

Bulletin

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

Emily Dickinson International Society

ALFRED HABEGGER: AN ORIGINAL DICKINSONIAN

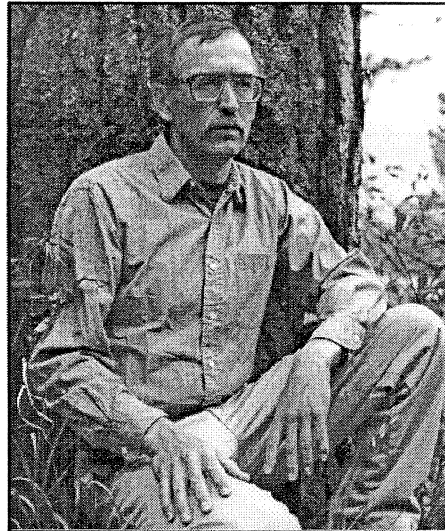
By Mary Elizabeth Kromer Bernhard

While Alfred Habegger has given crystalline definition to Emily Dickinson in *My Wars are Laid Away in Books*, he has revealed his own authorial acumen in discerning her life. The flourishing interest in Dickinson is evident with Random House's issuance of this biography in October 2001, followed by the Modern Library's paperback edition barely a year later.

Fundamental to Habegger's concept of *My Wars* was his conviction that the biographical imperative in this new study should be chronology. Believing that Dickinson's poetry "shows a striking and dramatic evolution," Habegger has analyzed contrapuntally her experiential life in relation to her creative work. His own evolutionary career as scholar, teacher, and writer has especially qualified him to write an authoritative biography of Emily Dickinson. Previously established as author of three insightful books, he deserves further visibility as a person.

Born in Chicago in 1941, Alfred Habegger was one of four children, two sisters and a brother being younger. At the time of his birth, his father was enrolled in medical school. Upon completion of his degree, the parents moved the family to a central California community, Reedley, where his father entered family practice and where his parents have remained. Influential in drawing them there was the fact that there were a number of

Mennonites in residence. The Habeggers belonged to the General Conference Mennonite Church, a rather liberal branch that did not choose to dress



Alfred Habegger
Photo by Nellie Habegger
distinctively.

Reedley, then a small town of 5,000, was essentially multicultural for, in addition to the large contingent of Mennonites, there were people of Finnish, Armenian, Chinese, and Japanese descent. At nine Habegger had an opportunity to meet native Americans when he visited his paternal grandparents at Busby and Lame Deer, Montana where they served as missionaries to the Northern Cheyenne Indians. In his teens he was very much a part of the pop culture, yet his first jobs in fruit harvests of the area involved exhausting labor. He de-

scribes himself as a "hyphenated American, one whose role was inclusive, yet isolated as a Mennonite," especially since he initiated his academic career at Bethel College, a Mennonite institution at Newton, Kansas.

Receiving his B.A. degree in 1962, Habegger returned to the far west to complete his Ph.D. at Stanford University as a Danforth Graduate Fellow. There he launched into study with Yvor Winters, the dominant literary critic at Stanford, who was a magnetic teacher with "a first rate intellect." A course on Henry James with Visiting Professor Irving Howe whetted Habegger's interest in James, who ultimately became the focus of his dissertation.

As a specialist in American literature, Habegger in 1966 joined the English Department faculty at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. His professional career spanned thirty years, ending in 1996 when he chose early retirement to devote himself fully as an independent scholar to his ongoing research and writing. The result is the impressive *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books*.

A principle thrust in his teaching was the salient importance of reading with absorption and penetration to develop "serious but non-formulaic thinking about literature." He offered graduate and undergraduate courses in nineteenth-century realistic fiction with emphasis on Henry James and

William Dean Howells. Even now Habegger is convinced that "Howells is much better than is generally recognized." Though he taught various American literature courses, he deliberately branched out, undertaking a spectrum of courses that included Dante's *Inferno*, *The Odyssey*, Frank O'Connor's short stories, and the third book in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* that defines the female knight, Britomart. Emily Dickinson emerged prominently in his undergraduate surveys and in his "Emerson, Dickinson, Whitman" course, only to become primary in his "Dickinson" graduate seminar.

Habegger's perspective on James shifted in the 1970s. Although he realized that James had often interpreted his leading female characters sympathetically, he felt negative about the novelist's female attitudes. He perceived that he was not a detached writer, and that in such novels as *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Bostonians* he was making "comments" basically unfavorable to women and suffrage.

With a particular interest in feminist factors in the history of nineteenth-century American fiction, Habegger turned to extensive reading of novels by women writers, as well as study of the period. His focus narrowed to the 1850s when all the "best sellers"—among them *The Wide Wide World* by Susan Warner and Maria Cummin's *The Lamplighter*—were by women. Habegger's *Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1982) provides a penetrating analysis of evolving realism in nineteenth-century American fiction with an emphasis on women's popular novels as a major force in

early literary development. Cambridge University Press published his second critical study in 1989, *Henry James and the "Woman Business,"* in which Habegger explores James's complicated attitude toward women writers—fundamentally in opposition to the feminist point of view and voice. Women as writers and as characters in James's fiction emerge from this study.

Habegger's transition from literary critic to biographer was precipitated by the publication of "Dupine Tracks J.J." in *The Southern Review* in 1991. Though Habegger has written a number of articles for professional journals, he experienced a career change as the result of a single short story. "Dupine," an invented literary detective and professor, outlines his break-neck search in various archival research centers for clues to the suicide of Henry James's uncle, John Barber James, whose very existence is obscured in family records. Convinced that this tragic event influenced James's imagination in his first novel, *Watch and Ward*, Dupine pursued his research with tenacity and great success. After "Dupine Tracks J.J." came out, Habegger received a phone call from the literary agent Nat Sobel, who offered to be his agent. Habegger accepted, and Sobel continues in that role today. Sobel suggested that Habegger write fiction; instead he turned to biography.

His switch to "real life" resulted in publication of his prize-winning biography, *The Father: A Life of Henry James, Sr.* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994; The University of Massachusetts Press, 2001). Habegger has illuminated a formidable father, one whose judgments

influenced even his novelist son's negative feminist views.

Stimulated by his long-simmering perceptions of Emily Dickinson, Habegger in 1994 vigorously undertook research for a comprehensive, innovative biography. His teaching experience made him particularly aware of the burgeoning pull of her poetry, though he was convinced that her life in relation to her creative work remained ill-defined biographically. After his retirement from active teaching, he was able to engage in exhaustive research involving travels across the United States to scour libraries and archival centers and to read a multiplicity of documents, both known and previously unknown. Accompanying him on his extensive research trips was his wife, Nellie Habegger, who was "willing and eager" to assist in gathering material.

Habegger has been the recipient of a number of research fellowships, especially from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and has served as a Fulbright Lecturer in Bucharest. He is convinced that "such financial support is indispensable" in combining research and writing with teaching. Since the publication of *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books*, he has swept the country from west to east and back again, lecturing on Emily Dickinson. Most recently he returned from a month-long lecture tour of academic institutions in Japan where interest in Dickinson flourishes. The Oregon Book Award for nonfiction had been granted during his absence.

In 1996 the Habeggers sold their Queen Anne house in Lawrence and

continued on page 28

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DICKINSON'S POWER IN STUDENT HANDS

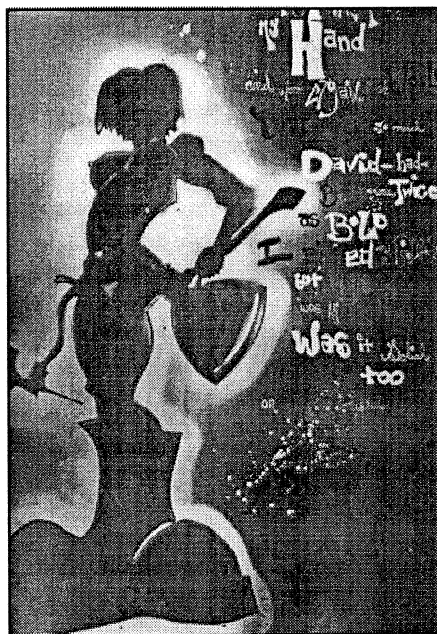
By Robert K. Wallace and Melissa Rae Gers

I teach an undergraduate course in Emily Dickinson and Henry James every other year at Northern Kentucky University. It is always a pleasure and a challenge to teach these two authors together; each time I hope to inspire more of those "magic" moments in which the teacher is able to "stand back and let it happen—watch the students really interact with the material at hand" (in the words of Connie Anne Kirk in these pages, November/December 2002, 9). To encourage such moments, I have increasingly opened space in my syllabus that students must fill with creations of their own, both individually and in groups. The students I taught during the fall 2001 semester filled their space with verbal and artistic creations beyond what I could have imagined. One student, Melissa Gers, my co-author here, has preserved much of that creativity in both a magazine and a website that she subsequently created as an Independent Study project.

First, the group work. One year I went a whole semester in which a majority of the students never entirely clicked with Emily (*that* group did much better with Henry). I like to use the *Complete Poems* as my Dickinson text, cruising through it chronologically in alternation with our chronological reading of James. Doing so gives students great flexibility in gravitating to individual poems they might savor, but for some it offers too bewildering or intimidating a variety of riches. I now meet that problem by dividing the class into groups of four and asking each group at the end of the semester to present its mini-anthology of Dickinson's 20 best poems, supporting its choices by explaining the criteria by which the choices were made. Knowing they will be responsible for selecting their own poems at the end of the semester keeps each student more actively engaged with the poetry every step of the way. (Of the 84 poems selected by the five groups

during fall 2001, eight were chosen twice and three appeared on three different lists: "Over the fence—," "He fumbles at your Soul," and "I tend my flowers for thee—"). For each group's mini-anthology, with rationale, see Melissa's website <http://www.nku.edu/~emily>.

For their individual projects in the Dickinson/James class, students can choose between doing a traditional research paper or a creating an artistic project of their own. More and more have been taking the artistic plunge in this literature class and others that I



© Camilla Asplen, *I took my Power in my Hand*, mixed media, 2001, 32 x 25 in.

Photo by Robert K. Wallace

teach. Melissa and her fall 2001 classmates gave me a new appreciation of the learning that can occur when students are filling the classroom space with their own original creations. Several students in this class did present research papers as their final projects, and several of these were excellent. But the most distinctive projects from this group of students were the artistic creations. By definition, a student who creates a work of art in response to Dickinson or James

is making that author her or his own. Whether the medium be painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, poetry, fiction, script writing, or song writing (those chosen in this particular class), the student can say, with Dickinson, "I took my Power in my Hand." This is the title of the painting by Camilla Asplen that Melissa chose as the cover for her magazine: *Dickinson and James: Creative Explorations*. Camilla shaped each of the words as carefully as she did the female figure.

"I took my Power in my Hand" was one of three large paintings that Camilla presented on the day and a half set aside for individual presentations. Ellen Bayer presented a sequence of twenty photographs, entitled *Emily, 2001*, in which she imagines Dickinson coming alive in the real-time world of our course, each photograph accompanied by an extract from the *Poems*. Amy Fry created an oval portrait of Dickinson, inscribed and stitched with Amy's favorite poems and passages; she presented this though a daring impersonation of who Emily might be if she lived in our own age. All of these students were English, not Arts majors, who found the creation of visual art an enriched medium in which to express a personal response to Dickinson's art. Such was also the case with Melissa Gers, whose sculpture—the first work of art she had ever tried to make—took its shape, as well as its title, from "This is a Blossom of the Brain." The one Art major in the class, Connie Bartlett, had her senior show in the University Gallery during the week of our class presentations. Several of the eight large drawings she exhibited were directly inspired by Dickinson poems she had read in our class. Equally interesting were those she had already drawn for which she found, after the fact, an equivalent expression in Emily's art.

Melissa's website illustrates all of the artworks created for the class, along with the artist's statement that accom-

panied each one. On the website you can also hear the two songs that were composed and sung by members of the class. Joel Spencer had been a very quiet student the whole semester. When he walked up to the front of the class with his guitar, sat on the edge of the table, and began to play *The Heart has Many Doors*, we were all mesmerized. His artist's statement on the website explains the unique process by which he managed to find the Dickinson poems whose texts he set. Nathan Dutle's process in *Going – to – Her!* was entirely different. After creating a rhythmic pattern internalized from his experience of reading Dickinson, he then chose the spoken words, only partially audible, that would best complement the musical motion.

Whereas Dickinson's poetry inspired nearly all of the visual and musical art created by students in this class, James's prose influenced several of those students who chose to express their artistry in words. Mark Goins's "Moral Hygiene" is a long short story giving a subtle psychological portrait of a contemporary male protagonist whose deep domestic distress is to some extent self-imposed. Rob Detmering's sequence of poems entitled *The Burning House* paid tribute to each of our authors. The repressed distress of his Osmondish "portrait of a power outage" contrasts with the epigrammatic freshness of the short poem that begins: "Athiests and Faithiests / Will never reconcile." Noah Soudrette, the one student who presented a film script as his final project, had us doubled up in laughter as he imagined a shoot-out between Henry and Emily in a Wild West nineteenth-century tavern in *Psychological Fiction*. Unable to delay the action any longer, Henry finally reaches for a large manuscript inside his capacious jacket, only to have Emily beat him entirely to the draw with her quick wit and early release. Perhaps without intending to, Noah condensed the feelings of the entire class at the end of a semester in which James, though admired, had not touched most students as deeply

as Dickinson had. One reason for this may be that our reading of *The Portrait of a Lady* (always central in a class's bonding with James in my experience of teaching the course) was interrupted at the end of chapter 33, in which Osmond proposes to Isabel, by 9/11.

You are reading this essay because Melissa Gers, on the first day of the individual presentations, said something like, "These are wonderful. We should do something with them." Her essay shares a bit of what she did do. [RKW]

Undergraduate English majors are usually evaluated by their ability to analyze and criticize the works of authors who were inspired to create tex-



© Ellen Bayer, *Somehow Myself survived the Night/ And entered with the day-*, from *Emily*, 2001, color photograph, 6 X 4 in.
Photo by Alex Bayer

tual masterpieces. It seldom occurs that the students are invited to create their own masterpieces from the inspiration they receive from others' pieces. For many of my peers, taking Dr. Robert Wallace's Emily Dickinson and Henry James course was their first opportunity since elementary school to express themselves artistically, opting out of traditional forms of evaluation. This course, with its demanding yet stimulating reading list, maps out a magnificent alternative to typical classroom strategy.

Dr. Wallace, in the preceding essay, discusses in detail the structure of the class and the magic it sparked from an instructor's standpoint. The process,

though, is even more evocative from a student perspective. When one enrolls in an upper-level English course there is a certain expectation that the semester will be filled with a multitude of analytical essays and lengthy research papers. Dr. Wallace's course is refreshing in that, while written exams are still required, the longer essays can be traded for art. This option not only allows students to break from long evenings at the library digging up facts that they may find absolutely uninteresting, but it offers a meditative workspace where students can reflect on how the class readings convey their own emotions and intellects.

Upon first glancing at the syllabus for this class, many of the students, myself included, believed that using our untapped artistic abilities for a final project would be an "easy" way to get a good final grade. This belief, we discovered, was the absolute opposite of what the projects ended up being, because the nature of the art we produced required us to unfasten the binds around our hearts and produce a new form of intimate expression. The students who presented creative projects were not just revealing the frequently repeated results of library research--they were, instead, displaying the secrets of their beings to the class.

During class presentations, it was evident that the students had put their hearts into what they presented. For example, Camilla Asplen's remarkable paintings fused the inspiration from Emily's poems with her own thoughts on what it is to be a woman, both in Emily's time and our own. For two of her works, she used photographs of herself as models for her paintings--this is especially effective in *I took my Power in my Hand*--and took a personalized approach as she decided how she wanted to portray herself against Emily's words.

In *Emily*, 2001, Ellen Bayer also used herself as a strong resource for her project. In her photographic journal, Ellen was her own model for her conception of what Emily would do if she were to visit the United States in 2001.

continued on page 29

GOING TO SCHOOL WITH EMILY DICKINSON

By John Guzlowski

In 1973, as graduate students at Purdue University, John Guzlowski and I met for the first time in a Colonial American Literature course. After nearly thirty years of friendship with John and his wife Linda Calendrillo, it gives me special pleasure to feature John, his poetry, and his reflections on Dickinson in the "Poet to Poet" series.

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

My experience with Emily Dickinson isn't like that of other people in this series. I didn't read her when I was a child. In fact, there wasn't much poetry in my house. My parents, my

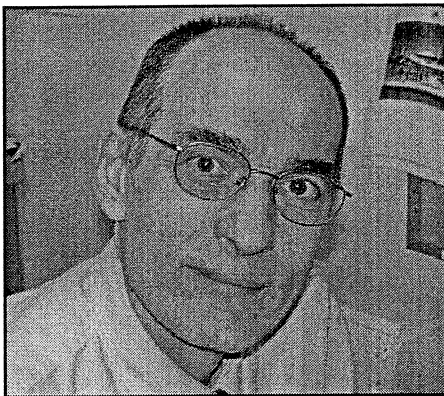


Photo by Lillian Calendrillo Guzlowski

sister, and I were Displaced Persons, refugees. My parents were Polish survivors of Nazi slave labor camps who had somehow found themselves in Chicago after the war, and they were busy trying to make something of life in Chicago in the fifties. We weren't passing poetry around the dinner table.

