

BULLETIN

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Emily Dickinson's Garden

This unfinished essay was written sometime in the mid to late nineteen thirties by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, Emily Dickinson's niece, biographer, editor, and a poet and woman of letters in her own right. It contains valuable reminiscences of the Dickinson family gardens, both flower and vegetable. Of special interest is the mention of "a summer house thatched with roses," now long vanished from the grounds, along with Emily Dickinson's glass conservatory built for her off the dining room by her father. There are also lists of the antique roses, annuals, and perennials that once flourished at "The Homestead," and most of these are readily identifiable today with the aid of old garden books and catalogs. The only plant to give momentary pause is the mysterious "Calico rose," but this enigma is soon resolved when we realize that the name is a New England corruption of the gallica rose (*Rosa gallica*), an ancient species known to the Romans. The striped variety familiar to Emily Dickinson was probably a late double form like *Mme d'Hebray* (1820) or *Perles des Panachees* (1845), both characterized by pink, light red, and white bands of color. Happily, the roses mentioned in this essay still survive, and are ensconced in their own special bed at the side of "The Evergreens," since Madame Bianchi took care to move them there when she sold the Homestead to the Parke family in 1915. Bianchi's own garden featured a striking row of tall hollyhocks set against the background of pines, hemlocks, and other conifers that gave "The Evergreens" its name, and a contemporary photograph of that garden is also reproduced here.



Barton Levi St.Armand
Brown University

"I was reared in the garden, you know," my Aunt Emily Dickinson wrote her cousin Louisa Norcross; her mother loving and living in it a hundred years ago. And as far as inheritance goes with people like that same little Emily, who grew up a poet and mystic, her mother's love of flowers came down to her intensified only by her own spirit sisterhood with every bird and flower. In that old Dickinson garden at Amherst now it is as she foresaw it would be when she wrote:
*New feet within my garden go,
New fingers stir the sod;
A troubadour upon the elm
Betrays the solitude.*

*New children play upon the green,
New weary sleep below;
And still the pensive spring returns,
And still the punctual snow!
In my grandmother (Emily*

Dickinson's mother's) day the same little flagstones led down to the garden path that ran through plots of blossom on either side, under honeysuckle arbors to a summer house thatched with roses. It was not "an old fashioned garden" in the sense discovered and laid out by modern stylists,—those had not been invented then,—and it brought up abruptly at the vegetable garden, only divided from it by the asparagus, an aristocrat in feathery clouds at mid-summer cut only to lend elegance to parlor fireplaces until the season of fires came around again. Beyond, the pole-beans flaunted red and white, like country girls in gay calico; next to the superior lima variety in green satin, and tall corn with tempting tassels for young fingers. There were lines of purple and green cabbages, the celery for

winter banked in straight rows—tops blurred in a mist of green. How the sun shone through the beet leaves as through a glass of Burgundy, setting their red veins on fire!—while the great squash vines trailed over everything the summer left behind right up to the frost.

There were grape trellises where full bunches of blue and purple and white grapes hung, to fill the air with their winey flavor,—and there was no evil imputed to them in those innocent old days of jelly and home-made wine, held equally innocuous. On the North side, protected by a high fence to keep off the winter winds, stood those three exotic fig trees, my grandmother's especial pride,—their spectacular finger-like leaves casting hieroglyphic shadows in a breeze that Emily's sister Lavinia said were reminiscent of the writing on the wall of Belshazzar,—which was apparent enough after she had suggested it.

Robert Browning might have written from that garden: "It was roses, roses all the way, / And myrtle mixed in my path like mad"—for myrtle was one of my grandmother's favorites, allowed to run wherever it could find a footing. Roses and perennials had it all their own way there. "In childhood I never sowed a seed unless it was perennial—and that is why my garden lasts," Aunt Emily explained later.

The tiny Greville rose with its clustering buds, each stem a complete little bouquet in itself, my grandmother had brought with her from Munson when she came to Amherst as a bride in 1828; and it is still cherished in our garden today. Beside the yellow and white rose bushes there were long hedges of Hedge-hog roses—named for their ferocious thorns,—and a blur of confusion where the Blush roses spread every year on all sides, as well as a variety of single rose they called the Cinnamon rose—renamed by our generation Love-for-a-day roses because they flare and fall between sunrise and sunset. Among these was a variegated crimson and white striped rose they called the Calico rose, from its likeness to a gay chintz, but which is a close copy of the striped

camelia, its Asiatic distant cousin perhaps. This also is blooming yet in our garden, flouting various attempts by successive florists at reproduction. More than one June slips have been given gladly, but the dear old loyalists would never be vulgarized by any such lure of modern publicity.

It must have been among these very roses that Aunt Emily got her recipe for a rose:

A sepal, petal, and a thorn

Upon a common summer's morn,

A flash of dew, a bee or two,

A breeze

A caper in the trees,—

And I'm a rose!

There were long beds filling the main garden, where one walked between a succession of daffodils, crocuses and hyacinths in spring—through the mid-summer richness—up to the hardy chrysanthemums that smelled of Thanksgiving, savory and chill, when only the marigolds—they called them "merry-golds"—were left to rival them in pungency. Many of the flowers were veritable old time perennials, punctilious in reappearance. "Once when the Sweet Williams are in bloom," Aunt Emily wrote, as of a set date; and just so the old Yellow-lilies and August Day-lilies had their regular time and place, and the "Commencement peonies"—heavy-headed pink, white, and red, the Boy's Love, Snap Dragon, Bleeding Heart, Baby's Breath, and ever-spreading areas of Lily of the Valley—sacred to decoration of the family graves rather than mere household adornment. "Mother's sweet briar," Aunt Emily refers to lingeringly, as a fondly associated fragrance from childhood.

