

THE EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

# Bulletin

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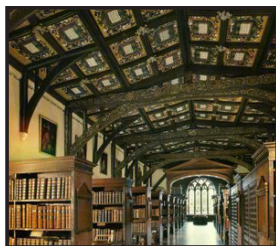
May/June 2010

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

## *"Were I Britain born"* Oxford International Conference August 6-8, 2010



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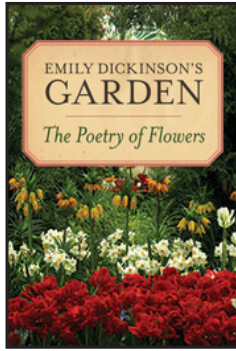
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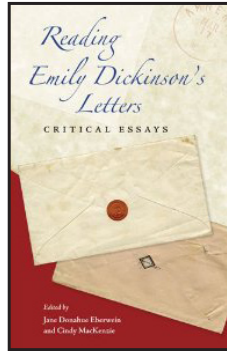
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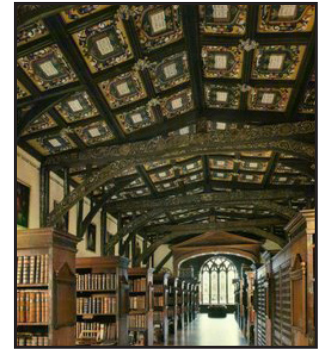
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## “Were I Britain born:” Oxford 2010 International Conference

By Paul Crumbley and Cristanne Miller

Plans for the August 6-8 international conference have been progressing smoothly and we now anticipate approximately 130 attendees from at least 20 countries. We invite all EDIS members to take advantage of this remarkable opportunity to join Dickinsonians from around the world as we gather to celebrate Dickinson’s transatlantic connections in this storied center of learning. The city of Oxford has long been recognized as a site of great beauty, in addition to being home to the oldest university in the English-speaking world. Matthew Arnold famously described the architectural elegance of Oxford in his 1865 poem “Thyrsis,” coining the phrase “city of dreaming spires” that has since become synonymous with the city and university. With a population of approximately 165,000, Oxford is a bustling urban hub that retains its identity as a historical market town while also supporting a vibrant business community and the thirty-eight independent and self-governing colleges that make up the university. Visitors to Oxford can expect to encounter crowds passing along Corn Market, High, and Broad Streets in the town center while also discovering quiet walks in University Parks along the gently flowing Cherwell River, a tributary of the Thames. Late summer temperatures in Oxford are usually quite comfortable, frequently hovering between 70 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Attendees should plan to bring light jackets just in case the famous English rain should appear, but otherwise be prepared for soft



Keble College

air and mostly sunny skies.

The host institution for the conference is the Rothermere American Institute (RAI) facility affiliated with Rhodes House, which was established in 2001 for the purpose of housing the Vera Harmsworth Library and promoting American Studies throughout the university. Most conference activities—including registration, the welcome, and the business meeting that concludes the conference—will take place on the ground floor of this building. The building itself is situated across the street from University Parks and designed so that it faces the garden area behind Mansfield College, where additional panel sessions will take place on the first two days of the conference. The majority of conference participants will be staying at nearby Keble College, a short walk from the Rothermere. Keble is a Victorian college established in 1870 and known for its brickwork designed in the Gothic style by architect William Butterfield. EDIS reserved a block of rooms at Keble because of its proximity to the

Rothermere Institute and because it offers comfortable rooms at reasonable rates that include breakfast and access to a college pub with indoor and outdoor seating. You can book rooms at Keble College before or after the conference through [www.oxfordrooms.co.uk](http://www.oxfordrooms.co.uk), quoting the promotion code EDIS2010.

Highlights of the conference include an opening-night banquet, a book signing and reception at Blackwell Bookshop, a play about Emily Dickinson, and the premier of a film inspired by Dickinson’s life and work. The banquet will take place at Oriel Hall, the main dining hall of Oriel College. Founded in 1326 by King Edward II, Oriel is the fifth oldest Oxford college and its dining hall provides an intimate setting rich in medieval atmosphere. The banquet will be preceded by a reception on the college grounds, sponsored by Johns Hopkins University Press, and will conclude with a talk by Lyndall Gordon, a widely recognized Oxford professor and literary biographer whose recent book, *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family’s Feuds* (Virago 2009), has stimulated much interest. Following a full slate of panel sessions and plenary talks on Saturday, all are invited to attend a book signing and reception at Blackwell Bookshop, one of the most famous bookstores in England. Authors will sign Dickinson books available for purchase while relaxing with conference-goers over a glass of wine.

A tentative conference schedule appears on pages 14-17. For a registration form, see page 35. *Register now!* The deadline is June 15, 2010

# FEATURES

*“Were I Britain born:” Oxford 2010 International Conference, cont.*  
By Paul Crumbley and Cristanne Miller



Punts on the Thames River

Participants are also invited to attend performances of *Emily Dickinson & I: The Journey of a Portrayal*. This much acclaimed one-act play performed by Edie Campbell will be staged at multiple times before, after, and during the conference, beginning Wednesday August 4 at 8:00 and concluding Sunday afternoon at 2:30. Tickets are available through the conference registration site or at the registration table at the RAI, beginning the afternoon of August 4. Contemporary British artist Suzie Hannah will premier a film related to Dickinson that will be available for viewing at the RAI on Saturday afternoon.

Those traveling to Oxford for the first time will have little difficulty making their way there from either Heathrow or Gatwick airports. Bus lines providing transportation to Oxford operate on a regular basis from both airports and British Rail

offers service from Heathrow to Oxford via London’s Paddington Station. Those interested in exploring historical Oxford and the surrounding environs will be happy to learn that tours of the university and the city take place daily and the options are plentiful.

To learn more about touring, transportation, accommodations, restaurants, and the university, simply type “Oxford tourism” into your Google search window or go directly to the Oxford City site: [www.oxfordcity.co.uk/info/visitors.html](http://www.oxfordcity.co.uk/info/visitors.html). You will quickly learn that Oxford also offers many destinations for informal touring, such as world-class museums like the Ashmolean, a botanic garden, and the Bodleian Library. Another noteworthy and distinctly British attraction is Oxford’s thriving pub culture. One of the most famous pubs, from a literary point of view, is the Eagle and

Child, where C. S. Lewis and the Inklings met for many years. This pub is a short walk from Keble or the Rothermere, as is The Turf, a pub famous for its selection of real ales. In truth, pubs proliferate in Oxford, each offering its own version of British hospitality. Restaurants providing cuisine from around the world are also plentiful and within easy walking distance of all conference activities. A particular attraction unique to Oxford and Cambridge is the opportunity to rent a punt and slowly meander along the Thames (known as the Isis where it passes through Oxford) or the Cherwell. Punts are narrow, flat-bottomed boats originally designed for the transportation of trade goods that have proven ideal for floating picnics.

As even this brief overview demonstrates, Oxford has something for everyone. The conference, of course, is the main attraction, but there is much to do in and around Oxford that is worth the investment of additional time. For this reason, we encourage participants to set aside enough time to recover from jet lag, enjoy the conference, and soak up the sights and sounds of Oxford.

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**Paul Crumbley** is president of EDIS.

**Cristanne Miller** is past president of EDIS, and current editor of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*.

## Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers

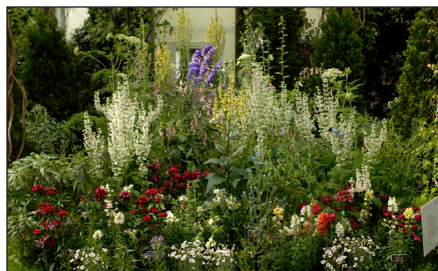
By Judith Farr

Perhaps because I was a city child, growing up in New York, I well remember yearning each spring for freshly blooming flowers. Although there were many carts along Manhattan's gray streets that offered dusty daffodils and crumpled violets, to me the beauty of flowers seemed to shine out only in summer. One April, however, my plant-loving mother decided to take her Girl Scout troop to the National Treasure known as The New York Botanical Garden. Its 250 rolling acres, now featuring 50 magnificent gardens and collections; a greenhouse that resembled the Crystal Palace, now a New York City landmark; an important herbarium, now containing more than 7 million specimens; and perhaps—most of all—the virgin trees of so many kinds that represent the original forest that covered all of New York City, now many over a century old: these features astounded visitors then as they do today.

The Garden's Mission Statement declares it "an advocate for the plant kingdom." Its identity, ever since it was founded in 1891, is that of a museum incorporating a conservatory, library, and laboratory to study and exhibit plants and flowers, both native and rare. I recall my childish delight at seeing a grand array of queenly orchids as well as a painting by renowned botanical illustrator Pierre-Joseph Redouté of a blush red peony placed next to a living peony with a sign inquiring, "Which of these is more beautiful: Nature or Art?"

That first trip to the Garden was followed by many others. Then, almost two years ago, I received a letter from Garden President Gregory Long. Shortly thereafter, I met with

him and members of his staff, including Susan Fraser, Director of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library, the Garden's superb collection of books and manuscripts dating from the 12th century, and Todd Forrest, Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections. Mr. Long had read my book *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* and was struck by one of its observations (not new to Dickinson scholars) that during her lifetime Dickinson was often better known as a gardener than as a poet. Mr.



The New York Botanical Garden's exhibition, *Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers*, April 30 - June 13, 2010.

Long and his staff had conceived the exciting plan of creating an exhibition of Emily Dickinson's flowers akin to their recently mounted show in 2008 on the life and works of Charles Darwin. It would acquaint visitors to the Garden with Dickinson's peculiar genius: as a gardener who excelled at growing flowers both rare and commonplace and also as a bold, exquisitely original American poet.

The Garden invited me to become a "Special Consultant" for this elaborate exhibition featuring the wealth

of flowers grown by Emily Dickinson, as well as poems that celebrated them and many kinds of materials associated with the Dickinson family. Visitors to the Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory could expect to see violets and roses, gentians and daisies, asters, tulips, marigolds, lilies, and (of course) daylilies: the blooms of her two-acre outdoor garden. Besides, a replica of her conservatory would boast delicately scented tropical blossoms such as the "poet's jessamine" or jasmine. Susan Dickinson claimed that Emily "knew her chemistries" "so well" that such specimens bloomed for decades under her careful hand. Now, whether summoned in or out of season, they would bloom again.

Since an essential aim of the exhibition was to tell the story of Emily Dickinson's life, the Mertz Library Gallery portion would contain original letters, daguerreotypes, photographs, paintings, even a copy of the famous White Dress. There would be manuscripts borrowed from Harvard University's Houghton Library so that one could see Emily Dickinson's handwriting and even a few of her most precious "fascicles." Poems would be pasted on boards along Garden paths and an audio tour would enable listeners to hear an interpretation of a poem while they gazed at the flower that in part inspired it.

We knew that mounting so elaborate a show, one that would both teach and enchant, would be costly. An Advisory Committee was formed to assist in applying for supporting grants to the National Endowment for the Humanities, New York Council for the Humanities, and others. Included among the eminent members in their respective fields were

# FEATURES

## *Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers, cont.,* By Judith Farr

Jane Wald, Executive Director of the Dickinson Museum; Alice Quinn, Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America; Polly Longworth, Dickinson biographer; Louise Carter, professional horticulturist and winner of an award for reproducing Dickinson's Conservatory; Todd Forrest, Susan Fraser, and Marta McDowell. We felt especially fortunate that Marta was among the advisors since she was very familiar with Emily's gardens in Amherst, had lectured for the Garden, and is the author of the book entitled *Emily Dickinson's Gardens*.

When visitors arrive on the exhibition's opening day—April 30—or thereafter, they will encounter impressions of the Dickinson Homestead, of the Conservatory, and of Emily's bedchamber where one very private "Soul" lived at the "White Heat." Because the actual Herbarium is too fragile to travel, they will be able to look at a digitized version, examining pages by means of a touch screen as though they were turning pages of the album itself. There will be lectures, readings, musical events, a performance of Barbara Dana in *The Belle of Amherst*, each planned to accompany the exhibition until the Conservatory portion closes on June 13. (The Library Gallery will be open until August 1.) In addition, Emily Dickinson would probably be pleased that NYBG's Everett Children's Adventure Garden will feature a "Children's Poetry Garden" full of the small wildflowers she herself coaxed from the woods more than one hundred years ago. I rejoice to report that the grants we sought were granted and that the Library Gallery portion of the exhibition will travel on to the Chicago Botanic Garden at the end of this summer.

As I gladly contributed to this major effort, I found myself remembering Redouté's peony and the question the Garden once put to us young visitors: Which is more beautiful, Nature or Art? It is a question that Emily Dickinson herself asks in her own poems and letters though she often seems to decide that it is unanswerable or has no need of an answer. Sometimes she implies that Art surpasses Nature. So, of the artist-poet she declares, "The One that could repeat the Summer day— / Were Greater than Itself—"; that is, the Artist transcends Nature since she or he can "reproduce the Sun—" (Fr549) again and again, not merely admire it. Certainly she suggests that Art and Nature have purposes that are not inimical. Thus she proclaims in a letter to Mabel Loomis Todd that "Art's inner Summer [is] never Treason to Nature's" (L1004). In a lovely poem (Fr380) sent to her young cousin Eudocia, she equates the petals of the rose accompanying it to the words of the letter itself:

All the letters I can write  
Are not fair as this—  
Syllables of Velvet—  
Sentences of Plush,  
Depths of Ruby, undrained,  
Hid, Lip, for Thee—

In this lyric the ruby-colored rose, soft as velvet, is fairer than language. Indeed, its petals are words and the curling forms it makes conjure sentences. If we listen to the music of the poem's sibilants and alliterative patterns, we realize that Dickinson is writing of what botanists call a "Deep Cup" rose meant to be put to the lips (even as words

or kisses issue from the lips). Then Dickinson's words and the rose's petals become one. They are "Hid," of course, meant to be discovered, interpreted, "drained" by the sympathetic Eudocia.

In order to create such sympathy in new ways, The New York Botanical Garden has mounted *Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers*. It is a beautiful and uncommon tribute to one of the most beloved of United States poets and indeed, one of the greatest poets writing in the English language. Emily Dickinson once described a symbolic identity between herself and her daylily in (Fr986):

Where I am not afraid to go  
I may confide my Flower—

.....  
Nor separate, Herself and Me  
By Distances become—  
A single Bloom we constitute  
Departed, or at Home—

It is to be hoped that visitors to the Garden this spring will find the "Distance" between Emily Dickinson's time and their own somewhat annulled by viewing the poems and the "Bloom[s]" that represent her legacy to us all.

---

**Judith Farr**, professor emerita of English & American Literature at Georgetown University, is the author of *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (1992) and *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* (2004).

**Credits**  
Photos by John Peden

## Emily Dickinson and Women's Basketball

By Robert K. Wallace

When I decided to write a book about the women's basketball team at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) in April 2006, I was not thinking of Emily Dickinson. I began to think of her one month later, when I was interviewing one player after another in my office. Each of the twelve players, as I taped her answers to my questions about what basketball meant to her, was sitting directly under "I took my Power in my Hand—" (Fr660), the artwork that my student Camilla Asplen created five years earlier (*Emily Dickinson Bulletin*, March 2003, p. 3). It did not take me long to realize that each of these young women was quite literally taking her power in her hand by playing basketball. Each of the three co-captains told me that basketball had "shaped the person I am." Each was being empowered through the education she received as well as the game she played. The team grade point for the previous season had been 3.54. Each player, upon graduating from the university, would be ready to say with Dickinson, "I took my Power in my Hand— / And went against the World—" (Fr660).

Once the "power" poem began to associate itself with these young women during my initial interviews, other Dickinson poems began to suggest themselves as I watched them work out over the summer, practice in the preseason, and enter the excitement of the season itself. I was interested to learn that women's college basketball had been created by Senda Berenson at Smith College in 1892, just six years after Dickinson's death in nearby Amherst (and

as the first slim books of Dickinson's poetry were being published). As one Dickinson poem after another came to mind while I was interviewing, watching practices, and beginning to write the book, the reason for the association became plain. The themes of female empowerment and self-actualization that Dickinson addresses explicitly in her poetry are implicit in the physical, emotional, and communal



Photo courtesy of NKU Sports Information Office.

development each player shows as she develops from her freshman through her senior year.

For a time I had considered calling the book itself "They Took Their Power in Their Hands." The publisher and I finally settled on *Thirteen Women Strong: The Making of a Team* (University Press of Kentucky, 2008). The book has ten chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion; ten of these twelve have an epigraph from a Dickinson poem. A quick run through the sequence of epigraphs will give a sense of the fla-

vor of the book—and of Dickinson's contribution to it (for each epigraph I used the text published closest to the poet's lifetime).

