

Collecting Dickinson**Emilyana: "Gathered from many wanderings"**

*By Carlton Lowenberg
Edited by Alice Lawson Count*

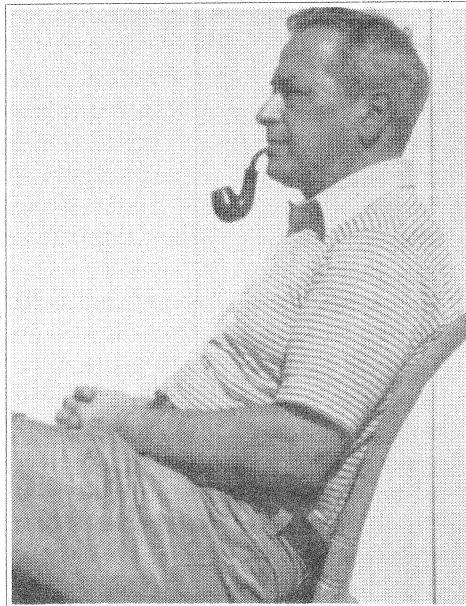
What was so special about this home-bound spinster of the nineteenth century that she ruled ten years of my life? Emily Dickinson was a brilliant woman who translated simple English into complex poetry. My relationship with her in those years was a reader's heaven with all the trappings of a bibliographer's fantasy. I was beset by the phenomenon of this remote creature who, working with words by candlelight, seized the essence of her world—and of mine.

Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley, and the romantic crowd were the fountains of my youth. When Territa and I were married at the start of World War II, she brought with her half a bookshelf of Emily's poetry and biographies. She often recited the poems. Neither of us predicted that these seedling books would resemble the roots of Yggdrasil.

In 1951 I moved my family to California to join a project dedicated to sending donated books to fourteen countries in Asia—seventeen million in thirty years. One result of this was the American Studies Research Centre Library in Hyderabad, India. Among that library's special segments are comprehensive collections of Whitman and the American Transcendentalists and works by and about Dickinson that have inspired many theses. Thousands of schools and libraries benefited from this project.

When Territa and I retired in 1981, we decided to go after Emily with all pennants flying. The timing was perfect. The book market was replete with Dickinson-related items. We found the

best targets to be bookshops, household libraries, flea markets, antique shops, and book barns in New England. Then there were other Dickinson collectors with whom I had a standing indifference. How



The contemplative collector

cautiously uninformative were our letters to one another.

For nine years, each May and September, our treasure hunts traversed the picturesque New England countryside. Friendly and knowledgeable booksellers appreciated the ready cash and our taking books with us. Many were housewives who supplemented their family income by turning barns and outbuildings into book or antique shops filled with locally acquired stock. It was exhilarating to find

a book in an edition that Emily had read or one that was in the Dickinson library. We came upon such books as Trench's *On the Study of Words*, Thoreau's *Walden*, Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, Child's *The Frugal Housewife*, Lyman's *The Philosophy of House-Keeping*, or grandfather Samuel Dickinson's 1806 Koran. Similar editions were everywhere.

Crucial to our undertaking were master want-lists of editions with primary material on Emily's poems and letters, as well as bibliographies and biographies. Other lists were on data about her family and friends, her schools, and town and county histories. Clues in biographies and letters expanded on the Houghton catalogue of the original Dickinson library.

Annual reports by Horace Mann, the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education (1837-48), provided specific lists of textbooks used in the public schools of Hampshire County. These, with the catalogues of Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke Seminary, led to our first book, *Emily Dickinson's Textbooks*, followed by the compilation *Textbooks of Hampshire County*.

Emily's own classical and popular music album in the Houghton Library provided yet another want-list. We knew Emily was a fine pianist. What we did not realize then was how extensively she influenced twentieth-century vocal music. Composer Alan Leichtling has written that "a sizable amount of American music would not exist if it were not for her poetry." The 1,615 settings we lo-

cated provided the primary material for my third book, *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere: Emily Dickinson and Music*.

A separate project was to gather the appearances of Emily's poems before 1930, her centennial year. About twelve poems were published in her lifetime. A pristine copy of the March 1, 1862, *Springfield Republican* with "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" was a Blandford, Massachusetts, bookshop prize. Also exciting was the discovery that Mabel Loomis Todd included first publications of Emily's poetry in her *Total Eclipses of the Sun* (1894). I bought the rare London edition at an English book fair. Todd also published three first appearances in *A Cycle of Sunsets* (1910).

Hunting for Emily's poems in any medium was a bird-dogging game. Every poetry book with an index was checked. We acquired every edition of the Untermeyer anthologies from 1919 on. The Dickinson effect on poetry grew as each edition added more of her poetry, thereby reflecting her growing popularity.

Other good anthologies were published around the turn of the century. The most attractive was Englishman W. Garrett Horder's handsomely bound *Treasury of American Song* (1896), with thirteen Dickinson poems. Frederick Knowles's *The Golden Treasury of American Songs and Lyrics* (1897) shows the sharp distinction between Dickinson's style and that of the romantics of her century.

The railroads of Western Massachusetts were a lifelong interest of Edward Dickinson, who instigated plans for the Belchertown and Amherst Railroad spur. Colton's *Eastman's New Railroad Map of New England* (1871) shows the route of the Dickinson railroad. We also acquired other pertinent railroad documents. Emily must have had her father in mind when she wrote "I like to see it lap the Miles" (P 585).

The booksellers' catalogs were ever-renewing sources for us. The rarest catalog find was fifty-one issues of the Amherst *New England Inquirer* (1826-27). Surprising are five articles on female education that may have been written by Emily's father. He also advertised in the issues as a lawyer and insurance broker.

An important Emily textbook, Samuel Phillips Newman's *A Practical System of Rhetoric* (1828), turned up in Camden, Maine. Samuel taught Greek, Latin, and rhetoric at Bowdoin College. His brother, Mark Haskell Newman—in the Bowdoin class of 1825 with Hawthorne and Longfellow—was Emily's uncle by marriage to Edward Dickinson's sister Mary. Mark opened the first bookshop in Amherst and in 1830 established a successful bookshop and publishing business in New York. He published nine of Emily's textbooks. The musical Emily was also familiar with the compositions of William Bradbury and Thomas Hastings published by her uncle Mark.

In 1982 we bought an assortment of Mary Lee Hall's papers from a bookseller in the South. It was a glorious moment when we unpacked a presentation copy of *Poems, Third Series* (1896). On its back flyleaf is the cryptic message "The future keeps her secrets for history to tell. Lavinia Dickinson."

It was many years before we found another fugitive item, Kate Dickinson Sweetser's *Great American Girls* (1931) with the chapter "Emily Dickinson, A Girl Genius." Kate was a granddaughter of Emily's aunt Catherine Sweetser.

A Putney, Vermont, housewife who worked in a converted horse barn offered me two boxes of titles from the Roberts Brothers' No Name Series. In one of the boxes was *A Masque of Poets* (1878), with Emily's poem "Success," the only poem published in a book during her lifetime. A special Red Line Edition of the 1878 *Masque* was later found at a Portsmouth, New Hampshire, book fair. These volumes initiated Territa's subsidiary collection of the whole No Name Series of about seventy-five titles.

Almira Hart Lincoln's *Familiar Lectures on Botany* was probably Emily's favorite textbook. We bought it in many printings. Its appendix, "Symbolical Language of the Flowers," may have inspired the poet's thoughts with such associations as acacia for friendship, sweet William for finesse, and lilacs for first love. Also important to the collection were books by Henry Willard Williams, the Boston ophthalmologist who treated Emily's eyes in 1864 and 1865. All the

Williams books and articles about treatment of the eyes were collected in New England. One wonders what Williams thought about his brilliant, reclusive patient.

Noah Webster's two-volume *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) was as rare a find as any in the collection. Webster compiled this monumental work while he lived in Amherst (1812-22). He and Emily's grandfather, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, were among the founders of Amherst College. The Dickinsons owned a revision of the two-volume Webster dictionary with an 1844 title page. After the age of fourteen, Emily used a later one-volume condensed version. Denison Olmsted defined scientific terms for Webster. Emily used his *Compendium of Astronomy* (1839) at Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke.

Emily used several references still familiar to us: Robert Chambers's *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (the Dickinson family had two sets), Crabb's *English Synonymes*, and Cruden's eighteenth-century *Concordance to the Bible*. That we found these easily in exact Dickinson editions shows their popularity in the nineteenth century.

Searching in an overstocked market for books that no one wanted was always exhilarating. Nineteenth-century textbooks were my personal favorites. *The Elements of Mental Philosophy* (1836), the first American psychology text, we found in a group of Thomas C. Upham's books. It undoubtedly influenced Emily.

While driving west of Hartford, we stopped at one of those ubiquitous paperback shops that we usually ignored. Two shelves of hardbound books, about forty in all, were stashed behind the cash register that serviced several rooms of paperbacks. Among them were two Emily books: Lady Georgiana Fullerton's *Grantley Manor* (1848) and Mme. A. de Barerra's *Memoirs of Rachel* (1858).

Also west of Hartford was a shoddy shop unlikely to have treasure. Nevertheless, there was a ten-page typescript of Thomas H. Johnson's "The Vision and Veto of Emily Dickinson." Corrected in ink and pencil, it was the draft of his introduction to *Final Harvest*, his selection of the best of Dickinson's poems.

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Collecting Dickinson

The Emily Dickinson Collection, Denmark

By Niels Kjær

In 1981 I began translating Emily Dickinson's poems and letters into Danish, and at the same time I started collecting Dickinson items. For my part, it was in some respects a surprising occupation, since I had never before been a passionate collector. Most boys collect stamps and coins, and many people go on collecting all sorts of objects for the rest of their lives. But until I met Emily Dickinson, I had avoided any "mania for collecting."

