

Bulletin

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

Reading Dickinson in the Digital Age



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Cover Design: Bryan Lindsey

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Back Cover: Above, a nameplate that “may have been used by Edward Dickinson . . . for his downtown Amherst law office.” Below, probably the “blue net worsted shawl” worn by the poet during Higginson’s first visit (L342a).

Both images are from the Houghton Library at Harvard University, in the collection of Dickinson Family Artifacts, http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/deepLink?_collection=oasis&uniqueId=hou01551

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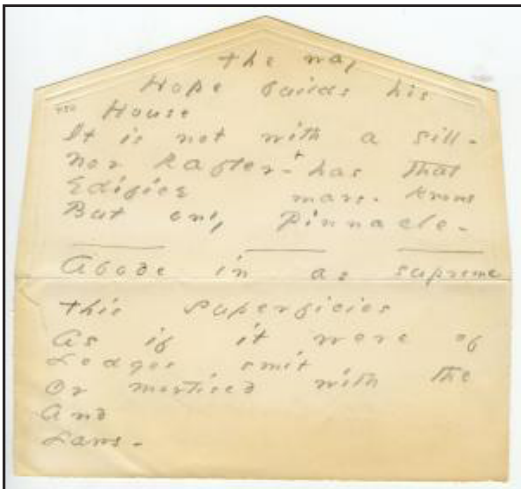
Digitizing Dickinson at Amherst

By Michael Kelly

When I first arrived at Amherst in the spring of 2009, I learned from our finding aid to the Emily Dickinson Collection that "The original collection consisted of 850 poems and fragments of poems; 350 letters, notes, and drafts to and from family and friends; the daguerreotype and silhouette of Emily Dickinson; and the extensive correspondence and publication material of Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham."

These numbers suggest that Amherst holds the largest collection of Dickinson manuscripts in the world, but as I delved into the world of Dickinson scholarship, I began to question these suspiciously round figures. What, exactly, had been counted? If a letter contains a poem is it counted twice? How are the fragments with just a couple of lines or words counted? When is a fragment a "note" and when is it part of a poem?

As with most things Dickinson, each question led to more questions and on down the rabbit hole. In the end, I sidestepped the issue of genre entirely and set about simply counting the number of individual items in our Dickinson Collection: we have 875 items, which range from a torn piece of a chocolate wrapper to multi-page fascicles.



Manuscript of Fr1512, "The way Hope builds his House"

Prior to my arrival at Amherst, all of the Dickinson manuscripts were scanned and loaded into a digital assets management system called Digitool. This project provides another handy statistic about our holdings: scanning every piece of paper in Emily Dickinson's handwriting resulted in 2,166 image files. Currently, access to these digitized manuscripts is limited to students and faculty of Amherst College and researchers working on campus, but this is about to change. Amherst College is in the process of implementing a new and much more robust system called Islandora, a version of the open-source Fedora software. Once Islandora is up and running we will import our digitized Dickinson manuscripts and, at long last, make them freely available for viewing over the internet. (For those interested in the technical details of such things, more information about Islandora is available at islandora.ca)

The strength of the Dickinson collection at Amherst College extends well beyond our holdings of manuscripts in the poet's hand. The Dickinson family played a critical role in the founding and operations of the college for nearly 100 years. Samuel Fowler Dickinson was one of the founders of the college and Edward Dickinson served as Treasurer from 1835 to 1873. Austin Dickinson graduated from Amherst College in 1850 then took over as Treasurer from 1873 until his death in 1895. Ned Dickinson did not graduate from Amherst, but he did work in the college library for several years. As the official archives of the college, we have a wealth of material that documents these formal connections between the Dickinson family and the school atop "the Consecrated Eminence."

Beyond the immediate family, we have outstanding holdings that document the lives and activities of other college figures that had some connection with Emily Dickinson. The silhouette in our collection was cut by Charles Temple, a member of the class of 1845. We have books, manuscripts, and ephemera that

document the death and memorial service for Frazar Stearns (Class of 1863), including the letter in which Emily Dickinson describes Austin's grief over Frazar's death at the battle of New Bern, NC.

Information on the hundreds of other Amherst alumni and faculty who served in the Civil War is also available in the Archives. Dickinson's first appearance in print can be found in the February 1850 issue of *The Indicator* – one of many college literary magazines that rose and fell during Dickinson's lifetime. David Todd graduated from Amherst in 1875 and returned as an instructor of astronomy in 1881, accompanied by his young wife, Mabel Loomis Todd.

One of my favorite groups of material in our collection is the small file we have on the Amherst College Aero Club in our Clubs & Societies Collection. David Todd was a great promoter of ballooning, and helped to found a student group dedicated to ballooning and flight early in the twentieth century. One can also find caricatures of Todd in volumes of the college yearbook, *The Olio*, during his tenure at Amherst College. Our holdings in college history are complemented by the vast collections of Amherst town history available at the Jones Library, just a short walk across the town common from the Amherst College Archives in Frost Library.

Mabel Loomis Todd is especially prominent among Dickinson connections represented in our collections. We have extensive holdings of manuscripts and other materials that thoroughly document Todd's work on the five volumes of Dickinson's writings she edited during the 1890s. We hold just over 900 of her transcriptions, more than 500 letters, the combined manuscript and typescript draft that was sent to the printer for *Poems: Third Series* (1896), and her original painting of Indian pipes that appeared on all of the 1890s volumes.

The Todd family ties continue with Millicent Todd Bingham's editorial work on Dickinson, beginning with the original typescript and



Dickinson's Indian Pipes

page proofs for the 1931 edition of *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, which she revised with her mother. Mabel Loomis Todd's copy of the 1894 edition of the letters with her notes for the new edition is a particularly illuminating artifact. We hold typescripts (often heavily corrected) and page proofs for *Ancestors' Brocades* (1945), *Bolts of Melody* (1945), *Emily Dickinson: A Revelation* (1954), and *Emily Dickinson's Home* (1955). Millicent Todd Bingham donated all of the Dickinson manuscripts she inherited from her mother, along with Mabel and Millicent's own materials, to Amherst College in 1956. That gift remains the core of our collection, though we add to it when we can.

In 1983, a lock of Emily Dickinson's hair and letter to Emily Fowler were donated by William R. Bailey in memory of his mother, Gillian Barr Bailey. In 2006, three additional Dickinson manuscripts and an envelope were donated by Thomas Michie.

In addition to documents in Dickinson's own hand, we also actively acquire items such as the 1850 letter from Abby Wood to Abiah Root in which Dickinson is mentioned. This letter was acquired by purchase in 2008. In 2011, we

received a major donation of archival material from the descendants of Samuel Bowles. Bowles was a close friend of Dickinson and editor of *The Springfield Republican*, where seven of Dickinson's poems were published during her lifetime.

The Bowles-Hoar Family Papers include letters from Lavinia Dickinson and a wealth of documentation about this prominent Springfield family. More information about the Bowles-Hoar Family Papers is available on our website, including scans of two previously unknown daguerreotype portraits of Samuel Bowles III.

Our book collection is also a valuable resource for studying Dickinson's life and works. We hold copies of nearly all of Dickinson's appearances in print during her lifetime – *The Indicator*, *The Drum Beat*, *The Springfield Republican*, *The Round Table*, and *A Masque of Poets* — and every significant edition of her poems and letters published since her death. The volume of material published about Dickinson is simply too large for us to attempt anything like comprehensive coverage, but we do collect some works to document the changing trends in Dickinson scholarship.

We also make a point of acquiring creative works that make use of Dickinson's life and writings, ranging from Jerome Charyn's *The Secret Life of Emily Dickinson* (2010) to *The Dickinson Composites* (2010) by Jen Bervin. We are building a collection of Dickinson objects and ephemera – everything from plush dolls to postage stamps – and we welcome donations in this area.

Although it will still be several months before our Dickinson materials are available in our new open-access Islandora system, we have already taken some steps toward freeing up the materials in our collections. Following the lead of Cornell University Libraries, Amherst College Archives & Special Collections no longer charges any use fees for public domain materials in our collections.

For Dickinson scholars, this means that everyone can make use of the daguerreotype portrait of Emily Dickinson absolutely free of charge

and without express written permission from us. We claim no authority over uses of books, manuscripts, and other materials in our care that are in the public domain. We will continue to charge modest reproduction fees to cover the costs involved in producing photocopies and scans for our patrons, but no additional publication or use fees.

Our goal is to provide students, scholars, and the public at large with access to primary resources with as few obstacles as possible. Toward that end, we are adding much more information about our collections to the Archives & Special Collections website, including scans of manuscripts and photographs. Eventually, we hope to see an open-access site which users can easily click through, from the 1890 edition of *Poems*, to Mabel Loomis Todd's transcriptions, to the original Dickinson manuscripts for any given poem. Over time, we will digitize material drawn from our various collections to flesh out the context of Dickinson's life and work in the shadow of Amherst College.

Another piece of our outreach strategy is our department blog, *The Consecrated Eminence* (<http://consecratedeminence.wordpress.com/>). The entire Archives & Special Collections staff take turns producing a weekly blog post about items in our collections that deserve to be better known. So far two of our posts feature Dickinson connections and she will surely figure in many more. In addition to these web-based efforts, we also maintain a busy schedule of visits from college classes and other groups. We work closely with the Emily Dickinson Museum to support their programs and provide some training for their volunteers.

As I write this, we are putting the finishing touches on an exhibition titled "Frazar is Killed" that coincides with the Museum's series of events commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (see page 29). Although we do not keep any Dickinson materials on permanent display, we do frequently mount exhibitions that include her manuscripts.

Finally, we are always happy to field questions about our collections. We can be reached by phone at 413-542-2299 or by e-mail at archives@amherst.edu.

Emily Dickinson at Harvard: Past, Present, and Future

By Leslie Morris

Most people know that the Houghton Library holds some 1023 autograph poems, including 40 fascicles; some 400 letters; close to 600 books that might have been read by the poet; and furniture and objects, including the writing desk and chair from her bedroom at the Homestead—all material that descended by inheritance from Martha Dickinson Bianchi to Alfred Hampson, from whom it was purchased by Gilbert Montague, Harvard Class of 1901, in 1950, and given to Houghton Library.

The “Dickinson Collection,” however, is not monolithic; it consists of a number of smaller collections, some of which actually predate Montague’s gift to Harvard. If one goes to OASIS (the Harvard finding aids database) and “browses finding aids” for collections listed under “Dickinson,” one finds 15 separate collections – and then one needs to add in the various Bianchi, Higginson, and other collections.

Realizing that this multiplicity can be confusing for first time (and even experienced) researchers, I’ve recently mounted a new “portal” to all things Dickinson at Houghton. I hope that readers of the *Bulletin* will spend some time exploring it, and send me comments and suggestions for improvements.

There has also, in the last five years, been a fair amount of new cataloging of what might be called “satellite” materials to the Dickinson autograph poems and letters. These materials include objects; Dickinson family papers, particularly from Martha Dickinson Bianchi; photographs; and the Dickinson family library.

Objects

The cataloging of objects was completed in 2007. Not all the objects that came to Harvard in 1950 are regularly on display in the Dickinson Room. I myself didn’t realize how many Dickinson family objects there

were until I systematically went through cupboards and closets at Houghton looking for items that I found mentioned in the Library’s correspondence files, as I worked on the introduction to *Emily Dickinson’s Herbarium* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006). One of the objects not on permanent display is the bracelet given to Emily by Judge Lord, inscribed on the back of the clasp, “Little Phil.”

It is important to remember that Houghton’s Dickinson Room is largely the con-



Above: a locket, engraved with the initials “E.N.D.,” holding the braided hair of Emily Norcross Dickinson’s parents.

<http://ids.lib.harvard.edu/ids/view/7154232?buttons=y>



Below: “adjustable woven bracelet with copper clasp and ornament, ‘Little Phil’ engraved on underside of copper clasp, gold braid fringe.”

<http://ids.lib.harvard.edu/ids/view/7154244?buttons=y>

Both images, as well as those on the next page, are reprinted courtesy of the Houghton Library at Harvard.

tents of what was originally the Evergreens’ “Emily Room,” created by Martha Dickinson Bianchi. We have very little documentation about the objects; as we come across information, we add it to the catalog. Any readers who have a published reference that illuminates the history of any of these objects – I think particularly here of the Robert Burns souvenir sand-glass – please do let me know. The descriptions in the Guide to Dickinson family objects were done by Nan Wolverton, the museum and decorative arts consultant also responsible for the furnishings research and plan for the Dickinson Museum.

Papers

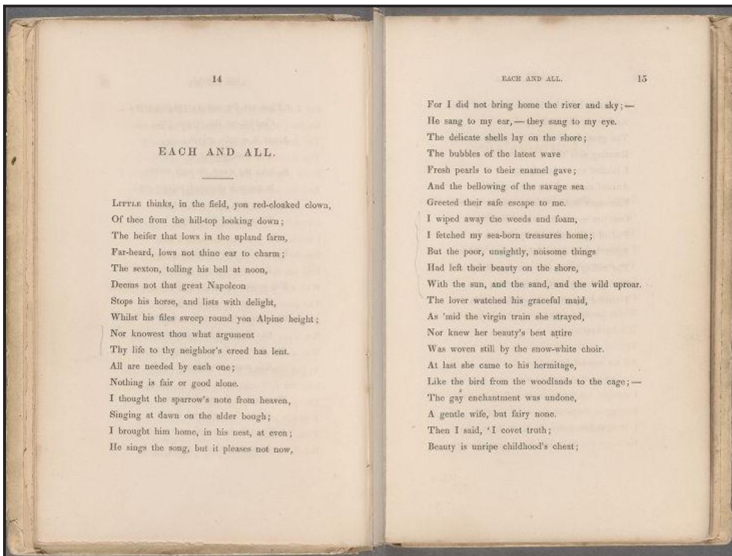
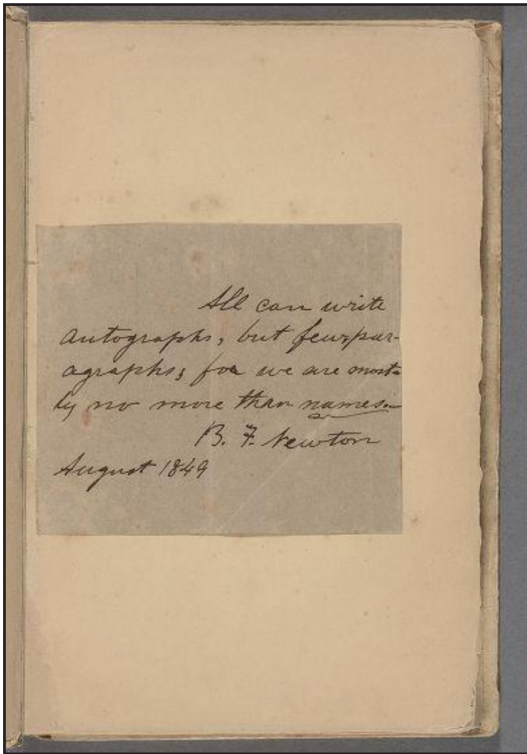
The second “satellite collection” I want to highlight is the Dickinson family papers, cataloging of which was completed in 2008. This collection comprises the papers of Emily’s parents; Susan and Austin Dickinson and their children; and Lavinia Dickinson; as well as some Root family papers. While these papers came to Houghton with the rest of the Emily material in 1950, prior to 2008 there wasn’t a numbered list, so one couldn’t be sure of locating material in the same place again. Those who have used this collection in the past may very well find some new things, now that it has been organized.