Her sister Lavinia in her turn became a passionate gardener who grudged daylight hours away from it on any terms. Her mignonette beds were yards square, whirring, whirling with bumble-bees. Her sweet peas marched in platoons. Her roses took on the more sophisticated hybrids. There was a riot in season of what the Irish gardener called "Excurtiums"—when nasturtiums ran wild over defenceless peony bushes, up the rose trees, across botanical decalogues at will. Aunt

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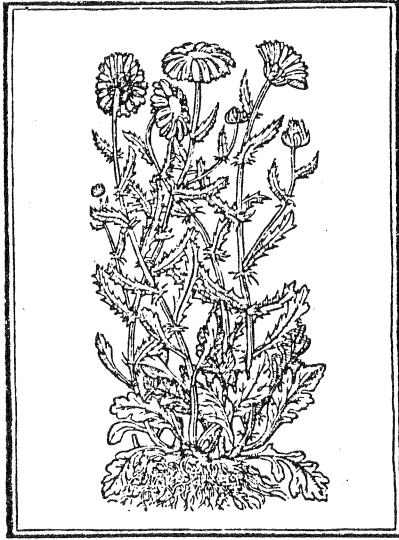
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Dickinson's Language of Flowers



Emily Dickinson, who once told Thomas Wentworth Higginson she “never had a mother” (Letters, 2:275), often turned to “Nature—the Gentlest Mother” (790) for spiritual sustenance. The sunsets, snows, and lightning storms that dance across her pages are proof of her deeply felt relation to the natural universe. But it was the offspring of Mother Nature—her flowers—that especially nourished Dickinson’s life and art. As Higginson observed, “Her life was divided between her friends and her flowers.”¹ Although she increasingly withdrew from the immediate society of many of her friends, she maintained her close association with plants and flowers until her death. As a student at Amherst Academy, Dickinson studied botany and carefully prepared a herbarium of floral specimens. Her earliest letters speak of excursions to the woods to gather wildflowers and of her experiences cultivating her garden. She also grew plants indoors in her conservatory. Dickinson’s poems and letters reverberate with botanical metaphor, and many were specifically written to accompany gifts of blossoms plucked from woodland and garden. The poet’s deep and abiding connection with nature tied her to other nineteenth-century poets and art-

ists. Her concentration on flowers also parallels a popular mid-nineteenth century pastime—deciphering the “language of flowers.” Small volumes such as *The Flower Vase* (Boston, 1843), *Flora’s Album* (New York, 1848), or *Flora’s Lexicon* (Boston, 1863) detailed the traditional meanings ascribed to common garden and wildflowers.

Like the Puritan emblem books, the language-of-flower volumes, often arranged like dictionaries and carefully illustrated, ascribed a particular meaning to each flower and presented a “controlling text” to explain its significance. The language of flowers was based on the ancient belief that, as emblems, flowers were eloquent messengers. In the words of one such book, “Do not flowers, lovely flowers, respond to the questionings of our hearts in a language more powerful, and far more expressive, than that of the tongue? Even more potent than the poet’s magic?”² Dickinson herself wrote to a friend, “Blossoms are so peculiarly consecrated—that there is no Language sufficiently sanctifying to indorse them” (L 527).

The language of flowers constituted an “emblematic communication,” a code by which lovers could speak without using words. “Keep your promise to meet me tonight. Do not forget” could be translated into a bouquet of plum blossoms (“Keep your promise”), sweet peas (“A meeting”), convolvulus (“Night”), and forget-me-not.³ By encapsulating and standardizing the language of flowers, by supplying a formulated poetry, the florigraphers distilled the essence and mystery of nature’s blooms.

Flowers, so centrally important to Dickinson’s life and art, obviously had immense meaning for her. But their precise meanings, at least those we can decipher, derived primarily from the poet’s own idiosyncratic worldview rather than from standardized formulae. Flowers were emblems for Dickinson, and the often cryptic notes and poems she wrote to accompany her floral gifts

are the “controlling texts.” In a letter accompanying lilies, for example, Dickinson briefly wrote, “Let me commend to Baby’s attention the only Commandment I ever obeyed—‘Consider the Lilies’” (L 904). Another, more enigmatic, note was enclosed with sweet peas: “Dawn and Dew my Bearers be—Ever, Butterfly” (L 1013). It was important to Dickinson to place her personal interpretation on her floral offerings. So precious were flowers to Dickinson that she often equated them with riches and rare jewels. In an exchange of flowers with Henry Emmons, she wrote, “I thank you for them all—the pearl, and then the onyx, and then the emerald stone. My crown, indeed! I do not fear the king, attired in this grandeur. Please send me gems again—I have a flower. It looks like them and for it’s bright resemblances, receive it” (L 171). In poem 697, a jewelweed, “this little Blaze/Flickering to itself—in the Meadow—” is compared to a topaz. In “What would I give to see his face” (247), the poet’s riches are “shares’ in Primrose ‘Banks’—Daffodil Dowries—spicy ‘Stocks’—” (a pun on the flower also known as stock). In poem 730, she defrauds a butterfly, “the lawful heir,” to send a flower to a friend, and in poem 179 she declares that “If I could bribe them by a Rose/ I’d bring them every flower that grows/From Amherst to Cashmere!” For Dickinson, a woman for whom material wealth was not a concern, her garden was a spiritual savings bank in which her flowers were her “capital” and from which she regularly “drew.”

While flowers were inestimable jewels in her casketlike world, Dickinson also thought of her flowers as persons and frequently preferred their company to that of humans. At Mount Holyoke, though she had to walk far to find wildflowers, she wrote that “they repay us by their sweet smiles and fragrance” (L 23). To her friend Emily Fowler Ford, she wrote of her plants, “They know that you are gone, they know how well you loved them, and in their little faces is

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Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust

Readers will be delighted to know that The Evergreens, Austin and Sue Dickinson's house that stands next to the Dickinson Homestead in Amherst, will not after all be subject to the wrecker's ball. Although in her will, Martha Dickinson Bianchi ordered that "the house be taken down to the cellar" once the last surviving legatees left, Mrs. Mary Leete Hampson, before her death, recognized the rich cultural and historic significance of the house and countermanded Bianchi's order in her own will. Now the courts have adjudicated in Mrs. Hampson's favor, and The Evergreens will be preserved and used for cultural and historic purposes. The decision is an important one for not only plants, but many furnishings and books were moved from the Homestead to The Evergreens after Lavinia's death. The

collection will now remain at The Evergreens under the terms of the trust set up by Mrs. Hampson.