The Introduction, subtitled "The Challenge," begins with the lines "I took my Power in my Hand— / And went against the World—" (Fr660). In the opening episode Coach Nancy Winstel challenges one of her players to play better defense in quite a forceful way, creating a power dynamic in which player and coach are each strongly challenged. Winstel is one of the most successful coaches in college basketball. She has become so by being fearless in what she expects from her players and generous in the inner strength she inspires.

Chapter 1, "Watching Women's Basketball," begins with the line "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—" (Fr764). Nancy Winstel represents all those generations of American women who grew up without a chance to develop themselves in competitive sports. She joined the first women's basketball team at Northern Kentucky University in 1974, never having played in high school because her school had only a boys', not a girls' team. She had learned to play sports with neighborhood boys in the streets and alleys of Newport, Kentucky. When she was five she was upset when she got a doll for Christmas—she had wanted a machine gun or a football helmet.

Chapter 2, "Learning the System," begins with "We play at Paste— / Till qualified for Pearl—" (Fr282). We see the future senior co-captains come in as freshmen who have no idea what it takes to succeed in



# FEATURES

## *Emily Dickinson and Women's Basketball, cont.,* By Robert K. Wallace

top-tier Division II NCAA basketball. They learn about conditioning, the playbook, and, above all else, all-out intensity. We see them, and the next year's incoming freshmen, during two seasons in which "...our new Hands / Learned Gem Tactics / Practising Sands—" (Fr282).

Chapter 3, "Magical Season," begins with "As if no Soul the Solstice passed— / That maketh all things new" (Fr325). The awkward freshmen are suddenly accomplished juniors leading a team without any seniors to an extraordinary season in which they win the Great Lakes Valley Championship, win in the first round of the NCAA Great Lakes Regional Tournament, and finish the season with a 28-5 win-loss record. March 5, 2006, was the day they passed their solstice, upsetting Drury University in the conference tournament with a level of play and intensity far surpassing anything they had shown before.

Chapter 4, "Offseason Preparation," begins with "One most perilous and long voyage ended, only begins a second, and a second ended, only begins a third." This time Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, rather than a Dickinson poem, provides the apt epigraph. In spite of everything the team had achieved during the 2005-06 season, they devoted themselves to a strenuous summer of voluntary activity: strength and conditioning workouts at 7:30 a.m. three days a week, two summer league games every Thursday night, and open gym workouts with players from Xavier University every Sunday night.

Chapter 5, "Preseason Preparation," begins with "In everything

imposingly beautiful, strength has much to do with the magic." Again, Melville's Ishmael provides the apt words for the inner and outer development of these young women during the seven weeks of individual drills that precede the three weeks of official practice that precede the two official exhibitions that precede the regular season. Day by day, these players become more fit for the game—as well as for them-

I took my Power in my Hand—  
And went against the World—  
'Twas not so much as David—had—  
But I—was twice as bold—  
  
I aimed my Pebble—but Myself  
Was all the one that fell—  
Was it Goliath—was too large—  
Or was myself—too small?  
  
(Fr660)

selves. A second epigraph for this chapter, "I be up in the gym just working on my fitness," comes from this team's signature song, Fergie's "Fergalicious."

Chapter 6, "Rising to the Challenge," begins with the words "'Twas not so much as David—had— / But I—was twice as bold—" (Fr660). Because of the high expectations for this year's team, Coach Winstel had

scheduled exhibition games against two very strong Division I teams, the University of Kentucky from the Southeastern Conference and Indiana University from the Big Ten. Our team played very well against these taller and stronger players, outrebounding both. We remained close to Kentucky well into the second half before they pulled away. We led Indiana at halftime before the heavily favored team finally prevailed.

Chapter 7, "Losing What We Had," begins with the words "Experience is the Angled Road" (Fr899). The 2007-08 team was expected to win the conference championship, return to the NCAA tournament, and be a contender for the national championship. A week before the season began, Karmen Graham, our All-American center, suffered a knee injury from which she never fully recovered. She played, but was seldom herself, nor was the team. After returning from a disastrous road trip to Lewis University in Illinois and the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, this year's team had a 1-4 record in its own conference and had fallen from the national rankings.

Chapter 8, "Finding What We Need," begins with the words "Success is counted sweetest / By those who ne'er succeed. / To comprehend a nectar / Requires sorest need" (Fr112). The huge disappointments of the early season cause these players to question themselves and to reconnect with the game they had loved as young girls. They are inspired by the poem that junior center Angela Healy posts in the locker room, asking each of her teammates

## *Emily Dickinson and Women's Basketball, cont.,* By Robert K. Wallace

to “dig deep within yourself and find your passion / Let’s play the rest of the season in badass fashion.” This they do, winning 13 of their last 14 regular season games, and playing themselves back into national contention.

Chapter 9, “Giving All We’ve Got,” begins with the words “Best Gains—must have the Losses’ test— / To constitute them—Gains” (Fr499). Their resurgence in January and February gives the team high hopes as the tournaments begin in March. NKU wins its first game in the conference tournament but is beaten soundly by Drury in the second round. We still get the second seed in the eight-team NCAA Great Lakes Regional, but we lose in the first round in a very well-played game against Ferris State, which wins by one point on a ball thrown up in desperation as the buzzer sounds. Last year’s gains are suddenly much greater than ever before.

Chapter 10, “Farewell to Five,” begins with the words “This World is not conclusion” (Fr373). The five graduating seniors have concluded their basketball careers (very few Division II athletes ever play on the professional level). They will now be entering the wider world for which their college education has prepared them. In Coach Winstel’s words, “They came here to leave.” They are leaving the university because they are ready to succeed in the adult world because of what they have learned in the classroom and on the court.

The conclusion, “March 2008,” begins with the words, “A Bird, came down the Walk— / He did not know I saw— / He bit an Angle Worm in halves / And ate the fellow, raw,”

(Fr359). I thought my book had ended with the awards ceremony in April 2007. The University Press of Kentucky accepted the book in December 2007 and by February was well into the editorial process when Winstel’s new team began playing extremely well. The director of the press said that I could add a postscript if this year’s team did anything remarkable in the post-

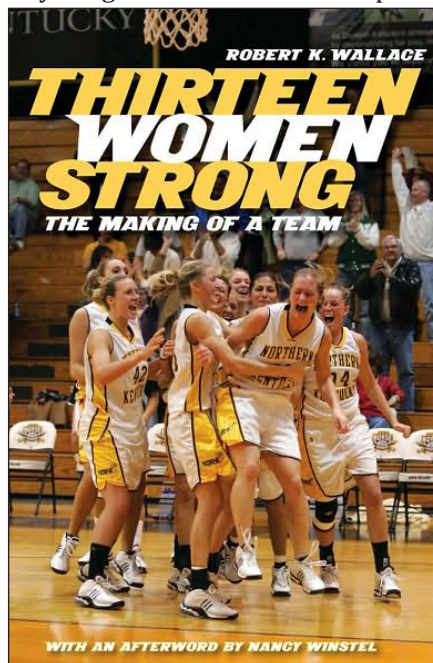


Photo courtesy of University Press of Kentucky. season—which they did by winning the national championship. NKU was the lowest ranked of the eight teams in the Elite Eight. They won the championship game against highly favored South Dakota with a panache rivaling that of Dickinson’s worm-eating bird.

I feel fortunate to have spent a year of my scholarly life following these young women. Originally surprised that Dickinson had inserted herself into their story, I became less and less surprised as time went on. I was teaching my course in Emily Dickinson and Henry James again

by the time the book came out in October 2008. It was a great pleasure, as I prepared for teaching Dickinson poems week after week, to have an entirely new framework, now, with which to appreciate them.

I found when being interviewed about the book that journalists were interested in the Dickinson connection. Bill Randall, who filmed a podcast posted by the press and distributed on YouTube, opens it with a question about Dickinson. John Erardi’s feature essay in the sports section of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* opens with Dickinson’s “I took my Power in my Hand—” (Fr660) and concludes with her “To comprehend a nectar / Requires sorest need” (Fr112). (“Professor documents NKU’s rise to the top,” October 30, 2008).

When I interviewed point guard Nicole Chiodi about the difficulty of shifting gears on a fast break, when you have to suddenly stop and set up a play, she said, “You have to be able to think on your toes. It’s a lot of thinking in a small amount of time.” So it is in Dickinson’s poetry. “I cannot dance upon my Toes—” she tells us, “No Man instructed me—”, yet her “mind” achieves an athletic “Glee” as “It’s full as Opera—” (Fr381).

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**Robert K. Wallace** is Regents Professor of English at Northern Kentucky University, where he has taught since 1972. His books include *Jane Austen and Mozart*, *Melville and Turner*, *Frank Stella’s Moby-Dick*, and *Douglass and Melville*. He is currently writing a book on Herman Melville’s print collection.

## Recalling the Dean: A Tribute to Richard B. Sewall

By Sheldon S. Cohen

I suppose that I will forever think of him as Dean Richard Sewall, rather than Professor Richard Sewall. Regardless of the title, having known him—even on a limited basis—he remains about the most cherished memory that I possess of my Yale undergraduate career. My first visual contact with Dean Sewall occurred in September 1949 at a freshman class gathering in the enormous commons dining hall. Numbering about one thousand, we had assembled there, to be enlightened on the true meaning of the “Yale experience,” and I suppose admonished on proper undergraduate conduct. I remember that the school had gathered some illustrious upperclassmen, the university chaplain, and from the freshman dean’s office, Richard B. Sewall.

I was already in awe of New Haven and the Yale campus; quite a change from my Ohio boyhood. It was with considerable uneasiness, therefore, that I anticipated a torrent of inflexible reproofs and numerous veiled threats that we were obligated to uphold the honor of Yale—or else! Instead, this slender, dignified man with a marvelous “Down East” accent—while giving passing mention to our university’s tradition—sought to remind us that we were about to enter upon perhaps the four most important years of our lives. He emphasized how the faculty and administration were eager to help us uncover the beauty within Yale and in surrounding New Haven, and he stressed the rich holdings that our campus maintained. We seemed to be captivated by his zealous urgings to us, as well as enthralled by this magnificent, eloquent, and feisty man who had uplifted and not berated us. We clapped with unbridled enthusiasm when he finished his talk.

The next incident that sticks in my mind regarding Dean Sewall was perhaps the most meaningful and

enduring. It happened when he temporarily took over one of my English classes when our regular instructor was absent. I remember that the class was dealing with Shakespearean tragedy and that I was completely unprepared for discussion. My hope was that somehow I would not be noticed, but alas, after glancing at his attendance sheet, Professor Sewall called on me. Flustered, I did my best to circumvent the crux of his question—offering some wild speculations concerning *Hamlet*. He looked at my helpless strained situation and declared rather jocularly, “Mr. Cohen, I think you have the mind of a weasel!” The class exploded with justifiable laughter. Simultaneously, I thought to myself that Sewall had undoubtedly recognized a character trait that I had brought to New Haven from Ohio, and one which I have prized to the present.

Prior to his retirement, Dean Sewall’s classroom stimulation had persisted. And he had augmented his instructional success by winning a National Book Award for an acclaimed biography of Emily Dickinson.

Several years ago, I attended a Yale class dinner in New York City. The speaker was Jim Thompson (who

passed away in August 2002), a classmate, also editor of the *Yale Daily News*, and one of Professor Sewall’s prize students. Following our graduation, Jim had studied at Cambridge in Britain; had become a Far Eastern scholar; worked in the upper levels of federal governmental circles; and concluded his distinguished career as a teacher and administrator at Harvard and Boston University.

After the speech, I introduced myself, and then asked if he recalled Dean Richard Sewall? “Of course I do; I loved the man!” and tears formed in his eyes. That was it; we all loved Dean Sewall, whom Thomson once had aptly described as “saintly and passionate.” Those of us who knew the dean understood that through his absorbing, gifted, and inspiring teaching, he had truly put into words what was in our hearts and minds. Tears formed in my eyes as well, and I soon bid farewell to Jim, confident that we both had indeed been blessed!

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**Sheldon S. Cohen** is professor emeritus at Loyola University Chicago. He received his B.A. from Yale in 1953, his M.A. from Harvard in 1956, and his PhD from New York University in 1963.

The whole truth about Emily Dickinson will elude us always; she seems almost willfully to have seen to that. The family, the early friends and the later, the mentors and the masters, the lovers or would-be lovers, or fantasy lovers—each yields it modicum of meaning. In our present state of knowledge, however, no more than that can be claimed for any of them. There is a feeling of incompleteness, of areas still to be explored, of mysteries that still beckon. The aim must be to shore up what truth we have as firmly as possible in the never-ending dialectics of readings and counter-readings. To twist one of her later remarks, “‘It is finished’ can never be said of us.”

But to leave her with no more than passing glimpses into one major source of truth about her—her life in books and reading—would be to cut her short indeed. Here she herself gives the lead in the remark to Joseph Lyman about her fear of blindness: “Some years ago I had a woe, the only one that ever made me tremble. It was a shutting out of all the dearest ones of time, the strongest friends of the soul—BOOKS.”

(from Chapter 28: Books and Reading, *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, by Richard B. Sewall)

## Why White?

By Jo Ann Orr

For thirty years, I have been under the influence of Emily Dickinson. Her poetry and her letters have filled my mind with countless hours of wonder, bafflement, and pleasure. More than 100 books and stacks of ancillary materials about her fill the shelves in my library.

One question in particular has always fascinated me: Why did Emily Dickinson dress in white? Since 30 years of reading hasn't turned up a definitive answer, I feel free to speculate as have many others.

Some have conjectured based on clues in her poetry that Dickinson chose white as a symbol of purity—a nun-like gesture—an expression of her spirituality. Others that wearing white was flattering to her pale complexion and red hair. Dickinson seemed to have a flare for the dramatic. Being the highly creative, intelligent woman that she was, Dickinson may well have enjoyed having her own unique look. When she “glided in” to meet her friend Thomas Wentworth Higginson for the first time, she was a vision of a Bluebird—white pique, blue shawl, and reddish hair. Adding to the effect, she carried two day lilies as a way of introduction (L342a).

Even Martha Dickinson Bianchi in *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, her biography of her Aunt Emily—who would have known Dickinson better than any other biographers—did not give a reason for “why white.” She did write, however, a charming description of her aunt “flitting about the porch at dusk to water her frail plants—looking in her white dress like just another moth fluttering in the twilight.”

I have come to consider another reason—why white—based on my readings of the book *The Extraordinary Healing Power of Ordinary Things* by Larry Dossey, M.D. One of the chapters in this book titled “Dirt,” describes the history of germs from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

During Dickinson's lifetime, around 1850, doctors began the custom of wearing white which would reveal immediately any dirt on the garment where, it was believed, the germs were hiding. Much was being discovered and written about in the media alerting the public to this threat of germs. It was the age of the “filth diseases” as they were called then. Everyone lived with the fear of these invisible threats and felt helpless in their menacing grip.

The phrase “germ theory of disease” came into common use, also during Dickinson's lifetime, around 1870. Scientists and doctors used frightening terms to describe them such as “foreign,” “base,” “murderers,” and “cunning.” Germs were thought to be evil and that they stalked everyone.

While no one knew how these invisible threats caused illness and death, they were considered controllable and preventable by proper domestic sanitation. One of the beliefs then was that totally clean clothing could help control the fight against disease, which is why doctors started to wear white.

One who firmly held this belief was Theodore Roosevelt's

mother, Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, prominent resident of New York City. She wore white exclusively even during the winter so that any speck of dirt could be immediately detected and removed.

Mrs. Roosevelt was born and died almost the same years as Dickinson (1835-1884). Because the Roosevelts were highly educated, well-informed, wealthy and famous, and the events of their lives recorded in newspapers and magazines, it seems unlikely that this information would have escaped Dickinson's attention. It seems possible that Dickinson would think wearing white would be an intelligent, common sense way to help prevent the invasion of germs and infections and the indiscriminate deaths they caused.

Perhaps, also, Dickinson's attention to detail would help explain the appeal of wearing white which would not be a hardship for her. We know that she was attentive to detail

from the way her fascicles were carefully organized and assembled. We know that choosing the right word to complete a poem to her satisfaction involved carefully considered choices. We know, too, from Higginson's description of her at their first meeting that he was struck by her “exquisitely clean white pique.”

It seems that Dickinson's deep concern and love for others would contribute to her choosing to wear white. From an early age she witnessed and knew all about the tragic results of diseases which at the time spread easily and caused death, including those very dear to her. She never missed an opportunity to console, as evident in her letters. Someone so caring would willingly do anything she could to stop the spread of germs.

Perhaps Dickinson was on the front edge of an important tradition. Today doctors continue to wear white. When President Obama invited doctors from all around the country to come to the White House in support of his health plan, they appeared in white lab coats.

