

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

## AGNIESZKA SALSKA: POLISH DICKINSONIAN

*By Magdalena Zapadowska and Barton Levi St. Armand*

*This tribute to Agnieszka Salska is, quite fittingly, a product of transcontinental collaboration. Barton St. Armand initiated it upon his return from lecturing in Poland and then forwarded his notes to Magdalena Zapadowska, who wrote the essay and introduced her own insights as a Polish scholar of American literature. Our co-authors are known to lovers of Dickinson. Author of *Emily Dickinson and Her Culture: The Soul's Society* and many articles, St. Armand is professor of American Studies at Brown University and has lectured in France and Japan as well as Poland. His book contributions to Sophia University in Tokyo were the subject of a 2003 Bulletin article by Alfred Habegger. Magdalena Zapadowska, assistant professor of American Literature at Adam Mickiewicz University, has published articles on Dickinson and other nineteenth-century American writers and is at work on a book project on "Delight, Desire, and Language in Emily Dickinson" that reads the poems in light of the phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas. She was the Emily Dickinson International Society's 2003 Scholar in Amherst.*

Jane Donahue Eberwein,  
Series Editor

I first met Professor Agnieszka Salska—the premier Polish scholar of Emily Dickinson and a leading specialist in nineteenth-century American literature and modernist poetry—in the fall of 1995, when I was a student assistant at an American Studies conference in Poznan. I had read her book, *Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson: Poetry of the Central*

*Consciousness* (1985), for my M.A. project on Dickinson, which I hoped to discuss with her. In Poland relations between students and professors are more formal than in the US, so I was thrilled when she suggested we have lunch together. Since then, with her characteristic generosity, Professor Salska has supported me and my work in numerous ways. Like many other Polish Americanists, I have often been inspired



Agnieszka Salska  
Photo by Marlena Kaminska

by her keen intellect and comforted by her personal warmth.

Barton St. Armand, who interviewed Agnieszka Salska for this profile, met her at the Emily Dickinson Centennial Conference in Chapel Hill in 1986. Paraphrasing Poe's "Ligeia," he confesses that "the friendship was founded 'for

my soul'—and it is on that level that I met and remain faithful to the Lady Agnieszka." This statement is deeply personal but it reflects the universal respect and affection which Professor Salska's friends, colleagues, and students feel for her.

Throughout her career Agnieszka Salska has taught at the University of Lodz, where she chairs the Department of American Literature and Culture. A gifted and dedicated teacher, she has educated a number of Polish scholars in the field, inspiring many others with her extensive learning, diligence, and enthusiasm. She has played a key role in creating and consolidating the community of Polish Americanists as the co-founder of the Polish Association for American Studies and its first president from 1990 to 1996. Today the Association has about 140 members, but in the 1960s, when Agnieszka Salska was researching her doctoral dissertation on "American Poetry and the Pursuit of Independence, 1620-1783," American literature was such a small field in Polish academia that she could not find an advisor who would be a specialist in the area. Indeed, at that time most professors in English departments believed that American literature lacked the refinement and profundity which result from centuries of history and tradition. Professor Salska is one of the scholars who can be credited for changing that view.

Agnieszka Salska's fascination with Emily Dickinson began at a summer school she attended as an undergraduate. She heard a recording of

Dickinson's poetry and was seduced by its music, even though she did not fully understand the poems, which are difficult even for native speakers of English. The young student wanted to learn more about the woman who could do such amazing things with language. She went on to read Charles Anderson's *Stairway of Surprise*, the critical study which first taught her how to approach this complex poetry and which she remembers as one of her formative books. But her main formative experience as a reader, scholar, and teacher of poetry was probably Harold Bloom's seminar at Yale, where Professor Salska spent a year in the 1970s as a research fellow sponsored by the Polish Ministry of Education. Although Bloom taught English romanticism, it was this course, specifically Bloom's charismatic personality and his strikingly individual approach to literary texts, that provided the main intellectual stimulus for Salska's book on Dickinson and Whitman, published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 1985.

The year at Yale was Agnieszka Salska's second visit to the United States. As a graduate student she had received a Kosciuszko Foundation scholarship to the University of Virginia, where she met the Whitman scholar Floyd Stovall. Later, in 1983-1984, she was the American Council for Learned Societies fellow at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1990 the International Research Exchange Program sponsored her stay at Stanford, which she mainly remembers for the inspiring conversations with Albert

Gelpi. Since then she has gone back to the United States several times, most recently in the summer of 2004.

American colleagues often ask Professor Salska about the difficulties and dangers of being an Americanist in Poland under Communism, when the United States was officially the main political enemy of the Soviet bloc. In fact, Poland enjoyed relative political freedom among the Soviet-controlled countries; for example, in 1956 it became the first Communist state to be covered by the Fulbright exchange program. In the 1960s and 1970s American Studies was too small a field to be perceived as politically significant. Until the rise of the Solidarity movement in 1980, English departments were not systematically investigated by the secret service.

The main obstacle for an Americanist was not political pressure but intellectual isolation: the shortage of textbooks and other teaching materials, the lack of access to current periodicals, the difficulty of obtaining newly released books. University libraries could acquire American publications only through the American Embassy, and the United States Information Agency, which did not want to risk antagonizing the Communist authorities, preferred to donate the "safe" classics rather than potentially "subversive" contemporary literature. One could purchase books while visiting in the United States, but such travel was only possible via official exchange programs. Like other scholars, Professor Salska traveled with a business passport which she had to deposit with the

Polish authorities immediately upon return from abroad. Still, with the help of her American friends, who often sent her books, she managed to accumulate a large private library of Dickinson studies and poetry criticism.

Asked about her involvement in the Solidarity movement in the 1980s, Agnieszka Salska says that she was simply doing what she had to do. The transition period, culminating in the collapse of the Communist regime in Poland and the Soviet bloc in 1989, was a time of clear, pressing moral choices: one could either side with the Communist party or with the opposition, which was illegal and persecuted by the authorities; and she considered it her duty to take part in the national struggle for freedom.

The fall of Communism did not dramatically affect the work of Polish scholars of American literature. Professor Salska feels that the main change since 1989 has been the technological revolution, especially the Internet, which allows easy access to a wealth of electronic resources. Besides, travel to the United States has become incomparably easier and more affordable than it used to be. Polish Americanists today have much better opportunities to overcome their sense of isolation, which to some extent is inevitable in a small community of scholars with diverse interests.

However, Agnieszka Salska was able to overcome this isolation even before the advent of information technology and easy travel. With her talent for friendship, she created a wide network of international contacts, which

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she has always shared with the larger community, inviting renowned scholars to the University of Lodz and to conferences in Poland. Her academic accomplishments quickly earned her an international reputation. Much of her scholarship has been published in the United States and in Europe, beginning with the essay on private and public aspects of Puritan poetry and the Dickinson and Whitman monograph. She contributed a chapter on "Dickinson's Letters" to *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* (1998) and wrote several entries for the *Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia* (1998). Her critique of Polish translations of Dickinson's poetry appeared in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* (1996), and her articles on Dickinson, Whitman, and Frost were published in French, Italian, and German journals and essay collections.

Nonetheless, Professor Salska thinks of herself first and foremost as a Polish scholar of American literature and believes that her primary responsibility is to be a mediator between the two cultures. Although she divides her critical attention between American romanticism and modernism, her own career is informed by a romantic rootedness in the national and the local rather than a modernist cosmopolitanism. Her love of Lodz — a large industrial city in central Poland — may well surpass Dickinson's attachment to Amherst (although, unlike the poet, Professor Salska enjoys traveling). She has published most of her work in Poland, much of it in Polish, and has contributed essays on contemporary American writers to Polish literary magazines, notably the Lodz-based *Tygiel Kultury*. Dedication to promoting American culture in Poland informs her recently completed editorial project, the magisterial two-volume *History of American Literature in the Twentieth Century* (2003, in Polish), to which she contributed chapters on turn-of-century regionalism and on American poetry in the first half of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, outside of Poland Agnieszka Salska is an ambassador of Polish culture and often speaks

about the Polish reception of American authors. At the EDIS conference in Innsbruck, Austria in 1995 she talked about Dickinson in translation; in 2005 in Paris, at the conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of *Leaves of Grass*, she discussed the Polish modernist poets' reading of Whitman.