The “family papers” also include two collections of Martha Dickinson Bianchi papers, sorting and cataloging completed in 2009. These are small collections, as the bulk of Martha’s papers went to Brown University after Mary Hampson’s death. Houghton holds some of Martha’s own poetry and essays, but principally the papers are related to Martha’s work editing and publishing Emily’s poetry. The papers include transcripts of Emily Dickinson letters and poems, copies of Dickinson’s death notice in the newspapers, photos probably gathered for various of Martha’s publications, and more. The papers also chronicle Martha’s efforts to get her aunt’s poetry into

print, and so are important for those studying the editing and transmission of the poetry, and in the reception of Dickinson's poetry.

Family Library

The final "satellite collection" I want to address brings me to the "Future" part of my



Two images from Dickinson's copy of Emerson's *Poems*: above, the inscription from Benjamin F. Newton; below, the poet's markings on "Each and All."

subtitle, the Dickinson family library. It's been my impression, over the last 10 years, that demand for the Dickinson books has increased – and my impression is supported by the recent special issue of the *Emily Dickinson Journal* (2010) on Emily Dickinson's Reading.

As most of you probably know, Roger Stoddard, now-retired Curator of Rare Books at Houghton, closed off access to the Dickinson family books in 1980, as he saw that many of these inherently fragile nineteenth-century case-bound books were suffering from over-use. When I became responsible for the books as well as the manuscripts upon his retirement, I commissioned a condition survey of the library, which was completed in December 2006. Unfortunately other projects intervened, but, in July of 2010 we finally began repair and stabilization of the family books.

The process will be long, but the goal is to digitize, first, all of the books with definite links to Emily; second, any book with markings; and third, everything else, because I know that none of you believe me when I say a book doesn't have markings! More than 50 titles have been made available to date (May 2012), including Emily's Bible,

Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*, and two primers (all of them showing evidence of the poet's penchant for cutting pictures out of books to embellish poems and letters); works by George Eliot, Elizabeth and Robert Browning, and Charlotte Brontë; several poetry anthologies; and the family's two sets of the works of Shakespeare. All contain marks

of reading of some kind: marginal lines and crosses, folded pages and corners, or cut-outs.

The declining expense of high-quality color digital photography makes it possible to conceive of a digital Dickinson Library, allowing us to make these fragile volumes accessible to Dickinson scholars world-wide. I should also mention that it is not just page images that are available, but the text is searchable as well.

While we're talking about the Dickinson Library, I should also mention that, as a result of my poking about in the files, we have "discovered" a number of books (23 titles) never, for some reason, incorporated into the family library list that has been available to researchers since 1950. These new items include a marked copy of Samuel Bowles's obituary, George Eliot's "The lifted veil" cut from *Harper's*, and the copy of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, from which Dickinson cut out the images that adorn the manuscript of "A poor, torn Heart" – a book with her father's ownership inscription in it. So, even if you've looked at the Library list before, look again, particularly at EDR 566 through 589.

Those who want to keep current with new information about the Dickinson Collection at Houghton might want to consider subscribing to the Modern Books and Manuscripts blog <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/houghtonmodern/> where, for example, we have highlighted the re-photographing (without the frame) of the portrait of the Dickinson Children, which more clearly shows Lavinia Dickinson holding a picture of a cat; and, occasionally, additions to the Dickinson Collection, such as our acquisition in 2008 of a variant manuscript version of "The Wind begun to rock the Grass." We also post information about local Dickinson-related events, such as recent lectures by Lyndall Gordon and Helen Vender. Visitors to Cambridge, Mass., should also know that there is a guided tour of Houghton Library every Friday at 2 p.m. that includes the Dickinson Room. There are many ways to keep in touch with things Dickinsonian at Harvard!

This is an updated version of the talk given at the EDIS conference in Oxford in August 2010.

Dickinson Electronic Archives 2

<http://emilydickinson.org>

By Martha Nell Smith and Marta Werner

The twin romances of comprehensivity and connectivity were the primary drivers behind the original idea of producing the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*: from Dickinson's hand (body), to a consumable text on a manuscript or printed page (sent by the poet herself via post or courier, read aloud by Susan and Lavinia to interested guests, then reproduced in print by various editors), to access on a laptop or some other screen.

In 2012, we have decided to build the *Dickinson Electronic Archives 2: A Critical and Creative Collaboratory for Reading Dickinson's Material Bodies*. Our goals are as follows:

- Foster a deepened focus on the material bodies of Dickinson's writings and offer access to the significant printed representations of these bodies.
- Create a scholarly environment that showcases the possibility of interdisciplinary and collaborative research across genres.
- Explore the potential of the digital environment to reveal new interpretive contexts – material, cultural, historical, theoretical – for Dickinson's work.
- Open a space for a networked world of scholars, students, and readers to expand our methods of reading her writing practices, the genealogies of her reception, and transmissions of her materials.

scholarly communication. The *DEA2* integrates features of the manuscript archive and the scholarly journal, and provides an experimental exhibition space, as well as a pedagogical forum.

The *DEA2* will be produced with customized applications enabling high quality representation of the documents for perusal by all readers; dynamic renderings of the documents that allow complex visualizations of potential relations among them while resisting the static order determined by codex formats; and deep and broad searchability.

The materials available in the *DEA2* grow with each volume. With the completion of each new volume, the materials of the previous volumes will be distributed across the *DEA2*'s collection of manuscripts, transcripts, critical editions, critical engagements, and virtual classrooms.

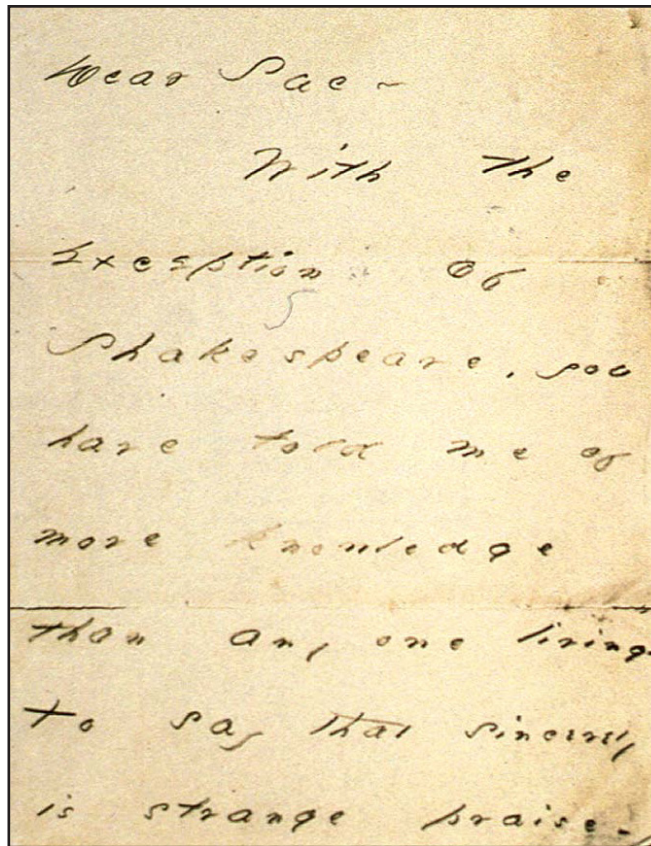
In collaboration with an editorial board comprised of Dickinson scholars, textual scholars, social and cultural historians, poets, and artists, the *DEA2* will produce a volume a year for the next three years. The focus of each of these volumes will be a set of Dickinson documents selected by the

editor(s) for critical engagement. The editor for each volume will solicit and curate a selection of peer-reviewed essays and/or exhibitions in response to the documents. In addition to the curated space, each *DEA2* volume will offer open space for critical and creative commentaries by readers.

Readers have various options of recording their experience of the documents. They may contribute their reflections and questions in the form of formal meditations, add contextualizing materials and links, produce tag clouds, or use some other appropriate means to respond critically to the materials featured in the *DEA2*. In these ways, the virtual itineraries made by readers in their passage across the documents will begin to be preserved.

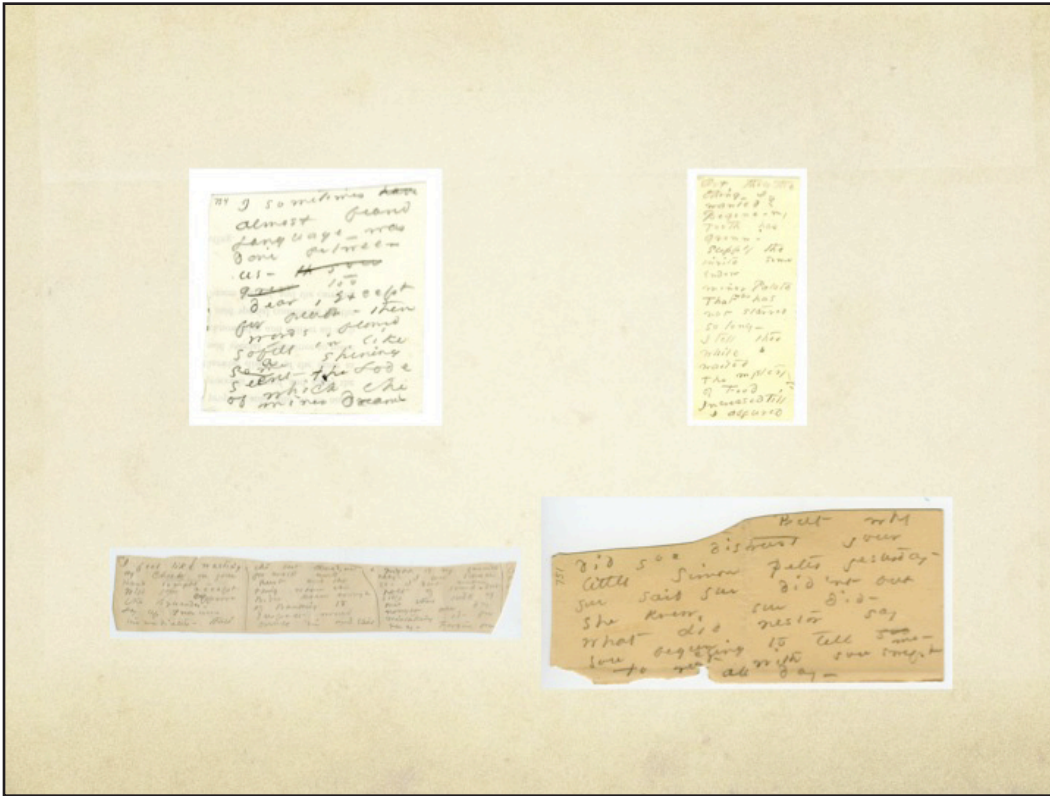
Three-year Plan:

- Volume 1 focuses on those documents previously curated



Digital image of a letter to Susan Gilbert Dickinson from the early 1880s

The *DEA2* is a hybrid forum for publication and other kinds of



Late Fragments from the *Archive*, showing paper, lineation, editing, and other elements of the material text.

as the “Lord Letters.” The volume includes digital surrogates of eighty-nine manuscripts, printed incarnations of the documents affiliated and used to produce Bingham’s *A Revelation*, Leyda’s *Years and Hours*, and Johnson’s *Letters* (1958), diplomatic transcriptions from Werner’s *Open Folios*, Leyda’s notes on cataloging at Amherst College and correspondence at Yale about *Years and Hours*, and collections of critical meditations on the documents and their import for Dickinson study. Of primary interest will be the ontological question of what the manuscripts are. The volume is a case study of a “correspondence” that challenges genre boundaries, notions of singular address, and systems of collection. The essays reveal the history of the editorial representation of these documents and open up new interpretive possibilities based on a reading of material evidence. The digital envi-

ronment enables readers to reimagine and rethink the relationships between these manuscripts. Do they belong together? Does a fresh analysis of the physical evidence alter theories of affiliations among the manuscripts themselves? Do the cuts in the manuscripts represent editorial mutilations or changing authorial intentions? How has the history of reading Dickinson been inflected by past editorial representations of these documents, including narratives of their transmission history? Liberated from the singularity of constructed address, what can these manuscripts tell us about late scenes of Dickinson’s writing?

- Volume 2 of the *Dickinson Electronic Archives 2*, curated by Jessica Beard, will be an exploration of Dickinson’s space. Many of her poems and letters express both a fascination with and fear of enclosure. Much

of her work confronts and sometimes surpasses fixed boundaries like doors, walls, and fences, while also playing with the fleeting boundaries windows impose. The material documents play with space in a fashion similar to the ways lines are constructed across the page, pages are chosen from shaped scraps, and handwritten words scrape up against printed words and images. Finally, these documents move through space, as letters, in letters or pockets, and defy closure while also remaining within the mostly certain boundaries of family and friends.

The *DEA2* welcomes engagements with these movements across time and space as they are expressed by the Dickinson documents. How do they both defy and encourage enclosure? What kinds of spaces do they explore, inhabit, slip between? How can they be freshly contextualized as compositions of, in, and across space? How has their collection, organization and publication prevented such explorations up to this point, and how can a digital environment open up new readings and understandings?

Martha Nell Smith is the author/co-author and co-editor of five books on Dickinson, is the Executive Editor of the Dickinson Electronic Archives, and, with Laura Vetter, the co-editor of Emily Dickinson’s Correspondences: A Born-Digital Scholarly Edition (2008).

Marta Werner is the author of Emily Dickinson’s Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing (1995), and Radical Scatters: Emily Dickinson’s Late Fragments and Related Texts, 1870-1886.

Both are on the Advisory Board of the Harvard University Press Emily Dickinson Archive.

Dickinson and Higginson at Boston Public Library

By Susan Glover, Keeper of Rare Books

The Emily Dickinson Papers at the Boston Public Library includes a small but interesting collection of correspondence and poems that Dickinson wrote to Theodore Wentworth Higginson, her mentor. It numbers only 70 letters and 43 autograph poems but illustrates the warm friendship that developed between Dickinson and Higginson as well as her responses to his editorial suggestions. This collection is part of the larger Galatea collection devoted to the history of women gathered by Higginson and donated to the library in 1896 by Higginson himself.

The relationship that developed between them was warm and affectionate on both sides. Dickinson came to appreciate Higginson and his gentle criticism of her work. She rarely signs her letters with her name but with such self-effacing terms as “your scholar” or “your gnome.” The Finding Aid for this collection can be found at: <http://archon.bpl.org/?p=collections/controlcard&id=42>.

In addition to Dickinson’s manuscripts, the collection also contains various published editions of her poems as well as critical studies of her work. Additionally, there is correspondence from Mabel Loomis Todd, the editor of Dickinson’s posthumously published works, to Higginson concerning the publication of these works from the Boston Public Library collection.

The library also holds the papers of Thomas Wentworth Higginson himself, the man who played such an important role in Dickinson’s life. Included in this collection is correspondence to and from Higginson from 1854-1907, illuminating not just his role as a writer and theologian but as an ardent abolitionist as well.