The only things that came into the house that resembled poems were the Polish soldier ballads my father would sing when he would have a few drinks. I remember one about a young girl waiting near a deep well for her lover, who never returns from the wars. There was another about how the red poppies on Monte Cassino (a Benedictine abbey on the spine of Italy that stood in the way of an Allied advance toward Rome) will always remind people about how the Poles bled and died there. You get the picture.

And my poetry reading in grade school and high school was shaped by the nuns of St. Francis in the former and the Christian Brothers in the latter. In grade school we read Catholic poets. The one who struck me most was Joyce Kilmer, the author of "Trees," a good man who died in the trenches of France in World War I. My first poem used his rhymed iambic tetrameter couplets. In high school, we read lots of Robert Frost and Dylan Thomas. I had a teacher who began every class for a year reading out loud either Frost's "Birches" or Thomas's "Fern Hill." It was boy's poetry and young man's poetry with a tinge of the brooding existential grayness of the early sixties.

When I did finally start reading Emily Dickinson in college, the experience wasn't one that touched me deeply or transformed the way I thought about poetry. I can honestly say that I didn't much care for her. Part of this, of course, may have come from the way she was presented back then, in the mid-sixties. One of my profs referred to Dickinson as the "poet of minutiae"; another talked about her "domestic concerns." Neither teacher was making me want to thumb through a volume of her poems. The feeling I was getting was that there were poets who said big things and poets who said small things. Looking back on all that now, I can see that a lot of what was going on was a dismissal of Dickinson on the basis of gender, but at that time I just didn't see it.

The first time I actually read her was in an introduction to poetry class. We read one of her "minutiae" poems, the one about the snake, "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass." The poem didn't move me at all until I got to the final stanza when she started talking about how she never ran across this snake "Without a tighter breathing/ And Zero at the Bone —." I thought, there's a great image, what a way to talk about fear: Zero at the Bone. Yes, she's got

that down, but the rest of the poem for me was a "so what." I thought, one super image but where's her philosophy, her worldview, and how about the zeitgeist? The big things? In this class, I was also reading Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and Yeats's "Second Coming" and "Sailing to Byzantium." Xanadu! Brook-

Midnight

Somewhere there is
A short lyric by Emily
Dickinson that begins
With that straight dark word

"Midnight" and ends
With these two quiet lines:
"The train passes oh so slowly
But the grief will never end."

When I first read it I was
Young, eighteen, a student.
Too young to know what
Really feeds us, I laughed

And said to my friend Mike
Rychlewski, "And they call
This oatmeal poetry? They
Should feed it to the cows."

"Midnight" appeared in the *EIU English Alumni Newsletter* May 1999.

lyn Ferry! Byzantium! These were poems doing everything a poem should be doing. Structuring the world. Explaining the unexplainable. Revealing truths that would remain truths for always, and for everyone. Tossing around exclamation points and rejecting dashes entirely!

What that introduction to poetry class taught me was that I preferred Yeats, Whitman, and Coleridge to Emily Dickinson and her simple matters. Yes, she was giving me a snake in the grass and "Zero at the Bone." And she was giving me Eden, of course,

but what about Leda and the Swan, the Cosmos, future generations staring me in the face, Khan's Pleasure Dome? If I could have spoken to her, I would have said, "Give me the big picture, Emily."

My next encounter with Emily Dickinson was in an American Literature survey, and it was about the same. She was sandwiched between Whitman's "Song of Myself" and Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*. I can imagine the three of them sitting on a bench waiting to be called into the game. The Whitman of Manhattan on one side, a lusty, big brawling figure waiting for somebody like Carl Sandburg to describe him as the Poet of the Big Shoulders. And on the other side, the magnificently rotund and socially imposing James the First after whom there are no others, a writer for whom every sentence is encyclopedically complex and raring to go.

And what about Emily? She sits in the middle, in white of course, quickly fading to a gray, dusty shadow, then little less than a shadow, then nothing, just a silence. She vanished for me. I'm sorry, but there it was. The professor who taught the class was working on a book about roaring radicals in American literature from 1850-1900, and he couldn't see Emily Dickinson either. Amid the gas and bellowing of the second half of the 19th century, there were only about 15 minutes for Dickinson and her domestic concerns. We read her poem about the porcelain cup on the shelf ("I cannot live with you") and scratched our heads. A poem about a cup? Students looked around at each other and looked again at the poem, and by then the 15 minutes were up and we were deep on the track of the Henry James Express! My poem "Midnight" in part comes out of these early experiences with Dickinson. At that time, I did feel that all that her poetry was good for was cattle fodder, something to feed the cows.

When was it that I started looking at Emily and liking what I saw? I guess it was in the middle of my teaching career, about fifteen years ago. I was

teaching the second half of our freshman composition sequence, a course yoking literature and writing, and I wanted to do a unit on poems about death, so I was going through the anthology searching for appropriate poems. I found "Because I could not stop for Death," "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died," and "There's a certain Slant of light." When I read these poems, I stopped looking for others. These poems became the whole unit.

What moved me about them then, and still moves me, is her absolute clarity. Maybe clarity isn't the right word, but I don't know how else to say it. She's talking about death, she's talking about her shifting attitudes toward it, she's talking about fear and expectation and despair and God and love, and she does it all with words so straightforward and so clear and so welcoming to me that I feel as if all poetic artifice is gone from the poems, and it's just Dickinson talking to me in a darkening room about what it is she felt when she thought about death. I'm not saying that the poems aren't complex and carefully crafted and deliberately shaped in such a way as to inspire deep and serious and critical readings. They're clearly all that, and they express a worldview besides! All I'm saying is that she writes with such humane forthrightness that, for me, she becomes fully real and alive. When she says, "There's a certain Slant of light," I have to look at a window because it's like she's standing next to me and pointing. "Look there," she's saying, "do you see it, John? I have to tell you, it makes me feel so cold. So cold. Do you see it?"

When I read her and feel this, I know it's exactly how I wish I could speak in my poems.

John Guslowski teaches creative writing and American literature at Eastern Illinois University. His poems about his parents' experiences in the Nazi Labor Camps appear in his books Language of Mules and Jezyk Mulow i inne wiersze, a collection of poems in Polish and English published by Biblioteka Slaska, www.bs.katowice.pl.

To E. Dickinson in Heaven

So Emily,
tell me
what is it—
that so finally
kindly stops us—
Is it the heart
at last saying yes

to cholesterol
to blockage
in the ascending aorta?
The not wholly
chromed bumper slapping

our bones as quick
as children changing
their minds among swings
slides and jungle gyms?

Or is it the life
that passes
before our eyes
as the gas

hisses from the shower head
the knife tears,
the bear spreads
his arms,
the lover
enters the half circle
of our vision?

Let me know.

Sincerely,

John Guzłowski

"To Emily Dickinson in Heaven" originally appeared in Rhino 99: The Poetry Forum.

Some of these poems appear online at <http://thescreamonline.com/poetry/poetry08-01/guzlowski.html>.

Zero at the Bone: Emily Dickinson Rock

By Sebastian Lockwood

It is a tribute to Emily Dickinson's genius that her poems work as the sharpest rock lyrics ever written. I think she would be pleased, by now, to witness eighteen-year-olds leaving a performance singing "Just felt the world go by."

It is a cliché that you can sing Dickinson to just about anything – Pritchard (Talking Back To Emily Dickinson, and Other Essays) speaks of hearing her poems sung by a chorus to "The Yellow Rose of Texas" – her 8/6 pattern makes this possible. Poets call this pattern common meter while musicians call it common time. Her poetry works from the hymn and chapel rhythms. Blues and its edgy child, rock, do the same. *Zero at the Bone's* work was not to fit Dickinson's lines to rock tunes but to write original rock and pop tunes that would illuminate the hard rock crystal of her work.

My first experience of the possibility of this power was with Firemask, an alternative band writing originals. We were playing at The Middle East, Central Square Cambridge, sharing the bill with Skull Toboggan. Here was an excuse to turn the PA up to 11 and rip. We had been putting music behind my spoken delivery of "There's a certain Slant of light" (Fr 320). This time we repeated the last stanza into a full rock crescendo of blazing guitars, screaming the last lines: ... *like the Distance/ On the look of Death* –

When we were done, Skull Toboggan, all tattoos and facial metal, gave that song a cheer and said we wrote heavy lyrics—oh no we replied, that was Emily Dickinson—"Wow Dude, she rocks!"

That was the first indication of Dickinson's power. Later, jamming with my partner Nanette Perrotte, I returned to a rock treatment of Dickinson's work. There we coined the concept Emily Dickinson Rock and began exploring her work to see how we could write original tunes for her lines. This coincided with Richard Colton, a Boston based choreographer, asking us to collaborate on a dance piece for Concord Academy.

One of the first songs we wrote for this was "Zero at the Bone," with help from Chris Zerby of the rock group

Helicopterhelicopter. I knew that to move beyond the cliché of fitting her work to tunes, we would have to work with elision and rearrangement. This was daunting if not sacrilegious: like being asked to rearrange a Faberge egg with a pen knife. However, if the end result is students singing her lines, then it's worthwhile.

A pop/rock song first and foremost needs a hook, a line that carves: *like a rolling stone... I can't get no... Who are you... All we are is dust in the wind...* (A superior line, Dickinson's "Dust is the only secret," comes to mind.) Are any of these "Zero at the Bone?" *Zero* is a rock word as is *bone*; together they give that winsome blues passive aggressive delivery. The poem has other lines that have that same gem impact: *Whip lash in the sun... when a Boy and Barefoot... tighter breathing* (Fr 1096). Now add a simple bass line and build the song, crafting verse, chorus, and bridge. By using certain of the lines and arranging them to fit this matrix we achieved one of the most achingly beautiful blues songs imaginable.

Developing the song we worked on the constriction of... "tighter breathing," repeated over and over before the release into... "Zero at the Bone." The construction and release eerily echo Habegger's description of the heavy, tighter, breathing of Dickinson's last two unconscious days before the release.

We have to make a few changes to serve this medium. Any words that are no longer in use we avoid: *till*, *'tis*, *'twas*, *'twere*, *tho'*, *thee*... we move some words, for instance, *unbraiding*, to get the line: ... *a Whiplash in the sun*. We also avoid words such as *cordiality* that don't fit the rock sensibility. The final song uses the lines that give the rock edge, repeating them until the audience has them carved on their minds like a ... "Slant of light." When the audience leaves the performance they do not yet have the poem "A narrow Fellow in the Grass." But when they return to that poem they can feel and hear those lines with a new intensity – they can find a gut resonance with the poem. (The chart for "Zero at the Bone"

is included at the end of this article.)

The premise here is that with Dickinson, as with most geniuses, it is more important to know the poem than to understand the poem. Great poetry has great resistance. By hearing the lines with an emotional force, the student can feel the power. (See Lockwood.)

Having written the show for Concord Academy with 18 dancers involved, we now find ourselves writing a new, stand-alone version of the show for Endicott College and Montserrat College of Art. The presentation here is straight rock band: vocals, keyboard, drums, electric bass and guitar—the band dressed in white with a black backdrop. On the backdrop are written in hand key Dickinson words: *degrees, snow, noon, light, lily, slant, now, eternity...* The band plays the songs; elliptical and poetic narrations segue between songs to give biographical sketches.

As we develop these songs there are poems that are just too obvious, such as "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun," after all the temptation to use "None stir the second time—On whom I lay a Yellow Eye" (Fr 764). The less expected poems work best, for instance "He fumbles at your Soul" (Fr 477). Here again is the battle that seems so rock: between ecstasy, faith, death and eternity. And Dickinson's own wrestle at dawn: "Two Swimmers wrestled on the spar." So much of rock held this challenge and some lost the fight: Morrison, Hendrix, Joplin, Cobain. For Dickinson we have the outlines of the battle: the fierce evangelicalism of her time, the geography of death with the civil war and the more than 33 friends and family she lost to consumption in her life (Habegger 640). Against this backdrop there is her own fierce wrestling to win her art and her precious freedom. So a poem like "He fumbles at your Soul" speaks to that rock dilemma: ecstasy and reality—inspiration and discipline. And of course there is the great refrain/hook of "He stuns you by degrees." "He" here can be art, god, master, lover or self. For us, the point of the song is to etch that line onto the listeners brains so that they will return to

the poem over and over with awe and come away singing that brilliant line.

In order to make this song work we needed to move lines and create repetitions, while at the same time holding to the integrity of the internal progress of the poem. We weren't able to achieve this without elision, but we had to balance our respect for Dickinson's own art with our commitment to the rock esthetic. Here is the new arrangement as song:

He stuns you by degrees

He fumbles at your soul
As Players at the keys
Before they drop full music on
Before they drop full music on
He stuns you by degrees

Your breath has time to straighten
Your Brain – to bubble cool
Before they drop full music on
Before they drop full music on
He stuns you by degrees

(bridge)
When Winds take forests in their
Paws
The universe – is still– (repeat)
(music break)

By fainter hammers – further
heard –
Then nearer – then so slow –
Before they drop full music on

Before they drop full music on
He stuns you by degrees (re-
peat over)

Deals – One – imperial –
Thunderbolt –
That scalps your naked Soul –

The last two lines are spoken over the chorus. We believe that our song, rendered as rock, lives up to the power of the original lines.

In the new show, however, we also make sure that our audience feels the full effect of a Dickinson poem read aloud. In a stillness at the center of the show, we recite from memory "There's a certain Slant of light."

We end the show with the hook-line *revolution is the pod*, a collage song with lines taken from four different poems (Fr 260, Fr 411, Fr 1044). The rock echoes of revolution are many and perhaps best heard in Lennon's *You say you want a revolution*. With Dickinson we have her added sense of pod: genesis, breaking forth, the chrysalis, the verdant revolution – spring. The song opens with her great rock question, almost a foreshadowing of The Who:

I'm nobody who are you
Are you –Nobody–
Too? (Fr 260)

The song ends with this refrain:

Mine-by the Royal Seal!
Mine-by the sign in the Scarlet
prison-
Mine-by the Grave's Repeal
Mine-long as Ages steal!
Revolution is the Pod, Revolu-
tion is the Pod,
Revolution is the Pod, Revolu-
tion is the Pod!

If as Hebegger suggests Dickinson had achieved a pagan understanding of transcendence over death, then she again stands as a source for the rock ecstatic stance: live hard die young. For the Stones and Dylan this is now metaphorical. For both of those rockers, horses played an important role: "Wild Horses" for the Stones, and Dylan's beautiful lilted, "All the tired horses in the sun." For Dickinson, in the great poem of transcending death, the horses' heads are toward eternity. The rock ethic we remember of the sixties is to live in the present: to be in the now. It is one of Dickinson's greatest achievements to have found a discipline and solitude that allowed her to live utterly in the now: to have recognized that eternity is now.

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continued on page 9

EMILY DICKINSON: REALMS OF AMPLITUDE THE 2004 EDIS CONFERENCE

You are invited to participate in the 2004 International Conference, "Emily Dickinson: Realms of Amplitude," to be held at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Located on the island of Hawaii, the university is a modern American campus whose classrooms open out on a tropical landscape of flowers, palms, banyans, and giant tree ferns. Thirty miles away is Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, a starkly beautiful zone of black rock, white steam, and the lava that Dickinson envisioned as "hissing corals." We will hold our meetings on the campus, take a tour of the

volcanoes, and sleep in the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel on the beach at Hilo Bay.

The conference will address the significance of amplitude as an aspect of Dickinson's writing and as a trope for the experience of reading her work. Dickinson's imagination frequently leads her to write about experiences of extreme fullness that she terms "amplitude." She writes, for example, of an "Amplitude no end invades-/ Whose Axis never comes" (F1446). Writing about a new wife, she wonders "If ought She missed in Her new Day,/Of Amplitude, or Awe" (F857). In

her oeuvre, amplitude is associated with many realms of experience and thought: the body, the erotic, nature, spirituality, the mind, language, and even mathematics. She observes that "Immortal is an ample word" (F1223), and that "Eternity is ample" (F352). But amplitude is not without complication in her work. For example, her concern with excess contrasts with her oft-voiced interest in restraint, the minimal. In the realm of spirituality, for example, do experiences of bodily sensuality lead to the spiritual, or do they "too

continued on page 9

continued from page 8

Zero at the Bone

Lyric arranged from Emily Dickinson's poem, *A narrow Fellow in the Grass*, by Sebastian Lockwood

Music: Nanette B Perrotte

Verse 1

A whip lash in the sun
closes at your feet
Unbraiding in the Sun
Zero at the bone
Zero at the bone

Verse 2

A spotted shaft is seen
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on
Zero at the Bone
Zero at the Bone

Chorus

never met this fellow
Attended or alone
tighter breathing, tighter breathing
Zero at the bone
Zero at the Bone

Verse 3

when a Boy, and Barefoot
I more than once at Noon
passed a Whip lash in the Sun
Zero at the Bone
Zero at the Bone

Verse 4

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
It wrinkled and was gone

continued from page 8
compete with heaven?"