What makes Professor Salska's scholarship so compelling are her passion, curiosity, and genuine love of literature. She approaches poetry with rare delicacy and respect, as if mindful of Dickinson's warning, "Surgeons must be very careful/ When they take the knife!/ Underneath their fine incisions/ Stirs the Culprit — Life!" (Fr 156). She focuses on texts which are personally meaningful to her, either because they offer an insight into the mystery of life and the human entanglement in history or because they record the author's dramatic struggle for meaning, or else because they captivate her with their imagery or musicality. Her writings are centered around several recurring themes: the self confronting the world; elegy and consolation; myth and its modern renegotiations; the past as a burden or blessing; the language of poetry and the ways in which it explores and transcends its historical context.

While she never yields to academic fads, Professor Salska is attuned to the latest developments in the field and is blessed with an excellent scholarly intuition. Her work has often anticipated major critical concerns, such as the private/public divide in American culture, the poetics of Emily Dickinson's correspondence and its place in her oeuvre, or Dickinson's status as a poet who is both "conservative" and "radical."

A literary historian by temperament, Professor Salska is skeptical about interpreting poetry through critical theory, which in her view absolutizes abstract concepts at the expense of the reader's personal response. She stresses that poetry is, first and foremost, the lived experience of a real person: the author, who writes in specific existential, historical, and cultural circumstances, and the reader, who

relates the poem to her or his own life and emotions. Her pursuit of the pleasures, surprises, and epiphanies of the text resembles that of Emily Dickinson, who also read for the intensity of the experience: "If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. . . . Is there any other way" (L 342a). Perhaps this shared enthusiasm for poetry as experience is another reason for Agnieszka Salska's fascination with the Amherst poet.

#### Agnieszka Salska, selected publications in English:

"Puritan Poetry: Its Public and Private Strain." *Early American Literature* 19.2 (Fall 1984): 107-21.

*Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson: Poetry of the Central Consciousness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

"Emily Dickinson in Polish: Recent Translations." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 5 (1996): 214-20.

"The Place of Letters in Dickinson's Opus." *Profils Américains* 8 (1996): 27-40.

"Dickinson's Letters." *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*. Ed. Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Cristanne Miller. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998. 163-180.

"Elegy," "Humphrey, Jane T.," "Root, Abiah Palmer." *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*. Ed. Jane Donahue Eberwein. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998.

"Dickinson in the Elegiac Mode." *Telling It Slant: Polish Insights into American Culture and Literature. Essays in Honor of Professor Andrzej Kopcewicz on His 65th Birthday*. Ed. Marek Wilczynski and Magdalena Zapędowska. Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1999.

## EMILY DICKINSON, TIPPLER & NEIGHBOR

By Lee Upton

When I learned that Lee Upton, writer-in-residence and professor of English at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania received the Poetry Society of America's Emily Dickinson Award in April 2005, I knew that I wanted to feature her in the Poet to Poet series. I am pleased to do so in this issue.

Jonnie Guerra, Series Editor

Wherever I've written — on buses, on dining room tables, on desks of varying vintages, bracing a baby in one arm and writing in a notebook with the other, on a fold-out couch, at libraries, on a balcony overlooking a busy street — I've written with Dickinson's example before me, for she is the great permission-giver who lets us know not only what we may do, but what we don't have to do: we don't have to maintain consistency; we don't have to dispel anxiety; we don't have to "be" in the social sense. For all the complexities of Dickinson's work, all its instability — and hasn't instability too readily served as a simple trope for decades? — she remains in one area remarkably consistent. That is, she is an exemplar of the exhilaration of bringing all one's power to a point on the page. She presumes that the experience of writing poetry is better than happiness — and less diffuse. Her sustained belief in the power of the poem gives starch to my resolve.

As a child I read "I'm nobody! Who are you," a poem often considered silly and coy, and yet it is a wily declaration that speaks for a part of us that longs to refuse social constraints, and that is certainly glad not to be a politician. I admire the poem's refusal of social grounding, its whispered intimacy, its refutation of hot-headed self-importance and even the speaker's romantic involvement with her own loneliness. When I first read it I suppose I felt what it was to be anything but a somebody. I was a girl on a farm

in Michigan who shoveled coal into the furnace before school, who caught and scaled fish at the creek, who worked with her father to put up the blower pipe, who climbed the silo, who cooked at least seven kinds of meatloaf for the neighbors who helped with haying.



Lee Upton

Photo by Theodora Ziolkowski

Then, the possibility that I would write books was not imaginable. To write books would have seemed vain, too proud, impossible. "Who do you think you are?" was a common saying where I came from. As was, "Who died and made you queen?" If you acted confident you were doing something wrong.

Yet I was seldom without a book or a pencil. I am still a compulsive writer, one of those who need to write to experience life most fully. For all I don't share with Dickinson, I share with her the compulsion to write. No one knew quite how obsessively she wrote until her trove of manuscripts was discovered after her death. It must have seemed like a guilty secret to her.

The fact that I've been fortunate enough to see my books published — for that I will never feel less than astounded. I know too that my debt to Dickinson is clear. As a critic I can't escape her even if I ever wanted to. In my second book of criticism I allude to Dickinson's absolute lack of self-pity, so similar to Louise Bogan's. In another book I look at contemporary poets and see them in the terms of Dickinson's "stylistic condensations, her omission of context, her antipathy to settled patterns of belief, and her sensitivity to the point of view of the powerless." Dickinson is presented as "the poet of the sublime detached from allegiance to institutionalized religion or a stable philosophical viewpoint." I praise her "radical experimentation, her punning and investigation of the interiority of words." She is called "a patron of self-effacement" who is "permanently estranged and estranging."

But it as a poet that I find her presence most pressing. The final poem of my third book of poems, *Approximate Darling*, quotes her briefly and then pays homage to her: "That we may love her better / with our curious hunger." Another poem, "Random Difficulties" cites the poem that begins "In Winter in My room / I came upon a Worm" and considers how that strange poem upends itself and any notions of uninterrupted genius. In a forthcoming book, *Undid in the Land of Undone*, two poems, including "Dickinson's Day Lilies," reprinted here, are explicitly about her. And those I've cited are simply the poems in which references to her are explicit. She is more often an underground presence in my work. The qualities of that presence are contradictory and seemingly opposed: her poetry approximates the solidity of stone, achieving weight and presence, and her poetry conveys the enigmatic sus-

pense we might associate with a ghost, a presence that won't be caught.

There is an old story—or if there isn't, there should be—about a ghost with a stone hand. The ghost lives in a forest of thorns surrounded by a white mist. If you find yourself within reach of the ghost's outstretched hand, you will never forget her touch, for the stone hand grows warm. Like Dickinson, the ghost confers strength—the living ghost, the stone we touch, the touchstone.

My poem "Dickinson's Day Lilies" responds to a well-known incident in the poet's life: Dickinson's first meeting with T. W. Higginson, the *Atlantic Monthly* editor to whom she had begun a correspondence in 1862. It must have been an occasion fraught with anxiety for Dickinson to meet him at last in 1870, no doubt rightly so, given Higginson's response, for he described the incident in famously indelible detail: "A step like a pattering child's in entry & in glided a little plain woman with two smooth bands of reddish hair . . . She came to me with two day lilies which she put in a sort of childlike way into my hand & said 'These are my introduction' in a soft frightened breathless childlike voice—& added under her breath Forgive me if I am frightened; I never see strangers & hardly know what I say—but she talked soon & thenceforward continuously—& deferentially—sometimes stopping to ask me to talk instead of her—but readily recommencing." In another installment, he would write of his deepest reaction: "I never was with any one who drained my nerve power so much. Without touching her, she drew from me. I am glad not to live near her."

How ironic that she exhausted Higginson, but that she fortifies the rest of us. We have much to be grateful to Higginson for, and I, for one, can't be hard on him. I once had an acquaintance—long since moved out of the area—to whom I was, without exaggeration, allergic. She talked and within minutes I got a headache. It was no fault of anyone's but an accident, never since experienced, of al-

most chemical complexity. Higginson's reaction to Dickinson bears almost that same level of withdrawal. Would Dickinson have intuited as much?