Higginson donated his collection of books by and about women, of which

the Dickinson manuscripts are but a small part, to the Boston Public Library in 1896. At the time, Higginson knew of no other institutional collection with this specific collecting scope. Others that he cited in a letter to the library on 11 February 1896 focused exclusively on the works of women only, not works about women. Believing that a collection of this sort would attract scholars, he wrote, “the great changes that have gone on within recorded history in the social, industrial, and educational position of women, render all this an important theme for special study, and a proper basis for a separate department in every large library.”

The collection numbered 1,084 at the time of the donation and now exceeds 4,000. It is a collection rich in 19th century printings including treatises on such diverse topics as the history and condition of women, education, health and hygiene, relations and comparisons of the sexes, rights of women, work and influence of women, and women as authors, editors, and translators in many languages. The Catalogue of the Galatea Collection of Books Relating to the History of Woman in the Boston Public Library of the City of Boston can be found on the Internet Archive at: <http://www.archive.org/details/catalogueofgalat-00bost>.

The entire collection of Emily Dickinson manuscripts at the Boston Public Library has been digitized and posted on FLICKR (http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/sets/72157604466722178/), and it will soon be available through an online edition of the works of Emily Dickinson planned by the Harvard University Press. The originals are located in the Rare Books Department of the Boston Public Library, 700 Boylston Street, Bos-

ton MA 02129. Departmental hours are Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Thursday, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. Advance appointments can be made through the BPL website at <http://www.bpl.org/research/rb/regform.htm> or by telephone at 617-859-2225.

Forthcoming in the Fall 2012 EDIS Bulletin

A review of *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson’s Envelope-Poems*, edited by Jen Bervin and Marta Werner.

The Gorgeous Nothings is equal parts artist book and act of archival scholarship, based on Emily Dickinson’s late compositions on envelopes. The edition includes a portfolio of nearly fifty high-resolution double-sided color facsimiles with visual transcriptions. Marta Werner’s lyric essay, “Itineraries of Escape: Emily Dickinson’s Envelope-Poems,” provides the scholarly, historic, and poetic context for these exquisite late writings by Dickinson. The edition is accompanied by a guide with a bibliographic directory for the fragments, and a series of visual indexes.

The Gorgeous Nothings is published in New York City by Granary Books.

There are 60 copies in the edition, each numbered and signed by Jen Bervin. 50 copies are for sale and 10 are *hors commerce*.

The price is \$3,500.

Jonnie Guerra, Series Editor

I am pleased to present Lisa Williams as this issue's featured poet. Williams is the author of two award-winning poetry collections – Woman Reading to the Sea (2008 Barnard Women Poets Prize) and The Hammered Dulcimer (1998 May Swenson Poetry Award). Her poems also have been published in many journals and in the anthologies, Best American Poetry 2009, Bright Wings: An Illustrated Anthology of Poems about Birds (selected by Billy Collins), and American Poetry: Next Generation. Williams is the recipient of a 2011 Brown Foundation Fellowship (Brown Foundation and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), a 2010 Al Smith Individual Artist Fellowship (Kentucky Arts Council), and a 2004 Rome Prize in Literature (American Academy of Arts and Letters). A special thanks to Dan Manheim for bringing Williams to my attention.

“Stopless—”: Meandering with Emily Dickinson

By Lisa Williams

“The Soul should always stand ajar”

Receptivity to a poet's voice is about being open to it, but there's something about a poem that must open up to a reader as well. I visualize this as two people (the reader, the poet), in adjoining rooms, with the door ajar. One can't see the other, but she/he knows the other is there, knows she/he might open the door farther.

Students crave that sense of a person behind the poem. This craving can make them fascinated with strange, grotesque, or simply personal biographical details. Countless times I have seen students adopt a knowingness about a poet's work due to some belief that they intuit about how the poet's life relates to a poem. It's a way into – or rather, a way around – a text they don't understand. We tend to fight our way back to the human from the literary. As a teacher of undergraduates, I want to help students connect with the human voice of a poem, not through “relatable” biographical details, but through the words, and the lines, as written.

“To take a backward look.”

This was hard for me to do with Dickinson. Coming of age as a poet in the late 80s and early 90s, I had no interest in her; she was the dowdy religious poet whose poems I might have read in my classrooms in Tennessee. In college, I was fortunate to discover Wallace Stevens and Baudelaire – their aesthetic lyri-



Photo Credit: Philip White

cism, heavy on sound and slightly fantastical, enchanted me.

So I came to Dickinson late and on my own, though I was in graduate school for poetry writing at the time. I can still remember my first real hearing of her. The poem was “These are the days when Birds come back – ” (Fr122). Its proximity to beloved poems by William Carlos Williams (“These”), Shakespeare (“That time of year thou may'est in me behold”), and the homely, clarion ballads of John Clare readied me to listen.

After moving through the poem's austere, surprisingly modern lines, I came to the phrase “. . . softly thro' the altered air.” It was clear to me that Dickinson meant for the word “altered” to convey the word “altared” as well. Not only had the poet captured two meanings in one word (one seasonal, one religious), but

she had verbed a noun.

As I noticed this, the poet seemed to tilt her head in my direction and say “I acknowledge you.” Actually, it was I who had managed to turn toward her. There had been much in the way of that, but my attention had arrived.

“I say it just begins to live”

I understood how one word (“altered”) pulsed with Dickinson's thinking. As I'm writing this, I envision the word with a

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sort of cartoonish elasticity, jutting out to accommodate other meanings, then returning to its normal state. People talk about devices such as homonyms, puns, and wordplay as if they are always playful, winking. To me they are ways of acknowledging a word as the “skin” of a moving voice. The voice keeps words from being tombstones (to borrow from Susan Howe who borrowed from Dickinson); the poem begins to live as we notice what makes these particular words inflected by this particular poet. Of course it’s our mind on his or her language that reawakens, breathes life into, and makes it not just letters on the page, but a communion.

I felt as if I had just woken up. There were more dimensions to language than I had dreamed of.

By that time, I certainly loved the look and sounds of language, but I hadn’t held words up to the light, considered them practically, looked at them individually from all angles, and seen each one as more than one wagon or caboose in a string of others. There’s an exacting, imperial quality to what Dickinson demands from the language: it must work for her. Words are not just objects to be set down in rows; they are to be examined and used. Handled.

So this was the first thing I learned from Dickinson.

“But Microscopes are prudent”

Years later, I imitated this dualistic use of language in my poem “Anatomy of a Skylark” (first published in 2003). The poem ends with the line, “– genus of throat – /found a painstaking form.” I worked for weeks on that ending, and when I finally stopped it, I was very pleased with myself. First, for hitting on the word “genus.” You see, I wanted to supplant the idea of artistic “genius” with the scientific “genus,” which I saw as evolutionary (that is, not created by human hands): not the trilling of a poet, but the intricacies of a bird’s throat. I meant to counter Shelley’s rhapsodic, self-centered fallacy. It seemed magically fortunate that the very concepts I was hoping to emphasize in the poem were so similar in sound and meaning! (Interestingly, I found that when I was working with a translator on that poem so that I could read it in Italian at a festival near Rome, we hit a wall with that word: we couldn’t capture both senses in one word the way “genus” did in English.)

Second, I liked how “painstaking” meant putting immense effort into, but also “taking pains away.” Again, the natural, practical, purposeful evolution of a bird throat trumped any human creation, but both were captured in the words I had so carefully chosen.

Now “Anatomy of a Skylark” feels artificial to me – it’s a sort of mechanical bird put together with too much self-conscious toolery. But I still like it for the discoveries, and the ambition, however ingenuous, it stands for.

*“Secured him by a string
To something neighboring
And went along—”*

The second thing I learned from Dickinson reaches back to my discovery, a year or so later, of her poem, “In Winter in my Room” (Fr1742). Most construe the baffling poem as sexual; in fact, it is featured in a recently published anthology

Anatomy of a Skylark

Inside a bird there are
chambers and chambers
tunnels through scapular
bones, tarsus flues.

Tongue under mandible
thin, flat, and tapered.
Feathers in mantle top
down-folded wing.

Oxygen circulates
pale pair of lungs,
paths to esophagus,
gizzard and heart

(thumbnail-sized). Breast, of course,
puffed up with plumage,
quills the original
pinpointed art.

Words follow from this.
Do they say anything
mythic as music
while lizard feet cling?

Instruments grew in
the hollow where noises
– genus of throat –
found a painstaking form.

Reprinted from *Woman Reading to the Sea* by Lisa Williams, ©2008 by Lisa Williams. With the permission of the publisher, W.W. Norton & Company.

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of erotic poems. There's certainly no reason not to read it as sexual on some level. Yet the poem's threaded slant rhyme, theme of metamorphosis, and travel past the familiar led me to think it might also be about poetic agency. Maybe it could also be about letting your own imagination take you wherever it might, out of the poem's room, out of its imagery: "That time I flew. . . Towns on from mine/ I set me down."

An early reviewer of Dickinson's poems noted that they seemed as if they were written by someone of genius who had a brain lesion – brilliant parts interrupted by grotesque oddness in a spasmodic way. These interruptions happened with the form as well as with the ideas. Reading early reviews of Dickinson pointed out to me how oddness and idiosyncrasy can be misunderstood, but not necessarily wrong. My recognition that she had followed her own weird threads of thought was a great comfort to me and essential to strengthening my own confidence as a writer. I was in a graduate poetry workshop at the time, attempting to figure out what I envisioned while facing the skepticism of my peers. She was herself, which meant the world to me.

"And Finished knowing – then –"

My intense interest in Dickinson led me to take a graduate seminar on her with an esteemed English professor, and a discussion that took place around one of her poems still comes back to me. I don't remember which poem it was, but I do remember the entire class puzzling over the confounding last third of the poem until the professor said that the poem just didn't seem finished – the closure wasn't well-worked out, or something to that effect. Maybe we couldn't figure it out because she hadn't either.

I still have a complex reaction to this opinion, but I can't deny that it also provided another instance of comfort. Whether or not Dickinson's poem met "our" standards in its development toward an end, it was done, and it was hers. We just had to take it as she left it. And maybe it was good for us, and for poetry, if we did so.

Sometimes messily, sometimes grotesquely, but almost always rhythmically, she shows that she values her own mind, and all of its weird swerves, "spasmodic" (L265) digressions from convention, and fallings off. Jorie Graham is one contemporary poet who has pursued a similar track. I admire Graham's commitment to continuing to resist the lyric procedures and closures evident in her first, very beautiful, highly praised two volumes. She has been engaging in "thought experiments" ("tries") that keep edging further and further past the sorts of closures she began her career with – as if she were laying down a road, and, as more of it is laid down, she keeps push-

ing the orange roadblock at the end a little further out, so that less and less of the poem has to do with hitting that roadblock or even meeting it, and the roadblock becomes incidental, simply a feature of the landscape outside of the poem.

Just as Dickinson dispenses with the "available fictions" (to borrow from feminist language) of how to work her way through a poem, she also, at times, does the same with how to end one. She understood that one of the things poems could do is to bring a reader close to another thinking being, in all of his or her peculiar, lonely humanity. And then to let go.

"Verdict for Boot!"

Recently, Cristanne Miller came to speak at the college where I teach and recommended to me Jed Deppman's book *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson*. In his title chapter, he discusses what he calls the "try-to-think" poems, saying that they offer no "dialectical click" or comforting sentiment. Deppman cites one revealing letter of Dickinson's: "while my thought is undressed – I can make the distinction, but when I put them in the Gown – they look alike, and numb" (L261). Like the "available fictions of becoming" that feminist writers have noted for women writers during Dickinson's time and after, there have been, and are, available fictions of poetic development, and poetic closure (what one could see as the abovementioned "Gown"). Deppman goes on to say: "The basic communicability of the poem's try hinges on the reader's willingness to identify with and follow a process of despairing thought well beyond where thinking would ever wish to go. While many readers may refuse, not recognizing or believing . . . those who have come to trust Dickinson may go deeply into the experiment" (69).

The word "despairing" doesn't seem as key to me as it does to Deppman – no matter. What matters is Dickinson's pursuit of her own thought through the poem; the not knowing, and not knowing where it will go, I would argue, can only have happened in the course of writing it. The going where it did go could only happen in the course of her writing it.

"Or even a Report of Land –"

Dickinson trusted her mind, trusted the words to help her step, or jump, or clamber, or handhold her way into and through. With such poems she must have felt she was leaving everything she knew of knowing behind. How incredibly brave.

This adamant pursuit of her own thinking, "unfinished" and unpolished, in whatever way that has meaning in a given century, has come to be the thing of most sustenance to me as I work harder on resisting my own compulsion to head toward a finish and tie up a

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poem – or alternatively, to leap elsewhere, associatively or disassociatively, in some of the typical, tired ways of much postmodern poetry.

For closures, perhaps more than for any other part of a poem, there are strong, limiting models – which of course are also models for thinking – that must be shaken off. Yet I want to do that “shaking off” in ways that are my own, not borrowed. Of course, even the injunction to avoid closure is a kind of convention. Where to go?

I am still learning. But this is where I am now. I offer a very recent unpublished poem, “Mayhem,” as an example. (And, yes, if you are wondering, Dickinson may have a few things in common with the creature in question, but that certainly wasn’t on my mind when I was writing the poem.)

Originally from Nashville, Lisa Williams is NEH Associate Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Centre College, where she has taught since 2001.

Mayhem

(Seattle Aquarium, January 2012)

Take from me myself
all I know as mine

bound into a center,
explode it out

delicately, to the tendrilled
end of each arm,

fleshed radiants!
Seeing courses

to other veins,
sight horizontal, and I

am actual,
more than actual.

The story
of my body loses freight.

Borne out, I witness.
The giant octopus,

rippled gray for sleep,
scarlet for action,

her form a needle
then a splay,

soon knits
her plume of eggs

to a fibrous web
she’ll gentle suction over

hourly, with such care,
and starve to tend, then,

just before dying, lightly
blow them past

her arms.



Mayhem, a female giant octopus at the Seattle Aquarium, was preparing for her mate, Rocky, when this photo was taken. Already anticipating his arrival, she would soon turn bright orange. Her arms stretch almost twelve feet wide.

Photo Credit: Lisa Williams

What's Your Story?

Georgiana Strickland, Series Editor

Reading Emily Dickinson – Aloud

By Harold Bond

It isn't just discovering Emily Dickinson that matters. It's how you respond to that discovery, as Harold Bond tells us here.

To tell us how you responded to that discovery, write me at georgiestr@aol.com.

At the beginning of my junior year in high school, my English teacher, a wonderful person who bubbled over with an infectious love of literature, asked the class whether any of us could name the three greatest American poets of the nineteenth century. I immediately raised my hand.

“Yes, Harold?”

“Walt Whitman.”

“Very good,” she said. “Do you know the other two?”

“Edgar Allan Poe?”

“Correct again.” There was no denying that she was impressed. “And the third one?”

I hesitated.

“Class?” she asked. “Anyone?”

In my head I was going through the list of poets that I knew – Whittier? Holmes? Ah, Longfellow! Yes, that was the one! Of course! But before I could raise my hand, she announced: “A clue – it's a woman.”

A woman, I thought. Really? A woman? Then suddenly it came to me. My hand shot up. “Harold?”

“Vachel Lindsay,” I said.