The first annual meeting of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust was held on Friday, July 27, 1990 at The Evergreens in Amherst. At this meeting, Professor Barton St. Armand was elected Chairman and Secretary, Professor George Monteiro was elected Vice-President, and Mrs. Margaret J. Mallalieu, Vice-President and Senior Trust Officer of Shawmut National Bank of Hampshire County and Corporate Trustee, was automatically appointed Treasurer. The chief matter discussed was the implementation of the trustees' charge to establish The Evergreens as a charitable and cultural facility, and the Trust's goal of preserving the house as a living monument to the Dickinson family over the generations.

A Letters Concordance?

"Tis a dangerous moment for any one when the meaning goes out of things and Life stands straight—and punctual—and yet no contents come." That prose gloss on one of Dickinson's major poetic themes can be found somewhere in the three volumes of Johnson and Ward's *Letters of Emily Dickinson*. But where, exactly?

Jonathan Morse, a Dickinson specialist, has spent a large chunk of his life asking "Where, exactly?" By way of speeding the process along, Robert Chandler of the University of Hawaii has produced an experimental concordance to section VI of the letters. This concordance, however, is not simply a word list like S. P. Rosenbaum's concordance to the poems. In fact, it isn't even a book. It's a floppy disk containing both the corpus of the letters and a sophisticated search program. And it's a lot better than a book.

For one thing, a disk costs much less to produce than a book (Rosenbaum's concordance costs \$99.50). Production costs are negligible for a disk publication, and the warehouse for a thousand disks can be a desk drawer. The translation from economics into English is straightforward: books are expensive, disks are cheap. But the disk's main advantage is a matter of intellectual technology: the power it gives you to read better. A book concordance lets you look up individual words, period. Chandler's disk concordance lets you look comparatively at words in their contexts by allowing you to issue such commands as "Show me, in pairs, every paragraph in which the word *awe* occurs." More: Chandler's program also lets you search for words associated with other words. You can, for instance, specify that you want to see every passage in which the word *master* occurs within ten lines of the word *bride*.

That is, you can begin to read Dickinson more rigorously than she's been read up to now: more consistently, with a surer sense of

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Lavinia liked some of everything: wild-sown Poppies, Gladioli, Snap Dragon, Sweet Sultans, Japanese and Tiger lilies, Madonna lilies and a white one with rose-powdered petals and brown velvet stamens, far more elaborate than the simple varieties of her mother's choice. All her flowers did as they liked: tyrannized over her, hopped out of their own beds into each other's beds, were never reprov'd or removed as long as they bloomed; for a live flower to Aunt Lavinia was more than any dead horticultural principle.

In those earlier years before she withdrew from the outside world, Aunt Emily's letters refer constantly to affairs of the garden, "Vinnie, buying watering pots for me to sprinkle geraniums," or "of my garden covered with snow; picked Gilliflowers Tuesday; now Gilliflowers asleep," she reports; or a splash of early summer like

this:

*South winds jostle them,
Bumblebees come,
Hover, hesitate,
Drink, and are gone.*

*Butterflies pause
On their passage Cashmere;
I, softly plucking,
Present them here!*

That "a pansy is transitive is it's only pang," she declares; and the old garden was crowded with their faces, impertinent yellow, so solemn black, mauve, purple, and white. She "hopes the violet will be resolute—through the sod."

That she loved her flowers beyond their own sakes for the luxury of romantic fancy is easily read in:

I tend my flowers for thee

[MANUSCRIPT BREAKS OFF HERE]

Martha Dickinson Bianchi

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sadness, and in their mild eyes, tears" (L 161).

Dickinson's flowers were often presented as children. She noted the arrival of the "children of spring . . . trailing arbutus, adder's tongue, yellow violets, liver-leaf, blood-root" (L 23). Like children, flowers must go to bed: "As Children bid the Guest 'Good Night'/And then reluctant turn—/My flowers raise their pretty lips—/Then put their nightgowns on" (133). And the poet, as governess, goes around the nursery checking on her charges: "Whose are the beds—the tiny beds/So thick upon the plain?/. . ./Tis Iris, Sir, and Aster—/Anemone, and Bell—/Bartsia, in the blanket red—/And chubby Daffodil" (142). The annual "death" and "birth" of her children in the garden reaffirmed her belief in the resurrection (L 488).

Dickinson not only personified flowers, she imagined people, especially children, as themselves blossoms. When Mrs. Samuel Bowles gave birth, Dickinson sent a flower, asking, "Can you leave your flower long enough—just to look at mine?" (L 244). After the death of her beloved nephew Gilbert, she wrote to Mabel Loomis Todd's parents, "My acquaintance with the Irreparable dates from the Death Bed of a young Flower to which I was deeply attached" (L 945).

Similarly, the poet often presented herself in the form of a flower: "My flowers come in my stead, today, dear Emily [Fowler]. I hope you will love to see them, and whatever word of love, or welcome kindly, you would extend to me, 'do even so to them'" (L 61). In poem 176 she is "the little Heart's Ease," while she pictures herself in poem 442 as a fringed gentian (also known as Virgin Pride) on a hillside, "ravished" by the frost. She ends by asking, "Creator—Shall I—bloom?" And to an unnamed recipient Dickinson sent a flower with this verse: "I hide myself within my flower, /That fading from your Vase./ You, unsuspecting, feel for me-- / Almost a loneliness" (903).