The first Dickinson books I purchased were quite ordinary tools for my translation task: the Johnson three-volume editions of the poems and letters, but also a number of critical studies that facilitated my understanding of the texts—works by Charles Anderson, David Porter, Theodora Ward, and many others.

In 1986 I attended the Dickinson centennial conference at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., to draw new inspiration from the distinguished scholars present. My pen pal for some years, Dr. Frederick L. Morey (the late editor of *Dickinson Studies*), kindly invited me to stay with him during the conference, and I spent a wonderful and instructive week in Washington. Morey generously presented me with several Dickinson books from his own collection, including a few rare items, such as an Emily Dickinson bibliography compiled by Alfred Leete Hampson (1930).

Naturally I also bought a lot of books while in Washington in 1986 and during subsequent trips to Amherst in 1988 and California in 1993. Each time my suitcases were terribly heavy on my way home, but I saved the very high Danish VAT and duties by bringing the books along as part of my personal luggage. In addition, I have ordered many books from the Jeffery Amherst Bookshop, which provides a very useful newsletter.

More important than my many purchases, however, have been the numerous gifts from Dickinson scholars in Europe, Asia, and the United States. I am grateful

for every book or periodical contributed to my collection.

By the standards of American library collections, mine is very small. But it is an example of a private collection with its own personality. Since being opened to the public in 1990, the collection has been



Photo by Martti Mäkelä, 1991

A Scandinavian Dickinson seminar assembles in the Emily Dickinson Collection, now housed at the International People's College. Seen, left to right, are Lene Olufsen, Sirkka Heiskanen-Mäkelä, Lis Moller, Niels Kjær, and Anne-Marie Christensen.

used by a number of artistic people in connection with several Danish Dickinson projects.

The collection can be divided into the following main sections:

1) Editions of the Dickinson poems and letters, including a few first editions, and other selections, including translations into many languages.

2) American and foreign Dickinson bibliographies, reaching from Hampson's (1930) to Dandurand's (1988) and Boswell's (1989).

3) A number of Dickinson biographies, of which the oldest are Martha Dickinson Bianchi's (1924) and Josephine Pollitt's (1930).

4) An extensive collection of critical studies, including several by Scandinavian and European scholars.

5) Scholarly editions, such as R.W. Franklin's facsimile edition of the facsimiles, Rosenbaum's concordance to the

poems, and Buckingham's *Emily Dickinson's Reception in the 1890s*.

6) Periodicals, including *Dickinson Studies*, the *EDIS Bulletin*, the *Emily Dickinson Journal*, and newsletters from Dickinson societies in Denmark and Japan.

7) Miscellany: tape recordings, music scores, playbills, programs, a first-day cover, and others.

8) Various editions of works by authors important to Emily Dickinson, such as Elizabeth Barret Browning, Robert Browning, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Altogether the collection now includes about 100-150 books and a considerable number of periodicals and other items.

In 1993 I decided to transfer my Emily Dickinson collection to the International People's College, which operates under the auspices of the Danish Ministry of Culture.

Interdisciplinary and creative subjects are taught there in English by an international faculty to students from all parts of the world. IPC is not a traditional university: no exams have to be passed and no degrees are granted, but certificates can be obtained. Eight- and sixteen-week courses are offered twice a year, as well as one-week, two-week, and three-week courses during the summer. The IPC is situated in a park close to Helsingør (Elsinore), home town of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Anyone who wishes to use my Emily Dickinson Collection can make an appointment with the IPC, which has overnight accommodations. For further information, write to the IPC, Montebello Allé 1, 3000 Helsingør, Denmark.

Niels Kjær is a Lutheran minister and a Danish Dickinson translator and interpreter.

Millicent Todd Bingham (1880-1968)

By Polly Longworth

Polly Longworth is the author of *Austin and Mabel: The Amherst Affair and Love Letters of Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd* (1984), *The World of Emily Dickinson* (1990), and, for youthful readers, *Emily Dickinson: Her Letter to the World* (1965). She is currently at work on a biography of Dickinson. Her valuable insights in this essay draw on a rich mine of largely unexplored archival materials.

Benjamin Lease, *Series Editor*

By her own account, Millicent Todd Bingham's life had three parts: a childhood in which Dickinson family members played mysteriously powerful roles she little understood; a thirty-five-year period when the name Dickinson was scarcely mentioned in her presence; and an equally long, turbulent time during which she wrote or edited several books still vital to Dickinson scholarship. Near the end she wrote grievously, "Dickinsons have reached into every crevice of my life."

She was born February 5, 1880, in Washington, D.C., and brought at age two to live in Amherst, Massachusetts, where her father, David Peck Todd, was astronomer on the Amherst College faculty. An only child, Millicent was educated in private schools in the village.

To accommodate her parents' frequent travels, she spent much time, including every summer, with her maternal grandparents, the Eben J. Loomises of Washington, D.C. This gained her the strong influences of her philosophical grandfather, an amateur naturalist who inspired Millicent's lifelong reverence for natural history, and the voluble, compulsive, opinionated Molly Wilder Loomis, who had rigid ideas of right and wrong.

Millicent confessed in her late seventies that "sometimes I think I belong to Muggy's era more than I ever did to my own, because I took her [moral] standards right over." In particular she copied Grandma Loomis's conflicted attitude of love and disapproval toward Mabel



Millicent Todd Bingham, courtesy of Yale University Library.

Loomis Todd, Mrs. Loomis's only daughter and Millicent's mother.

The beautiful, charming, multitalented Mabel was a burden to Millicent while growing up because she was unlike other Amherst mothers. "Not a single exploit of my father or mother, however admirable, however startling, caused me any emotion other than a yearning desire that it were otherwise," Millicent wrote when she was fifty. She grew up in mute rebellion, a large-eyed, overgoverned, silent child, so disapproving of her mother's wiles and charms that she suppressed her own natural exuberance and musical talents. At the same time she intuited strong, baffling local criticism, an awareness of "something wrong" directed toward her parents, that made her strangely defensive and loyally protective of them, even as she was their merciless critic.

What Millicent sensed was the whispered secret of her mother's rapturous love affair with Austin Dickinson, lawyer, treasurer of Amherst College, and pillar of the village, which subjected the Todds to village gossip. For Millicent, the Dickinsons were central beings. "Several times a day I would run up the little

path along the side of Mr. Dickinson's lush vegetable garden across the street from our house, skirting the edge of the meadow, to do an errand for Mamma [at the Homestead]."

There she found Maggie Maher, "a fat Irish woman who billowed around the bright green kitchen," and Lavinia Dickinson, looking "like a witch in fairy tales." There, too, might be Austin himself, who lived at the Evergreens, next door. "He was a presence—an omnipresence I may say—and a constant visitor every day at our house." The rest of Austin's family—his wife, Susan, and grown children, Martha and Ned—affected the child "like a miasma. If I saw them in the street I would go around the other way.... They just withered me if I got anywhere within range of them."

When Millicent was eight, her mother began the editing of three volumes of Emily Dickinson's poems and a double volume of her letters. Millicent remembered "a whirl of work in every room in our house," with Mr. Dickinson "right in the middle of it all."

Then, in August 1895, Austin Dickinson died, an event that marked the end of childhood for fifteen-year-old Millicent: "It just seemed as though the end of the world had come." Her mother wore black, and both parents mourned for months until they left the following spring on an eclipse expedition to Japan.

On their return, when the Todds discovered they were being sued by Lavinia Dickinson over the disputed deed to a piece of Dickinson land, Millicent was sent to Miss Hersey's School in Boston. There she was oblivious to the notoriety the lawsuit stirred during the spring of 1898, and isolated from the public humiliation her parents endured when they lost the case and were denied appeal. An angry Mabel Todd locked away in a camphorwood chest unpublished Dickinson poems and letters still in her possession, along with her own love letters to and from Austin. The name Dickinson

was rarely mentioned in Millicent's presence for decades.

She entered Vassar in the fall of 1898 and graduated a member of Phi Beta Kappa in 1902. Beginning in 1901, she accompanied her father on worldwide astronomical expeditions, which awakened her keen interest in geography. A first trip to the Dutch East Indies was followed by expeditions to Tripoli, Chile, and Russia. Between them, Millicent taught French at Vassar and Wellesley colleges, studied geography and French at the Sorbonne in Paris, and spent a year in Germany. On her return from South America in 1907 she wrote the first of several geographical publications, *Peru, Land of Contrasts*, published in 1914.

A stroke ended Mabel Todd's active lecturing career in 1913, leaving her partially paralyzed. About the same time, David Todd's behavior grew increasingly erratic. Conflicted as ever in regard to her parents, Millicent became responsible for them in new ways as her father was eased off the college faculty and the Todds relocated to Palm Beach, Florida. Millicent took her M.A. at Radcliffe in geography and geology during 1916-17, then helped her parents pack, store, and move their possessions.

In 1918 she sailed to France to teach French with the Army Education Corps, study geography at the University of Grenoble, and help the wounded in a field hospital. In the latter setting she fell in love with a soldier whom she followed back to America and to Oklahoma, only to discover that he was an impostor. The shattering experience came to underlie her conviction that Dickinson's emotional involvement with "Master" was largely imaginary.

To recover, Millicent began a doctorate in geography at Radcliffe, an experience she credited with making her "accurate to the seventh decimal." She received her degree, the first in the field awarded by Harvard to a woman, in 1923. She also married, in 1920 at age forty, Walter VanDyke Bingham, a psychologist with the Carnegie Institute, a kindly, mild-mannered man, much her opposite in temperament. Walter's broad understanding of human behavior became Millicent's salvation as she committed her father to

the first of a series of mental institutions and dutifully shouldered her mother's many financial problems.