Repeatedly she told Higginson that she was frightened. What was she afraid of? To be taken too lightly? To

be seen as ridiculous? To be a disappointment and not a delight? It is likely that she would be sensitive about the reactions, however hidden, of such a socially astute man. I've thought about those day lilies she held out to a man whose opinion—even when she

*Upton, continued on page 15*

### *Dickinson's Day Lilies*

"She came to me with two day lilies which she put in a sort of childlike way into my hand, . . . [B]ut she talked soon & thenceforward continuously . . ."

—Higginson on Dickinson

Humility wasn't enough,  
littleness was not low enough;  
the lilies she brought might be firebrands,  
globes of incense,  
torches clapping the air.  
She listened to the god of miniatures inside her  
and grasped two branding irons,  
two distillates of loons,  
and she led the lilies ahead of her to where  
she was used to finding nothing  
much on the other side of a conversation  
but an ampoule of air.  
She could not let herself tilt  
the room in any direction today, and so  
she had considered holding two antlers, two thistles,  
two mantles of thorns,  
she had considered dangling at her neck  
a whalebone or  
a diagram of the macula like a family  
crest to remind herself:  
Breathe in,  
do not roar.  
The lion in the parlor  
is playing the lily bearer  
with her two jars of bloody milk,  
her two bladders of sun soot—  
which she can hardly wait to pour  
into Higginson's ear.  
Only later that night in her bed  
must she wonder:  
What have I said?  
Who saw in me a specimen?  
But what had she given away  
but a camouflage,  
her two broken, golden-necked swans  
hissing, fragrance-less.  
They weren't notched into her own white paper quite yet.  
They weren't what would make her.

"Dickinson's Day Lilies" first appeared in *American Poetry Review* September/October (2005): 55. The poem received the 2005 The Writer/Emily Dickinson Award from the Poetry Society of America.

# RECITALS AND REVERIES

## TWO MUSICAL OFFERINGS OF DICKINSON'S POEMS

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By Daniel R. Craig

*Emily Dickinson in Song: Dwell in Possibility*

Virginia Dupuy, mezzo-soprano  
Shields-Collins Bray  
Tara Emerson  
William Jordan pianists  
Gasparo Records Inc. GSCD-360

Virginia Dupuy, mezzo soprano, Shields Collins Bray, Tara Emerson, and William Jordan, pianists offer a recital recording of Dickinson's settings which feature works from composers like Aaron Copland to lesser known American composers creating newer art songs. Offering a wide range of tonal sonorities and modern harmonic schemes, *Dwell in Possibility* is a treat for anyone who appreciates classical music.

Virginia Dupuy is an award winning operatic recitalist known throughout the United States for her performance of modern American art song. Her performance credits include the Lincoln Center with the American Symphony Orchestra, appearances with the Pittsburgh, Honolulu, Phoenix, Calgary, and Dallas Symphonies, and a range of recordings including the Grammy nominated *Voces Americanas* with Voices of Change.

Accompanists Shield-Collins Bray, Tara Emerson, and William Jordan all carry a list of prestigious performances, recordings, and proven records of excellence in teaching.

Virginia Dupuy's voice displays a rich and velvety tone consistently through her spacious tessitura. Her dark vocal timbre stands as the hallmark of this recording and is best displayed in the first track, Richard Hundley's setting of "Will there really be "Morning?" Here we find Dupuy soaring to the height of her voice with a delicacy one would expect to find in "the place where "Morning" lies!" In addition, Dupuy displays great vocal power and versatil-

ity in Lori Laitman's setting of "They might not need me." From this miniature, Laitman paints a tango-esque caprice which boldly transforms Dickinson's simple verse into a provocative dance for piano, and voice. Undoubtedly the most emotional track of the disk is Richard Pearson Thomas's setting of "I never saw a Moor." This simple expression of faith is set against a stirring melody befitting a Broadway performance with the power of an opera's emotional climax.

Ms. Dupuy provides program notes which are essential to the enjoyment of this recording. Sometimes it is necessary to follow the written poetry to fully enjoy the performance because Dupuy's rich vocal tone occasionally overshadows less punctuated diction. However, this is a minor distraction to a very rich and meaningful listening experience. Ms Dupuy's performance lifts the printed music to heights of sonorous delight.

*Reverie: Ellika Hansen sings Emily Dickinson*  
2005 Gazell Records AB

*Reverie: Ellika Hansen Sings Emily Dickinson* is the first solo recording by this eclectic vocalist from Sweden. The CD contains twenty-three original compositions by Ms. Hansen, displaying styles that range from folk and jazz to a new-age. Her inspiration for writing these settings comes from her first encounter with Dickinson's poetry in 1985. Hansen hand copied an entire book of Dickinson's poetry and began to create simple, yet beautiful musical arrangements of her poems.

Ms. Hansen's vocal style is a mix of jazz, folk, and new age. Her voice is smooth, ethereal, and reflective of her previous studio work. Her Dickinson settings are a home-grown mixture of simple accompaniments, and beautiful, yet sometimes quirky melodies. Hansen's fresh sound takes the lis-

tener on a journey that is somewhat unexpected as she blends ballad, jazz, and contemporary vocal styles with unusual harmonic twists and turns. However, it is this combination which best reflects the nature of Dickinson's sometimes irregular poetic meter and voice.

In "It's like the Light," Hansen employs a repetitive harmonic scheme and a piano accompaniment that paints the final image of the "Clocks—chime—Noon." In "Longing," Hansen's accompaniment is built from repeated arpeggios, a stirring obbligato for cello, and a smooth vocal melody which skillfully paints the emotional expression of "what constancy must be achieved before it see the Sun." The music reflects the natural and the spiritual elements of Dickinson's themes by binding her smooth vocal style with less complicated accompaniments. *Reverie* offers the listener a sound that is as simple as the place, time, and natural surroundings which stood to inspire Emily Dickinson's best work.

To order *Dickinson in Song*, contact Gasparo Records at (800) 934-8821 or [gasparo@monad.net](mailto:gasparo@monad.net). The cost is \$14.99 plus shipping. Ellika Hansen's disc is available from Gazell Records, who can be reached by international phone at +46 8 660 07 15 or by email at [info@gazell.net](mailto:info@gazell.net). The cost is \$24.60 plus international shipping from Sweden.

*Daniel Craig* is assistant professor of music at the University of Southern Indiana. His work includes numerous European concert tours, guest conducting, and vocal performances.

## PORTLAND EDIS FINDS ITS "EMILY"

By Holly Springfield

*The Bulletin is inviting members to write their stories of how they developed their interest in reading Dickinson for a new column, inaugurated by this EDIS Membership Committee. Please send accounts of your introductions to the poet and her work to J. Ladin at [ladin@usadatanet.net](mailto:ladin@usadatanet.net).*

*Here's the first story in the series, presented by Holly Springfield, who founded an EDIS chapter in Portland, Oregon.*

In 2003 I moved to a small town in northern California and opted to live without a television. I went in search of a biography at the tiny local library. That is when Emily entered my life through the portal of Alfred Habegger's *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books*. This biography led me in search of any similar material I could find. Slowly "my Emily" began to emerge—I was in love. Since then my love for Emily has moved through all the classic phases of a love relationship—from romantic, to antagonistic, to alliance. As I was discovering Emily Dickinson through her life, I deliberately held off on reading the poetry, and critical writings were under lock and key. I wanted my journey into the world of the canon to be as pure and unmediated as possible. The map is never the territory.

Finally, at some point, I felt ready to embark upon my journey into the world of the poetry. I had a nervous excitement about it because I knew it was going to require all of the rigor, imagination and dedication I could muster. I knew it would take time to develop my own "unfurnished eyes" and adjust to a land like life itself—ambiguous, dynamic, multivalent, and open-ended. It took time to trust my poet; I kept wanting to project my confusion onto the poet and the poetry. But I persevered, and began to experience moments of having the confusion pierced by flashes of understanding that "scalped my naked

soul." I came to trust my poet to my very bones.