Plenary sessions will introduce major realms of amplitude in her work: the body, nature, the erotic, spirituality, and language. Another realm is our relationship, as critics, biographers, and readers to the excessive and extravagant, the exotic, and the ample in Dickinson's writing, and this aspect of amplitude will also be considered in a plenary session. The conference will offer a series of paper sessions associated with the plenary themes. Three signature poems addressing amplitude and Dickinson's volcanic imagination have been chosen: F1446, "Water makes many Beds," F757, "I think To Live-May

ZERO AT THE BONE
 LYRIC - E. Dickinson
 LYRIC ARR - S. Lockwood
 MUSIC - NANETTE PERROTTE

INTRO BASS GUITAR + KEYS
 A - E - A - E - → Play Thru →

VERSE → Play Thru VERSES → [VX IN] A

WHIP-LASH IN THE SUN CLO-SSES AT YOUR FEET UN-
 BRAIDING IN THE SUN ZE-KO AT THE BONE ZE-KO AT THE BO-
 NE

SPOT-TED SHAFT IS SEEN AND THEN IT CLO-SSES AT YOUR FEET
 AND O-PENS FURTHER ON ZE-KO AT THE BONE ZE-KO AT THE BONE

CHORUS D F C
 NE-VER MET THIS FEL-Low AT-TEN-DED OR A-LONE TIGHTER BREATHING TIGHTER BREATHING
 ZE-KO AT THE BONE ZE-KO AT THE BO-NE [VX OUT] BASS + KEYS RETURN TO INTRO GROOVE = VERSES 3+4 = CHORUS ± OUT

NP/SL 2002

never met this Fellow
Zero at the bone
Zero at the bone

To chorus and out

Sebastian Lockwood is a poet and performer who performs the *Odyssey* as *Odysseylive*, as well as *Finnegans Wake*, *Gilgamesh*, and *Emily Dickinson Rock*. He teaches creative arts and other courses and workshops for a number of colleges. He is a graduate of Boston

University and Cambridge University U.K. He lives under Crooked Mountain in the Monadnock Region with his partner, Nanette Perrotte. Their work can be seen at odysseylive.org and nannettevoice.com. CDs of *Zero at the Bone* and *Emily Dickinson Rock* are available by request at those sites.

be a Bliss," and F517, "A still-Volcano-Life-." The conference will also offer sessions focused specifically on these poems to include short presentations of readings of each poem and discussion. In addition, there will be a series of sessions on the more general theme of New Areas in Dickinson Studies.

We invite you to propose a paper on one of these realms of amplitude: the body, nature, the erotic, spirituality, language, and the reader as critic or biographer. Please submit a 200 word abstract of your paper. You may also want to organize a panel devoted to one of the realms. Please submit an outline of the panel that in-

cludes with it abstracts of the papers to be included. If you wish to participate in a poem session, please choose the poem on which you wish to speak and submit a brief abstract of your reading of it. If you wish to present a paper for one of the New Areas in Dickinson Studies sessions, please submit a 200 word abstract on your topic.

All proposals are due by September 15, 2003 and should be addressed to Suzanne Juhasz, Department of English 226 UCB, University of Colorado, Boulder CO 80309. Email: juhasz@spot.colorado.edu. Please include your email address with your submission.

The College Search: Lavinia Dickinson's Decision to Attend Ipswich Female Seminary, 1849-1850

By Kate W. Flewelling

In December 1849, sixteen-year-old Lavinia Dickinson left Amherst for a term at seminary. Though higher education for females was still very much a novelty, the Dickinson and Norcross families had established a precedent for sending daughters away to school for a term or more. Lavinia's mother had attended Mr. Herrick's School in New Haven and older sister Emily had gone to Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in nearby South Hadley for two terms. The Dickinsons, however, did not send Vinnie to Mary Lyon's school. Instead, she went over 100 miles from Amherst to Ipswich Female Seminary. While Mount Holyoke was still very much an option for Lavinia—the Dickinsons could afford to send her there and her studies at Amherst Academy had prepared her well for a rigorous curriculum—recent events at the South Hadley school could have discouraged the Dickinsons from sending their second daughter. Under the circumstances, Ipswich Seminary was an understandable alternative.

Mount Holyoke, by the summer of 1849, was in a state of transition. Founder Mary Lyon, under whom Emily Dickinson had studied, had died in March after a brief illness which had been exacerbated by the stress of keeping her school running and the recent suicide of her nephew (Chapin and Hazen). Mary Lyon had devoted all her energy to the establishment of the seminary, in only its twelfth year at the time of her death. Teachers and friends of the school worried about the future of the institution after the death of its charismatic founder (Whitman).

Concerns about the ability of the young Mount Holyoke to survive were legitimate. By the time Mary Lyon had opened Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837, numerous other schools for young women had opened. Most lacked permanence, often closing their doors after the departure or death of the founder or influential leader. Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Academy, open for forty years, folded upon her death in 1827. After Catherine Beecher left

the Hartford Seminary in 1833, the school fell into sharp decline under the leadership of "a man who had a family and consequently could not devote his income to the support of the school as Miss Beecher had done" (Woody 355). Indeed, unlike most male colleges of the time, which had endowments and numerous administrators, women's schools most often depended on one passionate, usually single, person to dedicate all his or her time, energy, and money to running the school. When that person left, most schools could not survive for long. Of those that did remain, many lost quality and, subsequently, students. Mary Lyon, herself, had seen Ipswich Female Seminary close in 1839 after she gave up her post as the assistant principal and left to found Mount Holyoke, and after the principal, Zilpah Grant, left for health reasons and lack of funds. While Ipswich reopened in 1844 under new leadership, other schools had closed permanently.

For the Dickinsons, their decision to send Lavinia to Ipswich rather than Mount Holyoke could very well have been affected by Edward Hitchcock's choice not to send his daughter Jane to Mt. Holyoke. Edward Hitchcock was a well-known educator and botanist who also served as president of Amherst College. Mary Lyon had stayed with the Hitchcocks while planning and raising money for Mount Holyoke; Dr. Hitchcock was one of the school's first trustees. Indeed, Hitchcock was an important influence on Mary Lyon's own educational philosophy. Richard Sewall goes so far as to call Mount Holyoke "another Hitchcockian institution" and "an expansion not only of [Lyon] but of Hitchcock" (Sewall 362). However, Dr. Hitchcock and his family sent Jane, who was Lavinia's age, to Ipswich not Mount Holyoke. Whether the Dickinsons made their plans regarding Lavinia's education before or after the Hitchcocks' decision is unknown, but the fact that a trustee of Mount Holyoke, one of Mary Lyon's most ardent supporters, chose to send his own

daughter to another school suggests that Mount Holyoke may not have been as stable as when Emily Dickinson was a student.

If the Dickinsons worried about the quality of education Lavinia would receive at Mount Holyoke, they certainly had other options. They simply could have decided not to send her anywhere, ending her formal education at Amherst Academy. Though women's education had made great strides by the time Vinnie went away to school, higher education was neither guaranteed nor expected for the majority of Americans in 1849, male or female. Women, in particular, were not often afforded access to instruction beyond grammar school. However, Lavinia had been a good student at the Academy. A composition of hers had been included in the Exhibition of the Amherst Academy in May 1849, her last term at the school (Leyda I:156). She had done well enough in languages at Amherst that she was placed in the highest Latin class at Ipswich, in which most of her classmates were upperclasswomen, and the second highest French class (*Catalogue*). Moreover, the Dickinson and Norcross families were pioneers of higher education in Western Massachusetts, and the Norcrosses encouraged higher education for daughters as well as sons.

Besides the option of not going away to school, Lavinia had several other choices: most notably either Emma Willard's Troy Female Seminary or Hartford Seminary, founded by Catherine Beecher. Both were closer to Amherst than Ipswich Female Seminary and had been in existence longer, since the 1820s, while Ipswich had only reopened in 1844, five years before Vinnie arrived.

Yet, the Dickinsons chose Ipswich Female Seminary for their youngest child. Though their exact reasons for doing so cannot be determined, the proximity of relatives and friends and close historical and philosophical bonds between Ipswich Female Seminary and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary most certainly were factors

that could have led the Dickinsons to chose Ipswich over other schools.

Whether Vinnie herself had any say in the school search is unknown. She would have undoubtedly heard about Ipswich Seminary before her own search for a school commenced. While the Dickinsons probably discussed the school with the Hitchcock family, who were close enough that Vinnie and Jane were roommates when they went away to Ipswich, the family had other connections to the school. Helen Hunt Jackson had attended the seminary the year before Vinnie, and Vinnie could have heard about Helen's time at the school from either Helen herself or Helen's sister, Ann Fiske, a good friend of Vinnie. Wendy Kohler, a Helen Hunt Jackson scholar, describes Ipswich Seminary as a "utilized choice" among Amherst families (Kohler). While Lavinia Dickinson and Jane Hitchcock were the only young women from Amherst listed in the 1849-50 Ipswich Female Seminary Catalogue, the school was well-known enough to include in its 147 students women from six states, three Canadian provinces and Liverpool, England (*Catalogue*).

The Dickinsons also could have heard about the school from relatives and friends near Boston. Lavinia's uncle Joel Warren Norcross and his family lived in Boston. Vinnie visited her Boston relatives at least once while she was at Ipswich. In an overblown January 1850 letter to Joel Warren Norcross, chastising him for not writing often enough, Emily Dickinson wrote (only two paragraphs after telling her uncle that "I shall kill you"):

Are you all well-how are the children-please give the love of all our household to all the members of yours. Don't leave Cousin Albert out in my part! Vinnie has been to see you-she wrote what splendid times she had. We are very lonely without her-hope to linger along until she comes home.

(*Letters* 79;80)

While it may not have been the deciding factor for the Dickinsons, it was in Ipswich's favor that Vinnie would be close to relatives for occasional visits and in case of emergencies.

The most important consideration for the Dickinsons was probably the quality

of education Lavinia would obtain. No indication exists that the Dickinsons were displeased by the education Emily received at Mount Holyoke; their concern seems to have been caused by the uncertainty surrounding the school's future and not by its curriculum, philosophy or standards. For several reasons, Ipswich Female Seminary was strikingly similar to Mount Holyoke. If the Dickinsons were seeking a school that offered the same type of education as Mary Lyon's seminary, they could have found no closer relative than Ipswich Female Seminary.

Ipswich Seminary and Mount Holyoke shared a common history. In many ways, Mount Holyoke was a descendent of Ipswich. Ipswich had been founded by a group of businessmen in the area in 1826. In 1828, they recruited Zilpah Grant, then principal of Adams Female Seminary in Derry, New Hampshire, to serve as principal in Ipswich. Grant brought Mary Lyon, who had assisted her in Derry, to be assistant principal of the young school in Massachusetts. Mary Lyon left the school in the mid-1830s to devote her time to establishing Mount Holyoke. Grant continued to run Ipswich until 1839; her departure effectively closed the school.

Both women had studied under Rev. Joseph Emerson at his school in Byfield, Massachusetts. Emerson was a leader in educating young women to be teachers, opening up an occupation that had for the most part been limited to men. Emerson taught his students that teachers needed to be facilitators of learning, rather than harsh disciplinarians. Students, Emerson believed, should learn from their own desire for knowledge not from their fear of punishment (Melder 225-6). Grant and Lyon developed Emerson's philosophy in their own school. A pamphlet entitled *Maxims for Teachers*, probably published in the 1830s, provided an alphabetical list of instructions given to education students at Ipswich Seminary. The list included the following:

- Aim to make every lesson interesting.
- Deficiency of interest in a class may generally be traced to deficiency of interest in the teacher.
- Do not forbid play as a punish-

ment, but rather forbid study.

- Instead of giving prizes, allow children to study extra lessons, as a reward.
- Regard your Bible recitations as more important than any other, and so arrange the school in relation to it, that your pupils will learn to view it in the same light.
- Remember that your usefulness to your pupils depends upon your moral power over them, not upon their fond affection for you.

(*Maxims*)

These "maxims" clearly show some of the main tenets of Lyon and Grant's educational doctrine: the emphasis placed on religious instruction and example, the responsibility of the teacher in exciting students' interest in learning, and the role of teacher as moderator of learning, not simply provider of items for memorization. Those basic ideals of education were consistent throughout the early histories of both Ipswich Seminary and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary.

In the years that Lyon and Grant ran Ipswich Seminary, they sought to teach students to become what Keith Melder has called "educational missionaries," spreading the gospel of Christianity and literacy overseas and to the western United States. Melder writes, "Grant and Lyon made their New England school a center for training young women who would carry Yankee culture and moral standards into 'deserted regions'" (Melder 233). The operators of the seminary believed that the school's role was to advance "the cause of education and pure religion," meaning the religion of Protestants. In the pursuit of that goal, former Ipswich students were "scattered over every portion of our country, and the more distant parts of the world" (*Ipswich Female Seminary*).

The public goals of Ipswich Seminary did not include political or social equality for women, which, perhaps, was one of reasons Lyon and Grant were so successful. They were careful not to push for issues such as suffrage. In a pamphlet sent to potential donors, Zilpah Grant described the "Benefits of Female Education":

One of the important duties devolving on woman, is that of

moulding the minds within the sphere of her influence. Whether the educated female sustains the relation of mother, sister, teacher, or friend, to the children and youth around her, her usefulness may be greatly promoted by possessing aptness to teach, skill in influencing mind, and just views of the great success of education. (Grant)

The purpose, then, of female education was not to influence and change people, a goal that would have been extremely unpopular, but to foster younger generations and other women.

The belief that women needed to use their education unselfishly and within acceptable spheres had not changed by the time Lavinia Dickinson went away to school. As late as the 1860s and 1870s, graduates of Ipswich Seminary intermingled essays entitled “Woman’s Work for Women” with compositions about French kings and Roman battles (*Order of Exercises*). At the same time, commencement speakers warned graduates against becoming “walking encyclopedias, bristling with facts, and so becoming unlovely and unbeautiful” (*Ipswich Chronicle*). Though the limitations of women’s education in the 19th century are important to mention, just as important is that both Ipswich Seminary and Mount Holyoke greatly furthered women’s education and were considered revolutionary in their time. That educated women would stay in an “acceptable” sphere of influence was taken for granted by the educated elite, including the Dickinsons.

By the mid-1830s, Mary Lyon and Zilpah Grant wanted to expand their school to provide housing for more students (for the most part, Seminary students boarded with nearby families, limiting the number of pupils the school could accept), elevate the quality of academics, and increase the number of students from middle and working class families, a particular concern for Lyon. The school sent out numerous fundraising letters, and the principal and assistant principal pleaded with the school’s trustees to invest more time and money into the effort. The women envisioned a larger school that was more like

a college than most other female seminaries at the time. When the trustees failed to raise enough money to expand the school at Ipswich, Mary Lyon proceeded to plan for a school in South Hadley. Many of her earliest funders were residents of Ipswich, teachers and students, present and former (Waters 2:556-7).

While Mary Lyon’s new school was revolutionary in its scope and its desire to educate young women of all economic classes, Mount Holyoke was built on what Lyon and Zilpah Grant had started in Ipswich. When Mount Holyoke opened in 1837, a large number of Mary Lyon’s first teachers were from Ipswich, including Eunice Caldwell, the school’s first assistant principal, who had been the first principal of Wheaton Seminary between her stays at Ipswich and Mount Holyoke. In her history of the founding of Mount Holyoke, Elizabeth Alden Green writes, “Classes were arranged on the Ipswich system: two or three major subjects pursued intensively for each ‘series’ of six to ten weeks, and extras—including a weekly composition, Calisthenics, and vocal music—continued throughout the year” (Green 184). Charles E. Goodhue, Jr. has argued that “[t]he entire spirit and letter of the Ipswich Female Seminary including the course of study, plan of instruction and method of government was used in this larger school which might have been in Ipswich” (Goodhue). Though Mount Holyoke was not exactly like its predecessor, Mary Lyon’s educational philosophies did not change; she used what she learned at Ipswich, by all accounts a model of women’s early education, to design her new school.

In 1844, Eunice Caldwell Cowles and her husband Rev. John P. Cowles, a former teacher at Oberlin College in Ohio, reopened Ipswich Female Seminary. Eunice Cowles had learned how to teach and to run a school in large part by watching and learning from Zilpah Grant and Mary Lyon. Moreover, as a native of Ipswich and with a well-respected male educator as co-principal, she could be more influential over Ipswich residents and potential funders than perhaps her predecessors had been. In 1846, the school had 74 students. That number had risen to 147 when Lavinia Dickinson was a student

and reached its peak of 214 in 1854 (Waters 565). The school gained national recognition as a prominent seminary.

By all accounts, the new Ipswich Seminary was very similar to Mount Holyoke. The similarities are evident by examining the catalogues of both schools for the academic year 1849-1850, Lavinia’s year at Ipswich Seminary. Both catalogues list teachers then students, providing the hometown of the former. Both divide students into three class years (junior, middle and senior). Both catalogues then describe the course of study, student classification, the curriculum, general exercises, boarding arrangements, the division of terms (both schools had three terms ranging from eleven to fifteen weeks), and the price of tuition (*Thirteenth Annual Catalogue*).