Admittedly, there is little concrete evidence to explain beyond a doubt why Dickinson chose to wear white. Perhaps she had many reasons. But, even if we can't know for a certainty “why white,” it's fun to speculate about the thinking of someone so engaging and so incredibly endearing.

### Works Cited

*The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, New York, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, MA.

*The Extraordinary Healing Power of Ordinary Things*, Larry Dossey, M.D., Harmony Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.

Jo Ann Orr is an EDIS member and artist. She creates magnets inspired by Emily Dickinson that are available at the Emily Dickinson Museum.



Magnets by JoAnn Orr

## Reflection: “I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—”

By David Richo

Some poems present a poet’s real experience with no attempt to import a message. Others present a message unabashedly. Consider the following poem (Fr591) by Emily Dickinson, one of her best:

I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—  
The Stillness in the Room  
Was like the Stillness in the Air—  
Between the Heaves of Storm—

The Eyes around—had wrung them dry—  
And Breaths were gathering firm  
For that last Onset—when the King  
Be witnessed—in the Room—

I willed my Keepsakes—Signed away  
What portion of me be  
Assignable—and then it was  
There interposed a Fly—

With Blue—uncertain stumbling Buzz—  
Between the light—and me—  
And then the Windows failed—and then  
I could not see to see—

Emily Dickinson employs wry irony to show how our human solemnities are at the mercy of mundane realities, “a fly in the ointment” as it were. It seems that Emily Dickinson did not believe in the afterlife as it was conventionally understood. Hence we find her almost humorous parody of the serious leave-taking in which her friends are waiting for God (or Death), “the King,” to enter the room and carry her soul to heaven. Instead, the ordinary house-fly interrupts and can’t be shooed away, royalty or no. The great occasion has become his moment to be sure. The other-worldly light faded once attention was arched toward his fumbling buzz. The entrance of the fly represents the real arrival of death as opposed to the version held by the onlookers who see death as the majestic king.

The poet adds the extra “to see” in the last line to prevent us from thinking she now *sees* in some new, astral way. I think Emily Dickinson wants us to know of the finality of the death experience—the blind alley she is confronting. She is bravely searching the extremities just as they appear in her experience.

It is the power of great poetry that a larger truth may still emerge in spite of the poet’s belief system. An affirmation of a reality that transcends the poet’s limited view might slip through to us. We see such transcendence happening in the poem. It contains, subtly, three chords of spiritual and transpersonal consciousness.

First, we notice a *combination of opposites* in “the King” and “a fly,” in the “stillness” and the “buzz,” in the held “breaths” of those gathered around the bed and

the “uncertain stumbling buzz” of the intruder. The mourners are certain; the fly is uncertain —like faith and doubt. The combination of so many opposites is a sign that the transpersonal realm has entered the room/poem.

Secondly, the dying woman wills her keepsakes and every portion of herself that can be given away. This is a letting go, so characteristic of threshold etiquette on the journey to wholeness. It reminds us of Meister Eckhart’s words: “Everything is meant to be lost that the soul may stand in unhampered nothingness.” Letting go is not ending but preparing.

Thirdly, the poem escorts us into the liminal world, the realm of the between: “There *interposed* a fly... *Between* the light and me.” That certainly can symbolize the bridging of our mortal reality and a transpersonal world impervious to time’s decay —but the poet is too professional in her craft to inflict that on us directly.

Emily Dickinson states her experience by her bald description of the fly and her reaction to it, with no added recourse to a pre-existing creed. The poem is philosophical, confronting an existential issue and offering no clear solution. It presents a future event as a metaphor. Her purpose is to open a subject and leave it open. She is letting us join her in being uncomfortable. She is signaling to us that death, and perhaps all the ultimates in life, may not turn out to be what we expect. And, she is offering possibilities of how we might see our own death.

Yet, if Emily Dickinson believed in the afterlife, she probably would not have tried to convince us of her faith in any case. Some people want to be left to their own beliefs. Emily Dickinson simply opens us to what she found. We are left hanging, a legitimate description of our existential condition and of the realm of the between.

Now we can see that a poem gives something personal a chance to be the truth in the moment. In the objective world, only what can be proven or confirmed by reason and investigation is real. In a poem, the poet’s world is real no matter how fanciful it may be. We can see that poetry has pluck and self-esteem.

Poetry enshrines experience. Poems are unique comments on reality and grant the reader an opportunity then to shape it as he sees and feels it. Even though poetry works best when it does not attempt to convince, there remains a place for the alternative.

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**David Richo, PhD**, is a therapist and author who leads popular workshops on personal and spiritual growth. He is known for drawing on Buddhist thought, poetry, and Jungian perspectives in his work. This article is adapted from his book *Being True to Life: Poetic Paths to Personal Growth* (Shambhala, 2009).

# FEATURES

## Oxford 2010 International Conference Schedule

"Were I Britain born": Dickinson's Transatlantic Connections, August 6-8, 2010

### Friday, August 6

#### 9:00-9:30

Welcome by Nigel Bowles, Director of the Rothermere American Institute and by conference directors

#### 9:30-10:45

##### British Connections I: Dickinson, Shakespeare, and Milton

Chair: Martha Ackmann, Mt. Holyoke College, USA  
Anne Ramirez, Neuman College, USA, "The Hardest Miracle: Images of Death and Resurrection in Shakespeare and Dickinson"  
Cindy MacKenzie, University of Regina, Canada, "Essential Oils are wrung: Dickinson's Poetics and the Shakespearean Sonnets"  
Elizabeth Petrino, Fairfield University, USA, "Forbidden Fruit: Dickinson's Echoes of Milton's Eve"

##### British Connections II: Keats

Chair: Ellen Louise Hart, University of California at Santa Cruz (Emerita), USA  
Edith Wylder, Southwest Minnesota University (Emerita), USA, "Keats's Awakened Psyche and Dickinson's Rose"  
Yuji Kato, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan, "Readings on the Margin: Emily Dickinson's Posthumous Poetics and the English Romantics"  
Martin Greenup, Harvard University, USA, "For Poets—I have Keats: Dickinson and Allusion"

##### British Connections III: Dickinson and the Brontës

Chair: James Guthrie, Wright State University, USA  
Yanbin (Daphne) Kang, Chinese University of Hong Kong, "Oriental heresies: 'Oriental Circuit' and Jane Eyre"  
Gary Lee Stonum, Case Western Reserve University, USA, "Emily's Heathcliff"  
Nancy Mayer, Northwest Missouri State University, USA, "Passionate Reticence: Emily Dickinson and Brontë's Lucy Snow"

#### 11:00-12:15

##### Global Connections I: Dickinson in and out of Japan, Russia, and France

Chair: Jonnie Guerra, Independent Scholar, USA  
Hiroko Uno, Kobe College, Japan, "Emily Dickinson and Japan"  
Tatiana Anikeeva, Far Eastern National University, Russia, "Dickinson's Russian Connections"  
Antoine Cazé, University of Paris 7, France, "Paris could not lay the fold: Dickinson's Absence in France?"

##### Dickinson, Nature, and God

Chair: Jane Eberwein, University of Oakland (Emerita), USA  
Ningkang Jiang, Nankang University, PR China, "Birds, Nature, and *Dao*: A Comparative Study of Dickinson's and Tao Qiang's Nature Poems"  
Connie Ann Kirk, Mansfield University, USA, "Nature is what We know—But have no Art to say—: Meadows and Moors as Creative Inspiration in Dickinson and the Brontës"  
Richard Brantley, University of Florida, USA, "Dickinson's Empirical Voice: '... almost as omniscient as God'"

##### British Connections IV: Dickinson and Emily Brontë

Chair: Marianne Noble, American University, USA  
Aleksandra Vinogradskaya, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia, "The Dialogue of Loneliness and Free Spirit in the American Poetry of Emily Dickinson and the English Poetry of Emily Brontë"  
Makhdooma Saadat, Babu Banarasi Das Group of Educational Institutes, India, "Emily Dickinson and Emily Brontë: Renunciation and Discovery of the True Self"  
Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University, USA, "Some new equation given: Emily Dickinson, Emily Brontë, and Deep Time"

#### 12:15-1:15 LUNCH

##### 1:15-2:45 Plenary Panel #1

Chair: Cristanne Miller, University of Buffalo, USA  
Domhnall Mitchell, University of Trondheim, Norway, "Aspects of Dickinson's Reception in Norway"  
Paraic Finnerty, Portsmouth University, UK, "Dreamed of your meeting Tennyson in Ticknor and Fields: A Transatlantic Encounter with England's Poet Laureate"  
Maria Stuart, University College Dublin, Ireland, "Pursuing you in your transitions: Dickinson in Ireland"

#### 3:15-4:30

##### Dickinson and Class

Chair: Suzanne Juhasz, University of Colorado (Emerita), USA  
Aife Murray, Independent Scholar, USA, "Peony noses, red as Sammie Matthews's": Literary Rituals of (Class) Recognition"  
H. Jordan Landry, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, USA, "Whip a Crown-Imperial: Representing Class and Gender Revolts in Dickens and Dickinson"  
Mary Loeffelholz, Northeastern University, USA, "Master Shakespeare, Mrs. Browning, Miss Dickinson, and the Servants"

Times and dates of sessions may change. Please check the conference website for updates and revisions to the program, beginning June 1, 2010

# FEATURES

## Oxford 2010 International Conference Schedule

"Were I Britain born": Dickinson's Transatlantic Connections, August 6-8, 2010

### Global Connections II: Dickinson in German and Polish Authors

Chair: Antoine Cazé, University of Paris 7, France  
Therese Kaiser, Aachen University, Germany, "Further Transatlantic Connections: Paul Celan as a Translator of Emily Dickinson"  
Gloria Coates, Independent Musician, USA, "A New Understanding of Dickinson's Poetry as Revealed in the Writings of Novalis"  
Adam Czerniawski, Independent Scholar, UK, "Dickinson and Cyprian Kamil Norwid"

### Dickinson, Gender, and the Woman Writer

Chair: Stephanie Tingley, Youngstown State University, USA  
Mohamad Saad Rateb, Fayoum University, Egypt, "The Search for Female Identity in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti"  
Kelly Lynch, Independent Scholar, USA, "'A Bright Capacity for Wings': Dickinson's Metamorphosis as a Woman Poet"  
Ursula Caci, University of Basel, Switzerland, "Locating Gender in Space: Emily Dickinson's Conception of Gender"

4:45-6:00

### British Connections V: George Eliot Vol. I

Chair: Emily Seelbinder, Queens University of Charlotte, USA  
Barbara Mossberg, Goddard College (President Emerita), USA, "Through the Transatlantic Lens: Emily Dickinson's Transatlantic Soul—A Reading of 'On his British S/sky' in 'We Like March'"  
Margaret Freeman, Myrfield Institute for Cognition and the Arts, USA, "George Eliot and Emily Dickinson: Poets of Play and Possibility"  
Kristin Sanner, Mansfield University, USA, "'I am afraid to own a Body—': Corporeal Independence in the Letters of Emily Dickinson and George Eliot"

### Dickinson's Isolation and Dissemination

Chair: Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University, USA  
Karen Foster, Independent Scholar, USA, "'But cannot dance as well': The Blood of Language in Select Emily Dickinson's Poems"  
Dan Manheim, Occidental College, USA, "Dickinson and the Enigma of Gift and Sacrifice"

### Manuscripts I: Dickinson's Manuscript Books

Chair: Alexandra Socarides, University of Missouri, USA  
Ellen Louise Hart, University of California at Santa Cruz (Emerita), USA, "'Speaking of Pippa Passes': Alliteration, Rhetorical Emphasis, Dickinson's Visual Strategies of Manuscript, and Browning's Dramatic Verse"  
Trisha Kannan, University of Florida, USA, "Emily Dickinson's Thirtieth Fascicle"  
Kristen Kreider, University of London, UK, "Lyric Encounters: The Material Poetics of Dickinson's Later Manuscript Pages"

### Traveling Feet: Dickinson's Meter and the Lyric

Chair: Jed Deppman, Oberlin College, USA  
Michael Manson, American University, USA, "Reading Dickinson's Lyrics"  
Debra Fried, Cornell University, USA, "Dickinson's 'Whips of Time'"  
Cristanne Miller, University of Buffalo, USA, "Ballad Meter, Hymns, and (Transatlantic) Lyric Form"

6:30 Reception, Oriol College, sponsored by Johns Hopkins University Press

7:30 Banquet, Oriol College

8:30 Plenary Speaker, Lyndall Gordon, Oxford University, UK, "'The World Within': Emily Dickinson and the Brontës"  
Introduction by Sally Bayley, Balliol College of Oxford University, UK

## Saturday, August 7

9:00-10:15

### Dickinson and the Arts I: "Imagination's Muse: Emily Dickinson as Creative Inspiration"

Chair: Georgiana Strickland, Independent Scholar, USA  
Maryanne Garbowsky, County College of Morris, USA, "Will Barnet and Isabelle Arsenault: Two Artists and Their Books"  
Nicole Panizza, Royal College of Music, UK, "Titanic Operas: English Song Settings of Emily Dickinson and Elizabeth Browning"  
Suzie Hanna, Norwich University, UK and Sally Bayley, Balliol College of Oxford University, UK, "Emily Dickinson's Opposing Lands: Miniature Worlds and Sovereign Territory"

### British Connections VI: Dickinson's Imagery

Chair: Cindy MacKenzie, University of Regina, Canada  
Jesse Curran, Stony Brook University, USA, "'By a Flower—By a Letter': Dickinson's Transatlantic Cultivation"  
Hsu Li-hsin, University of Edinburgh, UK, "Asia, Animals and Apocalypse: The Narcotic Imagery in Emily Dickinson and Thomas De Quincey"  
Michelle Kohler, Tulane University, USA, "Dickinson, Keats, and the Disease of Autumn"

### British Connections VII: Solitude and Suffering

Chair: James Fraser, Utah State University, USA  
Mita Bose, University of Delhi, India, "'Victorian New England Sappho'—the Imploding Genius of Emily Dickinson"  
Gudrun Grabher, University of Innsbruck, Austria, "Between Loneliness and Solitude: Various Aspects of Being Alone in Emily Dickinson, John Keats, and William Wordsworth"  
Hyesook Son, Sungkyunkwan University, Korea, "The Rhetoric of Suffering in the Poetry of John Donne and Emily Dickinson"

# FEATURES

## Oxford 2010 International Conference Schedule

“Were I Britain born”: Dickinson’s Transatlantic Connections, August 6-8, 2010

### Archival Resources: “Over the fence—I could climb’: Primary Sources for Dickinson Scholarship”

Chair: Aife Murray, Independent Scholar and Artist, USA  
Jane Wald, Executive Director, Emily Dickinson Museum, Amherst, USA, “Emily Dickinson at Home”

Michael Kelly, Head of Archives and Special Collections, Frost Library, Amherst College, USA, “Emily Dickinson and Amherst College”

Leslie A. Morris, Curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts, Houghton Library, Harvard University, USA, “Emily Dickinson at Harvard”

### 10:30-12:00 Plenary Panel #2:

Chair: Paul Crumbley, Utah State University, USA  
Joan Kirkby, Macquarie University, Australia, “Darwinising with Emily Dickinson and Erasmus Darwin.”

Vivian Pollak, Washington University, USA, “Transatlantic Egos, Take 2: Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, and Ted Hughes.”

Jed Deppman, Oberlin College, USA, “But, but . . . Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf?”

### 12:00-1:15 LUNCH

### 1:15-2:30

Suzie Hanna film will run continuously from 1:15-4:00, starting every 10 minutes.

### Dickinson and the Arts II: “Dickinson on Stage: A Roundtable Discussion”

Chair and Moderator: Jonnie Guerra, Independent Scholar, USA  
Edie Campbell, LynchPin Productions, UK

Tom Daley, Boston Center for Adult Education, USA

Barbara Dana, Independent Scholar and Artist, USA

Jim Fraser, Utah State University, USA

Jack Lynch, LynchPin productions, UK

Barbara Mossberg, Goddard College (President Emerita), USA

### Dickinson and the Self

Chair: Gudrun Grabher, University of Innsbruck, Austria  
Xu Cuihua, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, PR China, “As if a Kingdom—cared’: Emily Dickinson’s Heroic Thinking on Self-Management”

Cynthia Hallen, Brigham Young University, USA, “The Mitochondrial Muse: Emily Dickinson’s Maternal Ancestors”

Polly Longworth, Independent Scholar, USA, and  
Dr. Norbert Hirschhorn, USA, “Was It Epilepsy?: Diagnosing Emily Dickinson’s Health”

### British Connections VIII: George Eliot Vol. II.

Chair: Margaret Freeman, Myrfield Institute for Cognition and the Arts, USA

Emily Seelbinder, Queens University of Charlotte, USA, “Supposed (Male) Persons: Narrative Cross-Dressing in Eliot and Dickinson”

Jane Eberwein, Oakland University (Emerita), USA,

“Dangerous fruit of the tree of knowledge’: Dickinson, Marian Evans, and Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu*”

Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University (Emerita), USA, “Now, my George Eliot’: Emily Dickinson and ‘Glory’”

### 2:45-4:00 Suzie Hanna Film

### Drama in Dickinson

Chair: Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University (Emerita), USA

Lin Yupeng, Hefei University of Technology, PR China, “Drama in Emily Dickinson’s Poems and Its Possible Causes”

Paula Bernat Bennett, Southern Illinois University (Emerita), USA, “From Browning to the American Civil War: Dickinson and the American Dramatic Monologue.”