Following Susan Dickinson's death in 1913, her daughter, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, published four volumes of Emily Dickinson's poetry and letters. One of these, *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1924), used materials from Mrs. Todd's 1894 edition of Dickinson's letters without acknowledgment, while another, *Further Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1929), presented unpublished poems of which Mrs. Todd herself had kept copies.

Both Mme. Bianchi and Mrs. Todd claimed the right to publish Dickinson's material—Bianchi on the basis of copyright, which had fallen to her from Lavinia (to whom Emily left her estate), and Todd on the far murkier premise that Austin had given her Dickinson family papers and made other promises he entrusted to Lavinia's will. Vinnie had died "intestate" in 1899, something Mabel didn't believe for a minute. Piqued by Martha's "piracy," "misrepresentations," and scorn, Mabel retrieved her camphorwood chest from storage in 1929 and asked Millicent to help her reedit and expand the 1894 *Letters*, the copyright of which had expired.

"This conflict of flaming loyalty and indignation at injustice shown to Mama, along with disapproval of what she does and detestation of certain traits—that it is which has turned my hair gray and made a bewildering tangle of my life and taken out all joyousness," wrote Millicent in her journal in June 1929. Yet she felt righteous on her mother's behalf and agreed to help. When the new Todd book appeared in 1931, Martha Bianchi was prevented from contesting its publication by having misplaced the contract for the 1894 *Letters*, which was in Lavinia's name.

Mabel died the following year. By then she had extracted her daughter's promises to "set the record straight" concerning the publication of Dickinson's poems and to publish all the unpublished Dickinson materials remaining in the camphorwood chest. For Millicent it involved two challenges—giving up her career teaching geography, which she did, and

reading the contents of the chest, wherein she discovered the record of her mother's love affair. This she could not cope with. Tortured that her mother's claim to the Dickinson materials rested on evidence morally reprehensible to her, Millicent worked from her mother's daily diaries and never read the more private journals or the correspondence with Austin.

Martha Bianchi died in 1943, having edited two more books of Dickinson's poems with her friend Arthur Leete Hampson, to whom she left her papers. Harper had delayed publication of Millicent's books for some time over the copyright issue, but in 1945 brought out *Ancestor's Brocades: The Literary Debut of Emily Dickinson* and *Bolts of Melody: New Poems of Emily Dickinson*, the latter edited by Mabel and Millicent.

Five years later, A.L. Hampson sold his Dickinson materials to Gilbert H. Montague, who gave them to Harvard College. Then began what Millicent termed a "deadlock" struggle over Harvard's efforts to gain possession of the Dickinson manuscripts she held. Representatives of Harvard threatened to prevent publication of *Emily Dickinson's Home*, for which she had completed the manuscript, unless she gave their editor, Thomas H. Johnson, access to her holdings for the editions of Dickinson's poems and letters he was preparing, and unless she gave up all claim to Dickinson copyrights.

The struggle was a grinding one. In the interests of scholarship and because Harvard was her university too, Millicent provided Johnson with photocopies of the materials she held, although her act went unacknowledged when the Harvard volumes were published. She gave the documents themselves, along with her copyright claim, to Amherst College.

In 1954 Harper published her book *Emily Dickinson: A Revelation*, about the poet's relationship with Judge Lord, and in 1955 released *Emily Dickinson's Home*. In both books Millicent acknowledged Harvard's copyright claim but challenged its validity.

She felt little satisfaction. During the worst of the animosity, Walter grew ill; he died in 1952. The copyright battle was now between Harvard and Amherst, but

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Everywoman Her Own Theology

Alicia Ostriker, the Difference of Dickinson, and Influence

By Martha Nell Smith

I am pleased to inaugurate my editorial responsibility for the “Poet to Poet” Series with an article on Alicia Ostriker, a poet-critic who has been instrumental in shaping my own understanding of women’s traditions of writing and in creating a context for my reading of Dickinson.

Professor of English at Rutgers University, Ostriker is the author of seven volumes of poetry—most recently *The Imaginary Lover* (1986), which won the William Carlos Williams prize of the Poetry Society of America, and *Green Age* (1989). She also has published numerous articles and books that investigate the relationship between gender and literature, including *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women’s Poetry in America* (1986).

Jonnie Guerra, Series Editor

Musing about Alicia Ostriker and Emily Dickinson, I found myself thinking first about the all-too-often-taken-for-granted obvious—what difference does poetry make anyway? Why do we bother to read it? Do professors earnestly perpetuate its study because that’s what keeps us in business? These questions came to mind because the poets under discussion here—Emily Dickinson and Alicia Ostriker—force readers to ponder poetry’s literal (as well as literary) significance.

This essay started eight years ago when I attended a centennial celebration, two days of performances by contemporary American women poets talking about Emily Dickinson and her poems and reading their own in tribute to her.

In preparing for that event, Gwendolyn Brooks said to herself, “You know, this is almost hopeless, because Emily and I are absolutely different in the details of our lives.” Alicia Ostriker might say the very same thing. Influence, however, is not a matter of like unto like, of easy relationships. Nor is it a matter of anxiety and overthrow. Influence may include such

responses, but the metaphors for the influences with which I concern myself here are neither revised Harold Bloom (*The Anxiety of Influence*) nor revisited Nancy Chodorow (*The Reproduction of Mothering*).



Photo by J.P. Ostriker

Ostriker, unlike Dickinson, is New York Jewish, not Protestant New England American; is married, has children, has given birth to widely disseminated printings of her poetry, and has won national literary competitions—Poetry Society of America, National Endowment for the Arts, and Guggenheim.

Yet when asked to respond to Dickinson and to contribute some of her own poems for the centennial celebration, Ostriker spoke neither of self nor of personal achievements but of Dickinson’s achievements, then emphasized the importance of valuing the disenfranchised and of an imperative to love.

What she had gained from her relationship to and with Dickinson, routinely touted as the consummate “Isolata,” was of social import and other-oriented. Because we are so often reminded of Dickinson’s reclusiveness, of her withdrawal from others, Ostriker’s view of the Dickinson legacy is of vital importance.

The poems Ostriker offered in tribute to Dickinson focused on matters of faith,

on definitions or redefinitions of the sacred, on the powers of storytelling, and on the fact of her double-bind: As a Jew she is marginal to the rest of the world; to the texts of Judaism she is, as a woman, again marginal. These themes continue to be central to Ostriker’s poetic and critical work. In *The Nakedness of the Fathers*, to be published by Rutgers University Press this fall, she repeatedly asks, “What do the stories of Judaism, like those about Job, for example, mean to me as a woman, who is so very different from Job, from Moses, from the fathers? What do they mean for women?”

Ostriker initiated her tribute with stories of how Dickinson had been rendered marginal in the classroom. Dickinson was presented as something of a diffident poet, scared to go outside, the author of “timid, frightened, narrow poems.” But when Ostriker began to read Dickinson “with an adult consciousness,” she realized that “here was one of the most fearless poets who ever lived” and that “what is astonishing about her mind is its courage, its ability to take risks, its absolute willingness to face and examine the most outrageously impossible possibilities, and its entire subversiveness of all convention.”

Unequivocal in her high regard for Dickinson as a woman writer who has been vitally important to her own poetic enterprise, Ostriker could not help but ponder the circumstance of all women when contemplating Dickinson’s influence: “Women have to run on hobbled legs” (or, as Dickinson might say, our business has too often been circumferenced by skirts). Women “have to pray and sing with throttled voices” (“Did I sing—too loud?” asks Dickinson).

Acutely aware of her own marginality, Ostriker was equally conscious of her Protestant, white, spinster foremother’s relegations to the border of society and, despite Dickinson’s status as the woman

poet seemingly always included when there are no others, to the border of a literary culture anchored by the American Renaissance of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. But Ostriker is right: even that inclusion assures us that Dickinson was different. Outskirts, outskirts—what Dickinson and Ostriker share is the imperative to write and love, to write that which will move others to compassionate action.

This emphasis on human connectedness should neither be confused with nor dismissed as naive, “touchy-feely” sentiment. Captured by Hallmark, LOVE is a word to be made fun of and has, in fact, too often become curiously equated with naiveté. But bringing it home to literary study and the production of poetry in particular, as these women force me to do, I am reminded of an exquisite book published a few years ago about Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats and the time they spent together early in this century in a hideaway called Stone Cottage. What struck me was how they clothed and crowned themselves as so special, above all others, among the talented few, and how they proudly bore a decided disdain for the rabble.

Responding to Dickinson and an audience for American poetry, Ostriker doesn't need such haughtiness. And I'm left asking, What kind of value is it that needs to look down on others to be assured of its own genius? What is it that confuses dismissive disputation with analysis, intellectual generosity with flabby thinking? What is it that needs to make a victim to believe in its own poetic prowess?

In sharp contrast to those fond of exclusionary poetic politics—to poets who present poems as closed artifacts, only for the initiated, the holy priesthood—Ostriker, like Dickinson, makes what may seem like outrageous remarks about reading. In “A Meditation in Seven Days,” Ostriker devotes a section to Dickinson and, in doing so, proclaims poetry's delectability. Prefacing it with Dickinson's remark about her believing friends and family (“They address an eclipse...whom they call their ‘Father’”), Ostriker implicitly compares Dickinson's writing to the preparation of food, traditionally part

Everywoman Her Own Theology

I am nailing them up to the cathedral door
Like Martin Luther. Actually, no,
I don't want to resemble that *Schmutzkopf*
(See Erik Erikson and N.O. Brown
On the Reformer's anal aberrations,
Not to mention his hatred of Jews and peasants),
So I am thumbtacking these ninety five
Theses to the bulletin board in my kitchen.