The curricula of the schools were also very similar. Both schools studied the Bible and had composition classes, as well as “Calisthenics, Linear Drawing, and Vocal Music.” French and Latin were taught at each, while Ipswich also offered German. The required texts and subjects were almost identical, though a book included in the middle class of one school might have been considered a senior text at the other. As students in the lower grade at Ipswich, Vinnie and Jane would have read the following: *Reviews of Arithmetic, Geography and United States History; English Grammar and Parsing; Worcester’s Elements of History; Agassiz and Gould’s Zoology; Day’s Algebra; Wood’s Botany; and Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers*. A student in the lowest grade at Mount Holyoke would have had all but the Abercrombie and Agassiz.

Melder has described the reopened Ipswich Seminary as a “finishing school,” yet the academics were comparable to the high standards set by Mary Lyon in South Hadley (Melder 237). In a letter to brother Austin, Vinnie described her fellow students as “not Amherst girls, yet some are pretty and fine scholars” (Lavinia Dickinson 89). The school, in fact, attracted many talented students, including Vinnie and Helen Hunt Jackson. Notably, Mary Abigail Dodge was a member of the senior class at Ipswich when Vinnie was there. Lavinia would have known Dodge; they were in the same Latin class. As “Gail

Hamilton," Dodge became a noted essayist and is rumored to have been a speech writer for Secretary of State James Blaine, a relative.

One issue that does not seem to have been a factor for the Dickinsons is religion. At Mount Holyoke, the pressure on Emily to convert to Christianity was strong. By late 1849, a religious revival had swept Amherst. The Dickinsons made little attempt to separate Vinnie from the passionate rhetoric. The Cowles followed in the footsteps of Mary Lyon by stressing morality and mortality in their curriculum. Vinnie seems to have been moved by their teaching and begged Austin to convert to Christianity:

Oh! Austin, I do so long to have you come over to the Lord's side! Oh, if you have not yet given yourself to Christ wholly & entirely, I entreat you in the name of the blessed Jesus, to delay no longer, to deprive yourself of that happiness, that Joy, no longer but my Dear Brother, now, while pardon is offered you while...the Holy Spirit is in your midst & when the attention of all is called to that subject. (Lavinia Dickinson 96)

While the religious doctrine of the Cowles may or may not have been a consideration when deciding where Vinnie would go to school, that doctrine was an important part of Lavinia's education while she was away.

When the Dickinsons sent Lavinia away to school for a term, they chose a school one hundred miles away, a significant distance for a young woman who spent the rest of her life in arm's length of her siblings. While there is no existing letter, document, or other evidence to reveal the

Dickinsons' exact motives for choosing Ipswich, the fragility of a Mount Holyoke in transition, the presence of Boston relatives, and the decision of a trusted friend to send his own daughter to Ipswich, must all have weighed heavily.

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Kate Flewelling graduated in 2000 from Mount Holyoke College where she was a history major. The article was the result of a 2000 "January Term" independent study under the guidance of Martha Ackman, highlighted by a class held at the Dickinson homestead.

EMILY DICKINSON MUSIC SOCIETY FORMED

One of the outgrowths of last summer's annual meeting, "Emily Dickinson in Song," was formation of an Emily Dickinson Music Society. A dozen interested persons met during the EDIS gathering in Amherst to discuss goals for the organization. These will include exploring musical interpretations of Dickinson's poetry by serving as a resource for information on composers and their settings, and promoting perfor-

mances of Dickinson songs.

Currently nearing completion is a website set up through Southern Methodist University. When it's completed, a link will be established with the EDIS website, and it can also be accessed through Google

Virginia Dupuy is current president of EDMS. Anyone interested in joining should contact her at Department of

Music, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275, or via email at vdupuy@mail.smu.edu. Initial dues are \$10.00.

Meanwhile, Virginia and composer William Jordan have performed Dickinson recitals in several cities in Texas. Anyone wishing to sponsor such a performance elsewhere should contact Virginia.

DICKINSON HOMESTEAD AND THE EVERGREENS PLAN TO BE REUNITED

By Cindy Dickinson and Jane Wald, Editors

In January 2003, Amherst College and the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust announced the exciting news that they are taking steps to join The Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens as a unified museum, to be called The Emily Dickinson Museum. The new museum will be devoted to the interpretation of the life of the poet, her family, and the community in which she lived and to the preservation of the houses they inhabited.

As readers of the *Bulletin* know, for several years The Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens have worked collaboratively on tours, public programs, and other projects. During this period of close cooperation it became clear to the trustees of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust and the Trustees of Amherst College that combining the two houses into a single museum held the greatest potential for bringing the full story and legacy of Emily Dickinson and the Dickinson family to the public.

The Trustees of the College agreed in January to accept ownership of The Evergreens, and the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust then petitioned the Hampshire County Probate Court to transfer The Evergreens to the College. The Probate Court must approve the plan and the consequent dissolution of the Trust, a ruling which could take several months.

The arrangement calls for a direct transfer (as opposed to a sale) of all Trust assets to the College, including the house, its contents, and the property on which The Evergreens sits. Income from the Trust's endowment and royalties from several of Martha Dickinson Bianchi's publications would be put toward the new museum's operating budget.

A Return to the Past

The Dickinson Homestead was built in 1813 by Samuel Fowler Dickinson,

the poet's grandfather, and is said to be the first brick house in Amherst. His son, Edward Dickinson, purchased half of the house in 1830 and lived there with his young family for ten years before moving them to a wooden-frame house on North Pleasant Street. In 1855, Edward Dickinson purchased the Homestead, undertook extensive remodeling, and moved his family back to Main Street. By this time, son Austin was completing law school and was engaged to be married to Susan Gilbert; Emily was a young woman of 24, soon to embark on her extensive outpouring of poetry; and Lavinia was honing her skills as the manager of the Dickinson household.

In that same year, construction of The Evergreens — Edward's wedding gift to Austin and his fiancé Susan Huntington Gilbert — began on the western end of the Dickinson family lot on Main Street. The impressive Italianate villa that rose next door to the Homestead was unique in mid-19th-century Amherst, and under Sue's direction became a center of social and intellectual life in the town.

According to Polly Longworth, Dickinson biographer and chair of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, the Homestead and The Evergreens functioned as a single family estate for the next 60 years, with daily contact between members of the extended household. Not until 1916, when Martha Dickinson Bianchi, the last surviving Dickinson of Edward's line, sold the Homestead, were the properties formally separated. Martha retained The Evergreens as her own residence and repository of Emily Dickinson artifacts.

In Martha's later years, she was acutely concerned that there should be some fitting tribute to the life and work of Emily Dickinson. She had already opened The Evergreens to those she called "pilgrims," visitors

intrigued by Emily Dickinson's poetry and eager to know more of its source. Martha offered these visitors both conversation and a view of household items from the Homestead most closely associated with the poet. She approached several prospective sponsors in hopes of gaining support for preservation of the Evergreens, without result. When Martha Dickinson Bianchi died childless in 1943, she left The Evergreens and its entire contents to her co-editor Alfred Hampson. Because, in correspondence with Hampson, she had affirmed the hope "of keeping The Evergreens intact, as the Dickinson Memorial," Martha's will left her ultimate wishes in an ambiguous condition with the now well-known stipulation that "the house shall not be occupied or used by anyone other than said Alfred L. Hampson, the members of his family, guests and servants, and if said property should be sold the house shall be razed before the transfer of title to said land. . . For sentimental reasons I do not want my dwelling house occupied by anyone else . . . and when the property is no longer desired for occupancy by those mentioned above . . . It is my will that the house be taken down to the cellar." In 1947 Hampson married Mary Landis, a long-time friend of Bianchi and Hampson, and the couple took up permanent residence at The Evergreens. Widowed in 1952, Mary Landis Hampson continued to live in the house, guarding the Dickinson legacy, until her own death in 1988.

Mary's concern about the future of The Evergreens led her to include in her will a provision for a private trust that would establish The Evergreens "and its contents as a charitable and cultural facility . . . associated with the American author Martha Dickinson Bianchi, maintained as nearly as may be as when it was occupied by her, for the enjoyment and/or cultural interest or

fare of scholars and/or the general public. . . ." Mary Hampson also foresaw the advantage of re-uniting the two Dickinson properties, indicating that her purposes could be effected "whether the trust property be administered as a separate entity or in conjunction with the Dickinson Homestead."

Since 1998, when The Evergreens was first opened on a limited basis for tours, the Homestead and The Evergreens have collaborated on numerous programming and interpretive projects. In 2002, the College and the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust completed an exploratory market study and business plan that supported the long-term sustainability and success of a combined historic literary site.

Still to Come

Once the museums are legally joined,

the operations of the two Dickinson houses will be merged. Initially observers will note only minor changes. The current administrative staffs of The Homestead and The Evergreens will remain in place to manage the new museum. While owned by Amherst College, the Emily Dickinson Museum will be governed by a Board of Governors responsible for setting policy, overseeing financial affairs, and raising funds.

In the meantime, business continues as usual at the two houses. The Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens opened for the 2003 season on Saturday, March 1. Many special programs have been planned for the coming year. We were pleased to collaborate with the newest museum in Amherst, the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, for "The Myth and Reality of Emily Dickinson: Through the

Lens of the Arts," a panel discussion with artist Nancy Ekholm Burkert, writer Jane Langton, biographer Polly Longworth, and photographer Jerry Liebling. Still to come are a celebration of National Poetry Month in late April, continuation of our popular "At Home and Glad" Tours and Tea offerings, and the second annual "Angle of a Landscape" series. More information about these programs is available on our web site <http://www.dickinsonhomestead.org>, or by phone at (413) 542-8161.

Readers of the *Bulletin* will take particular interest in these upcoming programs and in the good news that the Dickinson estate is to be re-united. We will keep you informed as plans develop, and look forward to celebrating with you this new stage in the life of an exceptional cultural resource in Amherst.

2003 SCHOLAR IN AMHERST AWARD COMPETITION ANNOUNCED

For 2003, the \$2000 Scholar in Amherst Award will be named as a memorial for Myra Fraser Fallon, mother of EDIS Membership Chair, Dr. Jim Fraser, and is funded by a generous gift from Jim and his wife Diana.

Myra Fraser Fallon, who passed away in Huntington Beach, California on July 28, 2002, was born in Golden, Illinois and majored in music and English at Northeast Missouri State Teachers College, Kirksville, Missouri, graduating in 1939. Later Mrs. Fallon did graduate work at UCLA, USC and Pepperdine University and completed a Master of Arts in Education at Chapman College in 1969. Throughout her life, she held many teaching positions related to her love of music and also was an accomplished cellist who studied with Gabor Rejto and played with the Inglewood and Glendale Symphonies. She retired from the Huntington Beach City School District in 1982. What Jim especially prized about his mother was that she "loved adventures, whether she was traveling or reading." As he remembers,

"The classics were among my mother's favorite adventures. I have her copy of Shakespeare with penciled comments in the margins there, just as Dickinson kept her memories."

The 2003 award will be made to an individual with demonstrable need to do research on Dickinson at libraries and other institutions in the Amherst area. It may be used for expenses related to that research, such as travel, accommodations, or a rental car. A minimum stay of one week in Amherst is required. Recipients also may 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 2003 Fraser Fallon Scholar in Amherst Award, please send three copies of a curriculum vitae, letter of introduction (written by the applicant), a two-page project proposal, and a brief bibliography, by October 15, 2003, to Jonnie Guerra, President, EDIS, Cabrini College, 610 King of Prussia Road, Radnor, PA 19087, USA

or to jguerra@cabrini.edu. Inquiries also may be addressed to Suzanne Juhasz, 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.

Late-Breaking News

Poets Against the War, edited by Sam Hamill, with Sally Anderson and others, was released on April 20 by Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books (\$12.95). The collection originated with plans for a White House literary event to be focused, in part, on Dickinson; the cancellation of the event led to a call for poems against the war in Iraq. Several poems comment on the irony of attempting to "cancel" Dickinson's American voice. The collection is being distributed to bookstores nationwide and can be ordered online at www.poetsagainsthewar.com. News supplied by Ellen Louise Hart.

VISITING EMILY DICKINSON'S AMHERST: A REPORT FROM THE FIRST "SCHOLAR IN AMHERST" AWARD RECIPIENT

By Paraic Finnerty

When I arrived in Amherst on April 9, 2002, it was my third visit there. On the other occasions, I had stayed for only a few days, but having been made the first recipient of the Emily Dickinson International Society's "Scholar in Amherst Award," I was fortunate enough to be able to stay for three weeks. In one of Amherst's hottest Aprils in recent years and with a letter introducing me as the Rogosa Scholar in Amherst, I set out with many questions about the role Shakespeare played in Emily Dickinson's life. I began my research in the Special Collection at the Jones Library where I examined the local newspapers: *The Amherst Record*, *The Franklin and Hampshire Express*, and *Springfield Republican*. This yielded interesting information about Shakespeare's local reception in Amherst. For example, on the announcement page of issues of *The Amherst Record* in September 1871, I found advertisements for a clothes shop in Northampton that played on the famous *Hamlet* line "to be or not to be that is the question." They read "TO BUY, OR NOT TO BUY, THAT'S THE QUESTION/But before you buy, be sure and examine the magnificent stock of goods just received by Draper & Ockington." Here *Hamlet*'s philosophical musings about life and death have been re-written to express every consumer's dilemma; the Dane's existential anxiety has become the impasse of New England shoppers. This suggested that Shakespeare's plays were familiar enough to the Amherst community to be used as part of a local advertising campaign. It also showed that even in the nineteenth century Shakespeare's status as a cultural icon was established to the extent that his most famous lines could be used in an amusing way to sell products. The correlation implies that Shakespeare is a great writer and this is a great place to buy clothes. Moreover, Draper & Ockington suggest that if readers are clever enough to recognise this allusion, they are the kind of customers who will appreciate the

clothes this shop sells.

What surprised me most about these newspapers was their detailed information about some key events in Shakespeare's nineteenth-century reception in America. For instance, the Astor Place Riot on May 10, 1849 was examined thoroughly in the *Springfield Republican* over a period of five days. The *Republican* explained how tensions began because of rivalry between two actors, Edwin Forrest, an American, and William Macready, an Englishman; both actors were playing *Macbeth* in two different class-orientated theatres, Forrest in the more "democratic" Park Theatre and Macready in the highly-priced Astor Place Opera House. From this newspaper, a reader like Dickinson would have learned that after Macready's performance on May 10 this rivalry culminated into a "shameful" riot in which fifteen people were killed and twenty-five wounded. (In fact, twenty-two people were killed and more than a hundred people were injured.) On May 12 the *Springfield Republican* noted that before the riot it was arranged that a strong police presence would be outside the Opera House as threats of violence were placed on those who "dared express their opinion at the English Aristocratic Opera House" and working men were told to "stand by their lawful rights." This suggested that the riot was as much about class as nationalism and showed that Americans associated a certain elite and moneyed class with England and Englishness. I wondered what Dickinson thought about the event and its implications. Moreover, I wonder if this event and these news reports reinforced scepticism in Amherst about theatre and drama, and fed into the Calvinist prejudice against theatre.

The Jones Library Special Collection also contains many volumes of *Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's Monthly* and *Harper's New Monthly* that contained articles on Shakespeare and his plays.

Accordingly, an avid reader of these journals, like Dickinson, was updated and informed about the latest ideas circulating about Shakespeare, as well as the views of leading American critics on his plays. Even more interesting were the various editions of the textbooks Dickinson studied at Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke. Although Shakespeare's place in education in America at the time was negligible, it was fascinating to read, for example, Ebenezer Porter's *Rhetorical Reader* (1835) and note the very few occasions when Shakespeare's plays were used as examples of some of the many complex rules of rhetoric. Interestingly, when a quotation from a Shakespeare play was used, his name was never mentioned. Was this because of Shakespeare's associations with the immoral theatre or because his plays were so familiar and easily identifiable that it was unnecessary to mention their author? The Special Collection also contained many books and articles on Dickinson that are not published in the UK, for example Alfred Habegger's *My Wars are Laid Away in Books*, the recently published *Concordance to Emily Dickinson's Letters*, and an essay by Keiko Beppu entitled "O, rare for Emily!" Dickinson and *Antony and Cleopatra* in a Japanese collection of essays called *Emily Dickinson: After a Hundred Years* (1988). The excellent facilities at the Jones Special Collection and the kindness of the Curator and staff made my days there very productive.

I split my time in Amherst between the Special Collections at the Jones library and Amherst College's Frost library. In the Frost library, I aimed to discover something about theatre in Amherst in Dickinson's lifetime. To my surprise, I found no evidence that a full-length standard Shakespeare play was ever performed there in Dickinson's lifetime. This reinforced my belief that while Dickinson's Amherst, like other New England towns,

continued on page 29

FILM REVIEWS: *LOADED GUN AND WORDS LIKE BLADES*

By Daniel Lombardo

Wolpaw, Jim, writer/director/producer. Steve Gentile, cinematographer/editor/producer. *Loaded Gun: Life, Death, and Dickinson*. Produced in association with The Independent Television Service Center for Independent Documentary. 2002. 56 min.

Morgan, Ron, producer/director. *Emily Dickinson: Words Like Blades*. Chip Taylor Communications, 2 East View Drive, Derry, New Hampshire, 03038, (800)876-CHIP. 1998. 30 min.

In 1987 I found myself in Upstate New York on the set of a PBS film called *Voices and Visions: Emily Dickinson*. I was there to check historic detail during scenes like the recreation of Emily Dickinson's baptism, and to answer such questions as, "When the Dickinson carriage drove down Amherst's Main Street, would it have traveled on the left or the right side of the road?"