### Manuscripts II: “Dickinson in Pieces”

Chair: Geoffrey Schramm, National Cathedral School, USA  
Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, USA, “Read Me: Poetry is ‘My Sermon—My Hope—My solace—My Life’: Dickinson in the Drawing Room”

Eliza Richards, University of North Carolina, USA, “Acres of Joints’/Acres of Seams’: Fragmentation and Reconstruction in Dickinson’s Civil war Poems”

Alexandra Socarides, University of Missouri, USA, “Why We Resist Understanding Dickinson’s Late Fragments, as Fragmentary as that Understanding May Be”

Marilee Lindemann, respondent, University of Maryland, USA, “How Public, Like a B(log): Emily Dickinson and a Feminist Literary Pre-History of the Blogosphere”

### Dickinson in New England

Chair: Michael Manson, American University, USA

Jean McClure Mudge, Independent Artist, USA, “Emily Dickinson’s Idiosyncratic Tie to Ralph Waldo Emerson”

Alexandra Menglis, Oxford University, UK, “Excavating Emily Dickinson and Henry David Thoreau in the Works of Susan Howe”

Robin Peel, University of Plymouth, UK, “Burglar! Banker! Father!’: Marx and Massachusetts in the Age of Edward Dickinson, Whig”

**4:30-5:30 Plenary Speaker, Paul Giles**, “Evolutionary Enigmas and Colonial Equations: Dickinson’s Transoceanic Geography”  
Introduction by Paraic Finnerty, Portsmouth University, UK

**6:30-7:30 Reception at Blackwell’s Bookshop, across from the Bodleian**

**8:00-9:20 Edie Campbell**, in *Emily Dickinson & I: The Journey of a Portrayal*. Performances at the Burton Taylor Studio (Gloucester Street)



# FEATURES

## Oxford 2010 International Conference Schedule

“Were I Britain born”: Dickinson’s Transatlantic Connections, August 6-8, 2010

### Sunday, August 8

#### 9:00-10:15

##### **British Connections IX: Dickinson’s Imagination and Words**

Chair: Mary Loeffelholz, Northeastern University, USA  
Judith Farr, Georgetown University (Emerita), USA  
“Secrecy and Revelation: English Writers and the Imagination of Emily Dickinson”  
James Guthrie, Wright State University, USA, “Mean Girls with Knives: Dickinson and Great Britain Have It Out”  
Katherine Kickel, Miami University, USA, “Emily Dickinson’s *Dictionary Verse*” (Samuel Johnson)

##### **British Connections X: Romantic and Religious Visions**

Chair: Richard Brantley, University of Florida, USA  
Linda Freedman, Selwyn College of Cambridge University, UK, “Dickinson’s ‘wonderful Blakean gift’”  
Victoria N. Morgan, University of Liverpool, UK, “‘I just wear my wings’: Reading Dickinson through Wattsonian Dissent”  
Alan Blackstock, Utah State University, USA, “Dickinson, Blake and the Hymnbooks of Hell”

##### **Dickinson’s Signature: Questions of (Poetic) Identity**

Chair: Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, USA  
Marianne Noble, American University, USA, “The Presence of the Face: Dickinson’s Mirror Neurons”  
Ryan Cull, New Mexico State University, USA, “Interrogating the ‘Egotistical Sublime’: The Continued Relevance of Dickinson’s and Keats’s Post-Romantic Sublime”  
Jorge Hernández Jiménez, Universidad Nacional Autónoma, Mexico, “‘Signatures of all things’: Portrayals of the Interruption in Dickinson and Joyce”

#### 10:30-11:45

##### **Dickinson’s Ethics and Poetics**

Chair: Gary Lee Stonum, Case Western Reserve University, USA  
Merve Sarikaya, Baskent University, Turkey, “The Loaded Gun and the Haunted Chamber: Julia Kristeva’s Theory of the Abject”  
Shira Wolosky, Hebrew University, Israel, “Dickinson and Nietzsche: Poetics, Ethics, and the World of Becoming”  
Logan Esdale, Chapman College, USA, “Adornment Practice in Dickinson’s Studio”

##### **Dickinson and the Question of Fame**

Chair: Elizabeth Petrino, Fairfield University, USA  
Tom Mack, University of South Carolina-Aiken, USA, “Emily Dickinson and Alice James: ‘How dreary to be somebody’”  
Andrey Logutov, Moscow State University, Russia, “Emily Dickinson and Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Making of One’s Public”  
Paul Crumbley, Utah State University, USA, “‘Behold the Atom—I preferred—’: Emily Dickinson Reading Fame in Emily Brontë’s ‘No coward soul is mine’”

##### **British Connections XI: Dickinson and the Brownings**

Chair: Michael Yetman, Purdue University, USA  
JD Isip, California State University Fullerton, USA, “Emily Dickinson and Robert Browning: A Shared History”  
Courtney Stanton, Rutgers University, USA, “A Poet, Not a Poetess: Barrett Browning’s Impact on Dickinson’s Poetic Self”  
Vincent Dussol, University of Montpellier 3, France, “Dickinson’s Distance from Epic: *Aurora Leigh* and Barrett-Browning’s Formulation of the Contemporary Epic”

#### 12-1:30 Buffet lunch and Annual Members’ Meeting

ALL ARE WELCOME! This is a time to share ideas about the future of EDIS, discuss venues and ideas for future conferences, and to hear about the activities of the Society over the past year. Lunch will be available during the meeting for all who attend.

### Special events:

Eddie Campbell, in *Emily Dickinson & I: The Journey of a Portrayal*. Performances at the Burton Taylor Studio (Gloucester Street), Wednesday Aug 4, 8:00 pm; Thursday Aug 5, 8:00 pm; Saturday Aug 7, 8:00 pm; Sunday Aug 8, 2:30 pm. *Tickets may be purchased through the online registration site or in Oxford at the registration table, beginning on the afternoon of Aug 4.*

A short film by artist Suzie Hanna will run continuously Saturday, August 7, 1:15-4:00.

## Poet to Poet: Teaching Dickinson, *By Alice Friman* *Edited by Jonnie Guerra, Series Editor*

*I became acquainted with Alice Friman as a poet with a Dickinson connection during my rereading of Sheila Coghill and Thom Tammaro's Visiting Emily: Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of Emily Dickinson. In this issue, I am pleased to present Friman's poem from their collection as well as her reflections on Dickinson's "diamond hard" poetic power and the resulting challenges Friman encountered in teaching Dickinson to undergraduates.*

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

I never enjoyed teaching Emily Dickinson. What was to say in the introductory lecture beyond her little history of publication, Higginson, her too short life, the eye troubles, the little sewn packets of poems found in a trunk, etc., before passing around the pictures of the big house on Main Street and the grave site where on her stone *Called Back* is carved. Of course, the story of the white dress was always a good sell, guaranteed to intrigue my young audience, especially the more romantic ones, as was the business of the mysterious Master letters. And when it came down to the nitty gritty, the poems, I was also at a loss. Let me assure you I was / am a good teacher—a marvel at Melville, a regular thrill-a-minute with Thoreau. But Dickinson was another story. Each poem, it seems to me, is so diamond hard, there's no door, no, not even a crack to enter by. One finds oneself circling the poem the way you would a Praxiteles statue. What is there to "explain," to clarify, when the "meaning"—how I hate that word when it comes to poems—comes at you like a great wave, knocking you down. The volleyball in the chest theory of teaching poetry: "See how it affects me, and respond in kind." Not the best kind of pedagogy.

So I found myself forced to "explain" what can't be explained because the original is said so straight, so spare, so the way it is. One is forced to talk *around* the poem, to restate her words in another way, a way that inevitably proves wanting if not downright off the mark. Trying to clarify what is so crystal clear, one ends up muddying up the

thing. How can you plumb the desolation inherent in "The Brain has Corridors—surpassing / Material Place—" (Fr407) to one whose experience of misery goes no further than a fight with her mother? Ah, but you will say, there are fights with one's mother and fights with one's mother. Still, I remember the time I had a class of sophomore football players, and I, hoping to reach them, assigned Dickinson's "Success is counted sweetest" (Fr112).

Success is counted sweetest  
 By those who ne'er succeed.  
 To comprehend a nectar  
 Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host  
 Who took the Flag today  
 Can tell the definition  
 So clear of Victory

As he defeated—dying—  
 On whose forbidden ear  
 The distant strains of triumph  
 Burst agonized and clear!

Surely I could relate that last image to the playing field, my burly, beer-drinking students' seemingly only passion. That the class discussion disintegrated into a discussion of how the pulchritudinous attributes of certain cheerleaders and the comfort of the presence of parents at games made up for any losses brought us no closer to the heart of the poem. My lesson faltered. Each semester I lost heart. I was tempted to leave Dickinson out of the syllabus altogether, but how could I, with a clear conscience, do that? Of course students were introduced to a handful of her poems in high school, but I found, after a quick survey, that all they had read were what I would call the ones whose central image was offered up to them as a sort of riddle—"A narrow Fellow in the Grass" (Fr1096), what's that? "I taste a liquor never brewed—" (Fr207), what's that? "I like to see it lap the Miles—" (Fr383), what's that? But as for the more complicated poems, the ones whose meaning lies beyond that first reach of, "Oh, she's talking about a train," nothing.

So much has been made of her reticence, how she acceded to Higginson's



Alice Friman. Photo courtesy of Lillian Elaine Wilson

saying her gait was "spasmodic" or his saying that her poems lacked form and the rhyme was imperfect, that I wanted my students to experience the power that *I* knew was there and had felt. Somehow they imagined her a sexless waif, perhaps from the stories they had heard in high school—a recluse known to the citizens of Amherst as "the myth," whose gaze went no further than the garden outside her window, a maker of Indian pudding and wearer of white dresses—when I wanted them to experience her passion, her pride, and, yes, her smoldering anger. Why else the volleyball in the chest when I read her? It had to come from somewhere. Someone threw it.

Proud of my broken heart, since thou  
 did'st break it,  
 Proud of the pain I did not feel till thee,

Proud of my night, since thou with  
 moons dost slake it,  
 Not to partake thy passion, *my* humility.

Thou can'st not boast, like Jesus, drunk-  
 en without companion  
 Was the strong cup of anguish brewed  
 for the Nazarene

Thou can'st not pierce tradition with  
 the peerless puncture,  
 See! I usurped *thy* crucifix to honor  
 mine! (Fr1760)

*Poet to Poet: Teaching Dickinson, cont.,* By Alice Friman  
 Edited by Jonnie Guerra, Series Editor

I wanted to bring to life the voice that compared her life to “a Loaded Gun—” (Fr764), or the person who put the words on what it’s like to feel trapped, “He put the Belt around my life— / I heard the Buckle snap” (Fr330).

The truth of the matter is, I gave up. Ah reader, you expected different: the master teacher that I was (and I *was*) found the holy grail: the poem and presentation that succeeded in reaching them on a gut level. Well, it never happened. That is, it never happened except for me. Over and over.

In 2005, my husband and I, both teachers of literature for years, made a six-week pilgrimage to all the New England literary sites. We read Elizabeth Bishop poems at her grave site in Worcester and on the corner of the famed dental office of “In the Waiting Room.” We saw the Frederick Douglass House in New Bedford and visited all the Melville sights we could find, even scooting our bottoms along his pew in the New Bedford church so as to absorb all Melvillian molecules that might still be lingering on the wooden bench. Thoreau’s Walden Pond, if you’ve never been there, from the point of view of the cabin, really *is* blue and green together just as he said, while Emerson’s house has become a tourist mecca where Transcendentalism is not to be mentioned because it’s too controversial, I kid you not. And yes, we saw Edith Wharton’s The Mount, Salem and Hawthorne’s house of seven gables which features his yellow highchair, and we looked through the windows of the Manse where Hawthorne and his beloved Sophia scratched their love into the window panes. We saw Sarah Orne Jewett’s desk with her bunch of chewed up pencils, and, of course, the house in Amherst where the lady in the white dress stitched her packets and welcomed, although shyly, a Mr. Higginson who probably never got over it.

Nor did I. We were the only people visiting the house that afternoon, for which I was grateful. I remember thinking of my students as we were shown around and wondering if just being in that quiet place would have made any difference in their attitude, or if they were too jaded what with yammering

### Of Women Who Wear White

Like a farm girl  
 practicing ballet,  
 the klutzy sycamore

Stuns us with her pose. So too  
 the blotchy bride  
 pausing at aisle end

Before her long waft down.  
 It is the white—  
 the libidinous

Chastity of it,  
 the Dover Cliffs and crown  
 of any wardrobe.

It’s the power suit.  
 The Moby D. of *haute couture*.  
 The one decision made

In defiance of good sense  
 and menses.  
 And no smirk of April

Mincing the park in pastel  
 can eclipse the thunder  
 of its speech.

Tell me, Lady of Amherst,  
 shawled wonder, who is heir  
 to your scraps?

Who gets the leftovers?  
 Lawn and trim, snippets  
 of eyelet—the white wink

Of Election?  
 Every genius in America  
 is out beating the bushes

For your sewing basket.  
 They know your habits,  
 your penchant for cache—

Those little stitched paper  
 Everests  
 you stashed away in a chest

The world’s black needle  
 wobbling to North  
 would turn pearl to find.

Revised version published with the permission of the poet. Original version “Of Women Who Wear White” by Alice Friman appeared in *Visiting Emily: Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Sheila Coghill and Thom Tammaro, University of Iowa Press, 2000.

cell phones and blood-and-guts television where even the commercials are frantic. At the top of the stairs was the white dress in a case.

I recall walking around it quite surprised, for the dress—which I take was a replica to size—wasn’t for a waif-like creature at all, small in stature yes, but not thin. Substantial I’d say. Then we entered her room. In front of me, her writing table. And then, there it was—the slam in the chest. I had to run out of the room. Nor could I go back in without it happening again. Now, I do not believe in ghosts. I am too rational a creature. But that fist came from the writing table. Not from the bed with the prettily laid out dress or maybe it was a shawl. I remember none of it but that thing that felt like a hand shoving me, leaving me quite breathless. Our guide would not allow me to be in the room alone even for a minute, so I’ll never know what would have happened if I had been allowed a private audience with that space. But here’s something I do know. Those poems are alive because she is alive in them. Fierce and powerful. “The heart wants what it wants, or else it does not care” she wrote in a letter. Or more to the point. “Vesuvius don’t talk.” Right. It knocks you over.

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**Alice Friman’s** ninth collection of poetry is *Vinculum*, forthcoming from LSU Press. Previous books are *The Book of the Rotten Daughter* and *Inverted Fire*, BkMk Press, and *Zoo*, University of Arkansas Press, which won the Ezra Pound Poetry Award and the Sheila Margaret Motton Prize. She has received fellowships from the Indiana Arts Commission, the Arts Council of Indianapolis, and the Bernheim Foundation, and won the 2001 James Boatwright Prize from *Shenandoah*. Poems appear in *Best Poetry 2009*, *Poetry*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Shenandoah*, and others. Anthologized widely, she has been published in thirteen different countries. Professor of English at the University of Indianapolis from 1973–1993, she now lives in Milledgeville, Georgia, where she is Poet-in-Residence at Georgia College & State University.

## **Dickinson Scholars: Jack Capps, By Dorothy Oberhaus** *Edited by Cindy MacKenzie, Series Editor*

Jack Capps has long been appreciated by Dickinson scholars for his 1966 book on *Emily Dickinson's reading*, a subject that still intrigues the poet's admirers. In the following profile, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus, professor of English at Mercy College and the author of *Emily Dickinson's Fascicles: Method & Meaning* (Penn State University Press, 1995), provides background on this important Dickinson scholar.

Cindy MacKenzie, Series Editor

After more than forty years, Jack L. Capps's 1966 book, *Emily Dickinson's Reading: 1836-1886* (Harvard University Press) is still an indispensable source that regularly appears on twenty-first-century Works Cited pages. *Emily Dickinson's Reading* is among the trailblazing books of the 1960s—a list that includes David Porter's 1966 *Art of Emily Dickinson's Early Poetry* and S.P. Rosenbaum's 1964 *Concordance*—books that appeared after the 1955 publication of Thomas H. Johnson's *Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, the first collection that included all her poems and variants, and that attempted to represent in print Dickinson's handwritten manuscripts.