My proposals, or should I say requirements,
Include at least one image of a god,
Virile, beard optional, one of a goddess,
Nubile, breast size approximating mine,
One divine baby, one lion, one lamb,
All nude as figs, all dancing wildly,
All shining. Reproducible
In marble, metal, in fact any material.

Ethically, I am looking for
An absolute endorsement of loving-kindness.
No loopholes except maybe mosquitoes.
Virtue and sin will henceforth be discouraged
Along with suffering and martyrdom.
There will be no concept of infidels;
Consequently, the faithful must entertain
Themselves some other way than killing infidels.

And so forth and so on. I understand
This piece of paper is going to be
Spattered with wine one night at a party
And covered over with newer pieces of paper.
That is how it goes with bulletin boards.
Nevertheless it will be there,
Like an invitation, like a chalk pentangle,
It will emanate certain occult vibrations.

If something sacred wants to swoop from the universe
Through a ceiling, and materialize,
Folding its silver wings,
In a kitchen, and bump its chest against mine,
My paper will tell this being where to find me.

From *The Imaginary Lover*, University of Pittsburgh Press,
1986. Reprinted by permission of the author.

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Will Barnet Meets Emily Dickinson

By Maryanne Garbowsky

You might say that Emily Dickinson found Will Barnet rather than the other way around. For even before his book *The World in a Frame*¹ (1989) was a thought, artist Will Barnet was at work painting women who would become the basis of his vision of poet Emily Dickinson. In his “Women of the Sea” series (1970s), he depicted lone female figures gazing out to sea. These “mystery women”² dressed in black were “symbols of strength and hope” to Barnet.³

In 1982, several years before *The World in a Frame* was an idea, Barnet described the series as “an effort to create a visual epic of America, one rooted in symbolism rather than realism.”⁴ When his work with Dickinson’s poems began, Barnet looked at these figures and realized, “Here was Emily Dickinson.”

It was with this image that he chose to interpret one of Dickinson’s most popular poems, “This is my letter to the World.” The poet, dressed in a high-necked black dress, looks directly at the viewer from atop a widow’s walk and asks her “countrymen” to “Judge tenderly—of Me.”

But Emily Dickinson may have been a presence deep within the psyche of Will Barnet long before the “Women of the Sea” series was done. Both came from New England, Dickinson from Amherst and Barnet from Beverly, Massachusetts. Both were culturally conditioned from birth to “see New Englandly.”

Their world view, their response to nature, their respect for education were the result of growing up in New England. “When I grew up, there was no radio or television, only books.” Thus Barnet, like Dickinson, turned to books at an early age, the book appearing frequently in his paintings and drawings.

Barnet remembers his trips as a young boy to the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. Here he saw portraits of his Puritan forebears and became interested in the shipping memorabilia on display. This was a world Dickinson too was aware of, incorporating the images of

trade and exotic seaports into her poetic vocabulary.

The New England landscape was also formative. Its stark contrast of black and white, its quiet and austerity—all had their impress on both artists.



“I taste a liquor never brewed” (poem 214)

There are other striking similarities. Dickinson ceased traditional church worship and substituted her own style of prayer, one she describes in poem 324, “Some keep the Sabbath.” Like Dickinson, Barnet fell away from religious orthodoxy and made art his religion.

In their approach to art, both were iconoclasts. In his own time, Barnet went “against the grain,” choosing classicism over the then-popular Expressionism. He preferred the clean, hard edge, a style he describes as “straight on,” to fuzziness. Instead of overt emotionalism, he chose restraint, a quality he finds in Dickinson. Dickinson was a classicist, too, disciplined in her use of language, choosing words carefully, not spending them ex-

cessively. She finds “a lot of freedom but within a tight structure.” Even Barnet’s description of his subject matter parallels that of the poet who found the universal in her narrow world. “My idea was that the world of artistic inspiration was close, that I would take a corner of the world and make a world out of it.”⁵

The initiating force behind Barnet’s “collaboration” with the poet came fortuitously. When the artist read scholar Christopher Benfey’s 1984 book on Dickinson, he sent publisher George Braziller a note congratulating him on publishing such a fine book. Later, when Braziller wanted to publish a Christmas gift book of Dickinson’s love poems, he asked Barnet if he would be interested. Barnet agreed, but after he began to read Dickinson’s poems he realized the project would have to be expanded. And thus was born the idea for *The World in a Frame*.

Barnet approached the poems neither as an academic nor as a literary critic but as an artist with a trained eye. For two years, the artist did his research, reading the poems—all 1,775 of them. First reading, then drawing, he analyzed the poems with pencil in hand, completing countless drawings, many of which have never been exhibited, and paintings, none of which have been shown.

For more than two years, Barnet devoted himself to his work, a labor of love rather than commercial gain. The artist was struck deeply by his contact with the words and felt “an affinity” with the poet. Gradually the book came together. It evolved “naturally,” Barnet recalls: “It was her life” from her beginning celebration of nature to her last poem. Barnet “put flesh and bones” on Emily Dickinson, seeing her “as a very real person.”⁶

The book follows a chronological sequence, visualizing the poet through the formative events of her life. We first meet her as an enthusiastic young woman leaping off the ground, an “Inebriate of Air”; then we witness her response to nature, her appreciation of the “Miracle” (P

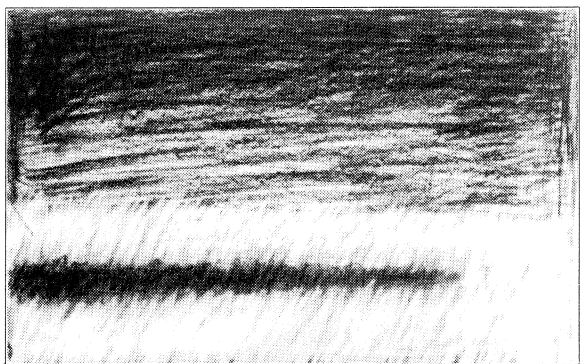
783)—the birds as they begin to sing at 4:00 a.m., and the spider-artist who, like the poet herself, creates, unseen and unheralded (P 1275).

The process of creating the book involved decisions to be made and problems to be resolved. Barnet selected the poems he wanted to use; these face the accompanying drawings. The other poems were chosen by Benfey, who wrote the introduction.

The artist's decision to use paper, that is, to do drawings rather than paintings, was based on the fact that he was dealing with a poet whose life work was on paper. So too he chose to use black and white, no color, because it reflected "the solitude of her life." Barnet used a carbon pencil, an implement that dates back to the seventeenth century, and worked on vellum.

How to depict Dickinson was also a decision Barnet faced. The only likeness of her is the daguerreotype made when she was about seventeen. Barnet fashioned his image on this daguerreotype but softened the poet's features, making her more attractive. She appears as a pretty young woman with a frame of dark hair, a little like the artist's only daughter, a favorite model of his.

One of the major biographical questions Barnet dealt with was the nature of the poet's love relationship. In his read-



"Presentiment—is that long Shadow—on the Lawn" (poem 764)

ing of the poems, Barnet came to believe that she entered a relationship with a man which was never consummated. This pivotal relationship is depicted in four drawings that delineate its cycle, from the tenderness of poem 506, "He touched me," through the pain and loss of poem 663, "Again—his voice is at the door."

In several of his drawings, Barnet answers questions for the poet. For instance, in approaching "He touched me," Barnet wondered if she wanted to be touched and, if so, was she happy. In his drawing depicting a tapering masculine hand gently stroking the chin of the poet, he answers affirmatively. In poem 663, which Barnet considers one of the most "poignant," he shows us the figure of the man from the back. His interpretation reinforces the mystery of this man, whose identity remains unknown.

Another problem Barnet encountered was how to depict visually the eroticism of poem 249, "Wild Nights." He resolved this by showing the poet's back as she is engulfed by a violent electrical storm. Here the mental confusion and physical passion she undoubtedly felt are externalized in the wild tumultuousness of the storm.

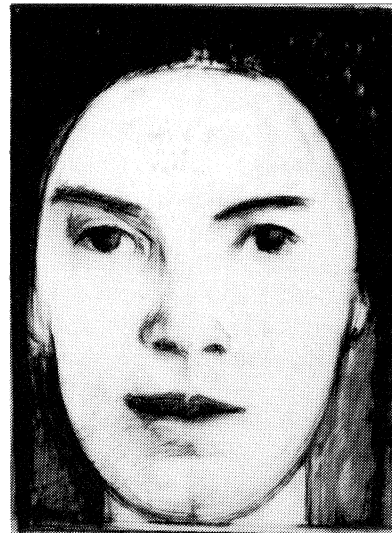
Although Dickinson preferred birds to cats, Barnet incorporates cats into his drawings, not only as adjuncts to the poems but also to "relieve the eye."

One of the most unusual features of the collection is the artist's sensitivity to sound. Barnet is noted for the "quiet" in his art. Rather than telling stories, he depicts a mood or situation (as in *27 Master Prints*⁷). This is apparent not only in his "Women of the Sea" series, but also in another series, "The Silent Seasons." Poem 604 is reminiscent of the latter series, showing the poet sitting in a library against a backdrop of books. The drawing is a tight rectilinear composition. In the upper left-hand corner is a large window to which the poet's eyes are drawn as she lifts them from a book.

In other drawings, as well, the reader hears sounds that evoke moods ranging from the pure exhilaration of the speaker's first shout of joy to the heaviness of "Winter Afternoons" to whose stillness the "landscape listens." Barnet orchestrates a pattern of sounds that pulls together both word and image. We "see" and "hear" the delicate twist of the key in the lock; the soft, barely audible pad of a

stalking cat. Even as we close the book, we are haunted by the lone cricket whose "melody" rises from a blade of grass. "Silence is important to my work," Barnet admits. "Art must draw you quietly to it."