The *Voices and Visions* documentary was produced in what we might call the middle period of films on Emily Dickinson. The first significant attempt was a television film featuring Claire Bloom in 1976. The genre has come a long way from that stilted, almost unwatchable film, to Ron Morgan's sensitive *Words Like Blades*, and Jim Wolpaw's wildly comic and deeply probing *Loaded Gun*.

Dickinson's life has long been portrayed on stage, since the appearance of Susan Glaspell's Pulitzer Prize winning *Alison's House* in 1931. It wasn't until the 1970s that film and television began to be explored for new ways of understanding the poet. In 1976, the Nebraska Educational Television Network assembled a cast of Claire Bloom and members of the First Poetry Quartet for a half hour tribute to the poet called *The World of Emily Dickinson* (available from GPN Educational Media, 1800 North 33rd St., P.O. Box 880669, Lincoln, NE 68501). The film

imagines a gathering of sister Lavinia Dickinson, cousin Louise Norcross, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson in the Dickinson's sitting room. Emily, played by Bloom, occasionally enters the conversations, but is mostly seen reciting her poems in her bedroom. It's a quiet, dull film with improbable scenes, like Emily and Lavinia reciting "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (Fr314) as a duet, and Higginson adding inane comments, such as (to Lavinia), "Your sister certainly has an active imagination."

A year later, in 1977, Jean McClure Mudge produced *Emily Dickinson: A Certain Slant of Light*. Mudge had written *Emily Dickinson and the Image of Home* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), and was the resident curator of the Dickinson Homestead. As on-screen host, Julie Harris takes us through the Homestead, out to Mount Holyoke College, and to the Dickinson grave site. All the while, Harris offers cogent commentary on the life and work. The film holds up surprisingly well. Produced at a time when, for example, Susan Dickinson was usually given a minor and rather negative role in the poet's life, the film portrays Emily's sister-in-law as a well-read, extraordinary woman who critiqued Emily's poems and shared her library with the poet. Julie Harris's readings of the poems are passionate, yet restrained, unlike her shrill readings heard in the video of the play, *The Belle of Amherst*.

A Certain Slant of Light employed a young Ken Burns as the camera assistant, and his present-day cinematographer Buddy Squires as the principle cameraman. The 30 minute film (available from Monterey Home Video) won the CINE Golden Eagle Award and the Red Ribbon of the American Film Festival.

In the 1980s, the New York Center for Visual History produced its landmark *Voices and Visions Series*, one-hour

documentaries on thirteen American poets. The Dickinson entry, shown on PBS in 1988, remains the most intellectually stimulating and comprehensive film treatment of the poet. The commentators are superb — Anthony Hecht, Adrienne Rich, Richard Sewall, and Joyce Carol Oates. Written by Judith Thurman and narrated by Jane Alexander, the film searches widely through the poetry, the poet's education, her grasp of science and theology, belief, relationship to death, the social and political context of Amherst, issues of friendship and love, and Dickinson's opinion of publication.

Director Veronica Young uses a variety of styles for illustrating the poetry — usually some form of scrolling the words across a natural background — but not always successfully. Her tableaux of costumed actors work well, primarily because they don't embarrass the actors by having them attempt to speak as the Dickinsons.

The film retains much of its relevance some fifteen years later. Were it possible to update it, however, the film would benefit from access to the Homestead (denied when the film was made) and to Austin and Susan Dickinson's recently opened Evergreens. More importantly, it would be enriched by new sources, like the Evergreens materials (now at Brown University), the Norcross-Edward Dickinson correspondence (at the Jones Library, Inc., Amherst), new understandings of Susan Dickinson and Emily Norcross Dickinson, Ralph Franklin's edition of the complete poems, and Cynthia MacKenzie's concordance to the letters.

It will, however, always be something of a thrill to watch Joyce Carol Oates talk about Dickinson as "one of the incontestible geniuses in the English language," one for whom "almost any life she had lived would have to be one that allowed her to create the work," or to hear Adrienne Rich de-

scribe what she learned about writing from Dickinson ("There are extraordinary psychological states which can be hunted down in language, but that language has to be forged, it has to be created"), or to watch Richard Sewall as he exclaims, "Words have the power to kill - she knew that! They also have the power to redeem - she knew that - and to exalt!"

Stylistically, the *Voices and Visions Series* owed a lot to the documentary innovations of Ken Burns—the on-screen scholar/celebrity interviews, creative use of archival photographs and manuscripts, exhaustive research, and outstanding cinematography.

It would be another ten years before producer/director Ron Morgan decided to take another look at the poet in his *Emily Dickinson: Words Like Blades*. Morgan eschewed on-screen commentators and readers, and came up with a style somewhere between modern documentary form and creative video interpretation. He combines succinct historical narration with a streaming montage of historical photographs. The strong readings of poems and letters are often fused with abstracted images, stop-action effects, etc., that work quite well. When appropriate, a simple slow-motion scan is used across quiet scenes, like leaves fluttering on a branch.

From the start, Morgan lets us know this will not be an easy, sweetened look at Dickinson. The 1976 film, *The World of Emily Dickinson*, began with Claire Bloom reading the childlike "Dear March - Come in - / How glad I am" (Fr1320). *Words Like Blades* begins with the more convincing "Presentiment - is that long shadow - on the Lawn - / Indicative that Suns go down - / The notice to the startled Grass / That Darkness - is about to pass -" (Fr487). We occasionally glimpse an actress portraying Dickinson, one who is a bit too pretty for the part. This is more than made up for by powerful sequences, like the one on Dickinson and the Civil War in which excerpts of Dickinson's letters are read over Matthew Brady stills from the war.

The film is aptly titled with words from the poem, "She dealt her pretty works like Blades - / How glittering they shone - / And every One unbared a Nerve / Or wantoned with a Bone..." (Fr458). In only thirty minutes, this film reaches deeper than expected, and does so in an intimate and innovative style.

Some ten years ago, Jim Wolpaw entered my then-office at the Jones Library in Amherst with an idea for a film. It would begin, he said, with a dream sequence of Emily Dickinson playing second base at a ball game. I was accustomed to meeting people who channel Dickinson, dress like Dickinson, or believe they are Dickinson, but Jim was different. An accomplished film maker (he teaches the subject at Emerson College), Wolpaw's 1985 film *Keats and His Nightingale: A Blind Date* had been nominated for an Academy Award. From Jim's fertile mind comes the most creative of Dickinson films, a personal search for the poet which ultimately proved Dickinson right: "Much Madness is divinest Sense -"

By calling the film *Loaded Gun: Life, Death, and Dickinson*, Wolpaw makes his intent clear: Though he will toss us around the outer wry edges of the Dickinson world, he will always draw us back to the center where we find a poet with "the power to kill, / Without - the power to die -" (Fr764).

Early on, we hear the film maker himself saying, "So how does this woman, who was apparently too sensitive to go out in the world, write about the world with such power and precision and presence? I've been trying to answer this question with a film. I started out using a standard documentary approach. I interviewed poets [film clip of Billy Collins appears], scholars [film clip of Dan Lombardo], performers [film clip of Julie Harris], and biographers [film clip of Polly Longworth]. I collected archival prints and photographs, added some period music, and recruited a narrator to tie it all together."

The film proceeds, in standard documentary fashion, with remarks from

the above commentators, to which are added comments of three psychotherapists ("She chooses to live, for her purposes, in a coffin," says one). Wolpaw, abundantly aware that Dickinson belongs to popular culture as much as to academe, then brings in a rock band (guitars, drums, and a sultry singer, doing "Loaded Gun"), a "sensitive" tuning into Dickinson's past lives ("I can see her in a life in the past as a Buddhist monk..."), and Phil Jenks whose tattoo of Emily Dickinson spans his entire back.

Wolpaw then drops documentary style and, as he says, tries "the Hollywood approach instead." He holds a casting call for someone to play Dickinson and receives over 1,000 responses, including 100 men. As with most of the film, we are not sure who is being put on. Is each actress aware that only the audition is needed, that the audition itself will be the role she plays? Are we to believe Wolpaw when he says his hope, with this very funny sequence, was to find "some flashes of insight that I could piece together with the rest of the material to form a portrait of the poet"? One of the delights of the film is that it forces us to question everything we are seeing. We laugh at the screen and at ourselves in our never-ending search for Dickinson.

The actresses are each asked five questions, which are intercut with the commentators' serious remarks on the same topics. This sets up a delicate oscillation that can leave one giddy. For example, the third question, "Do you have a problem with God?" elicits the following sequence:

Actress One: "No, I do not have a problem with God."

Actress Two: "Yeah, I have a problem with God."

Professor Alan Powers (exasperated): "A... problem... with.... God?"

The film cuts to Polly Longworth's comments on Dickinson and the concept of "damnation," and mine on Dickinson and the place of religion in Amherst society. Julie Harris reads "Some keep the Sabbath going to

continued on page 31

THE POETESS SINGS: A TRIBUTE TO EMILY DICKINSON

By Carolyn Cooley

The Poetess Sings was conceived, written, and performed by Carolyn Heafner as a tribute to Emily Dickinson. This work, originally a theater piece which was subsequently recorded on CD in 2001, contains twenty-seven Emily Dickinson poems in musical settings by eight distinguished American composers who are recognized for their sensitive interpretations of Dickinson's poetry. In addition to singing all the lyrics, Miss Heafner interweaves pertinent, illuminating narration between the settings, using material she has gleaned from Dickinson's poems and letters as well as from sources such as Jay Leyda's *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*, Richard Sewall's *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, and Martha Dickinson Bianchi's *Emily Dickinson Face to Face*.

The CD is a culmination of a process that began some years ago when Miss Heafner was researching American music for material to include on an LP recording for which she had a grant. During her search, she claims that she was "struck" by the number of composers who had chosen Dickinson's poems for their musical settings. She began to envision a concert composed solely of Dickinson settings, along with readings from some of the poet's letters. As she delved into Dickinson's life more fully, Miss Heafner became enamored with the rich, full, creative life Emily Dickinson led, and it became evident that her original project had expanded beyond a concert's limits. As a result of her "discoveries," a two-act theater piece, complete with costume, sets, and a director, came into being as *The Poetess Sings - A Tribute to Emily Dickinson*.

In describing the process of creating the theater piece, Miss Heafner reveals that the music came first, and she admits that she looked at more music than she can remember. Fortunately, she plays the piano enough to hear what things sound like and how

they feel in her voice. Ultimately, she claims it was a matter of getting together what she liked and then eliminating what could not be used. As she worked through this process, she began to realize that the poems in the music somehow fell into categories. She says, "Of course, anyone who knows Emily's poetry could have told me that, but I had to discover all of this for myself - and that is a good thing to do." So, she organized sections according to topics, such as nature and death, and attempted to have variety within those sections.

The diversity of her final choices is evident. *The Poetess Sings* opens with Ernst Bacon's lovely setting of "It's All I Have to Bring," which is so aesthetically pleasing that one can scarcely imagine another setting to replace it. Another selection is "This Little Rose," in which William Roy captures the elegance inherent in the rose quite simply, as if it needed no enhancement; a change of key in the last stanza lends all the variation needed. In "There Came a Wind Like a Bugle," Lee Hoiby conveys the mighty rush of the wind through the trees by continuous arpeggios up and down the scales, while John Duke sets a pensive tone, with a tranquil quality, in his "New Feet Within My Garden Go." One can scarcely miss the Gilbert and Sullivan influence that flavors Otto Luening's "Experiment to Me," nor can the dissonant, jarring, beating, surrealistic sounds of Aaron Copland's "I Felt a Funeral in My Brain" be soon forgotten. In sharp contrast to this Copland setting, Otto Luening composes a simple, sparse, chord-like accompaniment for the sentimental "If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking," which is highly appropriate to convey the poem's message. Ernst Bacon's accompaniment for "Simple Days" is perfectly matched to the intent of Dickinson's poem, providing only the

simplest of tones possible to support the words, whereas Robert Baksa's setting of "Who Robbed the Woods?" is almost overpowering with its frenzied activity, as if all the villagers had joined forces in pursuit of the "robber." Miss Heafner clearly achieved her desire to include an eclectic group of settings.

Miss Heafner also sought to vary the narrative, so that sometimes there would be two songs and narration, while at other times there would be three or four songs and then narration, thus avoiding a monotonous pattern of just sing, talk, sing, talk. She wrote everything in the narration that is not a direct quote, relying heavily on Dickinson's poems and letters for much of her narrative material. Often, this quoted material, removed from its usual content, becomes even more piquant and dynamic in its new setting. Because Dickinson's family relationships were so important to her, Miss Heafner wanted to include what she could, yet there just always seemed to be too much, she found. "I was, after all, trying to let her story be told by her poems and the music," Miss Heafner said, "the music being uppermost in my mind as the primary impact of the piece." She gives her director credit for helping with the editing, a process involving many hours of paring down the material she had written. Together, they achieved a unique blending of musical settings of Dickinson's poetry with narration obtained from Dickinson's letters and from other primary source material.

It was Miss Heafner's "great good fortune" to begin working on this theater piece when all the composers represented were still alive. Her first introduction to musical settings of Dickinson's poetry came during her freshman year in college with her first voice teacher, who gave her a small

continued on page 30

OBITUARY: BRITA LINDBERG-SEYERSTED

By Einar Bjorvand, Bjorn Tysdahl, and Per Winther

Translated by Nils I. Johansen

Our friend professor Brita Seyersted died suddenly on December 23, 2002, after a year-long battle with illness. We have lost a dear colleague and an outstanding Americanist.

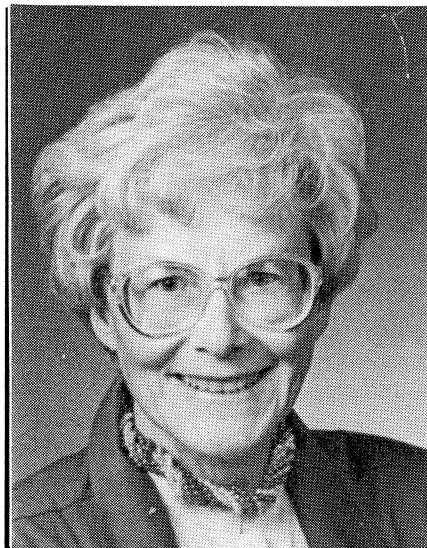
Brita Seyersted was born in Sweden. She began her studies at Uppsala, had study and research residencies at several American universities, served as a lecturer in Uppsala, and came to the University of Oslo in 1968. Here she was active as a researcher, advisor, and teacher, serving as well as section chief for English.

Her first book, her thesis *The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, is still a standard work in American literary scholarship. The value of this work is reflected in her receipt, in 2001, of the Emily Dickinson International Society's "Distinguished Service Award." As a researcher, Brita Seyersted concentrated on the work and circumstances of female authors, as in the newly published book *Sylvia Plath: Studies in Her Poetry and Her Personality*, and in *Black and Female*, in which she turns to female authors of color.

Another main interest, the English author Ford Madox Ford and his connections with American literary fig-

ures, resulted in no less than three books.

Brita Seyersted's research was guided by her will and the ability to think new thoughts, as well as by respect for traditional demands and good methods. Her teaching was guided by a clarity and involvement with her subject matter. She was also



known for her encouragement of female students.

The independence and care that is shown in her work colored her personality. She had opinions about cases

and personalities and she had the courage of her convictions. She always opposed superficiality at the same time as she showed respect for others' points of view. It was educational and thought provoking in so many ways to be with her. She was an exciting conversation partner. Her loss is deeply felt.

Brita was her friends' friend. The nearness with which she met us did not just cover our field or intellect. She wished that we would do well in life. It was a wish that we experienced as a strong force. It meant something for us, and will mean something in the future.

Our thoughts go to Per, who has lost a dear wife, and to the rest of the family.

Originally published in Aftenposten, Oslo, Norway, 11 January 2003.

Nils I. Johansen, a retired professor of geological engineering, has taught at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and is presently affiliated with the University of Southern Indiana. His research and teaching interests range from geotechnical engineering to the student learning process.

2002 POLLAK SCHOLAR IN AMHERST AWARD PRESENTED

On behalf of the EDIS Board of Directors, Dr. Jonnie Guerra, President of EDIS, is pleased to announce that Angela Sorby has been named the recipient of the 2002 Pollak Scholar in Amherst Award. Sorby earned her Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from the University of Chicago and is currently an assistant professor at Marquette University where she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in American poetry, nineteenth-century American literature, world literature, and poetry writ-

ing. She is at work on a book manuscript, *Schoolroom Poets: Power, Pedagogy, and Daily Life in America, 1855-1914*, that will conclude with a chapter on Emily Dickinson. Tentatively titled "Dickinson's Repetitions," the chapter will examine, according to Sorby, how the poet's work "engages with rhetorical repetition as it was practiced during her lifetime." Sorby plans to use the \$2000 award for a research trip to Amherst during which she will investigate scholarly resources that can illuminate the culture of oral

performance in New England from 1830 to 1886. This residency will be "enormously valuable," Sorby writes, to ground her Dickinson project "in concrete historical practices."

The 2002 award honors Vivian Pollak, the second president of EDIS, and is partially funded by a gift from her mother, Sylvia F. Rogosa.