In 2005 I moved to Portland, Oregon. By that time I wanted to engage with others who loved and recognized the stunning genius of Emily Dickinson. Prior to that I wanted my relationship to the poetry and Emily to be deeply personal and cloistered. But by the summer of 2005 things had changed; I was a member of EDIS and attended my first annual meeting in Amherst. As a result, I now have a handful of what I call my "Emily pals" and have tarried in the Homestead gardens where a presence leapt to life and gave me a start.

By 2006 I needed not only to connect with others who shared my passion, but also to find ways to share Dickinson with others. My first step in this direction was to found the Portland chapter of EDIS. Our first meeting was in spring of 2006. I offer here a brief history of the chapter, and its general structure and orienting principles.

The meetings were oriented around what I call an "Emily Dickinson Reading Circle." It was important to create a space where the gifts of the common reader and the expert could be embraced, an atmosphere of exploration—a place where a person might actually discover and give voice to "her or his Emily." I originally envisioned having four meetings a year parallel to the four seasons.

At the spring meeting just one person showed up, but it allowed for a lively discussion on Dickinson's structural use of the idea of circumference. The summer meeting was a high point as seven people showed up, including Ellen Louise Hart who had just moved to Portland. We began by having each person share his or her "Emily story."

That story was a response to the questions: When and how did Emily first come into your life? How did you respond to her? What impact has she had on you personally? How has she

figured in your life since that first encounter? One fellow, himself a poet, shared that his introduction was a volume of poetry he took on a backpacking trip. He said he kept dawdling on the trail and felt pulled to just go sit under a tree and absorb some poem that was haunting him. After the story, people were invited to read poems that were of interest to them and that touched them personally.

Due to illness, lack of time for advertising, and prior commitments of those who had attended previous meetings, the winter meeting in January 2007 was attended by just Ellen Louise Hart and myself. It was a most fortuitous moment in the progression of things because it gave us an opportunity to frame a whole new approach to bringing Emily and EDIS to Portland.

We have submitted a proposal to the Portland Library to do three EDIS events in 2007 with them. They have accepted our first event scheduled in May. Each event will be co-facilitated by Ellen Louise Hart and myself. We will begin with a short talk on a theme, followed by a reading and discussion of a selected group of poems. These are community events, and are designed to be fun, informative, and participatory.

The May event will focus on the anniversary of Dickinson's death, May 15, with a theme of spring resurrections. I will be the primary speaker for the September event, where I will draw on my years of experience as a meditation teacher to focus on reflection, consciousness, and transformation in relation to Dickinson's poetry. The December event will celebrate Dickinson's birthday with a focus on her biography and sense of joy.

No report from the Northwest would be complete without a comment on Ellen Louise Hart's inspiring birthday celebration event at the local

*Springfield, continued on page 15*

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Kelly, *Book Review Editor*

Barolini, Helen. *Their Other Side: Six American Women & the Lure of Italy*. New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2006. 309 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-8232-2629-0, \$24.95.

Inspired by her Italian-American heritage, her interest in feminist issues, and her reading of Emily Dickinson's "Our lives are Swiss —" (J80), Barolini profiles six American women: Margaret Fuller, Dickinson, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Marguerite Caetani, and Iris Origo. For these women and others, Italy represented "artistic freedom, creativity, and humanistic values they felt lacking at home" and "seemed to challenge male attitudes of national conduct, logic, and regularity." For them, Italy was a "creative catalyst" that enriched their lives. Unlike the other women, Dickinson never traveled to Italy except in her imagination, but Barolini says, "Dickinson called Italy: 'My Blue Peninsula of delight.'" In "The Italian Side of Emily Dickinson," Barolini discusses Madame de Staël and others, and traces the influence of the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, George Sand, and especially Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Aurora Leigh" on Dickinson, who "thought of Italy as the loosening of trammels, some absolute freeing of the spirit." Focusing on J80, Barolini also cites J405, 994, 1142, and 1705. She confidently engages past and present Dickinson scholars in an essay that reflects her wide reading but remains jargon free, personal, and a delight to read. Included are notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Bloom, Harold, and Jesse Zuba, eds. *American Religious Poems: An An-*

*thology*. New York: Library of America, 2006. 686 pp. Slipcased collector's edition with attached ribbon marker. Cloth, ISBN 1-931082-74-X, \$40.00.

This attractive, compact anthology testifies to America's unique and diverse religious spirit, representing 400 years of religious expression in America, from seventeenth-century Puritans to twenty-first century believers and agnostics. Included are over 200 poets, both well-known and rarely heard voices. No biographical information on the poets is provided other than a birth date and death date where appropriate. Arranged chronologically without editorial comment, the poems represent Baha'i, Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism, among other religious traditions. Included are twelve Dickinson poems: Fr 292, 340, 365, 372, 401, 453, 535, 591, 1353, 1500, 1627, and 1773. In his 23-page introduction, Bloom rates Whitman and Dickinson among "America's greatest poets" and believes "we have misunderstood Dickinson's aesthetic heritage; her characteristic quatrains derive from Shakespeare's sonnets, rather than Isaac Watts's hymns." Bloom says, "No one in the language, not even William Blake, packs as much cognitive force and originality into their quatrains as do Shakespeare and Dickinson." The volume concludes with American Indian songs and chants, and anonymous spiritual songs and hymns. In addition to notes, sources, acknowledgments, and indexes of poets, titles, and first lines, the editors provide a helpful guide directing readers to poems in 19 categories such as death and mortality, divine love, doubt and belief, grief and consolation, and prayer.

Campbell, Edie, and Jack Lynch. *Emily Dickinson & I: A Journey of a Portrayal*. London: Black Spring Press, 2005. 125 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-948238-31-3, £7.95 (about \$15.69). May be ordered from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) or from [www.blackspringpress.co.uk](http://www.blackspringpress.co.uk)

From Campbell's lifelong, passionate obsession with Emily Dickinson comes this one-woman play, 14 years in the making, conceived by Lynch and written by him and Campbell. They have brought Dickinson alive on stages in the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, and the United States. Campbell is no belle of Amherst. One of her main concerns was to tell Dickinson's story using only the poet's own words from her poems and letters, differentiating fact from myth. She achieves this with Dickinsonian concision, giving a lively account of Dickinson's life while seamlessly weaving throughout the play autobiographical elements of her own life and her uncanny personal relationship with Dickinson. Campbell's conversational style — with Dickinson, with herself, and with her readers — is informative, personal, entertaining, and often humorous. To portray a strong, courageous, passionate Dickinson, Campbell considers dressing the poet in red. Reading the 1,049 extant letters and trying to choose from among them, she ponders what Dickinson could have done with e-mail. Methodically, Campbell lists the ways she may be a reincarnation of the poet. Campbell's struggle to recreate Dickinson gives us a glimpse of the persistent effort required to bring forth art. Her approach to Dickinson is honest and refreshing. This play, read or acted, is not to be missed.

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S. Send information to Barbara Kelly, 444 Washington Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301, U.S.A. E-mail: [barbarakelly@psualum.com](mailto:barbarakelly@psualum.com).



Cronley, Connie. *Light and Variable: A Year of Celebrations, Holidays, Recipes, and Emily Dickinson*. Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2006. 245 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-8061-3788-6, \$16.95.

Cronley arranges her bright and breezy essays around the calendar year, each month featuring lines from a Dickinson poem: for example, "We like March / His shoes are purple —" (J1213) or for August, "As imperceptibly as Grief / The Summer lapsed away —" (J1540). Dickinson, she says, "has the purest eye for nature and measures words with the precision of a chemist." Part Cherokee, Cronley lives in Oklahoma with her rescued dog Bingo and multiple cats to which she reads aloud from Dickinson's poetry. Although Dickinson is not the focus of her essays, Cronley shares Dickinson's love of language and the etymology of words, as well as her ability to examine the ordinary, to juxtapose two unlike things and find extraordinary truths, to "tell all the truth but tell it slant." She provides bits of wisdom and much interesting information laced with gentle and often laugh-aloud humor. Celebrating both traditional and whimsical holidays (in January, a "Blame Someone Else Day"), Cronley writes with nostalgia, joy, and playfulness about a remarkably wide spectrum of life. As the publisher notes, "Who knew that Oklahoma was such a magical place? . . . Grab your hat and step into . . . Cronley's special world, where the mood, like Oklahoma weather, is always light and variable."