Capps's text is brief, dense, and concise, comprising only 147 pages plus the usual Bibliography and Notes and a useful Annotated Bibliography of Emily Dickinson's reading showing where many of her literary allusions occur in letters as well as poems. After a short introduction, the book's chapters are chronological, beginning with her readings in the King James Bible, "a basic reference," and continuing with "British Literature: Renaissance and Eighteenth Century"; "British Literature: Romantic and Victorian;" "American Reading: Colonial and Contemporary;" and concluding with "Readings in Newspapers and Periodicals." As Capps shows, her vast readings reveal that Dickinson was not an isolated recluse, but rather was knowledgeably and passionately engaged in Western literature and the issues of her day.

Jack Capps was born in Liberty, Missouri, where he attended grammar school and first encountered Emily Dickinson when he was required to memorize and recite "The morns are meeker than they were—" (Fr32) —whose final line he

forgot. Dickinson then dropped from his memory for the next thirty years.

After attending Missouri's William Jewell College for one year, Jack was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point by Senator Harry S. Truman. Though at that time the West Point curriculum emphasized engineering, he was required to take two semesters of English, where he again encountered Emily Dickinson in a nine-line cameo in Stephen Vincent Benet's *John Brown's Body*.

After graduation from West Point with a General Engineering degree, Jack served in a series of military assignments including Fort Benning in Georgia, where he attended "Jump School" and became a



Jack Capps with Emily Dickinson Museum director, Jane Wald.

"qualified Parachutist;" Nuremberg, Germany, where he met his future wife, Marie; and Ethiopia, where he co-founded the Haile Selassie I Military Academy and an officers' training school. After his co-founder told Jack, "You put together words well" and proposed that he return to West Point to teach English, he earned an M.A. at the University of Pennsylvania, where he took a Dickinson seminar taught by none other than the great Thomas H. Johnson. Jack describes himself as thereafter "addicted to Emily Dickinson."

His research paper for Johnson's seminar, "Place Names in Emily Dickinson," made him aware of her many literary allusions and thus inspired his Ph.D. dissertation, "Emily Dickinson's Reading." Thomas Johnson, the director of his dissertation, was certain it should be published. ("It's the best," said Johnson.) Jack therefore submitted abstracts to the

university presses at Princeton, Cornell, and Columbia, and received "polite refusals" from all three. Finally he submitted an abstract to Harvard University Press, where his book was soon published.

After its publication, Jack returned to West Point as associate professor of English and director of composition courses. During his tenure at West Point, he was a visiting professor of American literature at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, where he called on Mary Hampson at the Evergreens; at the American University of Beirut; and at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. After serving as chair of the West Point English Department for eight years, he retired in 1988 with the rank of Brigadier General and received, among other honors, the Distinguished Service Medal.

In addition to *Emily Dickinson's Reading*, Jack's major scholarly publications include the following: editor of an Annotated Edition of *John Brown's Body* (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1968); editor of a special edition of *The Faulkner Journal* (1986); and general editor of a thirty-five volume *Concordance to the Prose and Poetry of William Faulkner* (University Press of Michigan, published from 1977 to 1990).

Now retired and living in Kansas, Jack is still "addicted to Emily Dickinson." He sometimes writes reviews of critical works on her poetry and gives an occasional lecture, as he did in October 2007 at the Dickinson Museum. The photo accompanying this article shows Jack chatting with the Museum's director, Jane Wald, after his lecture, whose subject was "Emily Dickinson's Reading!"

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**Dorothy Huff Oberhaus** is presently writing another book about Emily Dickinson's fascicles. Jack Capps' book has been of enormous import to her books and numerous articles about the poet.

## What's Your Story?: Dickinson for Two

By Georgiana Strickland, Series Editor

Breakfast at the home of Bill and Nancy Pridgen in Universal City, Texas, provides food for both body and mind. Since their marriage in 1993, just about every day has begun with the reading of an Emily Dickinson poem. They start at the beginning of the Johnson or Franklin edition, work their way to the end, day by day and poem by poem, then begin again. They're now on their eighth or tenth go-around and they have no plans to stop. "It's a sort of perpetual thing," says Bill. "We just start over."

Dickinson isn't the only intellectual food served at the Pridgens' breakfast table. Thoreau gets equal billing with Dickinson, and the daily fare may also include readings ranging from the Persian poet Rumi to Frost or Auden, from Tolkien or Wittgenstein to William Least Heat Moon. The latest addition to this eclectic list is Whitman.

The Pridgens' interest in literature is not a recent development. Both were book worms while growing up. But their youthful literary interests were somewhat different. "Maybe calling it literature is stretching it a little," says Bill. He enjoyed stories of space travel and science fiction, then in high school he discovered the Beat poets. Later came T.S. Eliot and Oscar Wilde, whom he still loves.

Nancy was "kind of a loner, so I did a lot of reading," she says. She enjoyed children's poetry, even in high school. "I also liked song lyrics, especially 'The Ballad of Davy Crockett' and cowboy songs by the Sons of the Pioneers. Bob Nolan, one of their songwriters, was an outstanding poet." Longfellow and Poe were also favorites, but "Houseman was the one I was really taken by. And Auden."

These two avid readers began life in different parts of the country. Bill was born and raised in San Antonio, earning a bachelor's degree at Trinity University in Home Building, "a kind



Bill and Nancy Pridgen. Photo courtesy of Eleanor Heginbotham

of engineering degree," he explains. Later came a bachelor of divinity degree from Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, followed by ten years in the Episcopal priesthood—"a little known part of my background." Later still he earned a master's degree in sociology from Trinity and spent thirty years teaching social studies at Samuel Clemens High School in Schertz, Texas, near their present home in Universal City, northeast of San Antonio. Bill retired after the 2001-02 school year. In between came a first marriage and the births of two children, now thirty-five and thirty-seven. He has just become a grandfather for the first time.

Nancy was born in Warren, Ohio, and attended Ohio State University before getting married, moving to Texas, and having a baby. Shortly after her son's birth she returned to school to earn a bachelor's degree in English, Spanish, and teaching, then a master's in counseling and guidance, both from Southwest Texas State University. In 1974 she began thirty-three years of teaching English at Samuel Clemens High School, and that's where she and Bill met. "We were best friends for seventeen years before we dated, then we dated for two months and got married."

During their seventeen years' friendship, the two often exchanged books. Nancy introduced Bill to Kurt Vonnegut, Bernard Malamud, and Ann Tyler, among others. Bill intro-

duced Nancy to Robert Heinlein and Ayn Rand. "We exchanged a lot of different kinds of books," says Nancy.

After their marriage in 1993, Bill and Nancy's love for reading seemed to lead naturally to their morning reading ritual. "We decided our jobs were very stressful and we had some inspirational books. We'd read maybe the day's entry. Then it just boomeranged!" explains Nancy. "We also read books to each other in the car on long trips," adds Bill. "We read *Brideshead Revisited* and everything by Chaim Potok and some by C.S. Lewis."

Dickinson came into the breakfast table mix shortly after their marriage. Nancy had the initial interest, and Bill soon found that he shared that interest. Their Johnson paperback edition recently fell apart from long use and has now been replaced by a Franklin paperback for travel. At home they alternate between the two variorum editions. Asked how their discussion is formulated, Nancy explains: "We don't always discuss a lot. If we come to a word we don't know, Bill is always quick to get out the 1828 dictionary and the other dictionaries. We may have a general idea of what the poem is about, and we talk about that, but we don't go into depth discussing it." Their breakfast readings usually last about thirty minutes. That was true even while they were teaching. "I think we got up awfully early," explains Nancy. "We didn't read as many books, but we have read daily since we got married. If we miss it, we either make it up later in the day or we just go on the next day. Some days it gets skipped, but not a lot."

Bill claims not to be a "literary person," but he has studied the New Critics and likes their approach. "I like a close reading of the text before going into biography or something like that. I don't read a poem to prove anything. But I do like to follow ref-

## *What's Your Story?: Dickinson for Two, cont., By Georgiana Strickland, Series Editor*

erences. Dickinson makes a lot of metaphors and allusions to religion, philosophy, math, astronomy, and so forth, and I like to follow up on those. For example, we started on the poem that begins “Ah, Teneriffe!” Somebody wanted to know if a mountain in that part of the world could have ice on it, so I did a little geography, looked up the height of the mountain, and multiplied that by what’s called the lapse rate, and it turns out that yes, it could have ice on it. Such research brings in so many different things that Dickinson was knowledgeable about. That fascinates me.”

For a long time, Nancy did all the reading of Dickinson. Then she was involved in something else that was really long, so she turned Dickinson over to Bill to read. “Well, when I was ready to take it back, he wasn’t willing to give it back. That’s when we started reading two poems. Now we each read aloud a Dickinson poem every day.”

Asked if they often have a different take on a poem the second or third time around, Bill replies emphatically, “Oh, certainly. A poem has many levels of meaning.” “We’ve had disagreements about what some of the poems have meant,” adds Nancy, “but we don’t have problems with disagreements. We just agree to disagree, and sometimes we change our mind.”

Nancy recalls her first exposure to Dickinson in college: “‘A word is dead/ When it is said.’ I liked that a lot. Later my favorite education professor recited for me ‘Much Madness is divinest Sense’ when I was very frustrated about something. I was amazed that someone could understand what I was going through.” During her high school teaching career, she taught “I taste a liquor never brewed.” “I was just taken away by the idea of tipping on sunshine.” That’s one of Nancy’s favorite poems. “I started writing a list of my favorite

poems, but it got ridiculous.”

Bill and Nancy don’t confine their love of poetry to home. Nancy has led some Dickinson sessions with a church group they belong to. “But I have to be very careful because I can become monomaniacal and just go on and on. But the one thing that really helps is bouncing ideas off Bill. In fact, we bounce things off each other all the way.”

Thoreau has always been Bill’s favorite poet. He and Nancy have read his major essays, several of his books, and all of his poems. At present they’re alternating readings from a biography with his journals. Asked if they find connections between the two poets, Bill replies, “Oh, indeed. We think they had a lot in common. They were both New Englanders and both had a wry sort of dry Yankee wit.” “What excited me,” adds Nancy, “was when I found that Thoreau and Dickinson studied a lot of the same German philosophers.”

Nancy’s interests tend more to biography and criticism than do Bill’s. One of her current enthusiasms is Dickinson poems set in the mind. She has been influenced by Suzanne Juhasz’s *The Undiscovered Continent*. “But the most exciting book I’ve ever read is Jed Deppman’s new book, *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson*, which deals with her education, the ‘try to think’ exercise she learned in school, and the philosophers she studied.”

Some of Bill and Nancy’s interest in literature has rubbed off on their children, especially on Nancy’s grandson, Robert, who has been exposed to Dickinson from birth. Beginning when he was in fourth grade, Nancy taught Dickinson in his classroom. At the end of each week they’d act out “I started Early—Took my Dog,” with students drawing straws to play the dog, the mouse, the town, and the sea. “Somehow Robert always became

the dog.” Nancy offered several interpretations, “but the students always wanted to act out the scary story.”

An outgrowth of Nancy’s interest in Dickinson is “Emily Dickinson in the Hill Country,” a weekend event she began last year and continued this April with the theme of “Emily Dickinson and Love.” It took place at a church camp, U Bar U ranch, northwest of San Antonio. Discussion combined Dickinson biography and poems with art activities, hiking, walking the labyrinth, and reading spiritual poems. Last year’s event drew eight participants, and this year’s doubled attendance to sixteen, says Nancy. Marcy Tanter was the featured speaker and Bill spoke on “Thoreau’s lost love.” Last year Wendy Barker spoke. “I’d like to use it as a start for an EDIS chapter,” says Nancy, who is an EDIS board member and chair of the chapter committee.

Nancy joined EDIS in 1996, and she and Bill have been to most meetings since 1998. Both appreciate the welcoming atmosphere at the meetings. They especially enjoy the small-group discussions of poems. Nancy comments, “When we first went to meetings, Bill would say, ‘She’s the Dickinson person, I’m just along for the ride.’ Now he’s a full member. Bill has gone beyond being my husband.” The Oxford conference is definitely on the calendar for both Pridgens for this summer. Meantime, those breakfast-table readings continue to provide mental and spiritual nourishment for this remarkable couple.

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**Georgie Strickland**, a former editor of the *EDIS Bulletin*, now edits a series of articles on EDIS members who have interesting stories about their involvement with Dickinson. To tell your story in a future issue, please contact her at [georgiestr@aol.com](mailto:georgiestr@aol.com).

**Dickinson and the Visual Arts:  
Emily Dickinson and Elsie Driggs**

By Maryanne Garbowsky, Series Editor

In her “letter to the World” (Fr519), Emily Dickinson “commits” her words “To Hands I cannot see—”. It is this unseen, future audience she addresses in her poem, asking these readers to be gentle with her: “Judge tenderly—of Me.” So, too, in “Essential Oils—are wrung—” (Fr772), the poet foresees a time when she is gone but her poems will live on

...in Lady’s Drawer

Make Summer—When the Lady lie

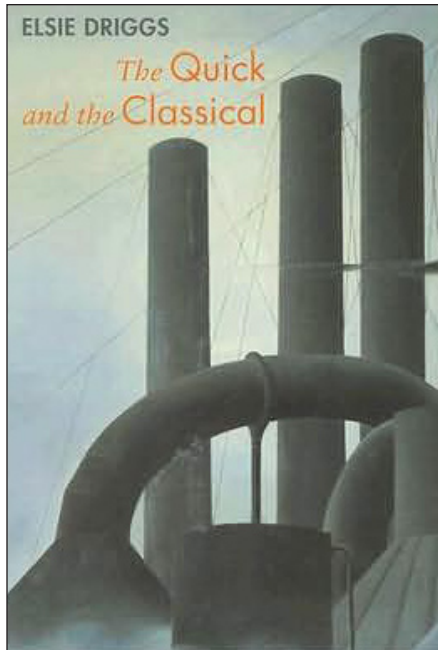
In Ceaseless Rosemary—

Dickinson knew that on some intuitive level, despite the scant encouragement she received during her lifetime, future readers would value her poems. At the end of her popularly anthologized poem “Because I could not stop for Death—” (Fr479), she takes a carriage ride into eternity. We notice, however, that she is not alone with the driver, but “Immortality” is along as well. Her poems *would* be remembered she believed.

And, of course, they have been remembered, but more than merely read and reread for pleasure and insight, they have provided many artists with a springboard to their own creative work. Like seeds, her poems have fallen on fertile ground to be gathered up by musicians, visual artists, and other poets as well. These seedlings have germinated and blossomed into new works of art.

A case in point is the early twentieth century artist Elsie Driggs, known primarily for her Precisionist paintings. However, she was so taken by Dickinson’s poems that at least three of them encouraged

her own artistic creations. Perhaps it was serendipitous that Driggs picked up a 1924 volume of Dickinson’s poems, read through them and took the time to transcribe at least three of them. These three were “The Soul selects her own Society—(Fr409), “I taste a liquor never brewed—” (Fr207), and “You’ve seen Balloons set—Hav’nt You?” (Fr730). In addition, she writes at the top of the sheet “I picked up book in 1938” (47). In 1938, she was to have her first and only child, a daughter Merriman. We can only speculate why at this time in her life



the poems appealed to her mind and temperament.

One suggestion might be that it was Dickinson’s spirit of “playfulness” that artist Marsden Hartley found so attractive about the poet in his 1921 book, *Adventures in the Arts* (200). He writes a chapter about her in which he applauds her “sublime, impertinent playfulness” that “like some child pranking

with the clouds, and the hills and the valleys beneath them, child as she surely was always, playing in some celestial garden space in her mind, . . . where freedom for this childish sport was the one thing necessary to her ever young and incessantly capering mind . . .” (Hartley 200-201).

It is this quality exactly that Driggs finds so captivating. Driggs used all three poems she transcribed, “The soul selects her own society,” “I taste a liquor never brewed” and “You’ve seen balloons set—haven’t you?” to paint. (Driggs quotes the Bianchi edition of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*; therefore, the numbering and capitalization differ from Johnson’s later edition.)

The latter two paintings were done in 1938 and celebrate a child-like simplicity and joy in life. Despite the limitations in her own life, becoming a first time parent in a small, cramped house in Lambertville, New Jersey with “no studio of her own” (Kimmerle 44), she created these two watercolors with an airy buoyant quality.