MEMBERS' NEWS

AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, May 23-25, 2003 Cambridge, Massachusetts

SPONSORING SOCIETY: Emily Dickinson International Society

PANEL ONE: Dickinson and Whig Politics. Chair: Robert McClure Smith, Knox College. Panelists: Coleman Hutchison, Northwestern University ("Eastern Exiles": Dickinson, Whiggery, and War"), Domhnall Mitchell, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, ("Ardent Spirits": Social Reform in Emily Dickinson's Poetry"), Betsy Erkkila, Northwestern University, ("Dickinson and the Art of Politics").

PANEL TWO: Dickinson and Ecocriticism. Chair: Paul Crumbley, Utah State University. Panelists: Christine Gerhardt, University of Dortmund, ("Often seen—but

ACADEMIC MEETINGS

seldom felt': Looking for Place in Dickinson's Nature Poetry"), Jonathan Skinner, SUNY at Buffalo, ("Pinions of Disdain': Dickinson's Ornithology"), Elizabeth Petrino, Fairfield University, ("Emblem-Reading in Dickinson's Floral Poetry").

SSAWW CONFERENCE, September 24-27 Fort Worth, Texas

PANEL ONE: Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters. Moderator and organizer: Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University Saint Paul. Paul Crumbley, Utah State University ("Eluding the Tribunal: Dickinson's Correspondence and the Politics of Gift-Based Circulation"), Ellen Louise Hart, Cowell College UC Santa Cruz and Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, MITH (Maryland Institute for Technology in the

Humanities) ("Dickinson's Correspondences: Fluid Texts"), Vivian R. Pollak, Washington University, St. Louis, ("Queering Dickinson and Reading her Letters"), Todd Samuelson, University of Houston ("Pen's Inflections: Emily Dickinson's Epistolary Privilege").

PANEL FOUR: Emily Dickinson as Nineteenth-Century "Authoress." Chair: Jane Donahue Eberwein, Oakland University and the Emily Dickinson International Society. Emily Seelbinder, Queens University ("Writing like a Man: George Eliot and the 'Supposed Person'"), Catherine Cucinella, Oakland University ("Unruly Authoresses: Fanny Fern, Elizabeth Stoddard, and Emily Dickinson"), Paula Bennett, Southern Illinois University ("Fancy's Flight: Osgood and Dickinson on the Subversive Imagination").

Rita Dove, Poet Laureate of the United States (1993 to 1995) and Commonwealth Professor of English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, will be the speaker at the fifth annual Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry at the Pennsylvania State University on October 3, 2003.

Alfred Habeger's *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson*, has won the 2002 Oregon Book Award for Literary Nonfiction. The judge in this category was Jo Ann Beard (author of *The Boys of My Youth*). Ms Beard commented: "This is a lovely book written in celebration of art and passion and scholarship. A meticulously researched and psychologically astute examination of Emily Dickinson's life and work, this book is as compelling as a good novel. ... The book sent me back to the poems, again and again, and reminded me that passion—whether it be that of the artist or of the art appreciator—is a gift, luminous and transcendent."

The winner of the election for the Member-at-large position will be announced at the annual EDIS meeting, June 29, 2003, and in the November/December 2003 *Bulletin*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Saskatchewan chapter of EDIS will present an evening of Dickinson's poetry at Chapters bookstore in Regina the last week in May. A group of five "readers" of Dickinson will present their response to a poem that had a particular impact on their writing or their life. Lemonade and black cake will be served.

Tapes and DVDs of *Loaded Gun* are available for \$29.95 plus \$6 shipping and handling from Jim Wolpaw 401-846-4394, jwolpaw@aol.com, or www.dickinsonfilm.com. For purchase made by EDIS members, or through the Homestead or Evergreens, Wolpaw and Steve Gentile, producers/directors, plan to donate \$10 to the Homestead/Evergreens (distribution to be worked out).

Poetry Center San Jose (Northern California) celebrated National Poetry Month with "An Emily Dickinson Evening of Music, Poetry and Conversation," Tuesday, April 8, 2003, at 7:30 PM in the Recital Hall of the Performing Arts Center at Santa Clara University.

The program featured talks by Ellen Louise Hart, an editor of the Dickinson Electronic Archives; Barbara Kelly, book

review editor for the *Emily Dickinson International Society Bulletin*; Aife Murray, a scholar and mixed media writer; and Brian Holmes, composer of *Amherst Requiem*. Also included were musical performances by Frank Farris, tenor, Josephine Gandolfi, pianist, and the Women's Chorus of San Jose State University, directed by Elena Sharkova, and a reading of Emily Dickinson's poetry by Nils Peterson. A full report on this event will be provided in the November/December issue of the *EDIS Bulletin*.

EDIS Saskatchewan chapter chair, Cindy MacKenzie, will present a paper titled, "It ceas'd to hurt me': Emily Dickinson's Language of Consolation" at the LEARNEDS, the Canadian Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia in May. The panel was organized by chair of the Maritime chapter of EDIS, Nancy Johnston, to nurture Canadian interest in Dickinson's work. Other members of the panel are Antony Adolf presenting "Questionable Quotations in Emily Dickinson: A Source-Critical Approach" and Meredith Donaldson, "Summer has Two Beginnings': Eschatology in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson."

PHILADELPHIA MEETING, JUNE 27-29, 2003

You are cordially invited to join the celebration of the Emily Dickinson International Society's fifteenth anniversary in Philadelphia. Cabrini College in Radnor, Pennsylvania will host Society members and other Dickinson enthusiasts from June 27 to 29, 2003, for the 2003 Annual Meeting and Weekend Program.

The Society looks forward to welcoming Dickinson back to Philadelphia, a city she visited in 1855 on her only trip outside of Massachusetts. We also will use our location in Philadelphia to explore the connections between Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore, a relationship that already has produced provocative commentary. As many of you know, Moore's own

association with Philadelphia is substantial. She earned her BA from Bryn Mawr College in 1909, and the library at Bryn Mawr College houses significant Moore materials in its special collections. In addition, the Rosenbach Museum and Library holds both Dickinson and Moore manuscripts and has agreed to mount a small, exclusive exhibition for Annual Meeting participants during the weekend.

The events of the weekend will include talks on Dickinson and Moore as well as Dickinson and Philadelphia, workshop discussions of Dickinson and Moore poems and letters, and a bus tour that will include visits to the Canaday Library at Bryn Mawr College, the Rosenbach Museum

and Library, and the Arch Street Presbyterian Church where some biographers allege Dickinson heard Reverend Charles Wadsworth give a sermon during her Philadelphia visit.

On the social side, activities will include a festive reception and buffet dinner, a Concerted Reading of Dickinson poems directed by Suzanne Juhasz, and dinner on the town in Philadelphia following the bus tour.

For more details, please consult the detailed weekend schedule posted on the Society's website.

A registration form for the Annual Meeting is included below. Please address any questions to Jonnie Guerra, EDIS President, at jguerra@cabrini.edu or 610-902-8301.

REGISTRATION FORM

Return with payment by May 20, 2003 to:

Jonnie Guerra, EDIS President
Cabrini College, 610 King of Prussia Rd.,
Radnor, Pennsylvania 19087 USA

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration confirmation will be by email unless another method is specifically requested.

Registration Fee*

Current EDIS member — \$85\$ _____

Non-member — \$100\$ _____

**Includes all talks and workshops, Friday reception and dinner, Saturday picnic and bus tour, and Sunday box lunch.*

Additional Tickets

_____ Fri. reception and dinner @ \$35.00\$ _____

_____ Sat. picnic @ \$15.00\$ _____

_____ Sat. bus tour @ \$18.00\$ _____

_____ Sun. lunch @ \$12.00\$ _____

TOTAL enclosed\$ _____

Please make checks payable (in \$U.S.) to Emily Dickinson International Society. We regret that credit cards cannot be accepted.

For information about becoming a member or renewing a membership, see the EDIS

Website: <http://www.cwru.edu/affil/edis/edisindex.html> For information about the 2003 Annual Meeting, email

jguerra@cabrini.edu

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Berley, Marc. *After the Heavenly Tune: English Poetry and the Aspiration to Song.* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000. 418 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8207-0316-8, \$59.00.

Examining the relationship of poetry and song, Berley presents an erudite history of poetics as music and an analysis of "the poets who most aspire to and best achieve a condition of song." His study of poets, philosophers, and composers includes Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Boethius, Sir Philip Sidney, Milton, Shakespeare, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson, Pound, W.B. Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Adorno, Schoenberg, and Wittgenstein. Berley says that Dickinson exhibits "a soul caught in the process of erotic expansions and speculative contractions" but, unlike Whitman, she does not possess the song to which she aspires, thus making herself "not only a great poet, but one of our greater erotic poets." She is distinguished by "her unremitting aspiration toward a condition of song that eludes her." Although Whitman says, "I sing," Dickinson says, "I shall keep singing!" Further, she declares, "I shall bring a fuller tune" (J250 / Fr270). This volume will appeal to scholarly readers, but Berley's book is clearly written, informative, and accessible to anyone wishing to learn the philosophical and historical context of what poets mean when they say, "I sing."

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Emily Dickinson (Bloom's Bio Critiques Series).* Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003. 142 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7910-6179-5, \$26.95.

Part of a series on world literary figures intended for young adults, this volume is an introduction to the life and work of Emily Dickinson. Bloom states that the poet, "who thought through everything for herself, to a degree comparable to Dante or Shakespeare, is a greater poet than as yet we know how to appreciate." His

two short introductory essays (a general essay on how writers and their work are influenced and an essay on Dickinson) are followed by Kay Cornelius's "Biography of Emily Dickinson" (5-47) and Sandra McChesney's "A View from the Window: The Poetry of Emily Dickinson" (49-85). Also included are two previously published critical essays: Adrienne Rich's "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson" and Allen Tate's "New England Culture and Emily Dickinson." The book concludes with a chronology of Dickinson's life, a bibliography of works by and about Dickinson, a list of relevant websites, notes on contributors, and an index. This volume is easily read and reflects some recent developments in Dickinson studies; however, anyone familiar with Dickinson's life and publication history will notice a couple of incorrect statements in her biography.

Burr, Zofia. *Of Women, Poetry, and Power: Strategies of Address in Dickinson, Miles, Brooks, Lorde, and Angelou.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002. 234 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-252-02769-8, \$39.95.

Burr asserts that women's lyric poetry has historical, cultural, social and political work to do and can profitably be read as more than self-expression. She argues that the canonization of Emily Dickinson has set standards for women poets that need to be re-evaluated. She presents Josephine Miles, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, and Maya Angelou as poets who challenge the critical assumptions that women's poetry will be intimate and autobiographical. Her twofold task is to show the "limiting effects of certain gendered assumptions about poetry by women" and to show "how poetry criticism might move beyond its dominant conventions and expand our sense of the possibilities and engagements of American women's poetry." In "The Canonization of Emily Dickinson" (21-

66), Burr reviews the reception of Dickinson's poetry from early ambivalent responses to modern feminist responses and current discussions of editing and textual representations. She faults critics for contributing to Dickinson's role as a touchstone, "a kind of ideal or mythic embodiment of pure poetic intensity." Explicating Dickinson's letter to Susan Gilbert Dickinson (L871), written at the time of young Gilbert Dickinson's death, Burr shows how a lyric utterance taken out of context can become "oblique, elliptical, enigmatic, [and] abstractly metaphysical," though its meaning is transparent in the context of the letter. In advocating less attention to poems as artifacts of self-expression and more attention to poems as communications with readers, Burr spars with a number of Dickinson scholars, past and present, providing an interesting and provocative study.

Freeman, Margaret H. "Momentary Stays, Exploding Forces: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to the Poetics of Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost." *Journal of English Linguistics* 30.1 (2002): 73-90.

Discussing the differences between Frost and Dickinson's poetry from a cognitive linguistics perspective, Freeman identifies and describes two schemas that inform Frost's poetry: "a linear PATH schema" and "a schema of BALANCE." She explains, "Frost's conception of poetry depends on a linear progression from beginning to end, resulting in 'a momentary stay against confusion.'" In contrast, Dickinson's poetry reflects an open-endedness." Her poetry is informed by "schemas of CONTAINER and CHANGE," exemplified in Dickinson's words to Thomas Wentworth Higginson: "I had no Monarch in my life, and cannot rule myself, and when I try to organize—my little Force explodes—and leaves me bare and charred—" (L271); and in her

words: "If I read a book [and] it makes my body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know *that* is poetry. . . ." (L342a). Freeman summarizes Frost's and Dickinson's use of differing schemas as contrasts between "agency that asserts control and agency that breaks free of control." She illustrates her approach with readings of Frost's "The Road Not Taken," "Desert Places," and "Birches"; and Dickinson's "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers -" (F124E / J216) and "Dare you see a Soul at the 'White Heat'?" (Fr401C / J365). To further distinguish between the two poets, the author compares Frost's "Stopping by Woods on A Snowy Evening" with Dickinson's "There's a certain Slant of light" (F320 / J258). Freeman clearly demonstrates how an understanding of cognitive linguistics can inform literary criticism, offering readers another key to unlock the mysteries of Dickinson's poetry.

Garbowsky, Maryanne M. *Double Vision: Contemporary Artists Look at the Poetry of Emily Dickinson*. Chester, Vermont: Putnam Hill Press, 2002. 62 pp. 9"x12". Paper, ISBN 0-9724070-0-6, \$35.00.

Garbowsky profiles 17 contemporary visual artists, exploring the many ways that Emily Dickinson has influenced each of them and their art. The wide variety of creative responses to Dickinson and her poems includes mixed media installations by Lesley Dill, Carla Rae Johnson, Aife Murray, and Barbara Penn; art books by Susan Gosin and Jan Owen; sculpture by Roni Horn; oil paintings by Eric Aho, Will Barnett, and Paul Katz; acrylic painting by Sally Cook; watercolor and calligraphy by Susan Loy; lithographs by Robert Cumming; etching and aquatint by Katja Oxman; cut "shadow papers" by Mary Frank; photography by Jerome Liebling; and used motor oil and graphite on paper by Linda Schwalen. Large color illustrations of the artists' work accompany 12 of the 17 essays. This book celebrates not only the artists but also Dickinson who inspires their art. Readers may recognize some artists because five essays

first appeared in the *EDIS Bulletin*. Garbowsky's additional essays make this a fine compilation. Drawing from interviews, conversations, and correspondence, she takes the reader behind the scenes and reveals the artists' thinking. The author's clear prose reflects her enthusiasm and skill in writing about art. This volume would make a suitable companion book to Susan Danly's *Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art* (1997). [See cover story and book review in *Bulletin* 9.1 (1997).]

Harris, Morag. *Linguistic Transformations in Romantic Aesthetics from Coleridge to Emily Dickinson*. Paley, Morton D., and Meg Harris Williams, eds. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002. 236 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7734-7029-8, \$109.95.

Posthumously published, this compilation of papers, given at international conferences or published in Italy during the last five years of Harris's life, focuses on the author's study of Romantic aesthetic theory and its relevance to Dickinson's work, a topic Harris was researching for her doctoral dissertation. The author says that German writers Schiller and Goethe inform Dickinson's work, as does Coleridge, whose words and phrases can be found in her poems and letters. Three of the four chapters on Coleridge and two on Keats mention Dickinson only in passing, but in the final two chapters, Harris describes an affinity between Emily Brontë and Dickinson, Brontë being "part inspiration and part confirmation for the themes and development" of Dickinson. The author discusses Brontë's poems "No coward soul is mine" (an "abstracted crystallization of *Wuthering Heights*") and "Julian M. and A.G. Rochelle," finding in them the sources for literal and elusive echoes in several Dickinson poems and letters. Harris's discussion of two of Dickinson's "Master" letters (L238 and L248) leads her to conclude that "The linguistic/emotional experimentation in the 'Master' letters . . . was the watershed point for the leap forward in

Dickinson's development into a great poet." [See *Bulletins* 12.2; 13.1 for reviews of Harris's *Emily Dickinson in Time*.]

Johnson, Greg. "First Surmise." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 41.2 (2002): 201-16.

Johnson's short story, based on Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death -" (J712 / Fr479), is an expanded paraphrasing of the poem. Used to clarify and explain, paraphrasing is normally less satisfying aesthetically than the work being paraphrased; however, Johnson has created a clever and artful work of his own. His especially lyrical prose fleshes out the poem, adding credible biographical, psychological, and topological details. His story, written in the first person and narrated by Dickinson, achieves compelling immediacy. It is as though he is Dickinson's amanuensis recording her every thought and sensation as she greets a mysterious visitor, then rides with him in the carriage over particular streets in Amherst on the journey to Eternity. Among other details, Johnson introduces an avid reader of Dickinson's poems, Tim Moriarty, who asks her many questions from the backseat of the carriage. The story suggests interesting classroom exercises: it could be read in conjunction with Dickinson's poem and could also be a model in creative writing classes where students are asked to write a story derived from a chosen poem. Dickinson readers will not want to miss this imaginatively written prose reincarnation of Dickinson's poem.

Kavaler-Adler, Susan. *The Compulsion to Create: Women Writers and Their Demon Lovers*. New York: Other Press, 2000 [First published by Routledge, 1993]. 356 pp. Paper. ISBN 1-892746-59-X, \$25.00.