Dickinson, Emily. *Emily Dickinson's Herbarium: A Facsimile Edition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006. 208 pp. 14.75 x 11.25 x 0.75 inches. 68 color illustrations. Slipcased. Cloth, ISBN 0-674-02302-1, \$125.00.

Long held in a vault at Harvard University's Houghton Library, inaccessible to the public because of its fragility, Emily Dickinson's herbarium, containing more than 400

flower and plant specimens, pressed and preserved by 14-year-old Dickinson, is now beautifully reproduced in full size and full color, with transcriptions of Dickinson's handwritten labels. Included are Leslie A. Morris's foreword on how the herbarium found its home at Harvard, Judith Farr's preface, Richard B. Sewall's introductory essay, Ray Angelo's catalog of plant specimens, and an index. Sewall says that Dickinson's interest in botany, influenced by Almira H. Lincoln Phelps and Edward Hitchcock, was more than a Victorian hobby focusing on the emblematic "language of flowers"; she developed a "trained eye" and a "profoundly felt empathy" for plant life. To her Norcross cousins she wrote, "The career of flowers differs from ours only in inaudibility. I feel more reverence as I grow for these mute creatures whose suspense or transport may surpass our own" (L388). Dickinson carefully composed each page of her herbarium with a kind of reverence for shape and form rather than for ordered categories. Sheep sorrel shares the same page with rhododendron; marijuana with rose; and oxalis with clematis. Farr correctly suggests, "The long-awaited facsimile publication of Emily Dickinson's herbarium should both inform and enchant her readers."

Gardner, Thomas. *A Door Ajar: Contemporary Writers and Emily Dickinson*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006. 257 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-517493-9, \$45.00.

In a cogent study of Dickinson's influence on four contemporary writers — Marilynne Robinson, Charles Wright, Susan Howe, and Jorie Graham — Gardner suggests that "in putting into play or reenacting various aspects of Dickinson's encounter with the unknown, contemporary writers, rather than 'imitate,' demonstrate how her work might be extended or explored." They seem to argue that Dickinson's awareness of "the incompleteness of human language" is her "greatest legacy." Gardner says, "all

four of these contemporary writers attempt to describe and enact forms of living in . . . emptiness or before stitched heavens and silent masters. For all of them, the forms are broken, multiple, and 'not connected up.'" The book consists of eight chapters. Each of Gardner's critical essays on the four writers is followed by an interview, in which the writer responds to Gardner's ideas and questions. In his introduction and conclusion, the author also discusses Dickinson's influence on poets Alice Fulton, Kathleen Fraser, Robert Haas, and Hart Crane. Gardner concludes, "Dickinson's legacy will remain a vital and continuing one, will continue to take shape, as long as her poems are taken up by and tested out in the work of practicing writers." This scholarly work is clearly written and supported by many well-chosen references to Dickinson's poems.

Griskey, Michèle. *Emily Dickinson*. Mitchell Lane, 2007. 111 pp. Library bound, ISBN 1-58415-429-2, \$24.95.

Designed for middle-school readers, possibly readers 10 to 15 years old, a new series, Poets and Playwrights, includes volumes on Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Carl Sandburg, William Shakespeare, and Tennessee Williams. Griskey's volume, generously illustrated with sepia and full-color photographs, provides a clearly written narrative about Dickinson and her world. Each of the ten easily read chapters of four to six pages is followed by a four-page discussion of a topic related to the chapter; topics include poetry, tuberculosis, Edward Hitchcock, American Transcendentalism, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Emily on eBay. In the chapter on Dickinson's legacy, Griskey tells of a past effort to have Amherst's name changed to Emily; she discusses the Emily Dickinson Museum, EDIS, the *Loaded Gun* film, the Mark Hofmann forgery, and the Philip F. Gura photograph on eBay. Missing from this attractive and informative book are the poems themselves, represented by several brief excerpts; nor are

the R. W. Franklin editions recognized. Griskey provides readers with a list of 21 first lines from “some of Dickinson’s most popular poems” and documents the Thomas H. Johnson editions of poems and letters. Also included are a chronology, chapter notes, suggested further reading including internet websites, a glossary, and an index.

**Leiter, Sharon.** *Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work.* Foreword by Gregory Orr. New York: Facts on File, 2007. 448 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8160-5448-7, \$75.00.

Writing “with the general reader in mind, high school and college students, as well as poetry lovers of all ages,” Leiter provides a thoroughly researched, well organized, gracefully written, and accessible reference work divided into four parts. Part I (3-22) presents a biographical essay on Emily Dickinson. Part II (25-237) contains analyses of more than 150 Dickinson poems with Leiter drawing from various critics to present a range of theoretical viewpoints; Franklin and Johnson numbers are provided, though not the poems themselves; each analysis is followed by references to related Dickinson poems and suggested further reading. Part III (241-405) is a collection of essays about the people, places, and ideas related to Dickinson. The essays are presented in alphabetical order; for example, under “P” are “publication and editorial scholarship,” “punctuation,” and “Puritan heritage”; suggestions for further reading follow each essay. Part IV (409-48) contains a detailed chronology (1636-1998), selectively annotated bibliographies of Dickinson’s works and secondary sources, and an index. Appropriately placed throughout the book, black and white photographs illustrate the text. An up-to-date, worthy choice for a reference bookshelf, this handsome volume with the heft and appearance of a textbook features on its cover

Guillermo Cuellar’s *Emily Dickinson – Her True Colors*, an oil painting based on the daguerreotype of Dickinson.

**Melançon, Charlotte.** *La Prison magique: Quatre essais sur Emily Dickinson.* Montréal, Canada: Éditions du Noroît, 2006. 200 pp. Paper, ISBN 2-89018-585-0, \$23.00 Canadian dollars (about \$19.50).

Written in French, Melançon’s book contains four essays. “La petite robe blanche” starts with Dickinson’s preference for wearing white and proceeds to show her sensitivity to color through a study of her poems and letters. “Lettres aux amis” examines the network of her correspondents and compares her to other great letter writers (Cicero, Seneca, Madame de Sevigne, Diderot, etc.). Informed by Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Melançon explores the relationship between Dickinson’s solitude and friendship and draws on Tocqueville to discuss the poet’s letters as instances of nineteenth-century American democratic culture. In “Catalogue d’oiseaux,” Melançon analyzes the poems and letters referring to birds not as merely sentimental “nature writing,” but as evidence of Dickinson’s “deep relation to the American natural and cultural environment and her bold reinterpretation of the circumstances of her life.” “La Prison magique” focuses on Dickinson’s solitude in light of the philosophical works of Seneca, Petrarch, Montaigne, Schopenhauer, Emerson, etc. Her thought is contrasted with Calvinism and religious revivals of the era. This volume provides a reading of Dickinson and her work from four views: “relations to the world, to others, to her natural and cultural environment, and to social and religious attitudes.” [Information was edited from publisher’s announcement.]

**Sastry, K. Pramila.** *Space-Time Continuum: A Study of the Convergence of Physicists, Philosophers and Poets in General, and Emily Dickinson in Particular.* Mumbai, India: Jaico Publishing, 2006. 295 pp. Paper, ISBN 81-

7992-609-5, 395 rupees (about \$8.94). Order from [www.jaicobooks.com](http://www.jaicobooks.com).

The core of Sastry’s study of poets, philosophers, and scientists is a belief, shared by Einstein and William Blake, that “we are all inter-linked and part of a cosmic whole.” Sastry says that the unity of everything “is the belief of the mystics, the very aim of almost all philosophic theories propounded, and the underlying thread and thought of all poetry.” Sastry says most scientists agree, “whatever has been found out to be the latest discovery through systematic analysis of data, has already been intuited and preserved in their works by mystics and poets since time immemorial.” The author provides an exhaustive chronological survey of critics, philosophers, poets, and scientists from the earliest to the present day, and a discussion of the Space-Time Continuum. Sastry’s aim “is to give a broad spectrum of study for Emily Dickinson’s poetry and create a cultural context in which coalesce different disciplines and mystic poetry pertaining to different religions all over the world.” The second half of the book offers a detailed reading of Dickinson’s work through the lens of the Space-Time Continuum, circling around the poet’s holistic attitude toward an “inter-penetrative and inter-dependent universe.” The final chapter is a bibliographical essay on Dickinson criticism. This ambitious scholarly work is clearly written and dense with information.