I had, of course, failed on two counts: gender and talent. I had heard of Emily

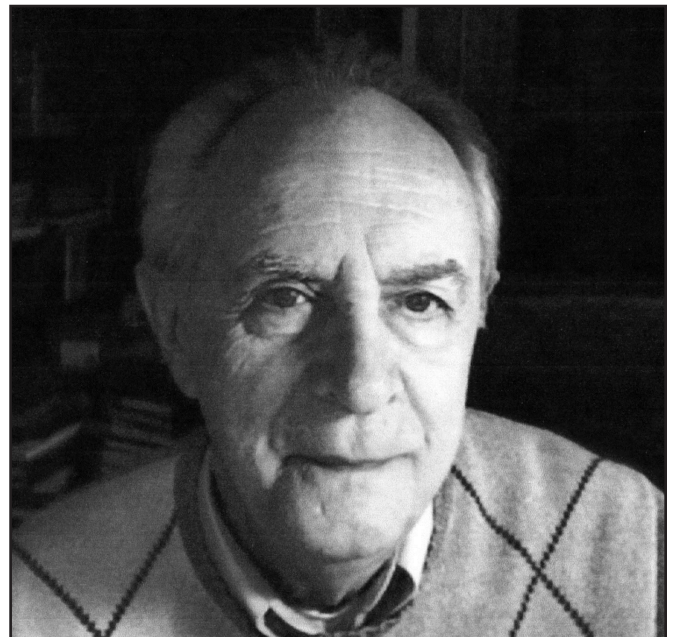
Dickinson, but only in elementary school where I had gotten the distinct impression that her poetry was, as one of her neighbors had referred to it eighty years before, “too Mother Goose-y.”

When I was eleven or twelve and my sister a year younger, our parents decided that the two of us should have separate bedrooms; and so our family moved from our three-room apartment to the five-room apartment upstairs. This move was, as I look back on it now, a life-changing experience for me. My sister and I had separate rooms on the second floor of the apartment. I had the larger of the two, which was also used for storage and had a lot of great old junk in it, especially a wind-up phonograph and a few old 78s of Caruso and Ponselle that I loved and memorized and sang along with.

I was a constant reader, but in time I found that, although reading novels and stories was pleasurable, reading poetry and plays was, for some reason, unsatisfying, boring, stifling. But one day, when I was about fourteen and home alone, I began, without thinking about it beforehand, to read aloud. It was Shakespeare – *Macbeth*, I would

guess – the murder scene, most likely. I just couldn't hold it in. I suddenly and loudly burst out with *Macbeth* and continued when my parents came home. They came running upstairs. I assured them that I was not the madman in the attic, and they didn't seem to mind.

After that, I read everything aloud. I began to select literature on the basis of how it would sound – the louder the better. That is how I found Vachel Lindsay. Of all the literary genres that I read, poetry seemed to gain the most by being read aloud. I understood it better that way. I began to realize that the sound of poetry is part of its meaning and that the poet wanted me to hear it and thereby feel the rhythm and the texture of it.



What's Your Story?

Getting to Emily Dickinson took a long time, however. It is easy to read aloud the “far-swooping, elbowed” lines of Whitman or the highly rhythmic, lugubrious lines of Poe. But Dickinson is different, much more self-contained, with shorter lines, less swooping, and less dependence on rhyme. After my teacher, for whom I had great respect, had told me that Dickinson was one of the three greatest poets of nineteenth-century America, I had to read her; but she wasn't easy to read aloud.

Higginson had told her that her poetry was “spasmodic.” It was. It had twists and turns and bumps in the road. And I was at that time reading the Todd-Higginson “corrections” and “improvements” that were much smoother than Thomas Johnson's 1955 edition of her poetry. Johnson restored the dashes, thereby making the bumpy road even bumpier and, once again, spasmodic. Before Johnson, I was trying to make Dickinson into Whitman or Shakespeare. It didn't work then and, post-Johnson, it didn't have a fighting chance.

Reading her poetry did not produce the smooth, rhapsodic experience that came with reading Shakespeare, Whitman, and Keats. However, Wordsworth, another of my favorites, brought

me to the turning point of my struggle to read aloud and therefore understand Dickinson's poetry. In my Literary Criticism course in college, I discovered that in his Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth defines the poet as a “Man speaking to other men.” Wow! Poetry is dialogue! Conversation! Like a speech in a play!

Suddenly I understood what Dickinson was doing – talking to someone, hesitating, looking for the right word, or holding the other person's attention – and therefore the dash. She is taking her time and

forcing us to do likewise. This is real talk, the way a speaker hesitates and changes the tone of her voice. The speaker is going on, but taking her time – almost stopping before managing to pluck a word or phrase out of the air and say what she wants to say the way she wants us to understand it. We share in the feelings that the dash indicates, but only if we obey the dash. Some people don't – even those who point out all the dashes.

I experimented. Wordsworth and Dickinson are similar, especially in Wordsworth's “Lucy” poems, as in these lines:

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

I have always admired the placement of that “oh” at the end of the penultimate line. It keeps things restrained, and it is the restraint that hurts. But Dickinson might have written that line with a dash

This is real talk, the way a speaker hesitates and changes the tone of her voice. The speaker is going on, but taking her time – almost stopping before managing to pluck a word or phrase out of the air and say what she wants to say the way she wants us to understand it.

at the end. And that works also because something is happening in the moment. The dash is talking to us.

I experimented with her own poetry by reading aloud the Todd-Higginson version of “There's a certain slant of light” and then reading aloud the Franklin printing (Fr320). Two different poems. Which one expresses despair more accurately? Does the landscape listen in the Todd-Higginson version? Do the shadows hold their breath? No – but they do when the reader obeys the punctuation in the original.

So there was Emily Dickinson in her bedroom, an unknown poet seeking the right word, the right sound, the right place for silence, the right way to speak to others to be understood. And there I was, many years later in my bedroom, an unknown anything, no longer just howling but talking, engaging in a conversation, listening to the poet. After she had written a poem, she must have read it. And I'll bet she read it aloud! That's the only way she could have known that it was right.

I have heard people read Dickinson's poetry badly and have wondered how they could like such sing-songy, Mother Goose-y poetry. I have also heard Robert Frost's drone and T.S. Eliot's imitation of Winston Churchill. Is that the way they want us to read their poetry?

Reading poetry aloud allows me to be a collaborator with the poet, but I must not only listen to the words and the order and sound of those words, I must also obey the punctuation so that I will hear the poem as the poet intended. This is not easy, but it is certainly worth the effort.

In that first letter to Higginson, Dickinson asked him to “say if my Verse is alive” and to let her know “Should you think it breathed” (L260). We

know the answer now, even though Higginson seemed somewhat mystified. He didn't allow it to breathe. Now – I hope – whenever I read it – aloud – it breathes.

Harold Bond lives in Reading, Massachusetts, where he taught courses in American literature, semantics, and Shakespeare at the local high school for thirty-eight years. He earned his B.A. in English at Northeastern University and his M.A. in English Language and Literature at Boston University. He and his wife, Theresa, buy and sell used books for fun and profit. Harold enjoys reading, writing, and acting.

TEACHING DICKINSON

Series Editor, Marianne Noble

If you teach Dickinson in classes at any level and you have anecdotes, observations, recommendations, or illuminating experiences that you would like to recount in an article, please contact the series editor, Marianne Noble, mnoble@american.edu.

Discovering the Artist's Physiognomy

By Eliza Richards

Many of the college students I work with grew up in competitive educational environments where standardized tests supposedly measure knowledge objectively. They often feel more comfortable with certainty than ambiguity; quite understandably, they would like to be able to quantify their knowledge and their accomplishments. Keenly motivated to learn not only the subject matter of a class but also how to “make As,” – because law school, or medical school, or something crucial depends on those grades – most students, even English majors, want answers, produced efficiently, not more questions.

Dickinson's poems disallow all that. Instead, they invite us to probe difficult, haunting, and unanswerable questions in rigorous ways that are often alien to our own thought processes and mental habits. How do we absorb an external event like a slant of light on a winter afternoon, a hummingbird's blur of colors in motion, a death in the house across the street? What comes after death, after we cannot “see to see –” (Fr591)? What happens in a marriage, or some other long-term commitment, if, over years, “the Gold, in using, / wear away” (Fr857)? How do we define and evaluate mental and emotional pain? When you feel a “Cleaving” in the “Mind,” why doesn't the “Brain” “split?” (Fr867)

For questions like these, we need help, but not in order to find definite answers. Instead we look for fellow travelers to show us that we are not alone, and that questions about spirit, ethics, feeling,



Photo Credit: Steve Fratoni

communication, language, the natural world, matter to all of us. These questions and this sense of companionship sustain us as we go about our daily operations and help to make our chosen tasks meaningful.

My goal in the classroom, then, is to share my sense of productive uncertainty in respectful, rigorous, and delightful encounters with both the students and Dickinson's poems. I seek to forge a collective spirit of inquiry in which perplexity is at home and right answers aren't the point. This term, confessing my cluelessness, I wrote a poem on the board with this final stanza: “Of Immortality / His Strategy / Was Physiognomy –” (Fr1163). How are we to proceed when confronted with such a gnomic statement? Gnostic comes to mind because there's a “Shroud of Gnome” in the poem, and “gnom” is embedded in the word “physiognomy.” Is that by accident, or design? Is Dickinson drawing attention to her own encrypted utterances, her fascination with the anatomy of language? Perhaps it would help to look the words up

in Dickinson's constant “Companion,” Noah Webster's Dictionary, available at the Emily Dickinson Lexicon Website, and in the classroom, via the students' various electronic devices. A Gnome is “an imaginary being, supposed by the cabalists to inhabit the inner part of the earth, and to be the guardian of mines, quarries, etc.” It is also “a brief reflection or maxim.” Well, the first definition goes along with the secretive, covert quality of the Spider's nighttime task of sewing “at Night/ Without a Light.” And the second definition fits the aphoristic quality of the poem.

We also learn that “Physiognomy” is the “art or science of discerning the character of the mind from the features of the face.” The practice was widely popular in the first half of the nineteenth century; Poe, Hawthorne, and other US writers Dickinson was familiar with alluded to physiognomy in their writing. How might this definition help us to understand in what way the Spider's strategy of immortality is physiognomy?

Perhaps it will help for us to draw on our collective spider knowledge. Spiders weave webs from stuff that comes from inside themselves; this makes them appealing figures of artistry. They encircle themselves with the webs they weave, so that insides become outsides, and outsides become insides: “himself himself inform,” in other words. Forming and informing, the secretive logic of the poem's language begins to take shape, much to the surprise of us all. Perhaps, a student suggests, the spider “discerns the features” of his web in order to divine his own mortal or immortal future: “Of Immortality / His Strategy / Was Physiognomy.” He creates his

TEACHING DICKINSON

web, and perhaps Dickinson creates her weblike poem, in order to discern their approach to the question of what lies beyond this life. So maybe she's suggesting that in order to understand what we think, we need to externalize our thought processes in language. Or, more radically, we can build bridges to immortality with the right combination of words, craftsmanship, and inspiration.

We seem to have gotten somewhere, but we're not sure. Now we dip into a packet with a range of potentially helpful materials that the students read in advance of class, along with the poem. Did Dickinson write any other poems about spiders? Several; spiders appear in her letters as well. Does she make a connection between the spider and the artist elsewhere? Certainly the "Continents of Light" swept away by the "Housewife's Broom" qualifies; that spider is a fortuneteller who holds a "silver Ball" and "danc[es] softly to Himself" (Fr513). Are there other poems that associate spiders with artists in the American poetic tradition? Yes: Dickinson's spider poems nestle alongside Whitman's "noiseless, patient spider" who "launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself." "Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing," hoping for the lines of silk to "catch somewhere," Whitman's spider seeks connection with others and with the outside world as intently as Dickinson's spider seeks both to know himself and to hide himself.

Comparing those two poems offers a productive entry point for a comparison between the two poets' very different writing projects. We might also think about the way the poem circulated, in manuscript form, to the Norcross sisters and to Susan Dickinson: "A copy in pencil, addressed 'Sue' and signed 'Emily' was sent" to her sister-in-law across the lawn, according to Franklin (*Variorum* II 1008). Could the poem be alluding to a particular topic or event, known to these women, unknown to us, that prevents us from being able to fully interpret the poem? What does the private circulation of Emily Dickinson's poems keep us from understanding?

While I introduced Dickinson with the mysterious spider this semester, diving into disorientation, modeling the ways we can proceed "Without a Light," on other days, I reversed the process, starting with the familiar and moving towards the disorienting. On a day devoted to poems at least ostensibly about marriage, I showed the students pictures of brides in snow-white flouncy dresses from *Godey's Ladies' Book*; we read William Blackstone's commentary on coverture law; he explains that "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is consolidated into the husband's"; we read poems by other mid-nineteenth-century American women on marriage, which often criticize the idea that the wedding day is the apex of a woman's life, and put the spotlight instead on the long years that follow. Julia Ward Howe, whose poems Dickinson would have read in the *Atlantic Monthly*, concisely charts the wife's long period of mechanical, unrelenting labor from the altar to the grave: "Measured is the path, and made,/ All the work is planned and paid."² Dickinson's "How many times these low feet staggered" develops the portrait of the wife as a ceaseless laborer, who can only rest in death; even then, she must endure criticism: "Indolent Housewife - in Daisies - lain! (Fr238) In "The Bride," Lydia Sigourney warns that girding on that bridal "harness" will not only determine the wife's existence on this earth, but also "may stamp the sentence of eternity"; the class agrees that serving out a sentence is not usually an enjoyable activity.³

These contextual materials help frame the students' reading of a poem like "I'm wife! - / I've finished that - / That other state," in which the woman speaks just after the vows and before she knows what will happen next (Fr225). Celebration of her elevated status - "I'm Czar - I'm 'Woman' now" - inadvertently conveys to the students a sense that her "very being or existence" now depends on her husband. That helps explain why she can't be a woman if she doesn't marry, and why she has put the word in quotations marks, as if she is not entirely sure what it means; it's someone else's definition of her identity.

The poem's image of the "soft Eclipse" is both romantic and sinister; vision and light are occluded, covered, in fact, some students notice.

If some poems are about marriage as a legal contract, in others marriage becomes a metaphor exploring an unnamed experience, one we can only speculate about. "A solemn thing - it was - I said - / A Woman - white - to be -" causes the students to ask right off the bat if Dickinson ever wanted to be a nun, what her experience with Catholicism was, and what it means to "drop a life / Into the purple well" (Fr307). We are back on cryptic territory, and I urge the students to marshal their forces of inquiry to work through the poem's increasingly elusive line of logic: is the speaker committing herself to God? To another person? To poetry? Whatever it is, the process of imagining expands the speaker infinitely, "like Horizons," and I hope the same happens to the students in pondering the only apparently "small life" of the poem.

When I teach Dickinson's poetry, then, I offer a range of approaches. We spend a day with only a single poem and Webster's Dictionary; then, bringing historical contexts to bear, we think about the ways poetic language is inflected with historical events, politics, law. We look at facsimiles of the manuscripts and then make a trip to special collections at UNC's Wilson Library to peruse the first book publications of her poems, comparing prefaces, noting the ways the poems were titled and rewritten, thinking about early reception. I hope the varied approaches provide students with ways to embrace uncertainty as an opportunity to think about important, unanswerable questions, and to turn to poets like Dickinson as their companion, rather than turning away from her work in confusion and dismay.