Higginson recalled his first glimpse of Emily Dickinson: "She came to me with two day lilies which she put in

a sort of childlike way into my hand & said 'These are my introduction' in a soft frightened breathless childlike voice" (Letters, 2:473). In the language of flowers, the day lily means "Coquette." Did Dickinson intend her visitor to read that message in her flowers?

Of all the flowers in her unique universe, Dickinson principally identified herself with the daisy, the language-of-flowers emblem for Innocence and Beauty. "Master," the poet's lover, is frequently cast in the role of the sun. And just as the heliotropic daisy blindly obeys the sun's movements, so Dickinson demonstrates her devotion to her beloved: "The Daisy follows soft the Sun—/And when his golden walk is done—/Sits shyly at his feet" (106). Several language-of-flower lexicons quote Montgomery in their treatise on the daisy: "The rose has but a summer's reign, the daisy never dies."⁴ Thus the daisy may have signified the poet's wish for immortality. The daisy is also the vehicle for determining one's lover's true feelings—"He loves me, he loves me not." In selecting the daisy as her flower-identity, Dickinson may well have meant to stress her essential innocence as well as her yearnings for immortality.

Another important flower in Dickinson's universe was the rose. In the language-of-flowers, the rose stands for beauty. Each species has a distinct significance—the campion rose is "Love's Messenger," the white rose is "Sadness," the Chinese dark rose represents "Forsaken."⁵ Dickinson never specifies a variety of rose but often identifies herself with the flower: "A sepal, petal, and a thorn/Upon a common summer's morn- -/A flask of Dew—A bee or two—/A breeze—a'caper in the trees—/And I'm a Rose!" (19).

For Dickinson, flowers were not only convenient metaphors. They were themselves perfect poems. "All the letters I can write/Are not fair as this—/Syllables of Velvet—/Sentences of Plush" (334). And if flowers were poems, so too her poems were flowers. Higginson prefaced *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1890) by ob-

serving that "In many cases these verses will seem to the reader like poetry torn up by the roots, with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them." ⁶ Emily Fowler Ford likened her childhood friend's poems to "orchids, airplants that have no roots in the earth."⁷

The poet herself came to view her work as flowerlike: "The General Rose—decay—/But this—in Lady's Drawer/Make Summer—When the Lady lie/In ceaseless Rosemary—" (675). The poetry lying in her drawer will endure long after Emily Dickinson is dead. The poems are immortal—the "flowers which never fade."

1. "An Open Portfolio," in Caesar R. Blake and Carlton F. Wells, eds., *The Recognition of Emily Dickinson* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1968), 3-4.

2. *Flowers: Their Language, Poetry and Sentiment* (Philadelphia, 1870), ix.

3. *Ibid.*, xiv.

4. *Ibid.*, 82.

5. Mrs. Hale, *Flora's Interpreter and Fortuna Flora* (Boston, 1860), 167-90.

6. Blake and Wells, *Recognition*, 11.

7. Richard B. Sewall, *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (New York, 1975), 2:377.

Elizabeth C. Stevens
Brown University



Flower of April — DAISY

Correction

Our sincere apologies to Tom Carlisle for a misprint in his poem "The Handwriting of Emily Dickinson" in the last issue. The third stanza should read:

*The letters formed as fast to catch
the message that her mind
received by cosmic telegraph
or tireless wireless wind*

Computer Critiques Emily Dickinson

Is your writing hackneyed or lazy? Perhaps your verb forms are having disagreements? If so, I may have the solution. One Sunday recently, I put some of my writing about local history through a grammar-checking computer program. With calm authority it criticized my style, revised history, and finally diagnosed the real problem with Emily Dickinson's poetry.

My Grammatik III program calls itself "a complete electronic writing analyst." I applied this powerful "Artificial Intelligence" to an article I had written about the history of coke and charcoal making. The program picked up a mistake in this sentence: "There were three charcoal kilns on Coke Kiln Road, North Leverett, owned by the Howard family in 1946." The computer flashed the word "Coke" and told me that I'd used a copyrighted trademark. Its advice? "Try cola or soft drink." I began to understand why Grammatik's intelligence is called artificial.

I then tried Grammatik on an article about Emily Dickinson. It found plenty to carp about in my writing, then it began to pick on Emily's. I

had quoted this line from one of her letters: "I found abundance of candy in my stocking, which I do not think had the anticipated effect upon my disposition, in case it was to sweeten it...." Grammatik winced at the use of "in case." It flashed "Hackneyed, Cliché, or Trite" on the screen. Grammatik arrogantly told Emily to "Avoid clichés, they distract the reader and weaken our message. Clichés are a symptom of lazy writing." After thirty years the great critic Thomas Wentworth Higginson was still bewildered by Emily's writing. Grammatik got right to the point in a microsecond. She was lazy. If Grammatik could so handily polish Emily's prose, what improvements could it make to her poetry? Grammatik quietly read Emily's beautiful poem about a hummingbird:

A Route of Evanescence

With a revolving Wheel—

A Resonance of Emerald—

A Rush of Cochineal—

And every Blossom on the Bush

Adjusts its tumbled Head—

The mail from Tunis, probably,

An easy Morning's Ride—

This is a poem in deep grammatical

trouble. Grammatik discovered that the poem contained no verb whatsoever. It concluded: "This may be an incomplete sentence." Grammatik also thought this one-sentence poem was a bit too long. It advised Emily that "Long sentences can be difficult to understand. Consider revising so that no more than one complete thought is expressed in each sentence." It added that one would need seventeen years of education to comprehend the poem as it was.

If only Mabel Loomis Todd had had Grammatik in the 1890s when she and Higginson edited Emily's poems.... We could have avoided decades of arguing about who Emily's "Master" was. Or why she felt a funeral in her brain. I almost subjected "Emily E. Dickinson" to the scrutiny of Grammatik, but I was afraid it would say: "Obtuse, difficult poet. Try Ogden Nash."