Upon completing the book, one senses its harmony and wholeness, a successful



"What mystery pervades a well" (poem 1400)

marriage between the verbal and the visual. The reader has moved from the promise of the poet's youth through the disappointments of her life. We are witness to her experience: to her loss in nature as the seasons turn and as the bird's song reminds her of "what we had" (P 1764), the relationships she cannot "live...again" (P 663). Barnet comes full circle to the mystery that is Dickinson. In a full-face portrait that completely fills the frame of the drawing, the reader realizes that "those who know her, know her less/The nearer her they get" (P 1400).

Has Dickinson had a lasting impact on Will Barnet? Recently the artist completed twelve paintings in a series that reaches back into his own childhood. They are filled with shadows, with people from his past, with himself as a child. They are haunting, "different from anything I have done before." They are undoubtedly the result of his work with Dickinson, who caused him to look back on his own beginning. Poem 467, "We do not play on Graves," reminded Barnet of his own childhood experience: "I lived next door to a cemetery that dated back to 1624. As a child, I played there. When I read the poem, it brought back those memories,"

Continued on page 18

P E R F O R M A N C E S

Rendezvous of Light

Reviewed by Maryann Sewell

A wonderful addition to theatrical works about Emily Dickinson has been crafted by three graduates of the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore: composer Mark Lanz Weiser, writer Peter Krask, and soprano/artistic director Elizabeth Knauer.

Rendezvous of Light was performed at the Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore under the auspices of the Young Victorian Theatre Company on July 15, 17, and 21, 1994. Unfortunately I learned of this production too late to attend, but producer Jesse M. Hellman sent me a videotape that I have watched several times. I have been intensely moved each time.

This "music theater drama," as Mark Lanz Weiser calls it, is written for soprano, clarinet, cello, and piano, and was created specifically for Knauer who, as the program notes state, "inhabits the stage as Dickinson lived—alone—." This wonderful singer is also a highly accomplished actress who can move seamlessly from speech to song.

In the words of the program notes again, "*Rendezvous of Light* explores three of [Dickinson's] loving, often troubled, always ferociously passionate relationships: those with her fickle sister-in-law Susan, the man known only as 'Master,' and her remote and mighty father."

The action is shaped into four scenes set during the period September 30 through October 4, 1883, when Dickinson's nephew Gilbert was dying of typhoid. The text uses none of Dickinson's poems but draws from her letters and includes original material written by Peter Krask. The resulting script is done with great taste. Between scenes the stage is darkened, but the instrumental ensemble plays on, creating a continuous flow.

The stage setting is simple and spare: some wooden lathing for doors and windows, a table with books, two wooden chairs, a bed—and Emily, alone. The small musical ensemble plays an overture of ominous chords and rising, expectant glissandos reminiscent of Copland's setting of "Going to Heaven." As the action

begins, Emily speaks the words "Gilbert is dying" and then sings "And Susan asks, will I come?" These two statements immediately set the dilemma for Emily and pose the dramatic question that will be answered at the end.

In this first scene, "The Waylaying Light," Emily speaks and sings about her love for her brother Austin's wife, Susan, "my sudden beloved whom I called 'sister,'" and remembers their wonderful times in Susan's house. "Paradise must be like Sue's drawingroom when we were



Photo by Jesse Hellman

Elizabeth Knauer as Emily Dickinson in
Rendezvous of Light

talking and laughing there." Now she is caught between her sorrow and caring for Sue and her reluctance to leave the house she has not left for twenty years.

"The Departures of Light" (scene 2) takes place two days later. "Susan writes, 'Gilbert's end draws near,' asks again will I come." It is in this scene that Emily speaks and sings of "Master," that unnamed being who seems sometimes to be God and who is identified here as Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield Republican*. A powerfully dramatic aria is full of longing for and disappointment in her love for "Master."

Scene 3, "The Cessation of Light," opens with a wordless, unaccompanied vocal lament followed by spoken reflections on her father, on his unexpected death, and on the nature of death and of God. "This I believe. Home means God.

It is holy. Since my father's passing, home is so far from home." Here Emily loosens her hair as if she were going back to girlhood. Her poignant cry, "Where are you? I can't find you" seems a call to her father and to God, or to the one in the other.

"Rendezvous of Light," the final scene, is introduced instrumentally by the melodic material that will recur in the final aria. This is the day Emily will decide to leave her house to see Susan and Gilbert. She remembers her friend Sophia Holland, who died in childhood; she thinks of all those she has lost. "After a while we will remember there is a heaven—but not now." She returns to the first words of the drama—spoken and sung—and then says, "Emily. Stay or go. I cannot stay any longer in my world of death."

She puts on a blue shawl and prepares to go through the real and symbolic door as she sings the final aria, "Pass to Thy Rendezvous of Light." While sad, this is also an affirmative moment, as Emily steps out of her house to join those she loves and those she has loved.

Mark Lanz Weiser says that he considers his music "evocative of the nineteenth century with a twentieth-century accent." From a singer's viewpoint, I think his music must be challenging to perform well. It employs great range in both emotion and pitch and requires the singer to move smoothly from speech to song.

From the listener's viewpoint, however, this music is very accessible. It seems to flow quite naturally from the words and the emotions. The intimate instrumentation creates a great variety of timbres and textures. The piano is used sometimes as percussion, sometimes as melodic soloist. The cello is sometimes the chordal framework, sometimes a plaintive voice. The clarinet may be playful or mournful. Weiser makes careful but non-obtrusive use of musical motifs and a thematic structure that draw the piece together neatly.

Elizabeth Knauer, for whom the work was written, is wonderfully persuasive as Emily Dickinson, portraying passion,

pain, curiosity, coquetry, and devotion, as well as the deep intellectual strength missing in so many portrayals of this great poet. It is hard to imagine that another singer/actress could inhabit this role as well as Ms. Knauer. This piece deserves to be performed again, but I hope also that the original performers can make a videotape for wider distribution.

Maryann Sewell is on the voice faculty at Montgomery College. She frequently performs settings of Dickinson poems.

Dickinson and Whitman: Ebb and Flow

2 cassettes. Auburn, Calif.: Audio Partners, 1994. 2 hours, 18 minutes. ISBN 0-945353-85-5, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Maravene Loeschke

This recently released audio set, originally issued by Spoken Arts in 1985, offers a two-part program. The first cassette includes thirty-nine readings of Dickinson poems by Nancy Wickwire with original piano accompaniment by Don Feldman. The second contains selections from Walt Whitman's work read by Alexander Scourby.

The Dickinson tape includes several selections also used in William Luce's *The Belle of Amherst* and in the Dickinson song cycle by Aaron Copland. Also included are poems familiar to Dickinson lovers but perhaps less so to the general public. Altogether the collection offers a balanced sampling of Dickinson themes, moods, and perspectives.

There is no attempt to arrange the poems in chronological or thematic order. Rather, the arrangement resembles a musical collage in which one poem blends into the next, resulting in a single composition made up of many harmonizing parts. Mr. Feldman's musical transitions contribute to this effect, and the blending of Ms. Wickwire's voice with the musical interludes maintains a consistent collective center as well as a sense of dramatic movement. The structure and arrangement of the tape capture the gentle, ethereal wonderment of Dickinson's creative imagination.

Two major styles of poetry reading prevail among actors. In one style the piece is treated from an objective point of view. This does not mean that the poem is read without feeling, but this style makes no apology for the fact that the poems are read rather than acted. The interpreter is relieved of the responsibility of experiencing and motivating the ideas and images as if they were her own. This is the style of the Wickwire recording.

The second style requires the interpreter to perform the poems as if she were Emily Dickinson. Julie Harris's recordings, *Emily Dickinson: A Self Portrait*¹ and *Poems and Letters of Emily Dickinson*² are examples of this style at its best, no doubt the result of Ms. Harris's experience in playing Emily in *The Belle of Amherst*. Her reading generates continuous pictures of Emily at various ages as the poems take us through time—something that does not happen during the Wickwire readings. This is not to suggest that visual pictures of the poet or her world are critical to the listener's enjoyment of a reading. The choice of style is a matter of personal preference.

There is, of course, plenty of room for various approaches within each of these two styles, and room for a mixing of styles that can result in interesting interpretations. Alexandra O'Karma's recording *Emily Dickinson: Poems and Letters*³ is a rather detached presentation falling somewhere between the two styles.

Audio Partners informs me that the late Ms. Wickwire, formerly a featured performer with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, never performed in Luce's play, a fact that may partially account for her choice to present the poems as a reader. As an actress, I myself am more attracted to a recording that captures Emily the person as well as Emily the writer. By their nature, audio recordings require the listener to fill in personal visual images while experiencing the tape. To my taste, it is more engaging when those pictures are enhanced by the subtle suggestion that one is listening to Dickinson recite the work from her soul. The simplicity, economy, and delicacy of her work seems all the more real when it appears to come from Emily's quiet heart.

Because of my prejudice, I find the

Wickwire readings engaging but not moving. Wickwire has a lovely voice that has enough variety to allay the potential problem of the poems taking on a sameness of rhythm. She captures textures and connects threads as she allows the music to carry her from mood to mood and subject to subject. But although her voice is rich and melodious, I am disappointed that she does not make better use of voiced consonants. Much power is lost by the absence of effectively used consonants. And the lack of cleverly placed unvoiced consonants diminishes the effect of some of Dickinson's playful economy. The performer choosing the reading style of presentation takes on more responsibility for using the vocal instrument as a tool for sculpting the work.