Here's what the students said this semester. One liked the single-minded intensity of Dickinson's poems and our focused time with them, because today "everyone is broadcasting themselves, and even when people are in the presence of others they

Continued on page 21

Emily Dickinson has been a fore-mother for innumerable later poets, and many of them have written poems back to her, trying in terms sometimes comical, sometimes irreverent, sometimes enchanted, to fathom the poet who inspires them. There are two full collections of these poems: Sheila Coghill and Thom Tamaro, eds., *Visiting Emily. Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of Emily Dickinson* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), and Marguerite Harris, ed. *Emily Dickinson: Letters from the World* (New York: Cymric Press, 1970), as well as many other tributes published elsewhere.

“How Many Emilies”

Maryanne Garbowsky

“How many Emilies in a piece of apple pie
:how many apples on each tree
:how many Emilies . . .”

“Emily Dickinson and Apple Pie,”
Wesley Day

Here is where we begin with not one, not two, but a myriad of Emilies – more than the eye can see, but less than the brain can create. Her life and her words have provided “the stuff of imagination,” tantalizing artists, musicians, poets and writers. In his poem “Dickinson’s Homestead,” Kenneth Rosen combines many different stories – whether apocryphal or not – that have accrued to the mystery that was Emily Dickinson. Thus he writes of the walleye, the “dingy wedding gown” which she wears in her upstairs bedroom, her lesbian inclination, her desire for her Master (presumptively Rev. Chas. Wadsworth), an abortion – all enumerated in six stanzas. In the last sentence of the poem, he repeats part of his opening line: “In Amherst the H is silent,” but adds “the O everywhere gaping.” Could the O be the unknown, the absence of knowledge at the heart of the enigma? It may be so. But let’s look at the “many Emilies” that poets and writers have created to fill in the unknowns of her life.

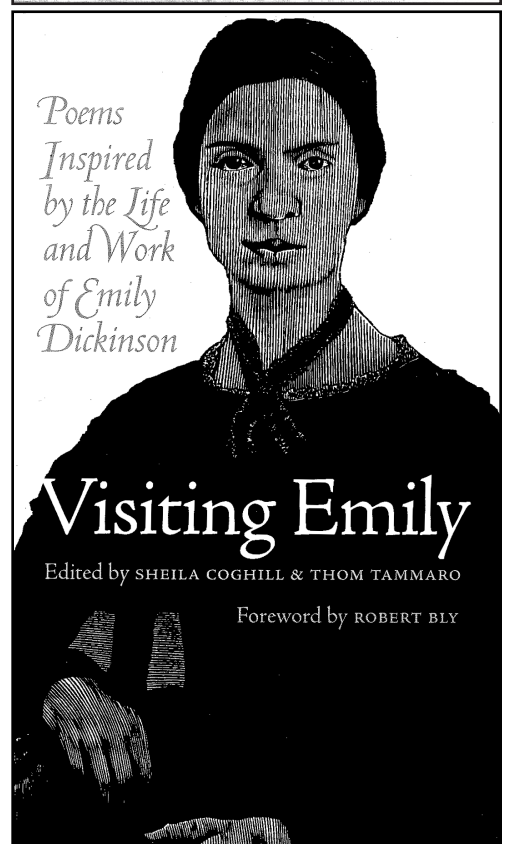
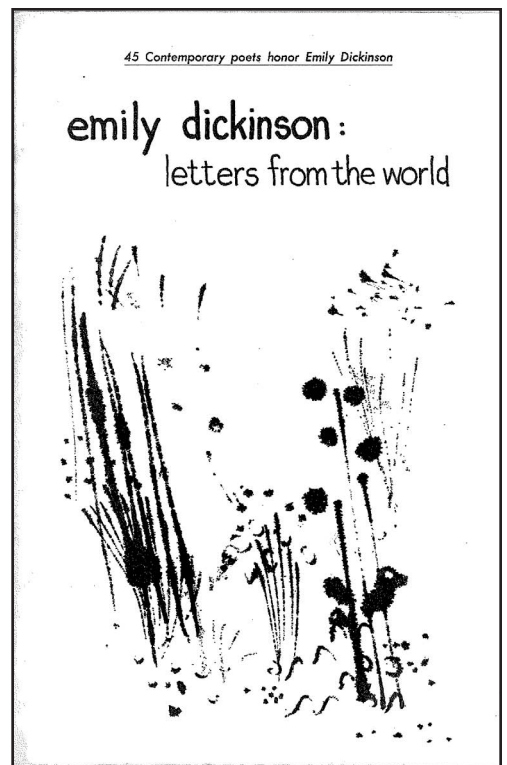
It is not uncommon for readers of Dickinson to create their own image of this mysterious woman. Eventually this imagined Emily becomes for them the real Dickinson and ultimately “My Dickinson.” According to Gary Smith, “We like to own” her even though we cannot (Coghill 90). Perhaps one of the best known and often anthologized visions of Dickinson is as the subject of sexual fantasy. Billy Collins, in his poem “Taking Off Emily Dickinson’s Clothes,” proceeds to undress her

using her words: “her tippet made of tulle” is the first to come off. Then her bonnet. The “long white dress” follows with its “tiny and numerous” “mother of pearl buttons down the back.” This is a “complicated process,” Collins complains, and “it takes forever” (*Sailing Alone Around the Room* 119).

He pictures Dickinson standing by the window of her upstairs bedroom, her “white dress puddled at her feet” and imagines himself as the “polar explorer” “sailing toward the iceberg of her nakedness.” It is with good taste that he proceeds, describing Dickinson’s letting go of inhibitions, the freedom she feels as “her hair tumbled free of its pins.” The imagery of her poems accompanies this encounter – the carriage, the fly buzzing “in the windowpane.”

When the moment of ecstasy finally arrives, Collins cleverly leaves his audience with Dickinson’s “loaded gun” which stares “right at you with a yellow eye.” The reader’s own shudder of recognition at what her cryptic words reveal is paralleled with the poet’s climactic sigh when she is finally “unloosed.”

But Collins isn’t the only one to portray the poet’s libidinous side. Other poets make Dickinson flesh and blood as well. Lee McCarthy in her poem “In the Flesh” complains that “I am tired of males swearing undying love for Emily Dickinson.” Yet they do, creating of her a sensual, sexual woman. Marilyn Nelson confides that Dickinson “had hair . . . in certain places, and . . . smelled human on a hot summer day” (Coghill 68). Another poet confesses that he’d “torn the white, grass-length dress of your spinster-



The above portrait of Emily Dickinson is a wood engraving by Barry Moser.

hood” (Harris 24). Another turns Dickinson’s words on her, recalling the pink snake she kept on a string in poem Fr1742. Here those phallic snakes she “never kept or had for long” transform into critics who “fathomed” her with their endless analyses and inquiries almost as if they were making love to her, and now she lies “decades underground” . . . “leveled by their dark love” (Harris 15).

At the opposite extreme from the carnal Emily is the New England nun who Madeline DeFrees says “prepared to risk it” with Gerard Manley Hopkins but didn’t (Coghill 19). Or in Donald Hall’s “The Impossible Marriage,” Dickinson is a “bride at last” running away from “the groom” – Walt Whitman – “in his slouch hat, open shirt, and untended beard.” He leaves her in hiding “the pale passionate / anchoress of Amherst” (Coghill 43).

In her infinite variety, Dickinson is able to combine flesh with spirit. While she is at once “most sensual of recluses” to Ron Padgett, she is “patron saint” to William Carlos Williams (Harris, intro.). To others she is someone at whose feet men literally come to worship:

I throw myself at Emily’s feet
at an ankle . . .
where I kiss her round moment
of bone, its poetry.

To Marvin Bell, in “The Mystery of Emily Dickinson,” she is “divine” (Coghill 2).

In this ethereal form, Dickinson’s voice has been perceived as both angelic and demonic. Robert Francis cleverly writes of an overheard conversation in Amherst between Robert Frost and Dickinson. Frost senses a presence and asks if it’s “Angelic? Or demonic?” Her question “How would you divine me?” is answered with “you who were ghost while living and haunting us ever since” (Coghill 31).

So, too, Richard Eberhart speaking to the poet says that she “held him in a trance” (Coghill 24). J. Unland is more direct in his poem “O Angel” and beckons her “Yon, dark angel come” (Harris 37). John Wheatcroft recognizes the light of innocence as well as the violence of the dark – the ambiguity at the heart of her personality – and pictures her first as a “daugh-

ter among buttercups” who “sinned for an exquisite pain,” who was “naked to the lashing wind and ravished under rain” (Harris 8). Yet he concludes her words “echo still witching New England air.” Jack Anderson states simply, “Your curse is upon us” (Harris 33).

To other writers, Dickinson is a vatic presence, speaking in a prophetic voice. To Siv Cedering, Dickinson is “the light,” “the fire of their sun” (Coghill 10), while in “Miss Dickinson” poet Constance Hunting notes her idiosyncrasies. “New England makes its women strange,” she confides, but Dickinson was “an oracle of Amherst” scratching out “the gist of the matter” (Harris 11). To Hart Crane, she was one who “fed her hunger like an endless task,” with the lasting result that “no flower yet withers in your hand” (Crane 170).

Some write of Dickinson’s documented domestic chores, her sewing, her baking. In “Blue Ribbon,” Louise Mally admires the “strong hands” that “shape a loaf” (Harris 18), a skill that is easily extended to the poet’s ability to craft words, to “catch . . . the right word” (Harris 2). In Sandra Gilbert’s “Emily’s Bread,” Dickinson became the “the bride of yeast,” “the alchemist of flour.” She “scribbles, smiles. She knows it is the white aroma of her baking skin that makes the bread taste good” (Coghill 37).

Her love of home, of Nature, her love of the garden are all delineated in many portraits. In several she is the bee making honey – an “unearthly honey” (Harris 5). She is, after all, “the fiercest bee of New England” with “Suns of heresies” “honeyed up in cells” (Harris 4).

In a lighter vein, David Burns pictures the poet/bee out on a forest jaunt with her father. Here she is “skinny Emily” dashing home to her “dark bed . . . of unfathered forest thoughts” to write a bee poem.

“To make a prairie-ie . . .
It takes a clover and one bee. . . .”
She paused for a moment in reverie. . . .
“I think / I’ll call that 1755,” and rose from
her infinite pillow to jot it down (Harris 27).

But by far some of the most memorable examples of Dickinson’s personae are those

that are humorous. Take, for example, Allen Katzman in “The Death of Emily Dickinson” in which he claims “Emily weighed 300 lbs. when she died” – grown fat on poetry. A more serious tone concludes that “it still takes 30 men to carry all that Truth to the grave” (Harris 47).

Peter Wild imagines the poet as she “flew over my house / on a fried chicken liver, . . . her apron / Tucked up under her white knees” (Harris 20).

A more time conscious Dickinson keeps a daily schedule of events. In “Emily Dickinson’s To-Do List,” the poet ponders her wardrobe: On Monday “what to wear – white dress? / Tuesday / White dress? Off-white dress? / Wednesday / White dress or what? / Thursday / Try on new white dress / Friday / Embroider sash for white dress” (Coghill 9).

Dickinson also plays with words each day. On Monday she writes a poem, then hides it. On Wednesday and Thursday, she writes poems and hides them too. On Friday, more poetry and hides everything.

One of the cleverest poems is Jayne Brown’s “Emily Dickinson Attends a Writing Workshop” (Coghill 8). Could anyone imagine critiquing the poem “My Life had stood a loaded Gun”? That is precisely what Brown does with some humorous remarks. “Why all the caps?” she writes in the margin. “Watch the repetition,” she cautions. The last stanza – “Though I than He may longer live,” she writes “Omit, too confusing!” In a final note to Emily, the teacher asks, “You seem to be alluding to some anger, yet the cause is never revealed. Is there another poem behind this one?” Then she adds, “I’d like to see you bring this poem through workshop again.”

Maxine Kumin in “After the Poetry Reading” brings Dickinson into the 1990’s and envisions her with “sex appeal” and “hair wild and electric / down to her buttocks. She’d wear magenta tights, black ankle socks and tiny pointed paddock boots.” She’s mastered “Microsoft and faxed” her poems to Higginson. She is an “Emily flamboyant” but Kumin ends on a more serious note: “Her words” were “for the century to come” (Coghill 54).

Many writers bring Dickinson into our modern age, making her a contemporary woman. To Adrienne Rich, she is a “woman masculine in singlemindedness” (Coghill 85). To Lynn Emanuel, she is “my own woman. Finally. And forever” (Coghill 26).

Toi Derricotte writes “because she could not say / rape, I say rape / because she could not say / penis, I say penis.” Would Dickinson write this way today, we might ask. Derricotte wonders, too. “We are her daughters / But would she accept us?” (Coghill 23)

Stephen Stepanchev recognizes the constraints in Dickinson’s own time and pictures her in her “white dress” in her garden with “the iron father standing at the top of the stairs” and “the sister like a stone angel / At the east gate of Eden.” There were “vivid contraries” – “an incompatibility, clearly / Between her clock and the clock of Amherst” (Harris 6).

But lest we are discouraged by this anachronism that was Dickinson, she becomes a new woman at the brink of a new world in Ed Hirsch’s “The Unnaming” (Coghill 46). She “deletes” “the names Adam had given the beasts” making her own revisions, feeling “a dizzying freedom as she cut loose from the affixed word.” She is a new Eve facing a blank page on which a new world was “waiting to be renamed.”

An interesting footnote to these different faces of Dickinson is how established poets approach the teaching of her poems. Galway

Kinnell winces at the professor’s obtuseness in “The Deconstruction of Emily Dickinson.” Kinnell wants to reprimand him but does so only in his head. He would ask if he could, “Why not first try listening to her?” (Coghill 51)

Rachel Hadas has more success in “Teaching Emily Dickinson.” The poet’s words hit their mark as Hadas writes, “One small bird / opens its wings. They spread. They cover us: / myriad lives foreshortened into Word (Coghill 42).

But John Berryman has the last word. Celebrating Dickinson’s 140th birthday in Wisconsin, he assures her in answer to her 1862 query to Mr. Higginson, “say if my verse is alive,” that yes the poems are alive – still. That in contrast to his own poems “more so than (bless her) Mrs. F. who teaches farmers’ red daughters and their beaux my ditties and yours and yours and yours!” (Coghill 3)

As you can see, the poet Emily Dickinson has “teased” many writers “out of thought.” We will never know for sure who or what she actually was. We must comfort ourselves with knowing – according to Theodore Weiss – “you will never give us what we want and so we want it more.” We must be content with knowing her only “between the lines,” the title of his poem (Coghill 96).

I would like to end with someone who actually did know Emily. In a note, Richard Eberhart recalls Kendall Emerson’s meeting with Dickinson as a boy of nine: “He was a close

friend of Emily’s nephew Gilbert” whom Emily loved deeply. When he died at the age of eight in October, 1883, she was broken. Mr. Emerson recalled that the poet “wrote him short poems” and one Christmas sent the poems along with flowers. He told Eberhart three details about Dickinson: 1) that she was good looking, not the plain woman “with no good features” that Higginson immortalized; 2) that she always wore white; and 3) that she made “very good doughnuts.” Eberhart concludes “She touched him. He touched me” (Harris 52).

This may be the closest we ever come to meeting the real Emily Dickinson. Nonetheless, she will always be in our imagination, beckoning us on to catch her, to pin her down. Whether “angel, witch, seer, soldier, bee, child, sex symbol, householder, prodigy,” she will always be the myth of Amherst.