Daniel Lombardo
The Jones Library

This article first appeared in the Amherst Bulletin on August 15 and has excited a great deal of reaction, especially from computer specialists!

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what the mystery words like *white* and *circumference* mean in their changing contexts. Or, if you're interested in larger patterns, the concordance can help you understand how those changes come about—for instance, the change from the sentimental prolixity of the early letters to the gnomic terseness of the later ones.

That, at any rate, is Morse's and Chandler's claim. Before proceeding with the full corpus of the letters, they will need to convince a publisher. The *Bulletin* will keep you posted on their progress.

But the quotation at the beginning of this note? Prose fragment 49, Ward and Johnson page 919. Until the concordance arrives, searchers in the letters will have to continue trusting to memory, perseverance, and dumb luck.

Jonathan Morse
University of Hawaii

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

American Literature Association

The second annual conference of the American Literature Association will be held at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. May 24-26 1991 (Memorial Day weekend). Preregistration conference fees will be \$30 (with a special rate of \$10 for independent scholars, retired individuals, and students). The hotel is offering a conference rate of \$60 a night (single or double). To register or obtain housing information, write to Professor Alfred Bendixen, English Dept., California State University L.A., Los Angeles, CA 90046.

The Association is a coalition of societies devoted to the study of American authors. As a member, EDIS will be holding several sessions at the conference as well as

conducting its annual business meeting (see information elsewhere in this *Bulletin*).

Modern Language Association

This year's meeting is being held in Chicago, Dec. 27-31. A panel session on "Emily Dickinson in the New Century: Publication, Critical Reception, Influence" is scheduled on Thursday Dec. 27, 7.00-8.15 p.m., in the Acapulco Room, Hyatt Regency hotel. Suzanne Juhasz will preside. A second panel session on "Emily Dickinson, 1890-1990: Rereading her 'Letter' after One Hundred Years" is scheduled on Sunday, Dec. 29, 12.00-1.15 p.m. in the Wright Room, Hyatt Regency hotel, Melinda M. Rosenthal presiding.

DICKINSON LIBRARIES: THE AMHERST COLLEGE COLLECTION

John Lancaster's profile of *The Emily Dickinson Collection* in his care at Amherst College begins a new series in the *EDIS Bulletin*. The series introduces members to the Dickinson libraries—both large and small—and the people who run them. We will offer news of important new acquisitions, exhibits, discoveries, and preservation efforts. Researchers will learn where important collateral collections are—where to find Norcross and Todd papers, or the letters of Dickinson family servants, for example. I encourage all librarians, curators, collectors, and researchers to send news, suggestions, and questions for upcoming articles.

Daniel Lombardo
Series Editor

The Amherst College Library is one of the two primary repositories of Dickinson manuscripts (the other is Harvard's Houghton Library). The bulk of the known extant manuscripts is divided roughly equally between the two collections. Amherst also holds a number of related manuscripts, transcripts, and artifacts.

Within the manuscript collection, there are six bound fascicles and ten large groups of unbound fascicle sheets, ca. 450 poem drafts, and ca. 350 letters written by Emily Dickinson, as well as another 100 or so family letters. Almost all the manuscripts came to Amherst as a gift from Millicent Todd Bingham, who had inherited them from her mother, Mabel Loomis Todd, editor of the poems and letters in the 1890s. Thomas Johnson drew on the Amherst manuscripts (then still in Mrs. Bingham's possession) for his editions of the poems and letters; the fascicles are all reproduced in *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, edited by R. W. Franklin; and the entire corpus is available on microfilm in many other places. Also included in Mrs. Bingham's gift were many transcripts which Mabel Todd used to prepare the original editions of the poems. They are accompanied by the printer's copy for the several books Mrs. Bingham wrote (or collaborated with her mother on) about Dickinson, as well as most of the Todd and Bingham correspondence relating to

Dickinson matters.

Probably the best-known artifact in the collection is the daguerreotype portrait of Emily Dickinson taken in late 1847 or early 1848, when she was a student at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (now Mount Holyoke College). As the only adult likeness which has an established provenance, it has been reproduced countless times; it also served as the basis for a retouched image (the "curls and ruffles" portrait) now at Harvard. The daguerrotype came to Amherst from Wallace Keep, who had received it from Lavinia Dickinson.

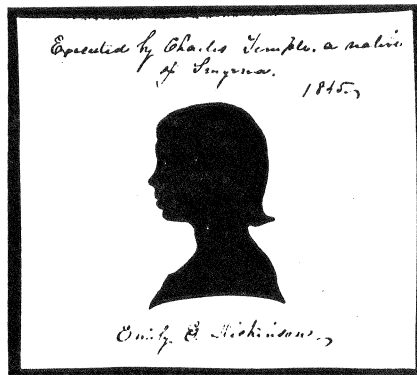


Illustration by permission of Amherst College

Also of great interest is a relic that came to light only a few years ago, the lock of Emily Dickinson's hair that she had sent to Emily Fowler (later Emily Ford). The lock was accompanied by a letter (Johnson 99), which is now in the New York Public Library along with Emily Fowler Ford's collection of other locks gathered from her friends. The absence of Emily Dickinson's lock from this collection had long been noticed, and was apparently occasioned by the great sentimental value it had for Mrs. Ford. In 1983, William R. Bailey (Mrs. Ford's great-grandson) donated to Amherst the lock of hair, which had been preserved apart (together with a few other items now of peripheral interest), first by Mrs. Ford, and then by succeeding generations. Perhaps the greatest value of the lock is to lend color (reddish brown—"chestnut" or "auburn") to the otherwise black-and-white image of the daguerreotype.

