussion of what she called “Dickinson’s importance to me,” mentioning the oral portrait in the Oscar Williams anthology she had as a child. “Her face looking out of that oval was very important to me” because there were “just a couple of women in the series.”

She also commented upon Dickinson’s rhythm, especially what she called the “cut and thrust” rhythm, the “tension and power and fury (in a way) of her rhythms.” But she admitted that not having “a very abstract mind,” it had taken her “a long time to engage [Dickinson] as a thinker.” “It took me a long time to understand [my] depth of fear of the choice she had to make as a woman and a poet—to do one or the other. Everything was not possible for that generation.” The necessity of that choice, Olds says, “filled me with grief for so long.” Still, Dickinson’s existence as a woman and poet also was “a sign to me that it was all possible.”

In a 1993 interview in *Poets & Writers Magazine*, Olds describes her “vision” of Dickinson’s “naked foot.” “I realized

that she had had a naked foot” (Blossom 34). This recognition of Dickinson’s physicality parallels and predates the comments Billy Collins made about just such a vision in “Poet to Poet” (*Bulletin*, May/June 2001). According to Olds, her “vision had something to do with beat, the beat of the Episcopalian hymns that I grew up with—‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’—and with the rhythm of Dickinson’s poems. It had to do with the love and the fear of connection” (34). Emphasizing her reticence to claim total likeness, Olds also directly joins herself with Dickinson, saying:

Emerging from the Puritan trust in pain! That Calvinist affection for the negative view of the self. It’s a pretty common journey, probably.

I have this feeling now about poetry and my relationship to it—our relationship to it: that we’re in a family. Maybe I felt I had the right to imagine her foot because it’s just human to imagine the naked foot of another human. It’s all right. It won’t hurt her. And it won’t be a lie, as if I’m saying I’m like her. I am like her, and I’m not like her. [34]

Olds, as her critics note, is a poet of the body; thus it is not strange that she would find connection through an embodied pun on Dickinson’s literal and metrical “foot.” She also states that poems form physically within her and that she wants “each poem to have all its body parts, to be complete” (Stewart 121).

The speaker in “Emily Dickinson’s Writing Table,” though bound to the chair, mentally dances her poem. As Olds says, “To me, the mind seems to be spread out in the whole body—the senses are part of the brain” (*Salon*). The physical memory, the poem emerging from the wounded body, is therefore a meaningful association, not to a single poem but to the body of Olds’s work. Echoing Dickinson’s query to Higginson, “Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is Alive?” Olds claims that what she “most care[s] about...is whether the poem feels alive. It is that life which matters” (Stewart 123). Her poems, like Dickinson’s, exist as embodied life—breathing rhythmically in the form of the poem.

Other similarities abound. Like Dickinson, who declares, “Their Hight in Heaven comforts not,” Olds values the tangible

being. She writes in "For and Against Knowledge": "I have never understood the spirit, / all I know is the shape it takes, / the wavering flame of flesh" (*Blood*90). Also like Dickinson, Olds challenges the divine and his authority on earth. Olds's poem "The Pope's Penis" might be an avatar of Dickinson's view of the Bible as "an antique Volume - / Written by faded Men / At the suggestion of Holy Spectres" (Fr1577C) and her questioning in "What if God," which wonders "Was He a bison... was He a squirrel... Is there a God in the house?" resembles Dickinson's castigations in "Of Course -I prayed -/ and did God Care?" (Fr581) or "It's easy to invent a Life" (Fr747) or "Abraham to kill him" (Fr1332), which compares the divine to a "Mastiff" with whom "Manners may prevail."

Olds's poems, like Dickinson's, are usually no more than a page long, and even the arrangement of poems in Olds's collections of poetry resembles the ordering of poems in Dickinson's various fascicles, some grouped according to theme, others by looser association.

The area in which Olds is most unlike Dickinson is her fame, for Olds is a public poet, touted as one of today's most popular. Once she began to publish, in her thirties, she continued to attract a widening audience. Her poem "The Death of Marilyn Monroe" won the Madeline Sadin Award from *New York City Quarterly*,

and Olds earned the Best Younger Poets Award from *Poetry Miscellany* before her first volume of poetry, *Satan Says*, was published in 1980. It won the inaugural San Francisco Poetry Center Award. Her second book, *The Dead and the Living*, was the Lamont Poetry selection for 1983 and won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her other collections include *The Gold Cell* (1987), *The Father* (1992), *The Wellspring* (1996), and *Blood, Tin, Straw* (1999). Her seventh collection, *The Unswept Room*, will be published in 2002.

Olds directs and teaches workshops in the Graduate Program in Creative Writing at New York University. She has organized poetry workshops at New York's Goldwater Hospital, a state facility for the severely physically challenged, since 1984, and is on the staff of Squaw Valley's poetry workshop. She gives readings throughout the country, and her poems appear in journals from *Poetry* and *Ploughshares* to *The New Yorker*.

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Elizabeth Mills is professor of English at Davidson College, where she teaches courses on contemporary American women poets and a seminar on Emily Dickinson.

A Puzzle, continued from p. 15

But what if Dickinson didn't write "If I can stop one heart from breaking" as an original poem but paraphrased it for a sentimental friend, like the copy of John Pierpont's "My Child" in L183, or the recasting of a poem by Thomas Wentworth Higginson in L503? That is, what if Mr. Osumi's text wasn't the copy but the original? With that consoling hope in mind, I asked Mr. Osumi by letter if he could give me any more information about his source. Unfortunately, he could not. An old man then (he died shortly thereafter), he could tell me only that he had previously published this quotation in 1966. And there the matter has rested for fifteen years. I have sent students looking

for a source, and I've looked myself in the published sermons of Charles Wadsworth, but none of us has found anything.

To add to the puzzle, Dickinson preserved a fair copy of the poem in Set 7. Whether or not the poem was entirely original, Dickinson seems to have been proud of her work. The text alone can't help us wish away that sentimental fact. But the other poems in Set 7 can at least provide a context. Of Dickinson's fifteen sets, Set 7 is the largest, but it consists chiefly of minor letter poems. This is understandable; the set dates from late 1865, after the poet's return from her long, exhausting stay in Boston and at the end of her great season of poetic fruitfulness. "If

I can stop one heart from breaking" is the poem of an emotional convalescent. In 1865, it may have been a poem that Dickinson needed for herself. Next to "Because I could not stop for death" it looks like an embarrassing anomaly, but in Set 7 it is a representative text.

But is it an original poem or a paraphrase of Mr. Osumi's text? After fifteen years of asking, I now turn this question over to readers of the *Bulletin*.

Jonathan Morse is professor of English at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu. He will be organizer of the next EDIS conference, at Hilo, Hawaii, in 2004.

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