Ms. Wickwire's performance has many pluses. She reads with energy and excitement, and she does service to the language. She reads with commitment. Her interpretations reflect strong if not always internally initiated feelings. But she tends to stress dramatic points rather than allow the simplicity of the images to stand on their own. The result is that some poems are dramatic for drama's sake, thus diminishing the potential for the listener to appreciate the beauty of their simplicity. Wickwire's readings sometimes lack economy of emotion and a trust in the fact that, with Dickinson, less is more. I am reminded of a line from one of Dickinson's poems:

How sweet it would have tasted—
Just a Drop—

Notes

1. Julie Harris, *Emily Dickinson: A Self-Portrait*, 2 cassettes, Caedmon SWC 2026 (New York, 1968).

2. Julie Harris, *Poems and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, 1 cassette, Caedmon CPN 1119 (New York, 1987).

3. Alexandra O'Karma, *Emily Dickinson: Poems and Letters*, Recorded Books Productions (Prince Frederick, Md., 1959). [Reviewed in the *EDIS Bulletin*, May/June 1992]

Dickinson and Whitman may be ordered by calling toll free 1-800-231-4261.

Maravene Loeschke is an actress and chairperson of the Theatre Department at Towson State University in Baltimore, where she also teaches acting and feminist theatre.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Recent and Forthcoming

[Information from publishers' catalogues]

Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994. 578 pages. ISBN 0-15-195747-9, \$29.95.

Bloom explores the Western literary tradition by focusing on twenty-six writers, including Dickinson. "Except for Shakespeare, Dickinson manifests more cognitive originality than any other Western poet since Dante." His essay on Dickinson includes explications of poems 258, 627, 761, 1109, 1153, and 1733. He finds "The Tint I cannot take," with the exception of Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," "the height of American poetry and, with Whitman's poem, the authentic American Sublime."

Greenberg, Robert M. *Splintered Worlds: Fragmentation and the Ideal of Diversity in the Work of Emerson, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson.* Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1993. 258 pages. ISBN 1-55553-167-9, \$40.00.

Greenberg examines the work of Dickinson and three other American Renaissance writers in the context of historical events and trends in nineteenth-century America. He argues that the multiple viewpoints of these writers reflect the cultural and religious diversity of their times and that their work thus contains some of the early forms of American modernism.

Howe, Susan. *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History.* Hanover: Univ. Press of New England/Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1993. 208 pages. Cloth, ISBN 0-8195-5256-9, \$40.00. Paper, ISBN 0-8195-6263-7, \$16.95.

In an examination of Thomas Shepard's conversion narratives, Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, and Dickinson's poetry, Howe "reads our intellectual inheritance as a series of civil wars, where each text is a wilderness in which a strange and lawless author confronts interpreters and editors eager for settlement."

Oberhaus, Dorothy Huff. *Emily Dickinson's Fascicles: Method and Meaning.* University Park: Pennsylvania State

Univ. Press, 1995. 221 pages. ISBN 0-271-01337-0, \$35.00.

Oberhaus offers "a radical new reading" of Dickinson's forty manuscript fascicles and demonstrates for the first time their underlying structural principles. Oberhaus sees the fascicles as an ordered "account of a spiritual and poetic pilgrimage" and argues that the poet "was capable of arranging a long, sustained major work with the most subtle and complex organization."

Olson, Steven. *The Prairie in Nineteenth-Century American Poetry.* Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 211 pages. ISBN 0-8061-2600-0. \$29.95.

Olson analyzes the image of the prairie in nineteenth-century American poetry, focusing on the works of Dickinson, Bryant, Melville, Whitman, Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow.

Review

Berry, S.L., and Nancy Loewen. *Emily Dickinson.* Mankato, Minn.: Creative Education, 1994. 48 pp. ISBN 0-88682-609-8, \$18.95.

Reviewed by Cynthia Wise Staudt

Recent trends in teaching literature increasingly seek to involve students at the pre-college level in comprehensive encounters with major literary figures, presenting detailed biographic sketches, historical perspectives, and primary texts of their works in an attempt to present famous writers not as flat icons on the printed page but rather as real people with real-life voices and concerns, ones to which students themselves can relate.

In keeping with this trend, S.L. Berry and Nancy Loewen's newly released *Emily Dickinson*, one in Creative Education's developing series *Voices in Poetry*, presents an extensive biographical summary of the Riddle of Amherst, interspersed with twenty-seven of her poems and accompanied by richly detailed flower illustrations in full color as well as etchings of the Amherst area, photographs of Dickinson memorabilia, and

portraits of Emily and her family and friends. Thus it seems obvious that this new publication has the potential to provide a valuable visual and literary classroom tool for exploring Emily Dickinson's world and times.

In fact, Berry and Loewen's books has much to recommend it over the traditional handling of Dickinson in middle school and high school anthologies. (The publishers indicate the reading level for the text as Grade 6, the interest level as 5-12.) Dickinson's life is portrayed without the sensationalism and stereotyping found in most student texts.

The authors eschew the still popular portrayal of the Dickinson household as an austere home deprived of mirth by a too-strict father and a submissive mother. They also downplay the theory that disappointment in love led to Dickinson's self-imposed seclusion, preferring sister Vinnie's explanation that Emily simply found reading and writing more pleasurable than socializing as she matured. They emphasize the gradual nature of Dickinson's withdrawal and note her opportunities for later romance, most notably her relationship with Judge Otis Lord.

In addition, through their discussion of Dickinson's education, her reading preferences, her letter writing, and the particularly well-done section concerning her conflict of faith, they help students to gain an increased understanding of the intellectual and evangelical forces governing nineteenth-century New England culture.

Of literary merit, too, are the relatively extensive quotes on poetic sensibility and responsibility that Dickinson articulated in her letters to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, as well as several poems explicating the same, most notably "I dwell in Possibility," "I reckon—when I count at all," and "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant." Berry and Loewen also explore Dickinson's views on publication and differentiate these from her desire for critical commentary on her work.

Finally, the authors' selections from the poems themselves are of merit. Cho-

sen to cover a wide range, their selections illustrate the breadth of Dickinson's poetic vision better than most school anthologies. They include the sensual "Wild Nights—Wild Nights!" and the romantic "If you were coming in the Fall"; the hymns to individuality "Much Madness is divinest Sense" and "I'm Nobody! Who are you?"; as well as the rarely anthologized "From all the Jails the Boys and Girls," "A Letter is a joy of Earth," and "The Riddle we can guess."

In fact, only six poems in *Emily Dickinson* overlap with those found in the major high school anthologies, the more traditionally selected death and nature poems "Because I could not stop for Death," "The Bustle in a House," "I taste a liquor never brewed," and "Some keep the Sabbath"; the intellectual "Faith is a fine invention"; and the unconsciously predictive "This is my letter to the World."

Yet these attributes cannot overcome the central problems with this volume. If Berry and Loewen's intent is to engage students in a more intimate encounter with one of America's most private poets and spur them to a greater appreciation of her talents, the book falls disappointingly short. For while the biographical sections are longer and more detailed than those found in high school anthologies, they retain the impersonal distance and stiffness of the textbook approach. The absence of anecdotes about the poet herself or descriptive details of Emily's interactions with her world rob readers of the persona of a human Dickinson, one that Martha Dickinson Bianchi brings to life so well in *Emily Dickinson Face to Face*. The intimacy and intensity that mark Dickinson in works such as this never appear.

Berry and Loewen also overlook the biographical connections between Dickinson's life and those of today's students. They fail to exploit her affinity for young people, characterized in her mentor/conspirator relationship with niece Martha and her neighborhood cohorts. Nor do they emphasize her passionate pursuit of individual expression as a possible outgrowth of the restrictive social conventions imposed upon women of her time, ignoring the growing body of feminist criticism concerning this aspect

of the poet and her work. Similarly, they fail to develop Dickinson's possible enjoyment of the enigma she created, an enjoyment that strikes a responsive chord in students once they understand the implications of "The Riddle we can guess," one of Berry and Loewen's chosen, but undeveloped, Dickinson selections.

Instead, they focus primarily on the poet's rebellion against the Puritan religious ethic and the natural consequence of such rebellion—the questions of immortality in the face of death—a subject central to Dickinson but not of burning interest to today's teens nor even comprehensible to most middle school readers.

Hence both ninth and eleventh grade students who read the text at my request quickly became bored with the presentation of Dickinson and skipped eagerly to the poems, only to withdraw in frustration from the complex themes of immortality and faith or reason vs. imagination in the early poems of the book. As one perceptive twelfth grader pointed out, Dickinson's message, when presented solely in poetic form, remained "Inaudible, indeed./To us—the duller scholars."

The disjointed presentation of the material is also disconcerting to young audiences. Readers leap from a page of biography, superimposed over a portrait or Amherst scene, to the contemplation of one to three poems, broken up by large flower sketches. Then they return to another slice of biography, and the cycle repeats itself. This lack of cohesion intensifies when, as often occurs, the poems relate only tangentially to the biographic and illustrative material.

Following a discussion of Dickinson's love of music that emphasizes her shift from a practical to a metaphoric interest, for example, Berry and Loewen choose not a clear poetic reinforcement of this shift, as Sewall argues "Musicians wrestle everywhere" would provide, but rather "This World is not Conclusion," which thematically contemplates the movement from faith to doubt, using music only as a two-line metaphor for apparent, yet invisible, immortality. Similarly, "I dwell in Possibility" becomes improbably incongruous when paired with a discussion of Dickinson's busy social life following

her return from Mount Holyoke, a section titled "Among Friends."

An even greater disparity exists between sense and visual image in the illustrator's choice of flowers. The problem is not with the use of gorgeously painted flowers to unify the illustrative portion of the text. Both biographic and literary considerations make the choice of flowers appropriate for a study of Dickinson. The problem is in the choice of specific flowers to accompany poems. A reference to "the Foxglove's door" in "I taste a liquor," for example, sits to the left of a jack-in-the-pulpit, and a dogwood spray accompanies "God made a little Gentian." Such lapses in logic frustrate student understanding. No pansies, peonies, lilies of the valley, dandelions, daisies, hollyhocks, foxgloves, or gentians riot among the flowers in the book, although they adorned Dickinson's garden and many of her poems. Roses and lilies appear attached to unrelated poems.