Two other items of interest are a silhouette of Emily Dickinson cut in 1845 by Charles Temple (Amherst College class of 1845), and a small (4-1/4" x 6-1/2") panel on which Mabel Loomis Todd painted the famous Indian pipes which appear, slightly reworked, as the binding ornament stamped on the 1890s editions of the poems and letters. The collection also contains copies of almost all the printed editions of Dickinson's work (some modern private press editions, published at prohibitively high prices, are excluded) and many secondary works and translations.

Because of the great interest in Dickinson, and the consequent great demand for access to her manuscripts, it has become necessary to restrict direct access to the originals, which are in many cases quite fragile. Scholars are in all cases asked to work in the first instance either with the microfilm (copies of which are available in some 50 institutions world-wide) or with the full-size photocopies (at Amherst). Only when the reproductions of specific manuscripts do not provide adequate detail for the purposes of an individual's research can handling of the originals be justified.

Access to the collection is provided by a card catalogue, prepared in the 1950s by Jay Leyda. For the poems, there is a computer print-out arranged both by first line and by Johnson number, kindly supplied by Ralph Franklin and derived from his work on a new edition of the poetry. There is no published catalogue, but almost all the Amherst manuscripts are recorded in Johnson's editions (the poems he records as belonging to Mrs. Bingham are those now at Amherst). Individual visitors are welcome whenever the Reading Room is open (8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday; 8-4 in the summer), and some Dickinson manuscripts are almost always on display. Larger groups can be accommodated by prior arrangement.

John Lancaster
Amherst College

PUBLICATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

NEW PUBLICATIONS

A Brighter Garden by Emily Dickinson. Poems selected by Karen Ackerman; illus. in full color by Tasha Tudor. New York: Putnam, 1990. \$17.95. With poems selected especially for children, Tudor's vivid watercolors "enhance the beauty of the poems and capture the special connection between nature and harmony that ED conveyed."

Lease, Benjamin. *Emily Dickinson's Readings of Men and Books: Sacred Soundings.* New York: St. Martin's Press; London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1990. Lease explores some of the realities behind the stereotypes of reclusiveness and provides new findings about the Civil War crises and the burgeoning spiritualist movement in the lives of Charles Wadsworth, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Dickinson herself.

Loeschke, Maravene S. *The Path Between: An Historical Novel of the Dickinson Family of Amherst.* Columbia, MD: Paul Fairfax Evans, 1990. ISBN 0-935132-11-2. \$15.95 288 pages. This book is advertised as "a true story based on new information."

Longworth, Polly. *The World of Emily Dickinson.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1990. This picture book uses nineteenth century drawings, maps, and photographs to portray the poet's life.

Maney, Jill Marion. *Emily Dickinson in Amherst: a Guide.* Illustrated by Allison Gosney. Ketchum, ID: The Computer Lab, 1989. ISBN 0-929-70905-5.

The latest edition in The Computer Lab's *Famous Footsteps* series, this booklet is a guide to "famous people in their favorite places." The booklet may be obtained through local bookstores, or mail and phone orders can be placed through the Book Cellar, P. O. Box 3309, Ketchum,

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES

The Belle of Amherst, the play by William Luce based on the life of Emily Dickinson, is currently being produced and performed on tour by New Yorker Emma Palzere through the courtesy of Actors' Equity Association. A graduate of Emerson College, Palzere has appeared in TV commercials, soap operas and films as well as in regional and New York theaters. In addition to schools, *The Belle of Amherst* tours hospitals, senior communities, museums, and libraries. Plans are underway for the second annual birthday celebration performance on December 10. Groups interested in booking the show can contact Palzere at (212) 279-1980 (leave message) or write Ms. Palzere at 43 Carmine Street, #10, New York, NY 10014.

A Visit with Emily, a presentation of selections from Dickinson's life and work, written and performed by Ruth McRee and directed by Anne Ludlum, is available on tour as a Playworks production. McRee, a Seattle-based actress who works in film and television as well as on the stage, became interested in Dickinson's poetry as theatrical material when she was working on her Master's thesis at the University of South Carolina. The one hour presentation is suited for colleges, libraries, community theaters, secondary schools, and private organizations. For further information, contact Ruth McRee at Playworks, 7541 19th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98115; (206) 524-3016.

Note: *Legacy* is now offering its Emily Dickinson Centenary issue (Spring 1986) for \$5.00. It includes scholarly articles on Dickinson, as well as profiles of Helen Hunt Jackson and Mabel Loomis Todd and book reviews. Copies are available from *Legacy*, Dept. of English, Bartlett Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.

REVIEW

Stonum, Gary Lee. *The Dickinson Sublime.* Wisconsin Project on American Writers. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990. 221 pp. ISBN 0-299-12460-6, \$19.95.

In *The Dickinson Sublime*, Gary Lee Stonum analyzes "a version of the romantic sublime" which, he argues, binds Dickinson's poetry into a coherent body of work. Stonum's study carves a specific niche for Dickinson as that poet whose commitment to the "esthetics of the sublime" sustains a "peculiar hesitance" bent on cultivating the dynamic of production between the poet and her audience.

In recognizing this coherence in her work, Stonum challenges critics such as R.P. Blackmur who, more than half a century ago, proclaimed Dickinson's poetic endeavors "helplessly 'private and eccentric,'" and directly engages David Porter's argument that Dickinson remains "the only major American poet without a project." Stonum responds that the coherence of Dickinson's enterprise resides in a different ethic of productivity than that traditionally expected of "major" poets—that Dickinson refused to continue the act of poet as performer masterfully engaged in providing "finished spectacles" for submissive audiences to experience, that instead she produced poems "that may then beget from her audience new poems and other forms of free, active response" (11-12). Such an interpretation reveals the poet's own challenge to the author-centered esthetics characterizing most Dickinson scholarship. The significant features Stonum finds distinguishing Dickinson's poetic project include the "affective understanding of poetry, a complexly motivated practice of postponing the normally climactic moment of the sublime, and an orientation both ethical and rhetorical toward provoking the reader's imagination

The Emily Dickinson Journal

The Emily Dickinson International Society is pleased to announce to our members that we are the sponsors of a new journal, *The Emily Dickinson Journal*. The journal will create a forum for scholarship on Dickinson and her relationship to the tradition of American poetry and women's literature, bringing together writing about the poet that is presently dispersed in a wide variety of publications. We will publish essays and review essays on Dickinson and on Dickinson publications. Although we are primarily a scholarly journal, we want to be available to all who enjoy reading about Dickinson as well as reading her poetry. Therefore, we will strongly encourage clarity of style and lack of jargon among our contributors, and we will be responsive to contributions that extend the study of Dickinson into arenas that may not be traditionally academic.