The first, *I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed*, is a small watercolor on paper measuring 14 ½ x 11 inches. Against a background of shades of blue, we see circles of varying sizes ascending. As they ascend, they grow larger and more transparent. They are various colors: yellow, blue, red, pink, and lavender. Reading the first two stanzas of Dickinson’s poem, which Driggs actually “transcribed on the back of the frame” (Kimmerle 47), we realize that Driggs visually depicts bubbles rising from a glass of some effervescent liquor. However, the lack of a source of these bubbles makes the viewer also aware that the inebria-

*Dickinson and the Visual Arts: Emily Dickinson and Elsie Driggs, cont.,*  
By Maryanne Garbowsky, Series Editor

tion that Dickinson speaks of in the poem, and what Driggs accurately portrays, is the spirit of life itself, the very air that we breathe that has this intoxicating effect. Nature herself during the “endless summer days— / From inns of molten Blue—” (Fr207) fills our spirits with elation and enthusiasm.

The second painting, *Balloons*, also dated 1938, is a small watercolor on paper (11x13 inches). Here there are more circles of color – sixteen in all – that are balloons of varying size. They rise against a background of blue, green and white. What appears to be the strings of the balloons—what Dickinson calls “ribbons”—are nine swans delicately penciled in. Here they glide weightlessly, like the balloons, which are light and airy. The swans are barely visible, lightly sketched; they are “stately”— Dickinson’s word — like the balloons which “go softly out / Opon a Sea of Blonde— (Fr730).”

The last painting, entitled *The Soul Selects her Own Society*, based on Dickinson’s poem of the same name, is according to art critic Ilene Susan Fort a “complex conceptual statement.” It shows “a horse and

chariot painted over a large profile of a Greek looking man” (Kimmerle 142) and is unlike the other two watercolors, which are light and buoyant. Fort describes this painting as one of Driggs’, “more enigmatic” and “surreal works” (Kimmerle 142). It is more serious in tone, like the poem itself.

What a rare insight into the act of creation, a front row seat in the artist’s studio. Perhaps the very act of transcribing the poems letter by letter, word by word triggered in Driggs the images that she would use in her watercolors. In this instance, it is not an artist inspired by another, but one artist collaborating with another. Both Dickinson and Driggs are working side by side, charged by the same current of creative energy. Dickinson and Driggs are at one, the poetic transformed into the visual, working together even though they are more than 70 years apart.

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### Bulletin Seeks New Editor

Kathy Welton has informed the EDIS Board of Directors that she intends to step down as editor of the *Bulletin* after the current issue. The Board is now looking for someone to take over this demanding but very rewarding task.

The basic qualifications are that the candidate be a member of EDIS in good standing and a resident of

the United States (to facilitate mailing). The editor also must have excellent writing and editing skills, be familiar with Dickinson’s biography and work, and be reasonably current with Dickinson scholarship. The position is unpaid, but all normal expenses are reimbursed. The position carries with it membership on the EDIS Board of Directors.

The Board is looking for a candidate who would be prepared to assume partial responsibility for editing the fall 2010 issue and full responsibility beginning with the spring 2011 issue. To apply, please send a resume and a letter of interest to Georgiana Strickland, 133 Lackawanna Rd., Lexington, KY 40503 or georgiestr@aol.com.



## My Criterion for Tune: Exhilaration Within: A Different Kind of Oral Life for Dickinson's Lyrics

By Emily Seelbinder, Series Editor

*"My Criterion for Tune" is a new name for the EDIS Bulletin's series on Dickinson and music. How fitting that the new series title comes from the same poem that inspired the theme for this summer's conference in Oxford (Fr 256). My thanks to Cindy Dickinson for passing along a copy of Exhilaration and thus leading me to meet the dynamic and delightful musicians who are the subject of this piece.*

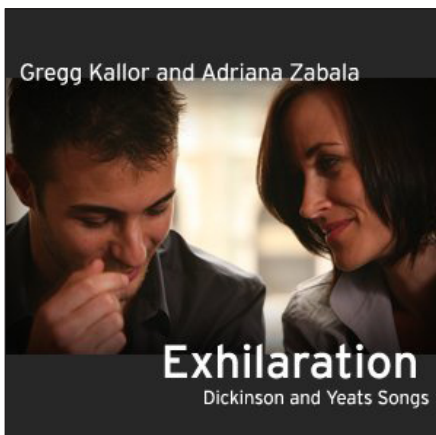
Emily Seelbinder, Series Editor

Listening to Gregg Kallor's evocative settings of Emily Dickinson's poetry, one would not guess that Kallor wrote his first song only two years before publishing and recording the nine songs that make up his Dickinson song-cycle *Exhilaration*. His settings are elegant and immediately engaging, lifting up the words, drawing the listener into what Kallor calls "the emotional sound world" of the poems. Subsequent hearings deepen that experience and reveal a complexity and careful craft that belie the composer's claim that he really had very little experience of poetry when he began setting Dickinson texts ("Intersections").

Take, for example, his setting of "Wild Nights" (Fr269). Though I am not familiar with all of the over thirty settings of this poem, I know quite a few, including Lori Laitman's "tango-inspired" version; Lee Hoiby's setting for the lush and powerful voice of Leontyne Price, with what Georgiana Strickland describes as "an appropriately stormy background in the piano, evoking waves crashing, winds howling"; and the over-the-top, eleven-minute setting for mixed chorus and orchestra that concludes John Adams's 1980 work *Harmonium*. Most settings focus on the highly charged passion of the poem—a lyric

Adams once identified as suitable for Mick Jagger or Tina Turner.

Kallor's setting is far more nuanced, evoking the passion, but also the aching uncertainty of the speaker, addressing an absent lover, with whom she may never share such passion again. When asked about this setting, Kallor explains, "Urgency was what I was going for." This mood is reflected in his not setting the song in a particular key, but by placing "two chords on top of each other," thereby providing no "harmonic resolution" to the



piece. As for the passion, he says, "I was more interested in creating that frenzy rhythmically." That rhythmic frenzy begins in the rolling, clashing chords of the piano and the singer's melismas on the word "Wild" as the song opens; it continues unabated until one brief, "more contemplative" moment as the singer concludes the phrase "Rowing in Eden— / Ah! the Sea!" and then pauses for several bars while the piano reflects her thoughts. "It seemed important to give this moment a chance to breathe. Essentially, this poem is about lust and desire—it calls for a frenetic energy and a rich harmonic palette—but here it feels like she is closing her eyes for a moment to savor the sweetness of her fantasy."

It is clear in his discussion of his work that Kallor relies first on his instincts in finding the appropriate setting for a poem. His extensive work as a jazz pianist has developed a trust in those instincts, now augmented by his study of classical composition, which he undertook after finishing a degree in American Studies at Tufts University and moving to New York City in 2000. In Boston, he had studied privately with Fred Hersch, "who, in addition to being a master improviser and accompanist, produces one of the most beautiful sounds from the piano I have ever heard." Hersch urged Kallor to study in New York with his classical piano teacher Sophia Rosoff, and that, Kallor insists, "changed everything. I experienced a kind of rebirth; I reengaged my study of the classics with newfound passion, and the music resonated very deeply. I had the strong feeling that I had come home."

Hersch also introduced his eager student to composer and lyricist Herschel Garfein. "Until then," Kallor recalls, "I had never formally studied composition, and in Herschel I found the perfect mentor. He taught me about the craft of composing—what to do with the inspired sketches after the Muse has departed. Sophia and Herschel both encouraged me to draw upon my background in jazz and improvisation in my 'classical' playing and composing. I am grateful to them for so wisely and patiently helping me to find my way." In 2005, when Kallor became an uncle, he asked Garfein for assistance in finding a text to set as a lullaby. Garfein obliged by providing lyrics of his own devising.

Kallor was pleased with his first song, but the nephew for whom it was composed was far too young to

*My Criterion for Tune: Exhilaration Within: A Different Kind of Oral Life for Dickinson's Lyrics, cont.*  
 By Emily Seelbinder, Series Editor

appreciate his uncle's gift. "It's hard to gauge appreciation when the intended effect of your song is to put the listener to sleep," Kallor says, "so I decided to write some songs for a slightly older and more demonstrative audience." Shortly thereafter, he purchased a used anthology of poems in English. At that time he knew very little about reading poetry. This "somewhat daunting" challenge was perhaps to his advantage, allowing him to explore the poems without pre-conceived notions of what one should and should not do in approaching texts.

Like many composers before him, Kallor was drawn to Dickinson immediately. Her poems, he says, "blew me away." There was "something about her writing, the way she captured these ineffable sensations in very subtle, not flowery language," a language that is "understated, but packs a real punch." Kallor set aside the anthology in favor of the Johnson edition of the complete poems. He read them all, taking note of the texts "that spoke to me, and narrowed that down to the ones that suggested a musical idea. I didn't choose these poems. They chose me."

In setting the poems, Kallor strove always to preserve the power of Dickinson's words: "I didn't want to add something extraneous—the poems didn't need to be augmented in any way. The way I went about it, I would read them and speak them aloud and imagine them being sung. They're not extroverted. I tried to imagine them in an understated voice—very speech-like. Because I was so struck by these poems, I didn't want to weigh them down. I wanted to give them a different kind of oral life. I tried to be very conscious of her phrasing."

The voice of Kallor's settings was not soprano—the most common

choice for composers working on Dickinson settings—but mezzo-soprano, in opera and art song the voice of experience, the voice of a woman who knows her own mind and does not fear the consequences of speaking it. Kallor found such a singer in Adriana Zabala, whom Garfein knew through her performance in the premiere of *Elmer Gantry*, for which he had written the libretto. An experienced singer with a diverse repertoire and an immense love of the art song, Zabala proved to be an ideal collaborator for the less-experienced Kallor.

"She's such a literate person," Kallor says. "She approached the songs from an intellectual place as well as musical. She would ask specific questions about phrasing and my intentions—we would talk about it, and sometimes I would make a change. One of the things I love about working with her is that she will take the poems without the music and get a sense of what they mean, what they mean to her, and see if the settings make sense to her. We both choose to perform music that has personal resonance to us, that speaks on many levels." Working with Zabala was "an incredible learning process" for Kallor, helping him "get a feel for what really works and what doesn't."

Zabala's feel for what works on stage is extraordinary. Perhaps her parents anticipated her ability to catch fire with an audience when they named her after her grandfather, a baseball player in Cuba and the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, still remembered by long-time baseball fans Adriana Zabala encounters when she is in Miami. According to Roberto González Echevarría, Adrián Zabala was "a strong six-footer of Basque origin . . . , a good overall athlete and also could hit. . . . He had speed and

an elegant windup. The last part of his surname (bala) means 'bullet' in Spanish, an auspicious linguistic association for a pitcher" (281-2). It is an auspicious association for his granddaughter as well.

In the large-scale world of opera, Zabala sparkles in the well-known bel canto and trouser roles that are the staples of a mezzo's operatic repertoire. She also brings remarkable vigor to the performance of new operas, most recently in the title role for the United States premiere of Jonathon Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* with the Minnesota Opera in March 2009. In more intimate settings, she glows, making an immediate connection with the audience. Kallor marvels at how, in their concerts together, "A lot of people we performed for have gotten caught up in Adriana's physical presence and the way she conveys the poems in her body language and her expressions. It's very real."

Operatic roles might pay the rent, but Zabala's abiding passion is the art song. As a performer, as Artistic Director for the Southeastern Festival of Song (a position she held for five years), and now as a member of the voice faculty at the University of Minnesota, she has examined a lot of new material and given much thought to how chamber concerts can and should be structured. Zabala confesses that when she received the packet of songs Kallor had sent her, she was at first reluctant to look at them. She knew that many composers have tried, but far too few have succeeded in evoking the elusive spirit of Dickinson's texts. She had "an immediate and moving response," however, to Kallor's "commitment to expression and meaning," which she describes in the liner notes to their CD as "wide-ranging and profound. His settings

*My Criterion for Tune: Exhilaration Within: A Different Kind of Oral Life for Dickinson's Lyrics, cont.*  
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reveal shades in every word, even the moments when there are no words." She eagerly accepted his invitation to work with him in developing his songs for performance and a recording.

Over the next several months, Kallor refined his songs and came up with two song-cycles, one featuring the work of W. B. Yeats, the other gathering nine Dickinson poems under the title *Exhilaration*: "Exhilaration is the Breeze" (Fr1157), "It bloomed and dropt, a Single Noon—" (Fr843), "Bee! I'm expecting you!" (Fr983), "We Cover Thee—Sweet Face—" (Fr461), "Wild nights—Wild nights!" (Fr269), "What Inn is this" (Fr100), "I should not dare to leave my friend" (Fr234), "Still own thee—still thou art" (Fr1654), and "Exhilaration—is within—" (Fr 645).

The name of the cycle comes from the two poems that Kallor calls "book-ends" for the poems in between. Kallor employs similar melodies in these two settings. "I love the idea of return—when something comes back to us at the end of a piece. The 'Exhilaration' poems complement each other, and I wanted to include both. To me, the sense of wonder that Dickinson describes in these two poems sums up what much of her poetry is about—savoring experience. Ecstasy, despair, and everything in between." Choosing where to place the other seven poems was a matter of finding a "musical flow," not so much a narrative as "an architectural plot." It was not by conscious design that "Wild Nights" is in the exact center of the set, but it works beautifully there, Zabala says, evoking so many feelings at once: "desire, sex, confidence, vulnerability, repression."

With the exception of "Bee! I'm expecting you!" the settings do not evoke the playfulness or exuberance

one might expect from the cycle's title. Several of the poems explore the experiences of death and loss, but Kallor sought to avoid morbid settings of these texts: "I think Dickinson is mistakenly viewed as being obsessively focused on death, but it wasn't death that interested her. It was the sensation of feeling loss, and joy and passion—the feeling of being alive and engaged. One of the reasons I was drawn to her was that she doesn't elevate the drama for effect—she is honestly (and exquisitely!) conveying what she felt at the bedside of someone she loved who was dying, or the guilt of not being there. The hesitancy, the uncertainty, the stuttering thoughts—she captured that feeling."

Kallor and Zabala have captured that feeling as well, especially in their performance of "I should not dare to leave my friend," which is available for viewing or download on Kallor's website: [www.greggkallor.com](http://www.greggkallor.com). There is a link on that website to a new collaboration between these two remarkable artists: *Exhilaration: A Workshop in Poetry and Music* ([www.songsworkshop.com](http://www.songsworkshop.com)). Through live performance and interaction with high school or college students in the workshop, Kallor and Zabala provide an opportunity for participants to explore the relationship of poetry and music and find new ways of experiencing texts. While visiting a campus, they also offer a concert, open to a wider audience than that for the workshop, in which they perform Kallor's compositions as well as other composers' settings of texts in English.

Given their combined passion and talents, one cannot doubt that anyone lucky enough to experience a Kallor-Zabala performance leaves the classroom or the concert hall with a

newfound or renewed love of poetry and the knowledge that "Exhilaration is the Breeze / That lifts us from the Ground" (Fr1157) and remains "within" us—"There can no Outer Wine / So royally intoxicate / As that diviner Brand" (Fr645).

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## New Publications

By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

**Anderson, Karen Leona.** *Punish Honey.* Durham, NC: Carolina Wren Press, 2009. 49 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-932112-58-3. \$14.95.

Recipient of the 2007 EDIS Graduate Fellowship Award, Anderson brings together poetry and science in her debut collection of thirty-five poems divided into three sections: "Tulips," "Bees," and "The Animal Parliament." The book's title is taken from Emily Dickinson's lines, "In vain to punish Honey— / It only sweeter grows" (J1562). Like Dickinson, Anderson has an affinity for the natural world and can be cryptic, dark, and linguistically difficult. Evie Shockley cites Anderson's "explosive diction and endlessly shifting syntax." Echoes of Dickinson can be found in words, phrases, and lines like "charnel house," "the sign of true election," and "Magnolia, throat too soon open to the fumbling fingers of beetles." For Dickinson, "'Hope' is the thing with feathers—," but for Anderson (sounding here much like Sylvia Plath), "Behold here as an insect bitch, golden bones / for legs, wraith-wristed, of course, a parody of the fat / and feathered." In Anderson's elegiac world marked by disease and entropy, even magnolia blossoms are on the wane as "wine-stained gloves." Her world can be dream-like and fearsome, often edging toward nightmare and brutality, recalling Tennyson's world, "red in tooth and claw." Anderson's poems do not offer cheer, comfort, or happy endings, but for serious readers interested in the poet's use of language and metaphor, with words and ideas put together in inventive ways, these poems can provide what Alice Fulton calls "a sumptuous linguistic feast."

**Bushnell, Sally.** *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009. 302 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8139-2774-9. \$55.00.