Kavaler-Adler analyzes the Brontës, Emily Dickinson, Anais Nin, Sylvia Plath, and Edith Stilwell, using a psychobiographical approach to examine whether their creativity brought about healthy self-reparation and developmental growth or whether in-

stead it afforded cathartic relief and emotional expression and led to pathological compulsion and self-deterioration. In her two chapters on Dickinson (192-248), the author discusses the poet's relationship with her parents and her psychological breakdown, including a five-page analysis of "My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun" (J754). She argues that because the poet could not identify with her mother and had an ambivalent relationship with her father, who was both a muse and a demon, Dickinson was a preoedipally arrested woman whose poems often express rage, despair, and a psychic void. Kavalier-Adler asserts that Dickinson's poetry shows the developmental arrest that prevented her from having an adult interpersonal life. Instead of providing true reparation, her poems were written out of manic reparation, providing a temporary psychic salvation that did not result in self-integration. Informed by Freud, Klein, Guntrip, Fairbairn, and Winnicott, as well as Dickinson's biographers John Cody and Cynthia Griffin Wolff, the author presents a clear analysis of Dickinson for those interested in a psychobiographical approach. The book assumes knowledge of psychological terminology and would appeal to readers interested in the creative unconscious or in literary, psychological, or women's studies.

McQuade, Molly, ed. *By Herself: Women Reclaim Poetry*. Saint Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 2000. 429 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-55597-297-7, \$16.00. Stating that critics are "our teachers" and criticism can be "nearly as artfully expressive as the poetry that provoked it," McQuade has gathered 26 essays on poets and poetry by contemporary women poet-critics. The wide range of voices includes Eavan Boland, Lucie Brock-Broido, Rita Dove, Annie Finch, Jorie Graham, Brenda Hillman, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Sharon Olds, Alicia Ostriker, and Adrienne Rich among others. Half of the essays are newly commissioned; the others are previously published essays considered classics, though they are intermixed and unmarked as such. Three

essayists focus on Emily Dickinson (Brock-Broido, McQuade, Rich), but others also register Dickinson's presence in their writing lives. Commenting on Dickinson's dashes, Graham cites them as "evidence of a failure of language," while Hillman says they are "our most gifted elocution marks, our most treasured and most determined uncertainty." In her meditation on the word "poetess," Finch says Dickinson "admired the [nineteenth-century] poetesses and had an important aesthetic kinship with them - an area that has hardly been explored." Without an index, finding specific information is a challenge, but the book is entertaining, accessible, and informative, offering varied perspectives on poetry.

Mitchell, Domhnall, guest ed. *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 31.6. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.: Taylor and Francis, 2002. ISSN 0049-7878. Ordering information at www.taylorandfrancis.com or 1-800-354-1420.

This special issue of *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* features five papers from the fourth international conference of the Emily Dickinson International Society, held August 3-5, 2001, in Trondheim, Norway. Entitled "Zero at the Bone: New Climates for Dickinson Study," the conference was sponsored by EDIS and the Department of English at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Included are Mitchell's introduction, Paul Crumbley's "'As if for you to choose - ' Conflicting Textual Economics in Dickinson's Correspondence with Helen Hunt Jackson," Eva Heisler's "Roni Horn and Emily Dickinson: The Poem as Place," Philip Horne's "The Poetry of Possibilities: Dickinson's Texts," Birgit Kvamme Lundheim's cover art and two illustrations of her conference posters, Bryan Short's "Emily Dickinson's Apostrophe," and Maria Anita Stefanelli's "Dickinson on Stage." The editor chose the papers "to reflect the diversity and quality of themes and methodologies covered by the conference." Other papers from the confer-

ence are published in *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 11.1 and 11.2 (2002).

Wardrop, Daneen. *Word, Birth, and Culture: The Poetry of Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002. 171 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-313-32234-1, \$58.95.

Wardrop offers close readings of Poe's "The Raven," Whitman's "Song of Myself," and selected poems from Dickinson's Fascicle 28, exploring "each poet's engagement with the feminine." Examining the language used in Fascicle 28 and singling out the "pod" poems, the author shows Dickinson's concern with gestation, particularly miscarriage and abortion. In order to see patterns of word usage, Wardrop believes it important to focus on the fascicles instead of individual poems. The final three chapters discuss Poe's, Whitman's, and Dickinson's association with alchemy, hydrophaty, and botany respectively. Drawing upon two botany texts that Dickinson may have studied in school (Almira H. Lincoln's *Familiar Lectures on Botany* and Alphonso Wood's *A Class-Book of Botany*), Wardrop says that the books (containing discussions of the pod) provided Dickinson with terms and vocabulary that suggest erotic associations. She shows how Dickinson's use of botanical and other nature images helped her express herself in ways that could stand alone "as erotic female expression," not needing "to be filtered through patriarchal naming." Informed by Cixous, Kristeva, Lacan, and others, Wardrop's well-researched study is dense with language, explications, citations, and endnotes, and may appeal to sophisticated readers who appreciate "matronymic expression that is trembling, unpronounceable, and crucially unnameable" as a strategy for subverting "patriarchal modes of signification."

Westfall, Douglas. *The Life of Emily Dickinson*. Orange, Calif.: Paragon Agency, 2000. 122 pp. 5.25" x 8.25". Paper, ISBN 1-891030-22-1, \$15.00. Westfall and his wife attended *The Belle of Amherst*, at the Laguna Playhouse in Laguna Beach, California,

and found that they were sitting in front of playwright William Luce. That chance encounter and a meeting with Julie Harris led to this volume, described by the author as "a celebration of the 25th anniversary of *The Belle of Amherst* and of Emily Dickinson's incredible poetry." Following the author's preface and Luce's foreword are a 29-page biography of Dickinson and 46 full-page black and white photographs of Harris portraying Dickinson on the Laguna Playhouse stage. Pages opposite the photographs feature 40 Dickinson poems from the Johnson edition. Intwoven into Westfall's clearly written biography of the poet are interesting facts of Dickinson family history (dating from 1659 in Hampshire County and including the "IV League" schools attended by the men in her family); also included is a list of Amherst notables (Melvin Dewey, Noah Webster, Robert Frost, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Sylvester Graham), a list of Amherst burials (under age 25) from 1851-54, Dickinson's black cake recipe, key letters she wrote to Higginson, excerpts from Dickinson's obituary, and more. For anyone who enjoyed Harris in her role as Dickinson, this well-designed, slim volume, dedicated to Harris, would make a good companion to *The Belle of Amherst* playbook. Originally sold in theaters, Westfall's book can be viewed and ordered on the internet at www.SpecialBooks.com.

Book Reviews

Martin, Wendy. *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002. 248 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-521-80644-5, \$60.00; paper, ISBN 0-521-00118-8, \$22.00.

Reviewed by Connie Ann Kirk

Arguably the most noteworthy book in Dickinson studies published last year, *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson*, edited by Wendy Martin, is a compilation of 11 essays by established Dickinson scholars that attempts to introduce college undergraduates to current biographical, literary, and cultural studies in the poet. While the core of many of the argu-

ments is not new to those familiar with the work of these scholars, the volume does succeed in its mission of updating previous claims and presenting fresh perspectives on others as it addresses an audience that may be approaching a more advanced level of Dickinson study for the first time. The book will be a useful college text in courses such as undergraduate seminars on the poet, but it also provides provocative reading for the general reader interested in a survey of more recent scholarly thinking on the poet's life, work, and times.

The book is divided into three sections: "Biography and Publication History," "Poetic Strategies and Themes," and "Cultural Contexts." The first and last sections with three essays each book end the heart of the book and give center stage to the poetry section's five essays. Each essay concludes with a guide to further reading on its subject. The volume also contains a Dickinson chronology, a select bibliography, and index. The editor's introduction gives an overview of Dickinson's life, debates in the scholarship, and a description of what readers may expect in the volume.

Essays in the first section include "The Emily Dickinson wars," by Betsy Erkkila; "Emily Dickinson and the American South," by Christopher Benfey; and "Susan and Emily Dickinson: Their lives, in Letters" by Martha Nell Smith. The essays concede that biographical study has been closely linked with literary study of this poet from the beginning, so each suggests that readers step outside this assumption and question why we care about the biography or why we should care about it, what might we challenge in terms of embedded limitations, and what can we learn by examining the core origins of the entanglement of Dickinson biography with the publication history of the poems. Smith presents, for example, evidence that the poet may have called on Susan Dickinson to serve as Horatio did for Hamlet in her desire to have her story told. If so, perhaps the challenge extends to all who take on this difficult task to report her and her cause aright.

The book's middle section contains the following essays on the poetry: "Emily Dickinson and Poetic Strategy" by Wendy Barker; "Emily Dickinson's Existential Dramas" by Fred D. White; "Performances of Gender in Dickinson's Poetry" by Suzanne Juhasz and Cristanne Miller; "Emily Dickinson: Being in the Body" by Shira Wolosky; and "Emily Dickinson and the Gothic in Fascicle 16" by Daneen Wardrop. The essays reflect on Dickinson's poems, themes, and strategies and contain analyses of poems ranging from "I dwell in Possibility —" to "I know that He exists"; from "I tie my Hat—I crease my Shawl—" to "I am afraid to own a Body—" to consideration of an entire booklet of sewn together poems as a group.

The cultural essays in the last section are "Emily Dickinson and Popular Culture" by David S. Reynolds; "Emily Dickinson and Class" by Domhnall Mitchell; and "Emily Dickinson and her American Women Poet Peers" by Paula Bernat Bennett. As the titles suggest, these essays examine the placement of Dickinson's poems within three different contexts and influences, but their conclusions may surprise some readers. Reynolds argues, for example, that Dickinson was heavily influenced by newspapers and pamphlets, the temperance movement, and the growth of women's literature of her day; Mitchell counterclaims that Dickinson's social and economic position in Amherst gave her feelings of elevation and importance but also a sense of exclusion from mass culture; and Bennett argues that Dickinson felt conflicting attractions to a domestic life that was similar to that of her peers, and to a desire for literary immortality.

As a compact introduction to ongoing issues in Dickinson scholarship, *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson* works well. It describes and illustrates some of the conflicting claims scholars make in their interpretations of the poet's life, work, and times. Readers seeking a rigorous, expanded discussion of forward-looking developments in the scholarship

may want to follow up this reading with *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* edited by Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Cristanne Miller.

Connie Ann Kirk is writing two books about the poet, Reveries of a Writer: On Emily Dickinson and the Creative Process and Emily Dickinson and Children. She is also researching the poet's nephew, Gilbert.

Uno, Hiroko. *Emily Dickinson's Marble Disc: A Poetics of Renunciation and Science.* Tokyo: Eihōsha, 2002. 300 pp. Cloth, ISBN 4-269-72080-8 C3098, ¥3,000 (about \$25.00).

Reviewed by Margaret H. Freeman

Hiroko Uno's *Emily Dickinson's Marble Disc: A Poetics of Renunciation and Science* is the compilation of thirty years of Dickinson research and scholarship. English speakers will be pleased to have more easily available access through this volume to one of Japan's foremost scholars on Emily Dickinson's poetics.

The book is divided into two parts, "Silence and Nothingness" and "The Science of the Grave," with four word-frequency appendices. Extensive reference to scholarly discussions of poems and painstaking and thorough listings of other relevant poems in the notes to each chapter provide a valuable resource to those wishing to explore further Uno's observations on some of Dickinson's major themes.

Uno's opening chapter focuses on the irony that the poet most known for her breathtaking choice of words was painfully conscious of their inadequacy to express her feelings and emotions. The opening chapter thus presents a framework for the subject of Part 1. Following Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's groundbreaking study of form in Dickinson's poetry, Uno examines the way Dickinson expresses the "beauty and truth" that reside in silence and negation through various formal strategies, such as repetition, the use of terms like "without" and "but," economy in words and the use of monosyllables, her use of the dash, and the effects of the sibilant 's' sound and its frequently

accompanying 't' that the word "silent" itself represents. Uno's discussion of the phonetics of 's' are refreshing and quite persuasive in revealing possible reasons for Dickinson's seeming preference for the various allophonic representations of the 's' phoneme in expressing silence's "mystical and oppressive power to suffuse or muffle, to menace or surprise, or to compel one to be stiff, rigid, and silent."

Uno's strategy throughout the book is to examine all linguistic expressions of the concepts of silence and negation in Dickinson's poetry. One notable feature of the list of negatives given in Appendix 1 is that it includes references to words not in the Rosenbaum concordance, a small but significant hint of the intensive and methodological work that lies behind Uno's research. The same appendix provides a comparison of negations used by Yeats and Hart Crane, indicating that Dickinson tends to use more, and thereby suggesting an empirical way of testing hypotheses about Dickinson's characteristic conceptualizations. One impressive feature of the book as a whole is the documentation it provides of many insights afforded by other scholars into Dickinson's preferences for such various concepts as frugality, nothingness, impossibility, loss, and even her habit of wearing white.

Although the book's division into two main sections results from its history as a compilation of Uno's research over the years, the section on science contributes, as the first does, toward understanding Dickinson's life of renunciation. Like the first, the second part opens with a chapter that provides a framework for the rest, a discussion of Dickinson's eye trouble, leading to an exploration of Dickinson's interest in the technical developments of her age in the telescope, microscope, and camera. The chapters in this section build on each other to examine Dickinson's use of the scientific knowledge of her time in exploring ideas of oblique sight, compound vision, the "blind worship of science," and, finally, the way her knowledge of geology informed her attitudes towards

poetry and publication, life and death, eternity and immortality.

Rather than present and discuss Uno's conclusions, I have tried within the constraints of this short review to give some indication of the range and intensity of Uno's research in the hope that readers will want to discover for themselves the insightful and illuminating perspectives Uno brings to Dickinson's poetry. The simplicity and elegance of her prose makes the book attractive and accessible. It will appeal to scholars interested in close textual reading as well as to the general reader who would like to gain some insight into the major themes of Dickinson's poems.

*The book is available from the Jeffery Amherst Bookshop (Amherst, MA), or by sending a check for \$33 (includes handling and postage) to the author, who may be reached at hirouno@pearl.ocn.ne.jp. Uno's earlier book, *Emily Dickinson Visits Boston*, [reviewed in the *Bulletin* 3.1 (1991)] is also available at the Jeffery Amherst Bookshop.*

Margaret H. Freeman, founding president of the Emily Dickinson International Society and professor emeritus at Los Angeles Valley College, lives in Heath, Massachusetts.

Book Notes

Alfred Habegger's *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson* is available in paperback (New York: Modern Library, 2002, ISBN 0-812-96601-5, \$16.95).

Emily Dickinson's Aupuka [Lyrics], edited by A. Kudryavitsky, (Moscow: Eksmo, 2001), includes approximately 241 Dickinson poems translated into the Russian language by I. Greengoltz, V. Markova, A. Gavrillov, and A. Velichansky. Some poems have two variants of translation. New volumes (small format, 384 pages) are periodically auctioned at www.ebay.com, price starting at \$6.95 plus shipping from New York.

Selected Bibliography

Articles appearing in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* are not included.

Abbott, Collamer M. "Dickinson's 'Safe in their Alabaster Chambers -.'" *Explicator* 60.3 (2002): 139. [Abbott says Dickinson's conception of the grave (an above-ground stone burial vault, a dwelling with rooms and chambers) has more metaphoric power than an underground grave.]

Bromwich, David. "The American Psychosis." *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 21.4 (2002): 33-63. [The author, discussing Emerson, Dickinson (J258, J959), Hawthorne, Henry James, and Flannery O'Connor, concludes "Money has taken increasingly to itself the obscure and compelling charge that Emerson assigned to the hidden self."]

Buell, Lawrence. "Emersonian Anti-mentoring: From Thoreau to Dickinson and Beyond." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 41.3 (2002): 347-60. [Emerson's ideas about mentorship and pedagogy influenced Thoreau, T.W. Higginson, and John Dewey; Buell says Dickinson "figured out very quickly that her preceptor was not an original but a derivative."]

Engle, Patricia. "Dickinson's 'Because I could not stop for Death -.'" *Explicator* 60.2 (2002): 72-75. [Engle suggests that the poem's speaker, in her showdown with Death, leaves the carriage and aligns herself with eternal life.]

Frank, Bernhard. "Dickinson's 'Portraits are to daily faces.'" *Explicator* 60.4 (2002): 200. [Key words in this short poem about art and reality lead Bernhard to conclude that the poem is "a minimal elegy" rather than a criticism of portraits or daily faces.]

"Guggenheim Fellowship Received." *Ascribe Higher Education News Service* 4 June 2002: n. pag. [Thomas Gardner, professor of English at Virginia Tech, received a Guggenheim Fellowship to complete a book about Emily Dickinson's influence on contemporary writers Jorie Graham, Susan Howe, Marilyn Robinson, and Charles

Wright.]

Murray, Aife. "A Yankee Poet's Irish Headwaters." *New Hibernia Review* 6.1 (2002): 9-17. [A trip to Ireland causes the author to reflect on the often-overlooked Dickinson servants whose presence in the Homestead marked an upswing in the poet's literary productivity.]