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### Book Notes

- Pomegranate Communications recently re-issued *The World in a Frame*, which includes poems by Emily Dickinson, drawings by Will Barnet, and an introduction by Christopher Benfey (ISBN 0-7649-3719-7, \$30.00).
- Yale University Press recently published *The Yale Book of Quotations* (ISBN 0-3001-0798-6, \$50.00) with a sizable section of quotations from Emily Dickinson, according to Fred R. Shapiro, editor. He welcomes comments or ad-

ditional Dickinson quotations for possible use in future editions: mail to [fred.shapiro@yale.edu](mailto:fred.shapiro@yale.edu).

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### Book Review

Finnerty, Páraic. *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006. viii + 267 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-55849-517-7, \$39.95.

*Reviewed by David Garnes*

In *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare*, Páraic Finnerty has written a well-researched, carefully organized, and altogether engrossing book. Finnerty examines "Dickinson's Shakespeare" from a wide variety of perspectives—cultural, psychological, literary. It would be difficult to imagine a more completely realized study of the American poet and the English bard.

Sometime during 1857 Edward Dickinson purchased the Charles Knight edition of Shakespeare, published by Little, Brown and Company. An impressive amalgam of play and poem text, social and historical background, stage history and literary criticism, this eight-volume edition is most likely the primary source used by Dickinson in her reading of the writer of whom she asked Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Why is any other book needed?"

Although Dickinson referred to Shakespeare numerous times in her correspondence, direct mention of him in her poetry, either by name or in reference to his work, is limited. Finnerty's aim is to go well beyond a cataloging of these instances and "to discover the central and constitutive role Shakespeare had in [her] life."

A good part of *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare* concerns itself with the prominence of the English writer in nineteenth-century American cultural life. Along with the Bible, Shakespeare was one of, in Finnerty's words, "a small group of sacred texts" that inspired intensive study in American literary communities. Fanny Kemble was the most famous of many Shakespeare readers who toured the country, and, such was Shakespeare's

commercial popularity, P. T. Barnum actually attempted to buy "The House" in Stratford-on-Avon and ship it *in toto* to America.

Finnerty examines Shakespeare from a variety of cultural perspectives. Early chapter headings such as "American Nationalism and the English Dramatist," "Shakespeare and Women Writers," and "American Shakespeare Criticism" are indicative of the focus Finnerty places on the cultural landscape Dickinson inhabited. The book is as much about "America's Shakespeare" as it is about Dickinson's. This broad view is one of Finnerty's most valuable contributions.

In later chapters, Finnerty focuses on Dickinson's particular Shakespeare (e.g. "Dickinson and Shakespearean Tragedy", "Dickinson Reading *Antony and Cleopatra*"). Here he offers provocative theories on, for example, her great love of the Egyptian play. Pages in the sixth volume of the Dickinsons' Knight edition containing the final acts of *Antony and Cleopatra* are especially fragile and nearly detached from the binding. The tragedy was also the first reading she turned to after recovering from her period of eye trouble: In a letter to Joseph Lyman, she wrote: "Going home I flew to the shelves and devoured the luscious passages. I thought I should tear the leaves out as I turned them. Then I settled down to a willingness for all the rest to go but William Shakespear [sic]. Why need we Joseph read anything else but him."

Though of interest and accessible to a range of Dickinson readers, *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare* is heavily documented (207 pages of text, 50 of endnotes). While reading each chapter, I kept a bookmark in the endnote section for easy reference. One small quibble: Although citations are fully provided in the notes, a discrete select bibliography would have made further perusal of sources easier.

In the brief conclusion to this outstanding book, Finnerty eloquently relates his study of Dickinson and

Shakespeare to the America of which she was part. In 1885, Dickinson wrote a note to Mabel Loomis Todd, then traveling in Europe. Making several patriotic references ("Sweet Land of Liberty," "... the American Flag ... in the shutting West"), Dickinson concluded by asking Todd to "Touch Shakespeare for me." She signed the letter, "America."

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*David Garnes wrote his master's thesis on Emily Dickinson at Columbia University. A former librarian at Columbia and the University of Connecticut, he is currently a guide at the Emily Dickinson Museum.*

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### Selected Bibliography

Articles published in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* are available online at Project Muse.

- Barrett, Faith. "Addresses to a Divided Nation: Images of War in Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman." *Arizona Quarterly* 61.4 (2005): 67-99. [Examining selected Whitman poems and Dickinson's Fr 465, 519, and 545, Barrett argues that while Whitman's poems reflect his vision of a reunited nation "in the aftermath of violence," Dickinson takes a skeptical, tentative, and oblique stance in depicting the war. Barrett says that both writers felt a moral obligation to address the violence and found language inadequate for the task.]

- Beebe, Ann. "Dickinson's 'Immortal is an ample word.'" *Explicator* 65.1 (2006): 36-39. [Beebe distinguishes the playful approach to immortality in the first stanza of Fr 1223 from the conventional statement of Christian consolation in the second stanza, asserting that in sending only the second stanza to Higginson on the death of his brother, she "signaled her recognition of the poem's competing tones."]

- Benoit, Raymond. "Dickinson's 'I Died for Beauty' and Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle.'" *ANQ* 19.4 (2006): 31-33. [Acknowledging that Fr 448 is often compared with

Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Benoit finds "an older and more probable link with Shakespeare's metaphysical poem 'The Phoenix and the Turtle'" because of the shared themes of beauty, truth, death, and unity-in-duality.]

- Finnerty, Paraic. "The Daisy and the Dandy: Emily Dickinson and Oscar Wilde." *Symbiosis* 9.1 (2005): 63-87. [Finnerty juxtaposes Dickinson (a shy 'Daisy' dressed in white) with Wilde (a dandy and public provocateur in a long, green coat) and suggests similarities: "their theatrical self-presentation, their use of flowers, and their views on the function and purpose of art, beauty, and poetry." He says that they "engage in what Sontag calls a 'mode of seduction' — one that employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation; gestures full of duplicity, with a witty meaning for cognoscenti and another, more impersonal, for outsiders."]
- Frank, Bernhard. "Dickinson's 'The Soul selects her own Society —.'" *Explicator* 65.1 (2006): 34-35. [Persuaded that the One selected by the speaker in J303 is "a worldly lover," Frank considers three dictionary definitions of valves and concludes, "a poem that, at first reading, appears sentimental, reveals erotic and dark underpinnings."]
- Freeman, Margaret H., and Masako Takeda. "Art, Science and Ste. Emilie's Sunsets: A Haj-inspired Cognitive Approach to Translating an Emily Dickinson Poem into Japanese." *Style* 40.1-2 (2006): 109-27. [A collaborative, close study of the sound and meaning of "A Sloop of Amber slips away" attempts to "answer the question of whether a cognitive analysis can aid in translating literary texts." Takeda's resulting Japanese translation leads the authors to conclude, "a cognitive approach enriches our understanding of the literary effects in both languages."]
- Goad, Meredith. "By the End You Just Feel So Rich: Top-notch Teaching and Transformative Time Away Attract Campers to Beautiful Hog Island Each Summer." *Portland [Maine] Press Herald* 27 Aug. 2006. [Goad describes Hog Island, Maine, where Mabel Loomis Todd purchased property and worked on Dickinson's manuscripts; daughter Millicent Todd Bingham sold the property to the Audubon Society.]
- Gorlick, Adam. Associated Press. "Grave Mystery Unearthed in Emily Dickinson's History." *Calgary Herald* 5 Nov. 2006. [Workers excavating in front of the Homestead unearthed a gravestone marked "Gen. Tho. Gilbert. Died Dec. 23, 1841." It is thought to be the original gravestone of Susan Gilbert Dickinson's father, originally buried in Greenfield but later moved to the West Cemetery in Amherst.]
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and Ralph Wood. "How the Church Became Invisible: A Christian Reading of American Literary Tradition." *Religion and Literature* 38.1 (2006): 61-93. [Questioning why "a nation with the soul of a church" has "produced so few writers who are Christian in any substantive sense of the word," the authors consider Emily Dickinson's Fr 501 a "perceptive understanding of the relation between faith and doubt"; they discuss Flannery O'Connor and Willa Cather as exemplary Christian writers.]
- Kirby, David. "Shrouded in a Fiery Mist." *TriQuarterly* 125 (2006): 9-21. [Kirby's visit to Bernini's statue *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* inspires a personal essay that explores the similarities of St. Teresa and Emily Dickinson, two visionary, literary, celibate females who had "opportunities for earthly love." Drawing on J271, 315, 1072, and 1545, Kirby describes the combined physical/spiritual swoons of the saint and the poet as Hawthorne's "Eden, a garden that . . . shimmers like a fiery mist."]
- Ladin, Jay. "Meeting Her Maker: Emily Dickinson's God." *Cross Currents* 56.3 (2006): 338-46. [Reading Dickinson's poems through the lens of

their religious experience, students at an Orthodox Jewish university change Ladin's agnostic attitude, finding in the poems "a passionate engagement with God, an engagement that affirmed God's existence and importance even as it fretted or raged over God's inaccessibility."]