In the words of Stephen Stepanchev, “I take my bourbon and drink to you” (Harris 7); in the words of Diane Williams, “You may be the best person who has ever lived” (Coghill 99); and finally John Berryman in his inimitable style,

Emily Dickinson
“Hot Diggity”

Maryanne Garbowsky, a Professor of English at the County College of Morris, in Randolph, New Jersey, is the author of two books on Dickinson. She continues to write about the poet as well as about the visual arts.

“Teaching Dickinson”
Continued from page 18

are communicating with other people on their cellphones or iPads. At least Emily Dickinson gave undivided attention to her various correspondences and her lasting relationships.” Another student found it especially helpful that some days were organized around “different topics because I’m not sure if I would have known what she was referring to if I didn’t know the general subject she was talking about beforehand.” As a result of the class, a third student decided to write an honor’s thesis next year

on Dickinson and the law. She says “In the past I’ve learned Dickinson in a very strict way with the teacher saying that, while our points may be good, there is really one way to read her poetry. I appreciated that you allowed us to come up with our own interpretations as long as they were founded in and supported by the poem itself.” And a fourth student simply said “I thought it was so awesome when we discovered that there was a gnome in Physiognomy.”

Notes

¹William Blackstone. *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Vol. 1 (1765), page 442.

²Julia Ward Howe, “The Wedding,” in *Later Lyrics*, Boston 1866, p50.

³Quoted in Barton Levi St. Armand, *Emily Dickinson and Her Culture: The Soul’s Society*, New York 1984, p335.

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THE COOK-OFF

By Marty Rhodes Figley

Emily Dickinson spent lots of time in the kitchen. Her specialty was baking. She was good at it and knew it. After all, she won second place and money (50 cents) for her Rye and Indian Bread at the 1856 Amherst, Massachusetts, Cattle Show.

The poet was generous with gifts from her oven. When she and her newfoundland dog, Carlo, made their social rounds, she presented her home-baked delicacies to local friends. A playful Emily was known to lower gingerbread in a basket from her window down to the delighted neighborhood children.

Is the present-day Emily Dickinson becoming a food celebrity? Maybe. In Fall 2010, something of Emily's was published in the *Boston Globe* newspaper. No, it wasn't a poem. It was "Emily Dickinson's Gingerbread Cake" recipe:

- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 stick butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup molasses

Set the oven at 350 degrees. Butter a 9-inch square cake pan. In a bowl, whisk the flour, baking soda, salt, and ginger. In an electric mixer, beat the cream until thick but not stiff; transfer it to a bowl. In the mixer, cream the butter until light. Beat in the cream just until blended. With the mixer set on its lowest speed, add the flour



Dickinson's Gingerbread Cake tantalizes just as it did 150 years ago. The recipe is adapted from *Emily Dickinson, Profile of the Poet as Cook*, by Jean Mudge, et. al., Amherst 1976.

mixture. Add the molasses. Scrape down the sides of the bowl once or twice, until blended. Transfer the batter to the pan. Bake the cake for 35 minutes or until the top is firm and springs back when pressed lightly with a fingertip. Serve warm with whipped cream.

The Emily Dickinson Homestead in Amherst recently hosted an Emily Dickinson Baking Contest. Move over Food Network, Emily D has come to town.

Let's imagine a "Dessert Competition for Literary Doyennes." Emily, Charlotte Bronte (who wrote one of the poet's favorite books, *Jane Eyre*), and Emily's contemporary from Concord, Massachusetts, Louisa May Alcott of *Little Women* fame, will compete.

I made some inquiries about what baking had gone on at Louisa's and Charlotte's houses. The staff at Louisa May Alcott's Orchard house told me about her.

Miss Alcott was quite a housekeeper – mostly out of necessity instead of for personal gratification, however. As a result, many of her cooking tasks often had unpredictable or even downright disastrous outcomes. One that she worked to her advantage to become one of her favorite recipes is called "Apple Slump," which is



Alcott's Apple Slump does not at all taste like floorboards.

coincidentally (or not!) the nickname she bestowed upon Orchard House because of the uneven floorboards all over the home!

Here is “Louisa May Alcott’s Apple Slump” recipe as best as we can update it to modern standards:

4 to 6 tart apples (3 cups sliced)
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon salt
1½ cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup sugar
1 egg (well beaten)
½ cup milk
½ cup melted butter

Pare, core, and slice the apples. Preheat oven to 350°. Grease with butter the inside of a 1½-quart baking dish. Put into the dish the sliced apples, brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon of salt. Bake apples uncovered until they are soft, about 20 minutes. While the apples are baking, sift together into a bowl the flour, baking powder, ½ teaspoon salt, and sugar. Mix into this the beaten

egg, milk, and melted butter. Stir gently. Spread this mixture over the apples and continue baking until the top is brown and crusty (about 25 minutes). Serve with whipped cream. Serves six.

Sarah Laycock, Library & Collections Officer at the Bronte Parsonage Museum in West Yorkshire, England, filled me in on Charlotte’s culinary status. Sadly, none of Charlotte’s own recipes have survived, but we do know from reading her sister Emily’s diary paper that Charlotte cooked apple puddings. She ate porridge in the morning (a common breakfast given there were plentiful oats in the area), roast or boiled meat and potatoes/vegetables for lunch followed by sweets such as bread and rice puddings, custards and “other preparations of eggs and milk, slightly sweetened.” Emily often baked bread to accompany the main meal.

Too bad we don’t have a copy of “Charlotte Bronte’s Apple Pudding” recipe. She might have given Ms. Alcott a run for the money. Charlotte will have to step down from the competition, but she wins on another front. In March 2011, yet another movie adaptation of her literary masterpiece *Jane Eyre* graced your local movie theatres.

Marty Rhodes Figley received her B.A. from Mount Holyoke College and is the author of sixteen children’s books. Her newest picture book, Emily and Carlo (Charlesbridge, 2012) is about Emily Dickinson and her beloved dog. Emily and Carlo is reviewed in this issue.

Did You Know? Gregory Mattingly

*We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground -
The Roof was scarcely visible -
The Cornice - in the Ground -*

Before the advent of motorized machines to break through the frozen sod, bodies were stored in unheated vaults within the cemetery. The vault was used to store bodies during the winter cold until the ground was soft enough to dig the grave.

At right is a concrete room, covered with soil and grass, in the West Cemetery in Amherst, MA. Emily Dickinson’s bedroom window on West (now Pleasant) Street overlooked this cemetery.

Not visible in this photo, “Town Tomb, 1851” is carved into the lintel of the vault.

Do you have images of objects that seem as if they may appear in Emily Dickinson’s poems and letters? Send them to the Bulletin! E-mail dan.manheim@centre.edu



NEW PUBLICATIONS

By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Decker, Everett.

haiku Emily! Haiku-Inspired Poetry Based on the Work of Emily Dickinson.

Amherst, MA: Small Batch Books, 2011. 136 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-937650-05-6, \$17.89.

Having studied Japanese philosophy and haiku, Decker undertook and completed an ambitious project, distilling each of Dickinson's 1,789 poems into his own haiku-inspired verse with the goal of making Dickinson's poetry more accessible. In *haiku Emily!* he presents 125 of his poems, describing them as "neither haiku nor Emily Dickinson but influenced by both." His selection draws from both Dickinson's well known and less familiar poems. Occupying a single page, each earnest, clever, often witty Decker poem is footnoted with the first line of Dickinson's poem and its Johnson and Franklin numbers. Besides the Franklin edition of Dickinson's poems, Decker consulted Noah Webster's 1844 *American Dictionary of the English Language* and Cynthia Hallen's *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* website. For those who hold Dickinson's words inviolable, he says that he approached her work with "respect and admiration" and "may have had to make her less reverent to make her more relevant." Although his poems can be read independently of Dickinson's work, it is satisfying and often delightful to read a Dickinson poem first, followed by Decker's distillation, observing how he keeps the kernel of a poem's thought, then re-imagines, re-energizes, and re-constitutes it into a much shorter poem. He suggests classroom applications of his work, and herein lies Decker's unique

contribution: his poems may offer some readers an entry into Dickinson's difficult work, stimulating discussion and possibly new student-written poems. Included are a preface, afterword, and indexes of Decker's and Dickinson's first lines.

Figley, Marty Rhodes.

Illustrated by Catherine Stock.

Emily and Carlo.

Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2012. 32 pp. 8.25" x 10.25" x .375". Cloth, ISBN 1-58089-274-2, \$15.95.

Written in lyrical prose and illustrated with bright, beautifully rendered watercolor drawings reflecting the seasonal changes in nineteenth-century Amherst, this simple but moving story of Emily Dickinson's relationship with her beloved dog Carlo is intended for children five to eight years old but will also charm readers of any age who appreciate Dickinson or have special bonds with their dogs. Figley's personal experience with a huge, shaggy, slobbering Newfoundland dog shedding long hair on her own white dress gives her an appreciation for Dickinson's sixteen-year relationship with Carlo. This simple, moving story begins, "In a small New England town lived a shy, smart girl named Emily." Into her lonely winter world, her father brings a "large, lively puppy," who on first encounter "covered Emily's face with dog kisses." Carlo becomes her constant companion and "*shaggy ally*" as together they listen to "the bobolinks' and robins' songs," walk to the Evergreens on a path "*just wide enough for two who love,*" explore the town and surrounding woods discovering "croak-

ing frogs that lived by the pond" and even imaginative "*mermaids in the basement.*" The muddy-pawed puppy Carlo grows older but remains a good listener: when Emily talks, Carlo's "*eyes grow meaning, and his shaggy feet keep a slower pace*"; eventually "his muzzle turned gray." Italicized words drawn from the letters and poems bring Dickinson's authentic voice into the story and provide a lovely introduction to Dickinson's world.

Freedman, Linda.

Emily Dickinson and the Religious Imagination.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 210 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-10700-617-1, \$90.00.

In a scholarly study of Dickinson's religious imagination, Freedman aims "to show how Dickinson's Puritan heritage, as it mixed with the liberal Christianity growing up in Boston, and fused with classical mythology, was a source of poetic enrichment and not a barrier to creativity that she simply reacted against." The author asserts, "From the paradox of the incarnate God and from religious stories of naming, light, quest, sacrifice and resurrection emerge four major themes of Dickinson's poetry: body, mediation, journey and gesture." In six chapters, she discusses the tension between religious revelations and their aesthetic representation; how religious narratives inform Dickinson's fictions of naming and her concern for the nameless; Dickinson's understanding of "the continuity between the sun-god, the transfigured Christ and sublime illumination"; the author takes

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.
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readers from this light of transcendence to poems that express awareness "of place and time, of journey, progress and failure, of human solace and lonely suffering"; she addresses "the relationship between theological and poetic interpretations of Christ's death"; and in chapter six she explains how "Christian and pagan understandings of resurrection" affected Dickinson's poetic responses to "loss, return and rebirth," noting that resurrection "struck Dickinson as a symbol of both the limitations and expansive possibilities of her verse." Readings of more than sixty poems, printed from the Franklin edition with Johnson numbers provided, support her work, accompanied by an introduction, conclusion, notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Hughes, Glenn.

A More Beautiful Question: The Spiritual in Poetry and Art.

Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011. 168 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8262-1917-6, \$60.00.

Hughes's paean to the spiritual found in great art and poetry focuses on the works of G. M. Hopkins, Emily Dickinson, and T. S. Eliot, with special attention to the foundational work of two twentieth-century philosophers, Eric Voegelin and Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan, both of whom studied the historical development of human consciousness, the discovery of transcendent reality, and its relationship to a desacralized world marked by materialism, secularism, and spiritual disorientation. Hughes's accessible scholarly study traces childhood's primary consciousness of the physical universe to something beyond that reality, a consciousness of a divine presence; he differentiates between immanence and transcendence and locates an ideal adult existential integration in a "balance of consciousness." He argues that great art and poetry can both defend and promote "the balance of consciousness which honors properly both worldly and transcendent reality." In "Emily Dickinson

and the Unknown God" (62-87), Hughes uses Voegelin's philosophy as a touchstone and references thirty Dickinson poems from the Franklin edition to examine "the way Dickinson's artistic corpus constitutes an unusually faithful, extended testimony to the in-between, or metaxic, condition of human existence." He regards Dickinson as "a brilliant poetic explicator of what it means to live in . . . the unrestful, inescapable, and irresolvable tension of existence in-between world and transcendence, time and eternity, ignorance and knowledge, despair and faith, hope and fulfillment." This cogent, well researched book includes notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Lee, Maurice S.

Uncertain Chances: Science, Skepticism, and Belief in Nineteenth-Century American Literature.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 239 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-19-979757-8. \$65.00.

Lee's erudite study of nineteenth-century intellectual thinking considers how attitudes about faith, belief in Providence, and the argument for intelligent design were disrupted by romantic subjectivity, science, empirical skepticism, and the Civil War. Informed by past and present intellectual thinkers, with particular focus on the doctrines of chance, probability, and pragmatism, Lee references these doctrines as he examines selected works of Poe, Melville, Douglass, Thoreau, and Dickinson. In "Dickinson's Precarious Steps, Surprising Leaps, and Bounds" (154-184), Lee suggests that Dickinson's "interest in romantic subjectivity gave way to a more empirical outlook," where chance and surprise play a role. Finding that the word *chance* occurs more than 20 times in her verse, he says, Dickinson was probably familiar with "probabilistic science in general," "commentaries on aesthetics and chance," and "the creative power of accidents." In Dickinson's poetry he finds "disappointment with an inconstant heaven, chagrin at God's fallibility, bitterness that life's pleasant ac-

cidents are so niggardly rare." Dickinson associated chance with danger and risk but also with opportunity: "she still believes in the primary force of surprising moments of grace." One of the tonic effects of Dickinson's poetry is that "it enacts experiences of surprise," augmented by variant choices. He references many poems, giving particular attention to Fr450 and Dickinson's "closest approach to surprise," Fr477. Tempered by occasional humor, Lee's densely informative study is for sophisticated readers familiar with academic language. Included are an introduction, coda, notes, and an index.

Moore, D. J., ed.

Wild Poets of Ecstasy: An Anthology of Ecstatic Verse.

Nevada City, CA: Pelican Pond, an imprint of Dolphin Publishing, 2011. 401 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-57733-295-0, \$22.95.

In a joyful celebration of ecstatic poetry, Moore provides an engaging and informative 54-page introduction examining the multifaceted history of ecstatic poetry and gathers more than 100 secular and religious poets, chronologically presenting a wide range of ecstatic poetry from Bible psalms, Homeric hymns, and Sappho to D. H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound. Included are Sophocles, Li Po, Omar Khayyam, Rumi, Hafiz, Mirabai, Donne, Herrick, Bradstreet, Goethe, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Emerson, Native American songs, Whitman, Dickinson, G. M. Hopkins, Negro spirituals, Rilke, and many lesser known poets. For copyright reasons, twentieth-century works are "conspicuously absent." Moore lists twenty-two characteristics of ecstatic poetry and says that poets in the ecstatic tradition "celebrate human beings in their best moments – 'the soul at the white heat' – to use Emily Dickinson's line. Ecstatic poets affirm the value of happiness, human connections, festivities, sexuality, and relatedness to the divine; they praise the goodness of life, the abundance of na-

ture, and the intimate interrelation of the whole cosmos; and they configure in their verse peak states of being and positive, life-affirming emotions, such as serenity, awe, hope, wonder, rapture, gratitude, and love." He says, ecstasy "heals and serves as a catalyst for human flourishing." This anthology includes eight Dickinson poems as they were first published, but they are assigned Johnson numbers (76, 157, 172, 214, 249, 365, 632, and 1118). Included are notes, a bibliography, and an index of first lines.