Orr, Gregory. "Two Chapters from *Poetry as Survival*." *American Poetry Review* 31.3 (2002): 24-27. [Excerpted from the forthcoming book, *Poetry as Survival* (Georgia University Press, 2002), one chapter is a preface, discussing lyric poetry as personal and transformative; the other chapter focuses on Emily Dickinson's poetic response to personal trauma.]

Ramirez, Anne West. "Harriet Beecher Stowe's Christian Feminism in *The Minister's Wooing*: A Precedent for Emily Dickinson." *Christianity and Literature* 51.3 (2002): 407-25. [Ramirez analyzes Stowe's 1859 novel, *The Minister's Wooing*, finding in it many of the concerns that Dickinson expressed in her poetry. Stowe's illumination of a shared cultural heritage "discourages the image of Dickinson as a masochistic neurotic and supports the impression of her as a relatively well integrated individual who sensitively articulated thoughts and experiences familiar to her contemporaries."]

Sousa Coelho, Maria Luisa de. "Dickinson's 'Tis little I - could care for Pearls -.'" *Explicator* 60.3 (2002): 140-42. [The author focuses on the poem's speaker, who "highlights the value of the world within," turning the private sphere "into her source of power."]

Tripp, Raymond P. "Thoreau, Dickinson, and Barfield and the World as Window of Opportunity." *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* March 2002: 19-27. [Specific ideas and images (ice, eyes, glass, windowpanes) found in Thoreau and Dickinson's work run parallel to ideas about consciousness and reality found in Owen Barfield's *Saving the Appearances, A Study in Idolatry* (New York: Harcourt, 1965).

Note: The Bulletin welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, includ-

ing those published outside the U.S. Send information to Barbara Kelly, 444 Washington Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301, U.S.A. Fax: 650-321-8146. E-mail: barbarakelly@psualum.com.

continued from page 2

moved to their summer house in remote, beautiful Willowa county in northeastern Oregon. The post and beam log structure there had been built by the Habegggers and their two young children in summers. They poured their own concrete, cut their own trees, and then hewed the timbers Habegger recalled Shakespeare's sage reference as he worked: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them. How we will" (*Hamlet*, Act V). The family lived outdoors until the place was habitable, yet "no one got chewed, gored, or mauled by the many wild animals" there. But the children clearly relished that "sometimes thrilling open-air life all summer." Now grown, Eliza is a field botanist for the Nature Conservatory in Seattle, while Simon is teaching currently at a "start-up college" in northeastern Thailand.

Looking back, Habegger realizes that he has had "a minority consciousness" and "an independent point of view." Nature has loomed large, as have scholarly pursuits, making his alliance with Emily Dickinson especially appropriate. What follows Dickinson? Though the future, according to Habegger, "will undoubtedly involve writing," he is not telling us now what to expect.

Betty Bernhard, independent scholar and EDIS Board member, lives in Amherst, MA, where she has been a Homestead guide for over twenty years. She is known for her lectures and for her articles on Emily Dickinson's relationship to her mother and the Norcross family, on the Dickinson's daguerreotype, and on Mary Landis Hampson. Her review of My Wars are Laid Away in Books appears in the fall 2002 Emily Dickinson Journal.

continued from page 4

When meshed with Emily's words, this project was powerful in its connection to the poet, the student, and the modern world with which Dickinson was herself so concerned.

Watching these presentations was one of the most enlightening experiences I had as an undergraduate. I was fascinated to see my classmates experiment—academically and emotionally—with new, creative forms of exploration. I knew that what was created needed to be captured and shared so that more professors and students would have the privilege to look into themselves to learn about great writers. Luckily, Dr. Wallace had this same feeling, and, just as importantly, had brought his camera with him to class that day.

I consulted with Dr. Wallace on what would be the most effective medium to expose others to the magic that can occur when traditional assignments meet creative outlets. We soon decided that my developing a website and magazine to showcase the works of the students in that amazing class would work best, and I undertook the completion of these in an Independent Study project under Dr. Wallace's direction.

Before creating the magazine and website, I found myself sorting through an enormous amount of photographs, essays, creative writing, visual art, and musical compositions. It was not an easy task to decide what would be included in each form of publication, as I was endeared to something (or many things!) in each of the projects. I also tallied what our class believed to be Emily's most significant poems, which was the result of an interesting mini-anthology experimentation, and decided to incorporate each group's rationale for why their specific poems were selected. It took a few weeks to decide what would be included, and a few more weeks to edit the artist statements, creative pieces, and essays that would be published.

Then came the hard part.

When I chose to create a web-based publication, I had no previous background in website creation but wanted

to make the material available in this way nonetheless. I diligently learned HTML format and played around with site layout for a dangerously long time (and made a few friends at the IT help desk at NKU in the process!). All the while, I was working on the magazine version of the material—a form I was much more accustomed to—which had its own formatting issues. Although I "finished" the website and magazine by the end of my Independent Study, I revised the magazine the following semester and still make changes in the website.

I was impressed by the response I received to the works after they were done. The students who were in Dr. Wallace's class with me were happy to see their projects available to a wider audience and were proud of not only their individual creations but the class as a whole. Feedback from NKU faculty was also impressive—many of my professors from other classes commented on the quality of the artwork displayed (especially noteworthy since many of the students had little previous artistic experience) and showed a sincere interest in the class's structure.

The many layers of positive response I have received regarding this course—from my professors' inquiries to my peers' appreciation—have reinforced my conviction that using the writings of renowned authors such as Dickinson as a springboard for students to jump from, in order to explore themselves and find personal connections to the assignments, is a progressive way for students to deeply appreciate their studies. These options allow for creative explorations that are not always found in the traditional classroom. [MRG]

Copies of the magazine *Dickinson and James: Creative Explorations* can be ordered directly from Dr. Wallace at wallacer@nku.edu. The cost is \$3 (black-and-white version) or \$7 (color). Supplies are limited.

Robert K. Wallace is Regents Professor of Literature and Language at Northern

Kentucky University. His interdisciplinary publications cover Jane Austen and Mozart, Emily Brontë and Beethoven, Melville and Turner, and, most recently, Frank Stella's Moby-Dick: Words and Shapes (2001). He is currently writing a book on Herman Melville's print collection.

Melissa Rae Gers graduated Summa Cum Laude from the Department of Literature and Language at Northern Kentucky University. She was the co-founder and co-editor of an honors journal, Placebo, and has had her fiction and poetry published in NKU Expressed. Her poem "Diaspora" will be published in the next volume of The Licking River Review.

continued from page 16

enjoyed reading Shakespeare "the poet," the whole idea of watching a play by Shakespeare "the dramatist" was a contentious one. Did the poet share her community's view about drama, and when she read Shakespeare the poet, did she ever think about the prejudice associated with this dramatist? At the Special Collection, I was able to examine two magazines associated with Dickinson: *The Indicator* and *The Amherst Collegiate Magazine*. These magazines demonstrated that despite an overall anti-theatrical prejudice, there were examples of Amherst College students, many of whom were acquainted with the Dickinsons, engaging with Shakespeare, Shakespeare's plays, eminent British critics like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Hazlitt, and American critics like Henry Norman Hudson. The Special Collection also had numerous books on college life and history during Dickinson's era; these presented an essential context for my research. What I found equally useful was the large collection of nineteenth-century American criticism of Shakespeare in the basement of the Frost Library. Many of these books are difficult to find in the United Kingdom and it was very important to be able to have unrestricted access to them. One book in particular, Delia Bacon's *Philosophy of Shakspeare's Plays Unfolded* (1857), was available on the open shelves, so I was able to read one of the first critics to argue (in the

most dense and, at times, incomprehensible prose) that Shakespeare had not written the plays attributed to him. The curator and staff of the Special Collection at Amherst College were very welcoming to me and very supportive of my research.

While most of my time was spent between the Jones Library and the Frost Library, I also spent a day in Mount Holyoke's Special Collection library. Here I was introduced by the Curator to the education methods of Mary Lyon. We also tried to discover whether there were copies of Shakespeare's plays at Mount Holyoke while the poet was there. This provided me with new material about the education system in which Dickinson was taught and Shakespeare's place within it.

My stay in Amherst coincided with the "Dickinson Alive" week (April 5-15); I was fortunate enough to attend an excellent lecture, "Getting Nearer, Knowing Less: Reading Emily Dickinson's Manuscripts" by Domhnall Mitchell, the Copeland fellow at Amherst College. Over lunch in downtown Amherst, Domhnall told me about a message written by Mary Bowles to her husband, Samuel, on the back of one of Dickinson's poems that might be important for my research. This was my very first excuse for looking at Dickinson's actual manuscript, as usually researchers require a very good reason to examine these fragile originals. It was an amazing moment that I will not forget: I unfolded the poem, seeing Dickinson's poem, "The Juggler's Hat/ Her Country" (A668), on one side, and Mrs. Bowles's advice to how her husband should read the poem, on the other. Also as part of the "Dickinson Alive" week I attended an enchanting performance by the New World Chamber Ensemble (Hartford, Connecticut) of Gwyneth Walker's *Letters to the World: A Reflection on the Poems of Emily Dickinson*. To have the poems read and then listen to Walker's musical interpretation was beautiful; I found the piece entitled "These are the days when birds come back" especially wonderful. For me, both of these experiences brought Dickinson's poems alive, and having spent the last few years mainly researching Shakespeare's American reception, I became eager to get back to reading her poems.

But the highlight of my research trip was a personal tour of the entire Dickinson homestead by its curator, Cindy Dickinson. I walked up to the Dickinson front door and rang the bell; surprisingly the door opened for me. Cindy took me on a detailed tour of the house: we went into every room in the house, and visited both the attic and the cupola. Cindy's information about the house and its various rooms was incredibly beneficial for me, giving me my first real impression of the vast space in which Dickinson lived and wrote her poems. From her cupola, she could see most of Amherst, Amherst College and the beautiful landscape that surrounded her. I imagined the poet climbing the stairs in the attic to watch the world unseen by it. What struck me most was that although Dickinson is frequently called agoraphobic and claustrophobic, she enjoyed the immense privacy that this mansion offered. As we travelled from room to room, through door after door, I grasped for the first time the freedom and independence Dickinson's home gave her. It was not hard then to understand why she decided not to leave this space of possibility. I was most grateful to Cindy's generosity for allowing me this rare privilege. I left Amherst on April 30 and now a year later as I am putting the last touches to my book I fondly look back on my time there and the very important research materials this award allowed me to access.

continued from page 19

volume of five songs by Ernst Bacon on poems by Emily Dickinson. She claims that she loved those songs, continued to sing them, and later programmed them on more concerts than she could remember. Miss Heafner met Ernst Bacon when she was in New York recording an LP for CRI that included a group of Ernst Bacon songs. She wanted Bacon to accompany her for the recording, but his eyesight was failing and he was unable to do so, though he worked with her and her accompanist on the songs. So, when she began work on *The Poetess Sings*, she and Bacon already had an established relationship. Quite naturally, Bacon's songs were the first she

turned to; the very opening song, "It's All I Have To Bring," is one of those five songs of his she had learned during her college days. Her contact with the other composers adds an important dimension to her vocal interpretations of their compositions.

Miss Heafner toured with *The Poetess Sings* for almost 20 years, performing at colleges and universities, museums, festivals, and special events. Her last performance of the piece was just two years ago in Hudson, New York, where "local antique shops made a beautiful stage setting for us, nice stage lighting was provided, and my wonderful accompanist was available. What a good way to do the last one - there was even a reception afterwards." Following the program, the sponsors of the event approached Miss Heafner with the proposition to record it. They were starting a new record company and wanted to bring *The Poetess Sings* out as one of the first six discs they had planned as their introduction to the world. Miss Heafner had never intended to do a CD because she conceived of the piece as a visual work, and she had concerns that it would not have the same impact just being heard. Nonetheless, the recording went forth, and though this company was unable to complete the project, eventually a different recording company and distributor put the CD on the market. Miss Heafner says that she has been "amazed at the positive response to the CD from people who have never seen the show."

Though Miss Heafner no longer performs *The Poetess Sings* on stage, the CD provides an opportunity to hear the musical settings and the narrative of the original theater piece. Though much of the narrative contains material familiar to Dickinson scholars, many people who are less aware of Emily

Dickinson will be genuinely entranced with the story and will be prompted to begin their own research into the poet's fascinating life.

Miss Heafner affirms that her opera and concert career was enjoyable, satisfying, and rewarding, but, she says, "I can safely say that in recent years *The*

Poetess Sings has been by far the most rewarding from a performance standpoint – the most satisfying because of having created the piece – and the most exciting because of getting to know and working with the composers.”

The CD can be ordered through Musicians’ Resource at www.msacd.com. The telephone number for those who do not want to order online is (914) 592-9431.

Ask for #MS1085. The cost is \$10.95 plus shipping and handling. *The Poetess Sings* can also be ordered at Borders or Tower Records from the Albany Recording Catalog.

continued from page 18

Church-” (Fr236) and “The Brain - is wider than the Sky-” (Fr598). Billy Collins nails the segment by saying of the former poem, “It’s a bomb, it’s a hand grenade thrown into the church.”

Though the film maker’s questions may be irreverent, and the actresses’ naive responses may make us laugh, the underlying substance of the film ultimately rises. A question addressing the contradiction of Dickinson being “worried about peoples’ hearts breaking,” and simultaneously finding “decapitation so amusing,” leaves the actresses squirming to make sense of the poet. Billy Collins balances them

with the observation that “There are two chambers to her person. One chamber is the chamber of sentiment, the other is the chamber of sarcasm... The only way to express these two things at the same time is through irony.” One of the psychotherapists adds that “She is a connoisseur of pain. Nothing interests Dickinson as much as pain, in every variety, shape, and degree...”

For Wolpaw, the actresses are more than comic relief in the film– they represent the common view of Dickinson in popular culture. Wolpaw considers them and concludes, “I figured it was time for the killer poet to get equal billing with the spinster in white.”

Here the film turns on a reading of “She dealt her pretty words like Blades” (Fr458), the same poem that inspired Ron Morgan’s film. Wolpaw shifts his attention to the Dickinson he considers most neglected, the Dickinson called by one psychotherapist the “sly sadist.” The filmmaker is drawn to Dickinson’s images of “the ecstasy of death”; he is most intrigued by the Dickinson that finds “a single screw of flesh is all that pins the soul.” Wolpaw wants to know how Dickinson can be both appalled and captivated by this “over-horror” of the self.

We are reminded, at the end of the film, of the dream sequence with which it so quixotically opened. In it, Wolpaw

narrates over a scene at a ballfield: “So I had this dream last night. I was coaching a baseball team. It was a really tight game. And their best hitter is at the plate. Someone taps me on the shoulder. I turn around and there’s Emily Dickinson. And she tells me she wants to play. Now I figure she’s not much of a player...”

Wolpaw puts Dickinson in the game, to stunning (and zany) effect, and says, “I remember thinking in my dream– here’s a woman who spent most of her life shut up in her house writing poems and baking bread. How’d she ever learn to play second base like that?”

The humor of the film, the ironic tone that borders on, and occasionally falls into, sarcasm, is replaced at the end with the quiet words of Julie Harris. Just prior to the final scene, we hear Jim Wolpaw say, “So I guess I should forget about the movie, and read the book.” And “the book” is where, after all is written and filmed, we ultimately find Dickinson.

Daniel Lombardo was the Curator of Special Collections at the Jones Library, Amherst, for seventeen years. He is the author of A Hedge Away: The Other Side of Emily Dickinson’s Amherst and a forthcoming book on the history and future of New England windmills.

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Alfred Habegger: An Original Dickinsonian BY MARY ELIZABETH KROMER BERNHARD
- 3 Dickinson's Power in Student Hands BY ROBERT K. WALLACE AND MELISSA RAE GERS
- 5 Going to School with Emily Dickinson BY JOHN GUZLOWSKI
- 7 Zero at the Bone: Emily Dickinson Rock BY SEBASTIAN LOCKWOOD
- 8 Emily Dickinson: Realms of Amplitude. The 2004 EDIS Conference
- 10 The College Search: Lavinia Dickinson's Decision to Attend Ipswich Female Seminary, 1849-1850 BY KATE W. FLEWELLING
- 13 Emily Dickinson Music Society Formed
- 14 Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens Plan to be Reunited BY CINDY DICKINSON AND JANE WALD
- 15 2003 Scholar in Amherst Award Competition Announced
- 15 Late-Breaking News: *Poets Against the War* Anthology Published
- 16 Visiting Emily Dickinson's Amherst: A Report from the First "Scholar in Amherst" Award Recipient BY PARAIC FINNERTY
- 17 Film Reviews: *Loaded Gun* and *Words Like Blades* BY DANIEL LOMBARDO
- 19 The Poetess Sings: A Tribute to Emily Dickinson BY CAROLYN COOLEY
- 20 Obituary: Brita Lindberg-Seyersted
- 20 2002 Pollak Scholar in Amherst Award Presented
- 21-22 Members' News
Academic Meetings
Announcements
Philadelphia Meeting, June 27-28, 2003
- 23 New Publications BY BARBARA KELLY
- 26 Review of Wendy Martin, *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson* BY CONNIE ANN KIRK
- 27 Review of Hiroko Uno, *Emily Dickinson's Marble Disc: A Poetics of Renunciation and Science* BY MARGARET H. FREEMAN
- 28 Selected Bibliography BY BARBARA KELLY
- 28 Article continuations

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