- "Literary Canon Losing Ground." *Times Union* [Albany] 15 Dec. 2006. [The Siena Research Institute for the third time in 21 years surveyed students and faculty nationwide about books they have read. Aristotle, Machiavelli, Dostoevski, Tolstoy, and de Tocqueville ranked lowest. Notably, 68 percent of faculty members read Dickinson's poems in 1985; 75 percent in 1997; and 80 percent in 2006.]
- Mayer, Nancy. "Finding Herself Alone: Emily Dickinson, Victorian Women Novelists, and the Female Subject." *Romanticism on the Net* 38-39 (2005). [Mayer argues that "in Dickinson's poems and in the novels of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Emily Brontë, there is a conscious ethical engagement" with "the possibilities of Romantic transcendence and the necessity of respecting the limits that define us."]
- Mitchell, Domhnall. "Ardent Spirits: Temperance in Emily Dickinson's Writing." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 15.2 (2006): 95-112.
- New, Elisa. "Variety as Religious Experience: The Poetics of the Plain Style." *Religion and Literature* 38.1 (2006): 9-25. [New examines metaphor and religious expression in Emily Dickinson, her forebears (John Cotton and Jonathan Edwards), and Modernists (Robert Frost and Hart Crane). She explains that plain style did not deny aesthetics but used imagery that could "enter and move the believer," and that "the metaphoric not only describes, but also sustains, spiritual liveliness."]
- Oberhaus, Dorothy. "Emily Dickinson and Religion." *Times Literary*

*Supplement* 5 Jan. 2007: Letters to the Editor. [Oberhaus writes, "In his essay on Ted Hughes (Commentary, 24 Nov. 2006), Craig Raine accuses Hughes of 'misreading' Dickinson's poems" and "declares she was an 'atheist.'" Oberhaus defends Hughes and Dickinson explaining, "Hughes obviously read more widely in the Dickinson canon, therefore discovering that the Bible, especially the New Testament, pervades her canon like no other book, and that Christian poems abound." For the ongoing debate, see *TLS* 19 Jan., 26 Jan., and 9 Feb. 2007.]

• Packer, Barbara. "Response to Elisa New's 'Where the Meanings Are.'" *Religion and Literature* 38.1 (2006): 27-30. [Responding to a draft of New's paper presented at the American Literature and Religion Symposium in Cambridge, Mass., Packer provides "a historical context for the experiments in metaphor that became crucial" to Dickinson, Thoreau, and others.]

• "Poets on Emily Dickinson." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 15.2 (2006): 1-68. [Contributions by Rae Armantrout, Mary Jo Bang, Sandra M. Gilbert, Guy Goffette, Marilyn Hacker (translator), Brenda Hillman, Cynthia Hogue, Susan Howe, Maxine Kumin, Claire Malroux, Steve McCaffery, Alicia Ostriker, Linda Pastan, Bob Perelman, Katie Peterson, Michael Ryan, Susan Stewart, and Thom Tammaro.]

• Socarides, Alexandra. "Rethinking the Fascicles: Dickinson's Writing, Copying, and Binding Practices." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 15.2 (2006): 69-94.

• Stoneback, Diane. "In Emily Dickinson's Garden: 'The Poet Is an Inspiration' and 'Guide to Growing Heirlooms.'" *Allentown Morning Call* 22 Sept. 2006. [Focusing on Dickinson's love of flowers, and drawing from recent books on Dickinson's gardening, Stoneback describes a Sun-

day visit to the Dickinson Museum and says, "Hearing Dickinson's poetry read in her garden is an unforgettable experience."]

• "Surfing the Net with Kids." *Boston Globe* 8 Dec. 2006. [Reviewed and recommended are five websites for Dickinson information: the Dickinson Electronic Archives (<http://emilydickinson.org>); the Modern American Poetry website ([http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/dickinson/dickinson.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/dickinson.htm)); Emily Dickinson read by Laura Lee Parrotti ([http://wiredforbooks.org/poetry/laura\\_lee\\_parrotti.htm](http://wiredforbooks.org/poetry/laura_lee_parrotti.htm)); Dickinson at Poets.org (<http://poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/155>); and the Virtual Emily website (<http://www.unix.oit.umass.edu/~emilypg/index1.html>).]

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## APPLICATIONS REQUESTED FOR 2007 SCHOLAR IN AMHERST PROGRAM

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The Emily Dickinson International Society invites applications for the Scholar in Amherst Program. The program, which is awarded annually, is designed to support research on Emily Dickinson at institutions such as the Frost Library of Amherst College, the Jones Public Library, the Mount Holyoke College Archives, the Dickinson Homestead, the Evergreens, and the Amherst Historical Society. The award is a \$2,000 fellowship to be used for expenses that relate 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.

The Scholar in Amherst Program was inaugurated in 2002 by a generous

donation from Sylvia F. Rogosa, made in honor of her daughter, Vivian Pollak, second president of the Emily Dickinson International Society. The 2003 award was named in honor of Myra Fraser Fallon, mother of EDIS membership chair Dr. Jim Fraser. The 2004 award was named in honor of renowned Dickinson scholar Brita Lindberg-Seyersted and those in 2005 and 2006 for Professor Everett Emerson to recognize his contributions to Dickinson studies as well as early American literature. The 2007 Scholar in Amherst Award honors Suzanne Juhasz and Jane Donahue Eberwein, Dickinson scholars and founding members of the Emily Dickinson International Society.

To apply for the 2007 Scholar in Amherst Award, please submit a curriculum vitae, letter of introduction (written by the applicant),

a two page project proposal, and a brief bibliography, by October 15, 2007, to Paul Crumbley at [PCrumbley@english.usu.edu](mailto:PCrumbley@english.usu.edu); inquiries may also be directed to Martha Nell Smith at [mnsmith@umd.edu](mailto:mnsmith@umd.edu). Letters of recommendation are not accepted as part of the application packet.

# MEMBERS' NEWS

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## Kasdorf to Deliver the 2007 Emily Dickinson Lecture

Julia Kasdorf, associate professor of English and women's studies and director of Penn State's M.F.A. Program, will deliver the 2007 Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry on October 5 at Penn State.

Kasdorf has written several books of poetry including *Sleeping Preacher* (1992), *Eve's Striptease* (1998), and *The Body and the Book: Writing from a Mennonite Life* (2002). Her poetry is said to bring "voice to a faith and culture historically silent in America." Kasdorf has also written a biography, *Fixing Tradition: Joseph W. Yoder, Amish American* (2003). Her works explore her Mennonite roots and her ongoing life experiences. She won the Pushcart Prize for her poetry in 2004.

Past speakers include Martha Nell Smith, Robert Hass, Robin Becker, Rita Dove, Ellen Bryant Voight, among others. Supported by an endowment from George and Barbara Kelly, the lecture is a celebration of poetry, free and open to the public.

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## Farr to Lecture at Wharton's Estate

Judith Farr has been asked to give a lecture (with reception and book-signing) at Edith Wharton's estate The Mount in Lenox, Massachusetts on July 30th of this year at 4 p.m. Tickets are already available. The lecture will be held in the Carriage Room and there will be ample time afterwards to roam the gardens which are truly stately. The subject of the lecture will be Emily Dickinson's experimental skills as a gardener and the metaphorical role of flowers in her poetry. It will draw upon Farr's recent book *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* (Harvard University Press: 2004) which won the Crawshay Prize of The British Academy as "Best Book in English Written by a Woman on a Literary Topic" during that year.