The journal is edited by Suzanne Juhasz, and the members of the Editorial Board are Roland

Hagenbüchle, Cristanne Miller, Vivian Pollak, Barton St. Armand, and Cynthia Griffin Wolff. The Editorial Board is representative of important areas of Dickinson scholarship, including feminist criticism, cultural studies, poetics and stylistics, and biography. We are especially pleased to have Professor Hagenbüchle on our Board. His presence will help us to find contributors and audiences outside of the U.S., thus aiding us in our international status.

The journal will be published biannually by the University Press of Colorado, with the first issue planned for Spring, 1992. Presently we are in the process of setting up our editorial offices at the University of Colorado and letting people know about the birth of our publication. It will soon be announced in scholarly journals, a flyer is being prepared to send to about 2,000 scholars, and most important of all, we are telling the members of the Society about our work and plans! We hope that

Society members will prove to be our most enthusiastic contributors and encourage you to send us submissions for our early issues. Please write to Suzanne Juhasz, Department of English, Campus Box 226, University of Colorado, Boulder CO 80309. Send two copies of your essay, and please follow MLA guidelines.

You will receive the journal as a part of your membership in EDIS. It will cost Society members \$25 per year (as opposed to \$35 for non-Society members). Consequently, a year from now, in 1992, dues will increase to \$35 to include the cost of the journal. (We will also have a special membership category for anyone who doesn't want the journal, with dues at \$10 a year.)

We are very excited about the journal. Its inauguration promises to be a major event in the world of Dickinson studies.

Suzanne Juhasz
University of Colorado

EDIS First International Conference

The Society is pleased to announce that its first international conference, "Translating Emily Dickinson in Language, Culture, and the Arts," has been scheduled at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C. on October 22-24, 1992.

By bringing together Dickinson scholars, teachers, readers, and translators in a working conference which focuses on the ways we "translate" Dickinson's work and life, we shall be able to explore together the presuppositions, premises, and criteria we use in order to develop a better and richer understanding of how Dickinson speaks to us in our own age and cultures.

We are planning a series of *dialogues* with Dickinson scholars both in the United States and in the international community along with *workshop sessions* that will enable participants to discuss specific poems

and ideas arising out of the dialogues. Performances are being arranged during the conference, and we hope that conference participants will have the chance to talk with each other at length about aspects of Dickinson's life and work that interest them.

We are in the process of applying for NEH funding. If we are successful, there will be some monies available to help defray the costs of attending. We will keep you posted in future issues of the *Bulletin* as to our planning progress. Jonnie Guerra has graciously agreed to undertake overall responsibility for the conference, and Barbara Mossberg is in charge of the program. If you would like further information, contact Jonnie Guerra at Mount Vernon College, Washington, D.C., or Barbara Mossberg at the Dept. of English, University of Helsinki, Finland.

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ID 83340; (208) 726-3700. Cost is \$4.95 plus \$1.00 shipping (50 cents for each additional booklet to same address).

Waugh, Dorothy. *Emily Dickinson's Beloved: A Surmise*. New York: Vantage Press, 1990. 335 pages \$16.95. This 1976 book, being published this year by Vantage Press, was described by George Monteiro in *English Language Notes* (University of Colorado, 1977) as follows: "I approached this book with prejudice....Wrong! Mainly wrong. This book records Dorothy Waugh's scholarly attempt to solve one of the great puzzles of American literary biography. Its author's earnest efforts and informed acumen earn it a place in the sun."

MEMBERS' NEWS

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual business meeting of the Society will take place at the Mayflower Hotel on Friday, May 24, 1991, following the afternoon sessions of the American Literature Association meeting (see notice under Forthcoming Conferences). We hope that members will take advantage of the many panels being organized by the Association, as well as the Emily Dickinson sessions, and join us for the business meeting.

NEWS FROM DENMARK

The Emily Dickinson Collection has been established as a study center in the parsonage of Lyø, 5600 Faaborg, Denmark. I have decided that my collection of Emily Dickinson items (books, periodicals, tape-recordings, etc.) shall be open to the public—with facilities for studying and overnight accommodation. It is my hope that the collection can function as a link between EDIS and Danish Dickinsonians.

Bogveninderne—a Danish interest group for literature written by women—features Emily Dickinson in their latest newsletter, August 1990. The group which runs a bookshop in Copenhagen tries to gain members for EDIS too.

Emily Dickinson Live is an interdisciplinary project which is planned to take place in Odense in February and March 1991. The project will include performance, art-exhibition, and lectures. In charge of the arrangements are Agnethe Bjørn (actress), Frank Hammershøj (artist) and Niels Kjær (Dickinson translator and scholar).

Rev. Niels Kjær, Lyø
5600 Faaborg, Denmark

Note: EDIS is delighted that the first EDIS Dickinson Center has been established in Denmark and we look forward to future cooperation with our Danish members.

BOARD VACANCY

A vacancy exists on the Emily Dickinson International Society Board of Directors, and Society members are invited to present themselves as candidates for the position. The person holding this seat is designated by the constitution as representative of the general membership. A special spring election will be held, with the winner beginning a three-year term of office at the May 1991 annual meeting. All Society members will receive ballots for this election.