Bushnell explores the nature of texts in process and their relationship to the

completed works, hoping to expand the definition of *text* to encompass both draft materials and the completed text. In the first three chapters she introduces a method to study draft materials; she then applies this method to textual analysis of drafted works by Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson. In her final chapter Bushnell reflects on "the nature of textual process, of the making of meaning and the kind of interpretation it requires." Informed by Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, French genetic criticism, Jerome McGann, and other contemporary critics, Bushnell's writing is clear, but a familiarity with hermeneutics, teleology, phenomenology, semiotics, and structuralism is helpful. Her study will appeal to textual scholars and theorists; and to scholars of Whitman, Tennyson, and Dickinson. In "Dickinson's Process" (168-214), Bushnell surveys the problems of editing Dickinson's work and interpreting the fascicles; but the core of her study is a "detailed analysis of Dickinson's creative acts and strategies," particularly her "resistance to making judgments and to 'fixing' the text." Working with Fr 369, 911, 1255, 1278, 1356, 1365, and 1476, and providing illustrations of manuscript pages, Bushnell focuses on Dickinson's deletions and footnote crosses, showing how she uses "a stable frame with pockets of instability allowed within it," how making one change can lead to others. Bushnell's meticulous work enables her to suggest sequential layers of revision—an impressive analytical effort.

**Eire, Carlos.** *A Very Brief History of Eternity.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010, 268 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-691-13357-7. \$24.95.

Eire surveys "how conceptions of *forever*, or eternity, have evolved in Western culture, and what roles these conceptions have played in shaping our own self-understanding, personally and collectively." Interested in the "intersection of intellectual and social history" and the "symbiosis of ideas and practices," he

asks, "What difference has eternity made in history?" Like Virgil in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cuban-born historian and Yale professor Eire is an alert, knowledgeable guide, as he leads readers through more than 3,000 years of religious history from ancient times, through early Christianity, the medieval period, the Protestant Reformation, and the Enlightenment, to the present secular period dominated by individualism and the decline of belief in eternity. Each chapter focuses on "a different dominant paradigm or conception of eternity," encompassing such figures as Plato, Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, the popes, Luther, Calvin, Pascal, Nietzsche, Stephen Hawking, and others. Like Emily Dickinson, Eire struggles with the fact that we must die. Introducing his chapter on modern religious history, he treats Dickinson briefly (157-59) but significantly, discussing her skeptical and agnostic voice in J502, 976, and 1551. Eire's erudite, engaging, and often witty history should interest anyone interested in Dickinson's "Flood subject" (L319), as she called her understanding of immortality, for he places Dickinson into the context of a long history of human concern about what happens after death. Included are sixteen illustrations, an appendix, notes, and index.

**Felstiner, John.** *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009. 396 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-300-13750-7. \$35.00.

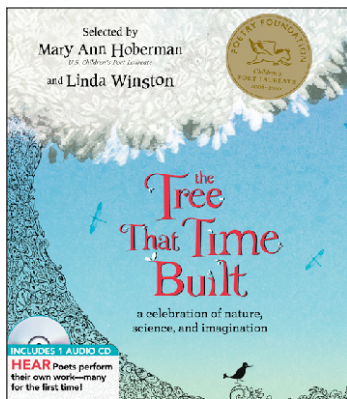
Felstiner says, "ecological losses are nearly beyond repair and time is running out," believing that "poetry more than any other kind of speech reveals the vital signs and warning signs of our tenancy on earth." In short, he argues persuasively that poetry can make a difference. His book is a noble enterprise. Accessible to general readers, Felstiner's essays begin with Native American songs and the Bible; he then discusses the lives and selected works of 40 British and American poets, including Blake, the Wordsworths,

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.  
Email: [barbarakelly@psualum.com](mailto:barbarakelly@psualum.com)

# REVIEWS

## New Publications, cont., By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Coleridge, Keats, Whitman, Dickinson, Hardy, Hopkins, Yeats, Frost, Stevens, Williams, Lawrence, Millay, Kunitz, Roethke, Bishop, Kinnell, Hughes, Snyder, and others. In "'Earth's most graphic transaction': Syllables of Emily Dickinson" (75-87), Felstiner references more than a dozen Dickinson poems, noting her keen attention to detail in "A Bird came down the Walk—" and "A narrow Fellow in the Grass." In an otherwise engaging essay accompanied by illustrations of the "narrow Fellow" manuscript pages, Emily Dickinson is represented in a nearly full-page photograph by the controversial Gura photograph purchased on Ebay, its undocumented provenance unmentioned. Dickinson's authentic daguerreotype and the retouched copy of it can be found in the essay on May Swenson. Felstiner notes Dickinson's influence on other poets throughout the book. He concludes, poems can awaken individuals to consciousness and "make us mindful of fragile, resilient life." Included are 60 illustrations (22 color plates), bibliographies for each chapter, and an index.



**Hoberman, Mary Ann, and Linda Winston, eds. Illustrated by Barbara Fortin. *The Tree That Time Built: A Celebration of Nature, Science, and Imagination.*** Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks: Jaberwocky, 2009. 209 pp. 9.25 x 8.25 x .75 inches. Cloth, ISBN 1-4022-1857-6. \$19.99.

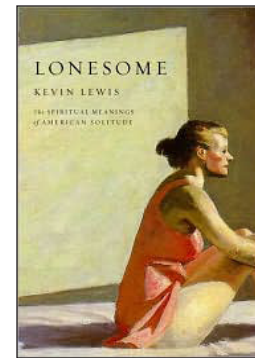
Strongly influenced by Darwin's discoveries, United States Children's Poet Laureate Hoberman and teacher Winston present 117 poems by 77 well known and lesser known poets celebrating the mysteries and miracles of the natural world,

from fossils and dinosaurs to a panoply of plant life, sea creatures, insects, birds, and mammals. Intended for school-age children, their teachers, and inquisitive minds of all ages, this informative, delightful anthology contains nine sections: "Oh, Fields of Wonder," "The Sea Is Our Mother," "Prehistoric Praise," "Think Like a Tree," "Meditations of a Tortoise," "Some Primal Termite," "Everything That Lives Wants to Fly," "I Am the Family Face," and "Hurt No Living Thing." Introductions to each section, instructive editorial notes following many poems, and a few fine pen-and-ink drawings accompany the poems. The editors emphasize that both scientists and poets are keen observers using their imaginations to explore, experiment, collect, and connect information. Nature's wonders are explained with imagination and humor: in her poem "206," Winston says the Tyrannosaurus rex has about 206 different bones—"Same as us." Dickinson is represented by "The Pedigree of Honey" and "A narrow Fellow in the Grass," the latter contrasted to Theodore Roethke's "Snake." Included are an audio CD with 44 poems, 18 poets reading their own work; a glossary of 47 scientific and literary terms; biographical sketches of the poets, editors, and illustrator; suggestions for further reading and research; and an index.

**Kjaer, Niels. *Dialogue with Dickinson: Papers Read at International Conferences of the Emily Dickinson International Society.*** Arhus, Denmark, 2009. 24 pp. Paper, spiral bound, ISBN 87-989716-7-2. \$10.00. To purchase, contact the author at nk2704@yahoo.dk

Danish author, translator, and poet Niels Kjaer gathers together presentations that he made at three Emily Dickinson International Society events: "Celebration" (21-22), a tribute to Dickinson, presented at the twentieth-anniversary meeting in Amherst, August 1-3, 2008; "Søren Kierkegaard, Emily Dickinson, and Haiku Poetry: 'The Moment' as a Cross-cultural Category" (5-13), presented at the EDIS international conference in Kyoto, Japan, August 3-5, 2007; and "The Art of Translating Emily Dickinson" (15-20), presented at the EDIS international conference in Washington, D.C., October 22-24, 1992. Written in English, containing two pictures, and featuring a hand-drawn im-

age of Dickinson on the cover, Kjaer's text concludes with a biographical sketch of the author, a bibliography of his work on Dickinson, and suggested further reading. A charter member and former Board member (1991-92) of the Emily Dickinson International Society, Kjaer has translated selected Dickinson poems and letters into Danish and has written books, articles, and plays about Dickinson in Danish; he has also written six articles in English about the poet.



**Lewis, Kevin. *Lonesome: The Spiritual Meanings of American Solitude.*** New York: I. B. Tauris/Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 202 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-84885-075-0. \$85.00.

In an extended essay, Lewis explores the complexity of lonesomeness, its religious-like character, and the "ways Americans have negotiated their privatized, non-traditional religiousness." To support his "plea for recognition of the fecund 'lonesomeness' of the greater American experience, and for its occasionally religious significance," he examines American poets Whitman, Dickinson, Frost, Stevens, Roethke, Ammons, and James Wright; fiction writers Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson, and James Agee; "country" songwriters; and artist Edward Hopper; drawing also from Rudolf Otto, William James, Romain Rolland, Abraham Maslow and others. Believing that dictionaries have not caught up with the uses and nuances of "lonely" and "lonesome," he distinguishes between "lonely" with its negative connotations and "lonesome" with its potential for the numinous, oceanic, peak experience and illuminated consciousness that lead to transcendence and intimations of eternity. He begins with Dickinson's poem (J1116): "There is another Loneliness . . . Not want of friend

# REVIEWS

## New Publications, cont., By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

occasions it . . . But nature sometimes, sometimes thought." Lewis says, "Our distinctly lone and lovely poet . . . American to the core, testifies that 'whoso' this other loneliness 'befalls / Is richer than could be revealed / By mortal numeral.'" In the section on Dickinson (32-40), he discusses J258, 262, 532, 774, and 1370, characterizing Dickinson's lonesomeness as "tough-minded, austere, evanescent, uncomfortable, braced by an irresistible chill." Notes and an index are included in this illuminating book, of interest to anyone wanting to understand loneliness and its potentially therapeutic counterpart lonesomeness.

**Magid, Annette M.** *You Are What You Eat: Literary Probes into the Palate.* Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2008. 464 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-847184924. \$89.99.

Twenty-one scholars examine the role food plays in literature, film, politics, and poetry. Divided among five chapters ("Domesticating Women," "Consuming Films," "Multicultural Tastes," "Childhood Eatables," and "Contemporary Cuisine."), the essays provide a diversity of approaches and topics including: "Food Fight: War and Domesticity in Fay Weldon's Fiction," "You Gotta Eat Somethin': Food, Violence, and Perversity in Scorsese's Urban Films," "Knowledge is as Food: Food, Digestion and Illness in Milton's *Paradise Lost*," "Perceptive Appetites: Food Issues in Mother Goose and Nursery Literature," and "Never the Right Food: Eating and Alienation in John Updike's Rabbit Angstrom Saga." Most of these papers were presented at the Northeast Modern Language Association's 2006, 2007, and 2008 Conventions in the "Food for Thought" sessions chaired by Magid. In Anne Ramirez's "Breadcrumbs of Grace, Birdsongs of Joy: Emily Dickinson's Gifts (44-55)," the author focuses on Dickinson's use of breadcrumbs "to represent precious morsels of grace that she humbly receives—or generously offers to others." She traces Dickinson, a supplicant, moving from deprivation and hunger to fulfillment, gratitude, and acceptance of transient joy, becoming the giver of gifts. To support her essay, Ramirez ex-

amines Dickinson's letters and more than a dozen poems. She concludes, Dickinson "repeatedly returns to the prophetic persona who is always expectant, always waiting in readiness for the next bars of melody, the next sip of sacred wine, the next breadcrumb of grace that will be transformed into poetry."

**Thomson, Shawn.** *The Fortress of American Solitude: Robinson Crusoe and Antebellum Culture.* Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009. 243 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8386-4217-7. \$54.50.

Robinson Crusoe was a popular and powerful role model for young men leaving home and seeking self-reliance and heroic individuality in the antebellum period; for women, Crusoe gave access to the "terrain of male experience." Thomson argues, however, that the Crusoe story offered "no practical guidance in negotiating the crowded cities and market values of the burgeoning nation." He says, "Crusoe's meaning as a model for productive energy breaks down in the self-seeking ideology of the liberal individualism of the nineteenth century and becomes reconstituted as an emotional fortress of solitude that shields men from recognizing the cost of their participation in America's imperial ventures." Thomson surveys the Crusoe theme in works by Herman Melville, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Stoddard, James Fenimore Cooper, Emily Dickinson, and others less well known. About Dickinson (192-200), Thomson says her "castaway tales of shipwreck and privation" . . . "provide a refuge from an austere and rigid patriarchy and a site for personal growth." He discusses two "castaway poems" (J750, 550) and two "shipwreck poems" (J1454, 1469), stating, "while the castaway poems served as a vehicle for abstract thought, the shipwreck poems reflect Dickinson's own dark obsession with moribundity." He concludes, "It is through . . . rupture of the civilized self from the elaborate forms of society that Dickinson achieves her greatest power." This interesting, well designed book includes three illustrations from early editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, notes and an index.

**Wardrop, Daneen.** *Emily Dickinson and the Labor of Clothing.* Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2009. 246 pp. 10.25 x 7.25 x 1 inches. Cloth, ISBN 1-58465-780-4. \$30.00



Focusing on nineteenth-century clothing, those who wore it, and those who made it, Wardrop seeks "to reposition the perception of Dickinson from that of a reclusive figure to a figure involved in social interactions." In clear, graceful prose, the author surveys nineteenth-century fashions made at home and later in factories: basque bodices, bustles, corsets, chemises, crinoline and hoop skirts; calico, chintz, cashmere, and damask fabrics; gaiters, bonnets, straw and palm-leaf hats; sacque jackets, tippets, lace, and veils. Readers learn the differences among pantalettes, pantaloons, and bloomers. Illustrating the text are 66 pictures (24 color plates), culled from *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Harpers*, and other archival materials, including art by Edgar Degas, Winslow Homer, and Currier and Ives. Wardrop analyzes Dickinson's white dress, her daguerreotype picture, and her writing, finding "a young woman vitally concerned with how she dressed." Only two blocks from the Homestead, the Hills factory, the largest hat factory in the United States in the mid-1860s, employed local seamstresses and later Irish immigrants, their hard working conditions surely known to Dickinson. Referencing scores of her poems and examining Fr 367, 388, 495, 705, and 735, Wardrop details how the making of clothing informed Dickinson's writing, leading to "expressions of eroticism, biting social commentary and comedy." Wardrop's serious title belies the accessibility and fun of this well researched, informative book that dispels the myth of a pristine white-clad Dickinson.

## Book Notes

Now available in paperback editions:

- Christopher Benfey's *A Summer of Hummingbirds: Love, Art, and Scandal in the Intersecting Worlds of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Martin Johnson Heade*, Penguin, \$16.00.
- Brock Clarke's *An Arsonist's Guide to Writers' Homes in New England*, Algonquin Books, \$13.95.
- Marietta Messmer's *Vice for Voices: Reading Emily Dickinson's Correspondence*, University of Massachusetts Press, \$29.95.
- Domhnall Mitchell's *Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception*, University of Massachusetts Press, \$32.95.
- William H. Pritchard's *Talking Back to Emily Dickinson, and Other Essays*, University of Massachusetts Press, \$29.95.
- Judy Jo Small's *Positive as Sound: Emily Dickinson's Rhyme*, University of Georgia Press, \$24.95.
- Brenda Wineapple's *White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, Anchor, \$16.95.