Book Notes

Now available in paperback edition:

Christensen, Lena.

Editing Emily Dickinson: The Production of an Author. Routledge, \$42.95

Mitchell, Domhnall.

The International Reception of Emily Dickinson. Continuum, \$49.95.

Pritchard, William H.

Talking Back to Emily Dickinson and Other Essays. University of Massachusetts Press, \$32.95.

Journal Articles

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

Blackstock, Alan.

"Dickinson, Blake, and the Hymnbooks of Hell." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.2 (2011): 33-56.

Evans, Meagan.

"'Itself is all the like': Selfsameness in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.2 (2011): 83-105.

Finnerty, Páraic.

"'Dreamed of your meeting Tennyson in Ticknor and Fields --': A Transatlantic En-

counter with Britain's Poet Laureate." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011): 56-77.

Giles, Paul.

"'The Earth reversed her Hemispheres': Dickinson's Global Antipodality." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011): 1-21.

Kang, Yanbin.

"Dickinson's Hummingbirds, Circumference, and Chinese Poetics." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.2 (2011): 57-82.

Loeffelholz, Mary.

"Master Shakespeare, Mrs. Browning, Miss Dickinson, and the Servants." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011): 34-55.

Manheim, Daniel.

"'And row my blossoms o'er!' Gift-Giving and Emily Dickinson's Poetic Vocation." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.2 (2011): 1-32.

Stonum, Gary Lee.

"Emily's Heathcliff: Metaphysical Love in Dickinson and Brontë." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011): 22-33.

Wichelns, Kathryn.

"Emily Dickinson's Henry James." *Emily Dickinson Journal* 20.1 (2011): 78-99.

Book Review

Robin Peel.

Emily Dickinson and the Hill of Science.

Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010. 435 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-8386-4221-4, \$92.50.

Reviewed by Hiroko Uno

In *Emily Dickinson and the Hill of Science* Robin Peel considers the influence of the sciences on Dickinson's poetry. In the first chapter, "Poetry, Paleontology, and Geology," he states that the purpose of the book is to demonstrate the importance of the "scientific investigator" role that

Dickinson played (13). He writes, "Nina Baym, Rebecca Patterson, Fred D. White, and Hiroko Uno are four critics who have written essays in which they move the scientific searchlight onto Dickinson's work, but without arriving at a conclusion that science was very important to it" (76). However, Uno, at least, has not only "cataloged" "the direct references to science" "very thoroughly" (17) but has acknowledged its significance, demonstrating Dickinson's use of her knowledge of developments in science and technology to solve her metaphysical and religious problems, while observing God-fearing scientists trying to reconcile their discoveries with what is written in the Bible.

Peel continues, "I go much further, arguing that Dickinson sedulously appropriated methodology and imagery from a range of scientific disciplines as part of a lifelong epistemological campaign most vigorously pursued between the years 1855 and 1865" (76). He does indeed go "much further" with immense and diversified information. For example, in chapter 2, "Climbing the Hill of Science," he suggests that the succinct presentation of information "in short paragraphs, often as axioms," in science textbooks might have led Dickinson to the "favor of brevity and interest in definition" (140); in chapter 3, "Women, Books, Schooling, and Science," he argues that the unexplained opening "it" in her poems "reflects the strategy of the science textbook in which a definition is sought and then provided":

"What is the earth?": "It is. . . ." In Dickinson's case, a poem can begin "It rises – passes – on our South" (Fr1034) or "It was given to me by the Gods –" (Fr455), leaving us to puzzle out the meaning of "it" and to what "it" refers. We are left suspended, but there is plenty of evidence provided in the poem, allowing us to move toward an empirical conclusion but frequently stopping short of providing one. Dickinson offers us the middle part of knowledge, arising from experience on earth. This middle part assumes a statement explained before we are born (be-

fore the poem begins) and a statement given after we die (after the poem ends). This is the scientific structure of the poem. It signals that prior and following knowledge is possible, but the poem concerns itself with what is observable now (184).

In chapter 4, "Emily Dickinson and Geography," Peel claims that Dickinson "drew on her reading of geography textbooks, journal articles, and reverie fiction to absorb images of the unfamiliar and unvisited, which through the power of language became less unfamiliar and verifiable in the imagination" (235); in chapter 5, "Seeing Differently: Astronomy, Optics, and the Slanted Lens," he asserts that although new technology made it possible to see something invisible to the naked eye, "she agreed with Kant [that], as human beings, we are restricted in what we see and know" (247); in chapter 6, "Dickinson

and Darwin," Peel states that she "may never have consciously responded to Darwin's theory, but . . . there are lines in her poems that suggest an acknowledgement of some kind of change, development, or evolution within nature" (327); in chapter 7, "Psychology and Pseudoscience," he says that she "lived at a time when scientific practice was being enthusiastically applied to the study of the mind and to the claim that there was a perceptible human spirit that survived the body in death" (330) and that Spiritualism was "a discourse in her intellectual environment" (355); and in chapter 8, "Disruptive Science and Disruptive Poetry," he contends that "Dickinson's writing applies the outer disruptive effects of the new knowledge to an exploration of the inner processes of disrupted psychology" (381). These examples give only a glimpse of the many fascinating arguments Peel makes.

I admire Peel for his ability to handle so much material from different fields, ranging from Peter Parley's Magazine for children, science textbooks, and periodicals such as Hampshire and Franklin Express to the writings of Kant and Thomas Moore. There are several careless mistakes: Dickinson was not "eighteen" in 1859 (174); and she did not write to Higginson in 1852 (301). Nevertheless, this book is both interesting and useful for a better understanding of Dickinson's work. Robin Peel has made a great contribution to the scholarship on Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Hiroko Uno is professor of American Literature at Kobe College in Japan and author of Emily Dickinson's Marble Disc: A Poetics of Renunciation and Science and Emily Dickinson Visits Boston.

New CD: Sofie Livebrant interprets Emily Dickinson

Reviewed by Niels Kjaer

Emily and I. Sofie Livebrant

Playground Music Scandinavia AB, 2012. Book and CD. PGMCD 68. EAN: 7332181044843. ISBN: 978-91-978779-6-1.

The Swedish composer and singer-songwriter Sofie Livebrant has recently released a new album with her own musical interpretations of Emily Dickinson's poetry. Previously Livebrant has composed music for Charles Baudelaire, Sylvia Plath and other poets.

In an interview Sofie Livebrant tells that the poetry of Emily Dickinson has had a profound impact on her. Over the last couple of years she has been living with Dickinson, and her poems have become an inseparable part of her life.

The eleven Dickinson poems Livebrant has put into music are Franklin #2, 33, 36, 40, 61, 62, 64, 214, 253, 320 and 640. Seven of these eleven poems were written before Dickinson

was 30 years old, so it is the young Emily whom the very talented Sofie Livebrant interprets on this album, which also contains one original Livebrant song, entitled "Something."

Livebrant's music can best be described as modern Scandinavian folk tunes. Together with the producer and musician Johan Lindström, Sofie Livebrant has created a completely unique and euphonious musical framework for Dickinson's poems. You have never heard Emily sing in this way before, I can promise you!

The CD is accompanied by a beautiful and informative booklet with the twelve poems in both English and Swedish. Furthermore the book contains texts about Emily Dickinson and Sofie Livebrant, illustrated with photos by Johan Månsson and aquarel paintings by Lars Lerin.



CD / Book Cover: *Emily and I*
Photo Credit: Johan Månsson

Going Public: The EDIS and the Dickinson Museum in 2012

Cristanne Miller

The article grows out of a panel from the 2011 ALA conference, including the author and Jane Wald, and moderated by Sharon Shaloo.

When the Emily Dickinson International Society was founded, there was no Emily Dickinson Museum and the Homestead was open only irregularly for tours. During the Society's early planning years, starting in 1986, a few Dickinson scholars forming the Society board or talking with board members (especially Elizabeth Bernhard and Martha Nell Smith) got to know Mary Landis Hampson, who was living in the house next door to the Dickinson Homestead called "The Evergreens" – an Italianate villa built for Emily's brother Austin and his wife Sue in 1856. Their daughter, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, specified in her will that only Alfred Leete Hampson (her companion) or his family could live in the house, and that thereafter it must be "razed" before sale of the property could be finalized.

The Emily Dickinson International Society (or EDIS) was in part founded out of concern for the state of the two houses and a desire to preserve them. Mary Hampson died in 1988, the same year EDIS was incorporated.

In 1988, EDIS had two primary material or real estate concerns. The first was to make sure the Evergreens was not razed. With the establishment of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, it became clear that that would not happen (this trust involved members of EDIS but the Society was not consulted about its forming or actions). The second was either to persuade Amherst College to use the Dickinson Homestead in a way more friendly to scholarship and public interest, or even to attempt to buy the property from the college ourselves. Since we were a fledgling organization made up primarily of faculty members with little or no experience in fundraising and with busy full-time jobs, the second option seemed highly unlikely.

Nonetheless, in our first decade, we did think about attempting to buy property in Amherst in order to create a center for Dickinson study, for local, national, and international scholars

and visitors, and even visited a property for sale near the Homestead and with historical relation to the Dickinsons. We were also in those early years pursuing other ways of "promoting, perpetuating, and enhancing the study and appreciation of Emily Dickinson throughout the world" (another part of our stated mission) – in particular, founding the *EDIS Bulletin* then the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and directing our first international conference in 1992.

At that point, we started a pattern of hosting an international conference about once every three years and in the other years hosting what we called an "annual meeting," mostly small-scale events with a few invited speakers, geared more toward a general public than toward scholars. We determined that we would meet at least once every three years in Amherst in order to keep our ties to the houses strong.

In 1996, while I was President of EDIS, Amherst College hired Cindy Dickinson (n as the first full-time and professionally trained Curator of the Homestead. From this point on, Amherst College took its responsibility to the Homestead property with new seriousness. In 2001, Jane Wald was hired as Museum Director; in 2003, the Bianchi Trust deeded the Evergreens to Amherst as part of a Dickinson Museum.

In comparison with other author societies, EDIS is relatively young (we will celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2013). Also, in contrast to most author societies, our initial goals were focused in part on the preservation of the material context of the poet's life and the developing of popular programs on the poet that the Museum now manages. Among our stated original goals were to "Secure the future of the Dickinson properties in Amherst . . . as cultural and historical treasures," and to "Establish a Center for Dickinson Studies" – which we first interpreted as a physical "Center." With the founding of the Museum, and given Jane's

and Cindy's exemplary management and programming, these no longer need to be the Society's key concerns. From the start we were also committed to being a society for both scholars and lay or popular readers of Dickinson – a commitment we still feel strongly.

Given that the ED Museum now secures the future of the Dickinson properties and functions as a Center for Dickinson "appreciation," EDIS has arrived at a point in its history of rethinking what the Society's own most significant contribution to the "study and appreciation of Dickinson" should and can be. Clearly EDIS provides the scholarly focus of world attention to Dickinson (as attested by the panels we host every year at the ALA and MLA conferences, as well as our own conferences about every three years). And EDIS works closely with the Museum in a host of ways. We participate with the Museum in programming, give it money annually, and we have just established a joint membership program that enables EDIS members to elect to join the Museum as well at a reduced fee.

Current and past Society board members also serve on the Museum board (in 2011, James Fraser, Polly Longworth, and Cristanne Miller). EDIS is also, however, having a retreat this summer to think about where the Society is going now with its own goals and priorities. Similarly, the ED Museum is in a continuing process of understanding its own mission more clearly and is asking, for example, questions like whether its primary target audience might be classified as people with primary initial interests in Dickinson's poetry or primary initial interest in the material cultural of the houses. This thinking on both sides will include the question of how our continued collaboration can make the best use of each of our respective strengths, networks, resources, and energies.

Cristanne Miller's latest book, Reading in Time: Emily Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century, appeared in May 2012.

Civil War Discussed at the Frost Library

Lois Kackley

The American Civil War triggered the emotional and intellectual maturity that stimulated a majority of Dickinson's poems, according to Polly Longworth in a recent panel presentation in Amherst. Longworth, a long-time supporter of EDIS and Dickinson biographer, was joined by four others to help launch Amherst College's "Frazar is Killed: Emily Dickinson, Amherst, and the Civil War," a Frost Library exhibit running from March 28 to May 20, 2012.

Moderator Martha Ackmann, past EDIS president, author, and Holyoke College lecturer, was introduced by Frost Librarian Bryn Gifford. Amherst History Museum's Marianne Curling invited the 100-plus audience to participate in the museum's project to "tell the private stories" of Amherst's 274 Civil War soldiers, who, like Frazar Stearns, had their own compelling personal details. Mike Kelly, archives and special collections director at the library, discussed the transformation in college life brought about by the war, emphasizing the "intimate group of people" that comprised the town and student body. Bob Romer, a retired Amherst College physics professor who wrote the book *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts*, read touching letters by area soldiers during the Civil War.

The event was co-sponsored by the Frost Library and the Emily Dickinson Museum. The organizer of the panel was the museum's director of programming, Cindy Dickinson. At the conclusion of the event, Emily Dickinson Museum Director Jane Wald invited the audience to other Civil War Sesquicentennial commemorations by the museum during the spring and summer.



Front row: Bob Romer and Polly Longworth. Back row: Marianne Curling, Mike Kelly, and Martha Ackmann

Hoosier Youths Exposed to the Belle of Amherst

On December 14, 2011, EDIS President Jonnie Guerra was invited by her third-grade friend, Hannah Morris, and Hannah's teacher, Mrs. Kathy Wolf, to visit their classroom at Cumberland Elementary School in West Lafayette, Indiana, to discuss Emily Dickinson and to read from her poems. The class enjoyed learning facts about Dickinson's life, seeing the poet's picture and the baseball card and doll made in her image, and listening to the poems read aloud. They responded enthusiastically to Dickinson's nature poetry and had many insights to share about her use of language, especially words that appealed to the senses. After the third-graders joined Guerra in a rousing recital of "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (Fr260), they snacked on Dickinson-inspired gingerbread in celebration of the poet's 181st birthday.



From rear: Kathy Wolf, President Guerra, Hannah Morris, and an unidentified woman in white.

San Francisco Poetry Marathon

EDIS is joining with the San Francisco Public Library and Litquake, San Francisco's literary festival, to sponsor an Emily Dickinson Poetry Reading Marathon on December 1, 2012. Modeled after the successful marathon held annually at the Dickinson Museum, the San Francisco version will be a half marathon with the balance of the poems read at another marathon to be scheduled for 2013. The event is expected to include costume judging because, noted principal marathon organizer and EDIS member Aífe Murray, "this is the sort of town where people will come dressed as Emily Dickinson or Carlo, her Newfoundland."