Nor do Berry and Loewen select such poems as "A Bee his burnished Carriage," "A Drop fell on the Apple Tree," or "A sepal, petal, and a thorn." Such selections, while not representative of the best or the most famous of Dickinson's poems, would have added not only literary and illustrative connections but also more easily accessible works for neophyte readers to explore.

As the book now stands, the flower illustrations are mere space fillers—a fate that may well befall Berry and Loewen's *Emily Dickinson* on classroom shelves because of their inattention to audience interests and presentation details.

Cynthia Wise Staudt is an assistant professor of English at Walsh University, where she teaches Children's Literature.

Book Notes

Through special arrangement with Farrar/Straus/Giroux, Harvard University Press has reissued **Richard B. Sewall's** *The Life of Emily Dickinson* in paper (ISBN 0-674-53080-2), \$22.95. The hardback (ISBN 0-374-186-944) is available from Farrar for \$35.00. Harvard has also released a paperback edition of **Judith Farr's** *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (ISBN 0-674-65666-0), \$15.95.

MEMBERS' NEWS

"Emily Dickinson Abroad"

Innsbruck, Austria, August 4-6, 1995

Speakers Announced for Second International Conference

Four plenary sessions and thirteen panels of invited papers will make up the program for the second international Emily Dickinson conference, to be held in Innsbruck, Austria, August 4-6, 1995, jointly sponsored by EDIS and the University of Innsbruck.

Plans are now being completed for the conference, which will draw on an international community of scholars and will emphasize Dickinson's worldwide reputation.

The conference will open with a plenary session featuring Roland Hagenbüchle of the Catholic University of Eichstätt, Gudrun Grabher of the University of Innsbruck, Vivian Pollak of the University of Washington, and Margaret Dickie of the University of Georgia.

Gender will be the topic of the second plenary session, which will include papers by Suzanne Juhasz of the University of Colorado and Cristanne Miller of Pomona College on "Emily Dickinson's Comic Power: Performance and Transformations," Sabine Sielke of the Free University of Berlin on "Dickinson's Threshold Glances: Mapping the Borders and Beyonds of Subjectivity," and Joanne Feit Diehl of the University of California at Davis on "'Size Circum-

scribes': Body, Boundaries, and Dickinson's Identity of Self."

Gary Lee Stonum of Case Western Reserve University is organizing a session on "Dickinson in Historical and Cultural Contexts." Panelists will include Cynthia Griffin Wolff of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, speaking on "Claimants for the Corpus," and Françoise Delphy of the University of Paris on "From Provincialism to Inner Space."

An additional plenary session is being planned by Martha Nell Smith of the University of Maryland on the editing of Dickinson.

The thirteen panels will cover "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Dickinson"; "Dickinson and International Artists"; "Editing Dickinson"; "Dickinson's Interest in and Influence on the Foreign"; "Dickinson's International Reception"; "Dickinson in Cultural Contexts"; "Dickinson in Historical Contexts"; "Dickinson and Her Contemporaries"; "Dickinson: Sentimentality and Domesticity"; "Dickinson's Resistance to the Patriarchy"; "Gender Issues in Dickinson"; "Dickinson: Privacy and Isolation"; and "Dickinson: Language and Rhetoric." More than fifty scholars and critics from around the world will present papers.

Other featured speakers scheduled to attend the conference include Sandra Gilbert of the University of California at Davis, Calvin Bedient of the University of California at Los Angeles, Charles Altieri of the University of California at Berkeley, and Betsy Erkkila of the University of Pennsylvania. Additional speakers will be announced in the May/June issue of the *Bulletin*.

In addition to the scheduled presentations, those attending will have ample opportunity to meet with Dickinson scholars from many countries, to learn about recent developments in Dickinson criticism and scholarship, and to enjoy the beautiful setting of the University of Innsbruck.

Conference and hotel registration forms are included in this issue (page 19) and will be mailed to members in January. Both hotels are within a five- to ten-minute walk from the university. The room rates include breakfast. To assure your place at the conference hotels, send in your reservation early.

For further information, contact conference director Margaret Dickie, Department of English, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 U.S.A. Or contact her by e-mail at mmdickie@uga.edu.

Officers and Board Members Elected

Daniel Lombardo has been elected by the membership as Member at Large of the EDIS Board. Dan, curator of Special Collections at the Jones Library in Amherst, is familiar to *Bulletin* readers as editor of the series on Dickinson library collections.

Also elected to fill Board vacancies were Gudrun Grabher of the University of Innsbruck, co-chair of the 1995 EDIS conference; membership chair Eleanor Heginbotham of Concordia College, St. Paul; Suzanne Juhasz of the University of Colorado, editor of the *Emily Dickinson*

Journal; and Georgiana Strickland of the University Press of Kentucky, editor of the *EDIS Bulletin*.

Officers elected for 1994-95 were Vivian Pollak of the University of Washington, president; Margaret Dickie of the University of Georgia, vice-president; Jonnie Guerra of Walsh University, secretary; and Martha Nell Smith of the University of Maryland, treasurer.

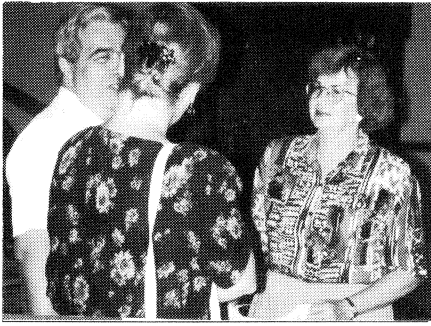
Membership in the Society now numbers close to 400, with members in forty-four states of the U.S. and in twenty countries.

EDIS Archives Established

Daniel Lombardo, curator of Special Collections at the Jones Library in Amherst, has begun cataloging the EDIS archives, housed at the Jones.

Dan asks that members who have business papers, correspondence, or publication or membership information send him copies. He especially asks for copies of papers delivered at conferences and photographs taken at meetings and conferences.

Send contributions to the Jones Library, 43 Amity Street, Amherst, MA 01002.



Jay Don and Jo Ellen Coppersmith talk with Joyce Schelstraete (center) at the first meeting of the Utah EDIS chapter.

Utah Chapter Formed

By Cynthia Hallen and Kasi Morris

Poetry readings, music, and Dickinson's Black Cake highlighted the charter meeting of the Utah Chapter of EDIS, held August 3, 1994, on the campus of Brigham Young University in Provo.

Chapter Notes

Summer flowers decorated the auditorium. The meeting began with the more than forty people present singing "There came a Day at Summer's full" to a familiar hymn tune, followed by a solo performance of "Will there really be a 'Morning'?"

In between came an "open mike" period for readings of favorite Dickinson poems, presentations on current research projects and the 1995 Innsbruck conference, election of officers, and discussion of plans for future meetings, which will include performances, speakers, and discussion groups.

The next general meeting is planned for February 1 at Westminster College, Salt Lake City. For information, call Judy Allen-Leventhal at 801-488-1600.

Boston Chapter Proposed

By Linda Evers

With the wonderfully rich Dickinson resources available in New England, the time seems ripe for forming a Boston chapter of EDIS. Such resources can only become more meaningful when explored with fellow Dickinsonians.

The level of Dickinson scholarship carried out in New England by residents and visitors offers us unique opportunities for sharing the latest thinking on the poet. And Dickinson-related cultural events have special significance here.

For further information, contact Dr. Linda Evers, P.O. Box 1531, Brookline, MA 02146. Please include phone and fax numbers. Participation by those outside New England is also warmly welcomed.

Lexical Connections

Webplay: The connection (semantic or lexical) between the key words in a literary text and the corresponding dictionary definitions.

EDL: The *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, a reference work in progress that will establish the principal definitions and Webplays for all significant words in Dickinson's poetry, based on the poem concordance, the 1844 edition of Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Connections human as well as verbal were the focus of a luncheon held at the June 1994 American Literature Association meeting in San Diego, hosted by editor/project director Cynthia Hallen, who presented a progress report for members of the *EDL* Advisory Board and other interested persons.

Hallen was able to report significant progress on the *Lexicon*. Student volunteers have prepared initial entries for words beginning with letters A-K and a number beyond that point. Those entries are now being reviewed by senior scholars. Several word packets were distributed at the luncheon. Packets for remaining entries await scholars willing to take them on.

Hallen also reported that permission to quote Dickinson poems is being worked out with Harvard University Press and that she has signed a contract with Greenwood Press, with publication planned for 1997.

Although the NEH grant application was turned down, a grant from Euralex, an organization of European lexicographers, remains a possibility. Connections have been established with the Dickinson Editing Collective, and an e-mail network for participants, to be named *WEBPLAY*, is planned, though not yet operational.

A highlight of the gathering was a showing of *A House of Possibility*, a video that explains the origins, purpose, and methodology of the *EDL*. The video, prepared by students at Brigham Young University, is available for classroom and group showings.

EDL Advisory Board members include Daniel Barnes, Jack Capps, Margaret Freeman, Dorothy Huff Oberhaus, Judy Jo Small, and Stephanie Tingley.

Anyone wishing to become part of the *EDL* team should write Cynthia Hallen at the Department of English, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 U.S.A., or by fax at 801-374-1411.

ED Panels for 1994-95

MLA: "Loaded Gun: New Contests in Dickinson Studies" will be the theme of a December 30 panel at this year's Modern Language Association meeting in San Diego. Papers to be presented are "Dickinson's Antinomian Poetic Practice," by Susan Howe; "The Book of Emily and Susan Dickinson," by Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith; and "The Emily Dickinson Wars," by Betsy Erkkila, who is also session leader. For more information, contact Erkkila at the Department of English, University of Pennsylvania.