The Board customarily holds two meetings a year, one in conjunction with the Society's annual meeting (generally in the spring) and the other at the Modern Language Association meeting the last week in December. In addition, Board members work during the year on Society projects, usually communicating by mail or telephone rather than trying to get together. The 1991 annual meeting and Board meeting will be held in Washington, D.C. over the Memorial Day weekend. The winter meeting will be in Chicago, and the next year's annual meeting and Board meeting will take place during the Society's conference on "Translating Emily Dickinson in Language, Culture, and the Arts" in Washington, D.C. October 22-24, 1992.

Continuing members of the Board are Joanne Dobson, Jane Eberwein, Margaret Freeman, Suzanne Juhasz, Cristanne Miller, Barbara Mossberg, Christer Mossberg, Marc Pachter, Vivian Pollak, Martha Nell Smith, and Gary Lee Stonum.

If you are interested in providing leadership for this young society and supporting its worldwide mission of promoting interest in Emily Dickinson, you are invited to run for this position. All members in good standing are eligible, without regard for geography, age, gender, or profession. The Nominating Committee (Jane Eberwein, Chair; Judith Farr, Joy Gersten, Jonathan Morse, and Yoko Shimazaki) hopes to offer a slate of candidates representative of the Society's diverse membership.

Anyone wishing to become a candidate should write by January 30, 1991, to Jane Eberwein, Department of English, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401. Be sure to include a return address and telephone number along with a brief statement of goals and qualifications pertinent to your candidacy. If you wish to nominate a candidate, please ensure that the person is willing to run. There will be a mail election in March, with the winner announced in the spring *Bulletin*.

Jane Donahue Eberwein

Call for papers:

EDIS is organizing several sessions for the second annual meeting of the American Literature Association, to be held in Washington D. C. over Memorial Day weekend, May 24-26 1991. Those wishing to present a paper should send a one or two page abstract to Professor Margaret Dickie, Department of English, University of Georgia, Park Hall 254, Athens, GA 30602. The deadline for submission of an abstract is December 15.

EDITOR'S NOTE

I am delighted to announce that Georgiana Strickland has graciously accepted the position of EDIS editor for the *Bulletin*. As managing editor at the University of Kentucky Press and long a reader and admirer of Emily Dickinson's poetry, Georgiana brings much-needed expertise and skills to the position. I am grateful to her for the editorial assistance she has given me for this issue, although whatever errors there are are all mine. Georgiana will take over full responsibility for the *Bulletin* beginning with Vol. 3, No. 1. Please, therefore, send her all contributions and suggestions for the next issue.

Margaret Freeman
Editor, Vol. 2, No. 2

New Editor's Note:

The editing of the *Bulletin* is a task I take on with great pleasure, since it draws together the threads of my vocation, editing scholarly works, and my chief avocational interest, Emily Dickinson. Cris Miller and Margaret Freeman have set a high standard in the first three issues, a standard I'll strive to maintain.

Since the exchange of information and views among members of the Society is the *Bulletin's* reason for being, I look forward to hearing from many of you. Articles, suggestions for the kinds of information you'd like to see, comments and criticisms—all are welcome.

As a start in that direction, I propose the establishment of a "Notes and Queries" column along the lines of

the exchange, published in the first two issues, on mementos left on Dickinson's grave. The column will appear as often as appropriate material presents itself in my mailbox. Queries and answers should be kept under 300 words.

Please note that the *Bulletin* deadlines have been moved ahead one month to help us get issues out well ahead of the Winter/MLA and the Spring annual meeting. Items for the next issue should reach me no later than March 1, for the fall issue by September 1. Please send disks (with label showing software program and operating system) and printouts (or printouts alone) to me at: 133 Lackawanna Road, Lexington, KY 40503.

Georgiana Strickland

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without dictating to it" (ix). Stonum builds his argument through discussion of Dickinson's particular approach to mastery, her "ethic of productivity," her orientation toward "stimulus," her relationship to power, and her "postponed or deferred sublimity."

Stonum creates a broad yet tightly bound framework built on Dickinson's acute sensitivity to issues of domination and submission, especially as that relationship affects a poem's audience. Stonum's impeccable choice of poems to support this framework peaks with "The duties of the wind" (1137) as most structurally and contextually evident of Dickinson's use of the sublime, a mode of experience that she extends beyond the traditionally accepted responses of admiration, terror, elevation, and transport to allow for a cherishing of power.

As Stonum demonstrates, the last stanza climaxes with Dickinson's explicit "I" appearing to "emulate" and "join" the "capricious" activity of the wind, that "aspect that has most resisted her definitions" throughout the poem:

*The limitations of the Wind
Do he exist, or die,
Too wise he seems for Wakelessness,*

However, know not I.

Stonum describes this terminating moment when the relation to the wind becomes suddenly "altered" or "reversed" as that "quintessential third moment of the sublime" in which "Dickinson essentially trades places with the wind, bestowing upon it the feebler cognitive powers she has been exercising heretofore and adopting for herself the power of blithely dwelling extent among" (113-14).

With this gesture of postponement or hesitation, the poet studiously faces the subject inspiring the sublime experience, a strategy that allows her time to cultivate and adopt the subject's subtleties of power. She then "leaves" the poem to the audience. According to Stonum, she aims to "humanize" the concept of mastery so bound to the sublime experience through this act of "exchange." It is this practice, he claims, evidenced by her resistance to the transformation of power into beautification, that positions Dickinson not only as a poet "unwaveringly committed to the sublime" but also as the most pure and loyal practitioner of the sublime in American literature.

Renee R. Curry
University of Maryland

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Members should have received their renewal notifications for 1991 membership dues. If you have not received a notification and wish to join the Society, please fill out the information below and send it to

Martha Nell Smith
Treasurer, EDIS, Inc.
Dept. of English
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

Name _____
Address _____

Regular (\$10) _____
Contributing (\$50) _____

All dues and contributions are tax deductible in the United States under Federal Law.

EDIS BULLETIN
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