## Election Results for the EDIS Members-at-Large

The two members elected as Members-at-Large to the EDIS Board are Cindy MacKenzie, continuing in the position, and Barbara Dana. We would like to thank Doug Evans and Nancy Pridgen for standing for election; their candidacies were greatly appreciated by the committee and by the membership. We would also like to thank everyone who cast their vote.

The following statements from the newly elected members should help introduce them to *Bulletin* readers.

### Cindy MacKenzie

Having spent the past four years as a member of the EDIS board, I have come more and more to appreciate the generous efforts of the founding members of EDIS to bring the work and life of Dickinson to the world. Next year, 2008, marks the 20th anniversary of EDIS and I am so grateful that I, too, will celebrate 20 years as a member of this vibrant, diverse, and ever-growing group. In my upcoming term I look forward to continuing to work to increase the Canadian membership in the society.

When I joined EDIS as a graduate student, I could not have understood the extent of the work that the originators undertook. I want, more than ever, to continue toward sustaining the superlative work they have begun. Convening conferences, welcoming new memberships, giving presentations, and chairing Dickinson events offers a bountiful reward because of what I have learned and because of the many fine people I have met and with whom I have formed lasting friendships.

### Barbara Dana

I have been a lover of Dickinson for many years. I joined EDIS when I began work on a novel for young adults based on the life of the poet. Now, six years later, the book is nearly com-

pleted (HarperCollins: spring 2009). I am grateful to EDIS for the wealth of information and for the friendships.

I am delighted that I will be serving as a Member-at-Large. I want to become more deeply involved in the Society, as it has already enriched my life. Having written for children for over thirty years, I would like to encourage more young people to join. I know of one young member already; I sat next to her at a conference lecture and so enjoyed watching her rapt attention. Dickinson has a strong appeal for young readers. I feel that the combination of scholars, artists and readers provides a special interaction that widens the scope of our appreciation, understanding and exploration of Dickinson. I have seen it work and would love to help encour-

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## Hello to Aafke, Farewell to Craig

One of the joys of serving as editor of the *EDIS Bulletin* is that I am able to have a student assistant.

The first of these, Ellen Small, after completing her English major at USI, is now nearing the end of a M.A. in social work at the University of Connecticut, emphasizing children's rights in a global setting. Ellen and I shared the pain of learning just how difficult it is to catch even most of the tiny errors that can creep into a publication from the first proof to the final print run, but also the pleasure of hearing "thank you" from authors whose contributions were well presented.

The second, Craig Fehrman, will graduate from USI in May with a double major in English and psychology. Craig will pursue a PhD in English at Yale, but, in spite of nearly two years of close attention to matters Dickinsonian, he will concentrate on medieval and early modern literature. An already published scholar, Craig is poised to make a significant mark on our profession.

Now serving a labor-intensive apprenticeship with me and attempting to learn everything that Craig knows

about the intricacies of PageMaker, Aafke Bleecker will begin her tenure as the editorial assistant with the fall issue. Aafke, like Craig, expects to serve in this position for two years. Unlike Craig, her literary heart is in the right place — she has a long-standing love of Emily Dickinson.

Without these editorial assistants, the *Bulletin* would be chronically behind schedule, less well proofed, and visually less interesting. Without these assistants, I would probably have gone long ago to my white creator. Working one on one with these smart, witty, critical, and self-motivated individu-

als has been and continues to be the highlight of my academic life. Thank you Ellen, Craig, and Aafke.

Michael Kearns, *Bulletin* Editor

*Upton, continued from page 5*

defied it — may have been of more importance to her than we can fathom. She had had a lifetime of overwhelming others with words. To succeed in any social contract, as many of her readers suspect, she must have needed to turn down her lights. “The Truth must dazzle gradually / Or every man be blind” is not only her statement of epistemology but of biography. The day lilies could have served as a disguise to suggest she was “womanly,” a nurturing sensibility unlikely to assault those categories so often summoned in Higginson’s prose with their anxious references to manly behavior. Did the flowers serve as an attempt to disguise her unsettling energy, her capacity for verbal power, for being visibly intoxicated by what she called “possibility”?

Recently I heard Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom, give a talk in which he said his goal for his own poetry is that “it look like a glass of water but turn out to be a glass of gin.” I can’t remember who compared William Carlos Williams to beer and Wallace Stevens to cognac, and I’m not going to say that Emily Dickinson is more like the whole liquor cabinet. I haven’t drunk enough to be an authority. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Dickinson told us she tasted a liquor never brewed, evidence suggests she knew at least something about the properties of sherry.

When she wrote to Higginson in July 1862 she described one of her best physical features: “my eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the Guest leaves —.” Of course Higginson was her most auspicious guest, and her guest would not leave without judging her. It was in candor that Higginson

noted that he was glad he didn’t live near her. But of course, now, in truth, she lives near all of us.

*Lee Upton’s fifth book of poetry, Undid in the Land of Undone, is forthcoming in 2007 from New Issues Press. She is also the author of four books of literary criticism, most recently Defensive Measures (Bucknell University Press, 2005). Her poetry has appeared in The Atlantic, The New Republic, and many other journals, and her fiction has also appeared widely. She is a recipient of the National Poetry Series Award, the Pushcart Prize, the Georgia Contemporary Poetry Series Award, and the 2005 Lyric Poetry Award.*

*Springfield, continued from page 7*

library last December. It was very well attended and enthusiastically received. The theme of joy was introduced with the quote “I find ecstasy in living the mere sense of living is joy enough.” This was followed with a brief biographical sketch that provided a good context in which to explore the poetry, dispel some major myths and explore her “enduring relevance” — a phrase from the Emily Dickinson Museum mission statement. Many people were so inspired by the event that they immediately wanted to go out and read the poetry and learn more about Dickinson’s life.

I am so grateful to have discovered “my Emily” in that obscure little library — I now have a treasured companion for life, and I now dwell in my own house of possibility and imagination. My most current project is a piece that is part presentation, part performance, entitled “Centre and Circumference in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson.” This event is scheduled for March of this year in California.

## Moonlight in Emily’s Garden

Three stone steps cut into a small rise between garden and house.

They are hardly needed, except as way stations, signs of the cross, a *via dolorosa*, a tri-partite bridge from the lower yard to the higher, a zen *koan* foreshadowing the Japanese fascination with Dickinson. There were Japanese high school students here today, taking notes, staying long on the tour.

Keats writes of the same nightingale singing through eternity. I think of Emily here, picking flowers *here*, in the August night over a century ago, sweat running in her eyes, white dress damp and limp even now at night, the only time she would come out. It’s as hot here as at home, in Kentucky.

Early moonlight. It falls on me like Emily’s white nightgown billowing over her head.

*Elizabeth Oakes is a professor at Western Kentucky University. Oakes publishes scholarly and creative writing, including The Farmgirl Poems, which was recently awarded the Pearl Poetry Prize. “Moonlight in Emily’s Garden” comes from a forthcoming volume, The Luminescence of All Things Emily.*

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<http://www.cwru.edu/affil/edis/edisindex.html>

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Agnieszka Salska: Polish Dickinsonian BY MAGDALENA ZAPEDOWSKA AND BARTON LEVI ST. ARMAND
- 4 Emily Dickinson, Tippler & Neighbor BY LEE UPTON
- 6 Recitals and Reveries: Two Musical Offerings of Dickinson's Poems BY DANIEL R. CRAIG
- 7 Portland Finds Its "Emily" BY HOLLY SPRINGFIELD
- 8 New Publications BY BARBARA KELLY
- 10 Book Notes BY BARBARA KELLY
- 11 Review of Páraic Finnerty, *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare* BY DAVID GARNES
- 11 Selected Publications BY BARBARA KELLY
- 13 Applications Requested for 2007 Scholar in Amherst
- 14 Members' News
- 15 "Moonlight in Emily's Garden" BY ELIZABETH OAKES
- 15 Continuations

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