## Journal Articles

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

- Álvarez Castaño, Emilio José. "Emily Dickinson o la búsqueda de la trascendencia." *Especúlo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* 42 (2009): n.p. Electronic publication: <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero42/edickins.html> Written in Spanish. [Author focuses on Dickinson's imagery and relationship to mysticism.]
- Boggs, Colleen Glenney. "Emily Dickinson's Animal Pedagogies." *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 533-41. [Boggs's surveys nineteenth-century attitudes toward animals, citing Dickinson's uncle Asa Bullard's 1863 book, *Dog Stories*, featuring a dog named Carlo; the book "portrays animals' behavior as exemplary" and "uses animals to teach children kindness." Boggs discusses Fr 333, 591, and 1236, counting more than seventy different animals throughout all of Dickinson's poems.]
- Diehl, Joanne Feit. "The Poetics of Loss: Erotic Melancholia in Agamben and Dickinson." *Imago* 66.3 (2009): 369-81. [Diehl explains Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's theory of melancholy, specifically "the relationship between loss and the reconstitution of the missing object," arguing, "The necrophilia that lies at the heart of Dickinson's poetry [Fr 411, 431, 442, 830, 831, and 1239] can be understood as an elaboration of the psychodynamics articulated by Agamben."]
- Friedlander, Benjamin. "Emily Dickinson and the Battle of Ball's Bluff." *PMLA* 124.5 (2009): 1582-99. [Friedlander compares "When I was small, a Woman died —," to other Civil War poems, identifies discordant notes in Dickinson's poem, suggesting that it provides the "best evidence that Dickinson was consciously engaged in positioning herself as a war poet," "bending her facts and feelings to fit a wartime literary marketplace."]
- Gilliland, Don. "Textual Scruples and Dickinson's 'Uncertain Certainty.'" *Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.2 (2009): 38-62.
- Gleason, George. "Is It Really Emily Dickinson?" *Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.2 (2009): 1-20.
- Harris, V. C. "Emily Dickinson and the Comic Imagination." *TJES: Teresian Journal of English Studies* 1.1 (2009): 1-7. [Harris defines comedy as "lack of a logical movement from cause to effect leading to unexpected and often incongruous developments." The author discusses J189, 214, 280, 465, 754, 877, 1192, 1426, and 1732, finding comedy in the absurd, illogical, macabre, and unreal; also grim gallops humor in end-game situations.]
- Kern, Robert. "Birds of a Feather: Emily Dickinson, Alberto Manguel, and the Nature Poet's Dilemma." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 16.2 (2009): 327-42. [Kern says "ecopoets" struggle to convey "a reality that is foreign to words and that resists them." He studies Wordsworth, Emerson, Dickinson (J69 and 178), Argentine/Canadian writer Alberto Manguel, and others, concluding, certain writers possess "venture-some verbal creativity" and "fecundity of imagination" to write with "startling reality and power:"]
- Longworth, Polly, ed. "And Do Not Forget Emily': Confidante Abby Wood on Dickinson's Lonely Religious Rebellion." *New England Quarterly* 82.2 (2009): 335-46. [From an estate sale in Massachusetts comes a newly discovered 1850 letter, now at Amherst College Library, from Emily Dickinson's friend Abby Wood to Abiah Root: "How can I tell you that she [Emily] ridicules and opposes us, and shuts her own heart against the truth. But her very actions show that the Spirit of God is stirring in her bosom, and she is perfectly wretched. I went there the other day & she treated me as if she were insane."]
- Maier, Carol. "Love Unfaithful but True: Reflections on *Amor infiel*. Emily Dickinson por Nuria Amat." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.2 (2009): 77-93.
- Nguyen, Nicole. "An Open Letter from Emily Dickinson to Billy Collins, Re: A Missing Bonnet." *Red Cedar Review* 43 (2008): 17-18. [Perhaps written in response to Billy Collins's poem, "Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes," Nguyen's poem begins, "Dear Mr. Collins, / It has come to my attention / that you may be in possession / of a certain bonnet of mine — ."]
- O'Malley, Maria. "Dickinson's Liberatory Poetics." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.2 (2009): 63-76.
- Ryan, Michael. "Dickinson's Stories." *American Poetry Review* 38.2 (2009). [Ryan explicates three of his favorite poems focusing on their narratives: "I heard a Fly buzz — when I died," "These — saw Visions," and "There is a pain — so utter." He concludes, "They are as good as poetry gets" and "the range of [Dickinson's] poetic skill is unmatched in my view by any other poet ever:"]
- Szalay, Edina. "A Woman — White — To Be': Politics of Subjectivity and Gender in Emily Dickinson's Poetry." *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* 35.1 (2008): 61-72. [Szalay's well researched, close analysis of "A Charm invests a face" (Fr 430), shows how Dickinson critiques the image of the middle class nineteenth-century woman, revealing "the vulnerability and illusory nature of the privileges enjoyed by this class of women."]
- Tamburini, Anna Maria. "Amore e conoscenza: Forme di scrittura del sacro: Margherita Guidacci e Agostino Vene[a]nzio Reali sulla scia di Emily Dickinson." *Campi Immaginabili: Revista Semestrale di Cultura* 2008; 1-2 (38-39): 172-218. Written in Italian. [Author focuses on topics of love, knowledge, and the sacred; and Emily Dickinson's influence on Guidacci and Reali.]
- Vogelius, Christa. "Paralyzed, with Gold —': Dickinson's Poetics of Photography." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 18.2 (2009): (21-37).

# REVIEWS

## *Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters: Critical Essays*

Edited by Jane Donahue Eberwein and Cindy MacKenzie: Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009. xiii + 292 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-55849-741-2. \$39.95.

Reviewed by Margaret DeAngelis

For many people, their introduction to Emily Dickinson comes first in elementary school, where her poems about snakes or snow storms or steam trains open young minds to the uses of the short descriptive lyric. Later, in American literature survey classes of their high school and undergraduate years, the same students might see more poems, but never more than a few dozen. At least some attention is given to the biography, with emphasis on the reclusiveness and the white dress, and a brief explanation of the century-long process of bringing the poems to publication in the form Dickinson actually wrote them.

Many teachers then reiterate Dickinson's own caveat about the search for biography in the poems by quoting her statement to Thomas Wentworth Higginson: "When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse, it does not mean—me—but a supposed person" (L268). Thus the casual student might learn about rhyme and meter, simile and metaphor, and the power of the briefly lyric to capture a moment or express an emotion, but little beyond the mundane about the woman who composed the poems, reworked them, tried alternative versions, and kept most of them from most people, all the while engaging in the normal social and domestic activities of a cultured nineteenth-century gentlewoman.

Dickinson was a lifelong letter writer. More than a thousand of these compositions are extant, and they represent but a small portion of the total she wrote. Her notes run the gamut of the kinds of letters anyone in her position would be called upon to write. There are

friendly letters giving news to acquaintances and family members both near and far, thank-you notes, letters of congratulation and condolence, and notes to accompany gifts, often with poems included to mark the occasion.

*Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters*, a collection of ten critical essays edited by Jane Donahue Eberwein and Cindy MacKenzie, gathers new work examining the ways that Dickinson's practice of letter writing illuminates her artistic method as well as her webs of friendship and kinship. The essayists are Paul Crumbley, Karen Dandurand, Jane Donahue Eberwein, Judith Farr, James R. Guthrie, Ellen Louise Hart, Eleanor Heginbotham, Cindy MacKenzie, Marietta Messmer, Martha Nell Smith, and Stephanie Tingley. Each examines the letters as evidence of Dickinson's efforts to explain herself (by offering her "letter to the World"), to discharge her social obligations, to express the anguish of her own heart when informed of the bereavement of a friend or family member, and to engage in intellectual stimulation by discussing her reading with like-minded individuals. As Marietta Messmer notes in her foreword, this is the first collection of scholarly inquiry to be devoted exclusively to the correspondence.

Some of Dickinson's letters, especially those to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, seem to have been written as guides for readers of her poems, to help them better understand her purposes as an artist. The editors note in their introduction that the letters to Higginson get more attention in this volume than do the letters to others, even though his response to her work and his value

to her as a reader is traditionally thought to miss the mark that her genius deserved.

Other essays take a fresh look at the conduct of particular friendships that Dickinson enjoyed, especially those with her aunt, Catherine Dickinson Sweetser, and with Justice Otis P. Lord. Finally, two pieces look at the tangible objects that the letters constitute, offering the student of Dickinson a way to consider her as an artist who created visual as well as textual works.

Contributors to the collection had at their disposal the latest in digital and other electronic tools for studying the letters. The collection offers a look at the current trends in Dickinson scholarship and does not shy away from the more controversial areas that still trigger division among readers who love this poet and all of her work. Endnotes to each essay are as engaging as the points they amplify. The back matter includes not only a general index, but an index to the poems and an index to the letters that the essays consider.

Although the essays are written by some of the most prominent academics working in Dickinson scholarship, the material is accessible to the educated lay reader. *Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters* is a treasure not only for those who wish to learn more about the poet but also for those whose interest is in nineteenth-century domestic life.

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**Margaret DeAngelis**, an independent scholar and fiction writer, has had a lifelong interest in Emily Dickinson.



## Awards

The University of Maryland honors five senior professors each year with a Distinguished Scholar-Teacher award. According to Ellin Scholnick, Associate Provost and professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, distinguished winners represent a broad range of academic excellence. The program honors tenured faculty members who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments as educators and notable achievements in their respective fields. Each scholar will present a lecture during the school year, and the award carries an honorarium to support professional activities.



Martha Nell Smith, a 2010-2011 Distinguished Scholar-Teacher award winner with the Department of English, is widely regarded as one of the most important and innovative experts on the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Using letters of America's most renowned woman poet, she is among those who revised notions of Dickinson from a self-effacing recluse to a woman who was ambitious in crafting her self-presentation and intent on establishing her legacy. This approach has influenced scholarly thinking about American literature as a whole. While having dramatic impact within the academic community, Smith's writings are accessible to the general public, as is evidenced by her being featured in a *New York Times Magazine* cover story.

Scholnick describes Smith as a "fine scholar and superb teacher. She is notable for her ability to blend the two disciplines—the digital humanities and scholarly endeavors. She is particularly good at teaching others how to do research in literary areas."

In addition to using the traditional tools of literary criticism, Smith exploited technology as part of an international cohort to create the field of digital humanities, enhancing archival and comparative research as well as text analyses. She is the founding director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH). Funded partly by a National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge grant, the institute is a network of digital humanities collections from, among others, Stanford University, the University of Virginia, Duke University and the University of California.

It is almost impossible to separate Professor Smith's scholarship from her teaching. Graduate and undergraduate students under her tutelage acquire skills in text encoding, Web site construction, and archiving, as well as in archival research and textual, feminist, and queer criticism and theory. She also includes students as co-authors. Remarkably, she is affiliate faculty in seven departments, and she developed some of the courses that became the foundation for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies program. Smith also makes vital contributions within the classroom, repeatedly volunteering to teach a large lecture class. Finally, she reaches beyond the university to coordinate seminars for teachers in local high schools and community colleges.

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## Chapter News

### Chapter Groups Update

By Nancy List Pridgen

Progress continues on the chapter groups project. Carol Woodson,

Marcie Tanter, and Margaret Freeman have joined our group of those who met in Regina. I have chosen an able co-chair: Lois Kackley. She has proven herself to be outstanding in organizing and maintaining a local Dickinson group in Amherst. Her creative programs have been effective in keeping an interest in Dickinson alive and the chapter members returning to meetings. Thank you, Lois, for accepting this position.

We have sent questions to the various members who have either had a chapter group in the past, have a group now, or are interested in starting one.

If you attended the chapter group at Regina or have since joined us, you will be hearing from us soon with questions about establishing Emily Dickinson local groups and affiliating these groups with the Emily Dickinson International Society. We need feedback from people in all stages of organization – groups going strong now, groups no longer meeting, and groups in the various planning stages. If you have not yet responded to the survey questions that were sent as an attachment to an email in March, we need to hear from you. If you did not receive this email, please let me know: [possibility@satx.rr.com](mailto:possibility@satx.rr.com). Please share your experience, your expertise, and your individual slant on how to establish successful EDIS-affiliated chapter groups.

As I write, I have already received a lot of feedback and suggestions from Lois Kackley, Margaret Freeman, Ellen Beinhorn, and Eleanor Heginbotham. By the time you read this I will have heard from several others. Thank you so much for your help. I dream of a network of Emily Dickinson chapter groups throughout the world. Together we can make this happen!

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**Nancy List Pridgen** is a board member of EDIS.

# MEMBERS' NEWS

## Notes & Queries

### Announcement

The Nominations Committee welcomes nominations, including self nominations, for candidates who will stand for election to serve a three-year term as a Board Member at Large. The Members-at-Large have the same responsibilities and opportunities for service to the organization that all EDIS Board members have. These include: becoming familiar with the By Laws; conducting Society business by serving on committees; reading the *EDIS Bulletin* and the *Journal*; following discussions on email; attending annual meetings as often as possible; checking the Society's web site for information and updates; staying current with Homestead and Museum activities; writing for the *Bulletin*; and, depending on location, participating in activities with local chapters. An on-going issue for EDIS is finding ways to increase membership, and Members-at-Large are asked to contribute to this goal by having their ears tuned to members' preferences, interests, and concerns.

Please submit names to Ellen Louise Hart, Chair of the Nominations Committee, at [ehart@ucsc.edu](mailto:ehart@ucsc.edu) by July 15, 2010.

### Events

#### April 30-June 13, 2010

The New York Botanical Garden's exhibition, *Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers*  
Bronx, New York

[www.nybg.org/emily](http://www.nybg.org/emily)

#### May 27-30, 2010

American Literature Association  
San Francisco, CA

[http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2/american\\_literature\\_association\\_2010.htm](http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2/american_literature_association_2010.htm)

#### Friday, May 28, 2010

9:30-10:50 am

Session 8-A Emily Dickinson

Organized by the Emily Dickinson International Society

Chair: Ann Jacobsen, University of California Davis

1. "This is my letter to the World: Emily Dickinson's Epistolary Poetics,"

Cindy MacKenzie, University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

2. "Concealment and Revelation: Emily Dickinson, Marcel Duchamp and the Poesis of the Archive," Jessica Beard, University of California, Santa Cruz

3. "The Poet in the Kitchen," Aife Murray, Independent Scholar

#### August 6-8, 2010

EDIS 2010 International Conference

"Were I Britain born": Dickinson's Transatlantic Connections  
Oxford, England

[www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org/oxford.html](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org/oxford.html)

#### September 25, 2010

Emily Dickinson Poetry Marathon  
The Emily Dickinson Museum

[www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/events](http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/events)

## October 7, 2010

Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry

Jane Hirshfield, prize-winning international poet, translator, and essayist, will deliver the eleventh annual Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry at the Pennsylvania State University on October 7, 2010. A reception and book signing will follow. The lecture, supported by an endowment from George and Barbara Kelly, is free and open to the public.

Hirshfield is the author of six books of poems, her most recent being *After* (shortlisted for England's T. S. Eliot Prize and named a "best book of 2006" by the *Washington Post*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *London Financial Times*). She has also written a book of essays, *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry* and has edited and translated *The Ink Dark Moon: Love Poems* by Komachi & Shikibu, *Women of the Ancient Court of Japan*, *Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women*, and *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems*.

Hirshfield's other honors include the Poetry Center Book Award; fellowships from the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Academy of American Poets; Columbia University's Translation Center Award; three Pushcart Prizes; and (both twice) the Commonwealth Club's California Book Award and the Northern California Book Reviewers Award. In 2004, she was awarded the Academy Fellowship for distinguished poetic achievement by the Academy of American Poets.

## Crossword Puzzle

### Answer to More Words To Lift Your Hat To (Fall 2009 Bulletin)

#### Across

3. Mien Fr254
4. Pinions Fr50
5. Brindled Fr1419
7. Debauchee Fr207
9. Pleiad Fr48
10. Sere Fr1419
12. Flambeau Fr327
14. Festal Fr53
15. Cuirass Fr1481
17. Poltroon Fr329
22. Perihelion Fr1375
24. Aliment Fr317
27. Mazarin Fr 436
28. Cochineal Fr1489
31. Sepulture Fr1565

#### Down

1. Capsule Fr1284
2. Sirocco Fr355
4. Parallax Fr1269
6. Sepal Fr25
8. Burdock Fr289
10. Sabachtini Fr283
11. Vevay Fr235
13. Bobolink Fr54
16. Superficies Fr1512
18. Pigmy Fr96
19. Bernardine Fr211
20. Corolla Fr1458
21. Affiance Fr1550
23. Surcingle Fr1426
25. Tamborin Fr229
26. Vail Fr293
28. Calyx Fr1261
29. Attar Fr772
30. Bur Fr420

## Oxford 2010 International Conference Registration Form

This page may be photocopied for multiple use

### Conference Registration Form

Complete this form and make your check or money order payable, in U.S. funds to EDIS, Inc.  
Please print or type your name and affiliation as you wish them to appear on your conference badge.

Name, title & affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (office) \_\_\_\_\_ (fax) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

- Conference fee  EDIS member registering by June 15, 2010 \$115.00  
 EDIS member registering after June 15, 2010 \$145.00  
 Non-member registration \$145.00  
 Student registration \$50.00

Banquet at Oriol Dining Hall  \$30 per person

Theater Tickets: *Emily Dickinson & I*  \$20 per person

Send to: EDIS; c/o Johns Hopkins University Press; P.O. Box 19966; Baltimore, MD 21211-0966

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### EDIS Membership Form

Membership in the Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS) enables you to participate in the Society's meetings and conferences, to receive both of the Society's publications (the *Bulletin* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*), and to help foster the goals of the Society.

Name, title & affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (office) \_\_\_\_\_ (fax) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please check if this is:  new address membership renewal

Annual Membership Category:

Sustaining Member  \$200.00

Institutional Member  \$113.00

Contributing Member  \$100.00

Regular Member  \$50.00

Student Member  \$30.00

(All of the above Members receive both the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and the *Bulletin*)

Associate Member  \$20.00 (*Bulletin* only)

I have included an additional tax-deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Society's programs.

### Gift Memberships

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The Robin's my Criterion for Tune—  
Because I grow—where Robins do—  
But, were I Cuckoo born—  
I'd swear by him—  
The ode familiar—rules the Noon—  
The Buttercup's, my whim for Bloom—  
Because, we're Orchard sprung—  
But, were I Britain born,  
I'd Daisies spurn—

None but the Nut—October fit—  
Because—through dropping it,  
The Seasons flit—I'm taught—  
Without the Snow's Tableau  
Winter, were lie—to me—  
Because I see—New Englandly—  
The Queen, discerns like me—  
Provincially—  
(Fr256)

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