Dorothy Huff Oberhaus Delivers Keynote Lecture at Women's History Month Celebration

Joyce Rasmussen Balint

On March 18, 2012, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus delivered an address, "The Many Moods of Emily Dickinson," to an overflow audience at the Bronxville Women's Club in Bronxville, New York, on the occasion of the Club's celebration of Women's History Month. The lecture was given in the Club's historic Clubhouse, built in 1928, and now on The National Registry of Historic Places. Oberhaus began by observing that so much attention is given to Dickinson's poems about death and sadness that some readers begin to believe that she wrote about nothing else. But although ED wrote many fine poems about death and suffering, she also wrote many about happier subjects. This, Oberhaus observed, is especially apparent in her major work, the forty bound fascicles, most of which include a wide variety of moods and perspectives.

In her lecture, Oberhaus chose three poems to illustrate this variety. "Because I could not stop for Death," one of the finest poems ever written in English, represented her poems about death. "I taste a liquor never brewed," which depicts her speaker as drunk on the beauties of life, is typical of ED's joyous poems. And "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" is among her many nature poems, and also one of her many riddle poems – those that describe in detail a creature or object without naming it, in this case a snake.

A half-hour period of questions and answers was followed by an afternoon tea that was accompanied by a musical interlude.

Dorothy Oberhaus is the author of Emily Dickinson's Fascicles: Method & Meaning (Penn State Press, 1995); and of a book-in-progress, also about the fascicles.



Dorothy Oberhaus speaks about Dickinson to the Bronxville Women's Club for Women's History Month

New Directions in Dickinson Studies

At the Annual Meeting of the Emily Dickinson International Society at Amherst in 2011, a group of scholars, readers, teachers, and artists came together to form what is now known as "New Directions in Dickinson Studies." This group is interested in asking what these "new directions" might be in a field that has had such rich work done in it over the years. To that end, on January 1, 2012 we launched a website that hopes to showcase, question, challenge, and celebrate new projects on Dickinson and her work. Without any predetermined sense of what makes something "new" – whether that newness resides in content, style, or approach – this website is dedicated to opening the field of Dickinson Studies to new possibilities.

The website, which can be found at <http://newdirectionsindickinsonstudies.org/home/>, is open to the public to read but requires a member to have a password in order to comment. The site presents one new piece every two months, therefore leaving time for eager readers and

participants to look closely at the piece, to do their own thinking or research into the topic, and to respond in a substantive way. Ideally, such discussion will not only be interesting to the community of people writing in, but will be valuable to the person who has offered the piece up for consideration. In this way, works-in-progress, half-ideas, and new thoughts are particularly well suited for this site. In January 2012, Theo Davis presented a piece entitled "Dickinson, and Lighting Things" and in March 2012 Antoine Cazé contributed a piece entitled "Emily Dickinson's Ethics of Neighborhood." Although Cazé references Davis' writing in a footnote, they start in very different places and ultimately have wildly different investments. In this way, the first two publications prove that "new directions" are indeed multiple.

If you are interested in contributing a piece or in obtaining the password that would allow you to become a "user" on this site, please email Alex Socarides at socaridesa@missouri.edu.

MEMBERS' NEWS

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 Categories:

Sustaining Member (added to joint or regular membership) _____ \$150 or more
Institutional Member _____ \$115
Contributing Member (added to joint or regular membership) _____ \$100
NEW: Joint EDIS/Dickinson Museum _____ \$100
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

Name, title & affiliation _____
Mailing address _____
Telephone (home) _____ (office) _____ (fax) _____
Email _____

Use additional page for further gift memberships.

Please make check or money order payable, in U.S. dollars, to EDIS, Inc., and send to:
EDIS; c/o Johns Hopkins University Press; P.O. Box 19966; Baltimore, MD 21211-0966

www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org

Call for Papers

Emily Dickinson International Society panel at the 2012 South Atlantic Modern Language Association convention, November 9-11, 2012; Durham, North Carolina.

Conference theme: "Text as Memoir: Tales of Travel, Immigration, and Exile"

Panel Title: "Dickinson's (Inter)Textual Travels"

The Emily Dickinson International Society seeks participants for a roundtable discussion of Dickinson's manuscripts as tales of travel, immigration and exile. This discussion might include both the manuscripts themselves and their circuitous history. T. W. Higginson insisted in his preface to the 1890 edition of her work that Dickinson's manuscripts "belong emphatically to what Emerson

has long since called the 'poetry of the portfolio' – verses written without a thought towards publication." Dickinson's "portfolio" was thus launched on a series of strange voyages, its leaves scattered in various locales for over a century before being re-assembled into what many readers now recognize as a radically complex poetic project. By examining Dickinson's commitment to manuscript production, this discussion should reveal many telling glimpses into the unforeseeable travels one takes as a "supposed person" (L268).

We welcome traditional analyses as well as creative work that can be written, digital, or mixed media.

Please send 200-400 word proposals for participation in this discussion by June 1, 2012 to Trisha Kannan at trisha.kannan@sfcollge.edu.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Welcome to the 2012 Annual Meeting of The Emily Dickinson International Society

“EMILY ROCKS”

And Welcome to Case Western Reserve University,
University Circle, and the North Coast of the USA

Birthplace of Rock and Roll and Deathplace of
Samuel Fowler Dickinson, Emily's Grandfather

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Friday, Aug 3

Feature: Martha Nell Smith, Distinguished Scholar-Teacher and ADVANCE Professor at the University of Maryland will speak on “How Emily Rocks.”

Master classes/poem workshops; museum visits; banquet, cabaret-style poem performances.

Saturday, Aug 4

Feature: Keynote address by Kevin J. Dettmar, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* as well as *The Longman Anthology of British Literature* will address “Emily Dickinson and Zombies.”

Business Meeting; archival details about Samuel Fowler Dickinson's time as treasurer of Western Reserve College; excursion to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum; downtown dine-around at celebrity chef (Michael Symon, Jonathan Sawyer, Zachary Bruell, et al.) restaurants plus a few less pricy but nearly as good.

Sunday, Aug 5

Further master classes/poem workshops; wrap-up and eye to next year by Alex Socarides; allied meetings.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Within walking distance of the meeting events and in the unparalleled concentration of cultural and educational institutions that is University Circle are the Cleveland Museum of Art, Severance Hall (home of the Cleveland Orchestra), Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland Children's Museum, Western Reserve Historical Society, Dittrick Museum of Medical History, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland Institute of Music, Cleveland Botanical Garden, Cleveland Cultural Gardens and a legendary dive bar where, aside from the many later-to-be famous acts who appeared in the 1970s and after, Joan Jett and Michael J. Fox rocked on in Paul Schrader's *Light of Day*.



Featured Speakers Martha Nell Smith and Kevin J. Dettmar promise to get the Emily Dickinson Society to rock.



Photo Credits: Smith, Steve Fratoni; Dettmar, John Lucas

MEMBERS' NEWS

LODGING

Limited bed and breakfast lodging available at Glidden House (866-412-4537; EDIS rates available) and Washington Place (216-791-6500). CWRU offers university housing ranging from dorm rooms, at less than \$20 per night, to private apartments for around \$100 per night. The nearest full-service hotel, from which University Circle shuttle service is available, is the Doubletree Tudor Arms (216-455-1260). Online booking for some of these is available through the EDIS website.

ARRIVAL IN CLEVELAND

From the airport, take the RTA to the University Circle station. University Circle shuttle buses will then take you closer to your destination; ask the driver for details or consult the on-line map: www.case.edu/maps/busmap.html.

Arriving by car: CWRU is on the far east side of Cleveland. From I-90 the most useful exit is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr drive. From

I-71 or I-77, use the Carnegie Road exit. In either case, consult online or paper maps for more specific routes to your destination.

Parking in University Circle will usually require payment. Metered street parking is easily available; the closest garages to EDIS events are on Ford Rd, between Euclid Ave. and Bellflower Rd or on East Blvd, just north of Euclid Ave.

Registration packets will be available in Clark Hall, room 206 (11130 Bellflower Road). from 3 to 6 pm, Thursday, Aug 2 and after 9:30 am on Friday and Saturday.

INFORMATION AND UPDATES

The latest information will be available on the EDIS website, or you can email the meeting director, Gary Stonum, at gary.stonum@case.edu.

REGISTRATION

Registration forms are available from the EDIS website, www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org. Or use the paper form below.

EMILY ROCKS: EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING, AUGUST 3-5, 2012

REGISTRATION FORM

Name, title & affiliation _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone (home) _____ (office) _____

(fax) _____ (mobile) _____

E-mail _____

Registration (deadline July 15, 2012)

Current EDIS Member or Friend of the Emily Dickinson Museum \$110

Non-Member Registration Fee (includes EDIS membership) \$150

Student (Proof of college ID required) \$60

Guests for Friday lunch, \$13 per person _____

for Friday banquet, \$30 per person _____

Payment: Registration Fee _____ Total for Guest Tickets _____ Total Enclosed _____

Checks (payable to EDIS) must be made in U.S. dollars and drawn in a U.S. bank. Do not send cash. Please indicate credit card information below.

Credit Card: Master Card VISA Account Number _____

Expiration Month _____ Expiration Year _____

Mail to: EDIS, c/o Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211-0966. Payment must be made by July 15, 2012. No refunds will be made after July 15, 2012.

EDIS Chapter Group Update

By Nancy List Pridgen and Lois Kackley

The number and size of Emily Dickinson International Society chapter groups continue to increase. Get on the bandwagon and start a group in your area. You will be glad you did. All you need is a place to meet, a few participants, and a readers' edition of Emily Dickinson's poems edited by either Thomas H. Johnson or Ralph W. Franklin. The resulting discussions are thought-provoking and entertaining, and the rewards are immeasurable.

Three EDIS chapter groups meet regularly. Ellen Beinhorn sponsors an EDIS group that meets in Beaufort County, South Carolina. EDIS San Antonio in Texas is sponsored by Nancy List Pridgen. The EDIS Amherst chapter group, organized by Lois Kackley, meets in Emily Dickinson's hometown, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Update on EDIS Beaufort County – Ellen Beinhorn

The Beaufort County EDIS group will meet this month at my home to discuss future meeting places. We are writing letters to Emily and will discuss how her letters and poems relate. Next month we will look into Emily's "humor," dark and light.

Report on EDIS San Antonio – Nancy List Pridgen

The EDIS San Antonio group is the newest of the three. It has met since September, 2011, in Universal City, outside of San Antonio. Attendance is small but growing, with four to eight participants. We discuss three or more poems at each meeting. Often we add one or more letters. This year we have pretty much stuck to the calendar for seasonal topics when appropriate, beginning with poems about autumn in September. Since our meeting date conflicted with both Thanksgiving and Christmas weekends, we combined both November and December meetings into a "Happy Birthday, Emily" meeting on December 10, 2011. At this meeting, we discussed letters and poems pertaining to Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthdays. Valentine poems at the end of January meeting were especially enjoyable.

Our meeting for the end of February dealt with poems on the theme of word(s), such as "A word is dead." Discussion was enthusiastic and enlightening. While March will focus on poems about March and spring, we will return to a theme in April. Discussion of Dickinson's views on religion has been suggested by one of the participants, a topic that could fill every day for the entire month of April.

We are also looking forward to the Fourth Annual Emily Dickinson in the Hill Country weekend outside of Kerrville, Texas,

the third weekend in June, when our topic will be "Poems and Letters to Dickinson's Friends and Family." We will narrow our discussion to poems and letters sent to Col. T.W. Higginson and poems and letters sent to Dickinson's cousins Louisa and Frances Norcross.

If you have any suggestions or recommendations for meeting topics or procedures, they would be welcomed. If you can come for the ED in the Hill Country weekend, let me know. My email is Nancy List Pridgen, possibility@satx.rr.com.

Report on EDIS Amherst – Lois Kackley

Emily Dickinson International Society-Amherst will celebrate its fourth anniversary in May. Lively conversations and keen participation from area readers of Dickinson make this a venture I enjoy more all the time. The Friday group typically sees 12 participants, while the Thursday group is more intimate, usually, with three to five attendees. Since its beginning I have kept a sign-in log, both for some future historian and to track trends that may or may not be tied to other Amherst activities.

At the start of 2012 the group voted to begin including a Dickinson letter as part of the "Poetry Conversation." The Friday group for February discussed L77 – a huge bite to chew for anyone, but one that provided a stimulating introduction to letters containing the germs of many later poems. Two short poems we discussed before the letter – "The flake the wind exasperate," and, "The Heart is the Capital of the Mind" – were somewhat randomly selected. However, going forward we will choose poems that Dickinson included in the selected letter, or that have some other relevance to the letter at hand.

I would like very much to hear from EDIS members who have ideas and suggestions.

Email: Lois Kackley, lobobolink@mac.com.

We hope you will give serious consideration to sharing the adventure of sponsoring an Emily Dickinson chapter group. The Emily Dickinson International Society site, <http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org/>, has a section on Chapter Groups with a link to a document listing steps for starting an EDIS chapter group in your area. If you have any questions, feel free to communicate with either Lois Kackley or Nancy List Pridgen, chairs of the EDIS Chapter Group Committee, using the email addresses above.

The Sweets of Pillage

Because of certain conspicuous visual features, Emily Dickinson's poetry can seem deceptively easy to parody: too easy, a student once dismissively remarked. But any reader's pleasure leads to a desire to express that pleasure to the world, and expression may pardonably find its form in witty distortion. If the parodies printed here inspire others to share their own wittily revisionary tributes, then "The Sweets of Pillage" (Fr1504) could reappear as an occasional feature of the Bulletin.

The Waist Is Larger than the Belt

A

The waist is larger than the belt –
For put them side by side –
The one the other will exceed
With ease – it cannot hide –

The foot is wider than the shoe –
For try them inch by inch –
The one the other won't fit in –
Without a mighty pinch –

The mouth is greater than the will –
For test them both with cake –
The one the other will subdue –
As anodyne quells ache –

B

Is *this sweeter?*

The mouth is greater than the will –
For show them something sweet –
The one the other will defy –
And in the end defeat –

She Ate and Drank the Luscious Treats

She ate and drank the luscious treats –
Restraint had taken flight –
She knew that she was far from slim
And that her clothes were tight –

She bought some caftans, shawls, and
capas
And now her spirit sings
Despite her girth – What liberty
A loosened wardrobe brings –

A Narrow Fellow in the Glass

A narrow fellow in the glass
Is what I yearn to see –
But much I must forgo, alas
To make a slimmer me –

No cookies, brownies, cake, or pie –
I may become unstrung.
The pleasure healthful foods supply
Is zero at the tongue –



Had I Not Tasted Rum

Had I not tasted rum
I'd be content with juice
But alcohol has newly made
My former tastes vamoose –

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

How the Potatoes Drip With Gravy

How the potatoes drip with gravy,
How the stuffing burns –
How the Rum Cake is dipped in cider –
Tables fill with urns –

How the Turkey stands in scarlet,
Off his bed of sage –
Steps from the oven to the table,
Clears his throat with rage –

"Truly the fire gusts like bellows
Upon my crispy hide!"

Said the Turkey to the fellows
Around the table wide –

"But know you now that ere too long"
He added with a scowl,
"It won't be paunchy men that feast –
But hungry woodland fowl!"

And with a cry he spread his wings –
Grease blots flung on breasts –
And fell upon the unsuspecting
Table full of guests.

And then a quiet stilled the town
That dark Thanksgiving night.
While others gobbled happily
With not a care in sight –

The Turkey with a vengeful purr
Enjoyed his own fine feast –
When rage of all Thanksgivings
past
Turned entrée into beast!

Colleen Maggard



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