ALA: Two Dickinson panels are planned for the 1995 meeting of the American Literature Association, to be held Memorial Day weekend in Baltimore. Both will focus on the theme "Emily Dickinson in the Twentieth Century: Influences and Traditions." Anyone interested in participating should send a one-page abstract to Cristanne Miller by January 1, 1995: Department of English, Pomona College, Claremont, CA 91711-6335; phone: 714-621-8000, ext. 2214; fax: 909-621-8403.

Further information on the ALA meeting can be obtained from Alfred Bendixen, Department of English, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110; phone: 213-343-4140.

N.E. Encyclopedia Seeks Contributors

A comprehensive *Encyclopedia of New England Culture* is being developed under the editorship of Burt Feintuch and David Watters. This multidisciplinary one-volume work, to be published in 1998, will include approximately 1,200 entries on a wide array of topics. Those having special interest for Dickinson scholars include Art, Education, History, Images and Ideas of New England, Literature, Music, and Women's Lives.

Overview essays will cover a variety of

topics. Shorter essays on significant aspects and brief entries on major figures, institutions, sites, events, and ideas will make up the work. Nationally known scholars will serve as senior consultants.

Scholars interested in contributing should send a letter of interest and a brief c.v. to Blanche M.G. Linden, Associate Editor, *Encyclopedia of New England Culture*, Center for the Humanities, Murkland Hall, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824-3596.

Emily Dickinson: A Clerihew

By Jean Balderston

Emily Dickinson
visited Boston, Worcester,
Philadelphia, Washington,
but found a fairer city
in Possibility—

Jean Balderston is a poet and a psychiatrist practicing in New York City.

Emilyana, continued from page 2

Browsing through some books, magazines, and papers in a New Hampshire cow barn, we found a prize of the first order, an April 1862 *Atlantic Monthly* with T.W. Higginson's "Letter to a Young Contributor," which initiated the relationship between the poet and Higginson. Recently I found the same issue in a California bookstore, lying like a gold coin among pennies. Between the cow barn and California were ten years and a distance of three thousand miles. Not even an old love affair could be so sentimentally served by the passage of time!

Most Dickinson readers are familiar with the charming photograph of Higginson on a penny-farthing bicycle with his daughter Margaret. On Cape Cod, we bought Margaret's inscribed copy of Mabel Todd's *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1931), annotated throughout. Inserted was a well corrected typed leaf that said, "I send you a Gale, and an Epitaph, and a Word to a Friend, and a Bluebird for Mrs. Higginson. Excuse them if they are untrue." Pencil on the back of this leaf were the words "Emily Dickinson & Immortality." Here is material for a literary puzzle. In 1884 Emily sent a book as a valentine to young Margaret, saying, "It would please me that she take her first Walk in Literature with one so often guided on that great route by her Father" (L 894). How much was Emily a part of Margaret's life?

Among the targets for our collecting were materials about Mabel Loomis Todd, her husband, David, and their scholarly daughter, Millicent Todd Bingham.

There were also Mabel's father, the astronomer Eben Loomis, and Sereno Edwards Todd, David's father, a well known agriculturist, writer, editor, and inventor. These families were active and productive. Details of Mabel and David's scientific trip to Japan in 1896 are recorded in *Coronet Memories: Log of the Schooner Coronet on Her Offshore Cruises from 1893-1899*. Several related



Territa Lowenberg with the Dickinson textbooks.

items—a letter from the owner of the *Coronet*, two *Coronet* photographs, and tipped-in clippings—surfaced in an Albany, New York, bookstore.

In West Cornwall, Connecticut, with its fine covered bridge spanning the Housatonic, a gentle lady bookseller with a shop overlooking the river sold me thirteen letters written by Mabel Todd to Roberts Brothers of Boston, who published the first books of Emily's poetry

and letters and the No Name Series, as well as Mabel's father's books.

New Salem, Massachusetts, north of Belchertown, is an almost intact nineteenth-century town that escaped the bulldozers of the Quabbin Reservoir project. Over several years' visits, the book ladies of New Salem provided a number of special prizes, such as Walker's *Transactions of the Agricultural Societies of Massachusetts* (1852). Page 272 describes Edward Dickinson's fruit orchard. The quality of his apples was well known, but "pears, peaches, plums, quinces, and grapes (both foreign and native)" and "a beautiful fig tree loaded with fruit" are also listed.

Treasures were not found only on the East Coast. A unique presentation copy of *Poems* (1890) turned up twenty miles from my California home. Mabel Loomis Todd had inscribed it to an Amherst friend, so it may be from the first printing. Another rarity came from Southern California, a limited edition of *Further Poems* (1920), one of fifteen copies lettered H and not for sale.

Of all the books of Emily's time, those on music were the most easily obtained. Isaac Watts's *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, Asahel Nettleton's *Village Hymns*, and the Bible were in nearly every rural New England homestead. In an 1853 letter to Austin, Emily mentions the *Village Hymns*, the first hymnal used at Mount Holyoke Seminary; Mary Lyon carried it with her to classes. The Dickinsons had five copies of the Park, Phelps, and Mason *Sabbath Hymn Book*. Their

library also had Mason's *Carmina Sacra*, Webb's *Odeon*, and Mason and Webb's *The Vocalist*.

We acquired a few foreign editions of Emily's poems. The rare Balkema underground-press edition (Amsterdam, 1944, forty copies printed) was offered in a Boston catalog. The first British edition of *Poems* (London, 1891) with the signature of Ursula Wood (Mrs. Ralph Vaughan Williams) came from a London sale. A foreign-book specialist in Cambridge, Massachusetts, imported the Mondadori editions of *Poésie*, Kessler's *Der Engel in Grau*, and some Dutch, Hungarian, and French editions. We discovered a presentation copy of Felix Ansermoz's *Choix de Poèmes* in New York City. The Bibliothèque Nationale kindly photocopied eighteen journal articles on Emily by critics André Maurois, Jean Catel, Charles Cestre, and Albert Feuillerat. Harold Nicolson's *Essays in Divers Hands* (London, 1947) and James Southworth's *Some Modern American Poets* (Oxford, 1950) turned up in a Guildford bookshop south of London.

The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan was an important informational source. A colleague in Tokyo sent Kikuo Kato's *Emily Dickinson Studies* (Tokyo, 1976) in Japanese and English.

Difficult to detail are the masses of archival matter we accumulated. Among them are the Lovell portraits of Amherst College faculty, photographs of the college campus, an original photograph of the Dickinson meadow showing the Amherst Straw and Palm Hat Finishing Works in the background, and the strange diary books of Obadiah Dickinson, a justice of the peace. There are also a Mount Holyoke Seminary photograph album, scrapbooks, ledgers, and newspapers—all miscellany to absorb rainy afternoons.

Over the years we met the challenge we had set ourselves of assembling books in exactly the same editions as those in the Dickinson library. Jack Capps's *Emily Dickinson's Reading, 1836-1886* (1966) was a useful guide. Of the roughly 800 volumes on the Houghton list, we found 567 titles, for a collection that represents well the reading of a literate nineteenth-century family.

As we became familiar with the Emily

resources, we felt the weight of what others had accomplished—the collections at Amherst, Harvard, Yale, the Jones Library, and the Boston Public Library.

Did we read all the Dickinson books? Hardly. Yet we learned much from them. And added to the sheer pleasure we experienced in gathering our collection was the joy of creating from it three books: *Emily Dickinson's Textbooks* (Berkeley, 1986), *The Textbooks of Hampshire County, 1815-1850* (1989, unpublished), and *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere* (Berkeley, 1992). Territa, an English teacher at the Rhode Island School of Design, was a grammarian and editor of the highest order, and her expertise made possible these books.

Now, having donated our collection, to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we have the added satisfaction of seeing it made available to scholars. [See *Bulletin*, May/June 1994.]

Looking back, I continue to wonder how this sherry-eyed creature, who penned her powerful verses at night and bundled them into fascicles unknown to her family and generation, could engage the hearts and minds of so many. In the course of ten years spent gathering the threads of her life, I was a close witness to the strange magic of Emily Dickinson, her poems, and the life of her time and place.

Carlton Lowenberg is now engaged in collecting the Existentialists but continues to add to his Dickinson collection.

Alice Lawson Count is a historical musicologist and harpist who has written extensively for the Grove Dictionary of Music.

Bingham, continued from page 5

Millicent still needed to make a clean breast of the love affair. "It has hung as a shadow over me all my life," she wrote in 1958, "half of my life not knowing what it was and the other half of my life trying to combat it and to set things right." At last she gave her family papers to Yale and placed the love affair documents in the hands of Richard B. Sewall, who incorporated them into his 1974 biography, *The Life of Emily Dickinson*.

It is difficult to convey to a recent generation of Dickinson scholars the electrifying effect Mrs. Bingham's books had

on her contemporary Dickinson devotees. ("For me personally it was a thunderbolt," Benjamin Lease remembers, referring to *Bolts of Melody*.) Her startling disclosures of the poet's love for Judge Lord in *Revelation* and the existence of the Master letters in *Home*, accompanied absorbing, authoritative accounts of Dickinson's family and physical milieu, conveying a bygone way of life that she supported with dozens of Dickinson family documents. Her work added substantial complexity to what had been known about the poet and still serves basic Dickinson research today—a tribute to Bingham's tireless, careful scholarship, her courage, and her perseverance.

"She was a brilliant and complicated woman, by no means a popular favorite," said Richard Sewall, who knew her well. "She was a demon for precision—getting the facts straight, following proper procedures in everything from serving tea to writing biography." Through it all, until her death in December 1968 at eighty-eight, there remained within this exacting woman a little girl who led a deeply troubled life.

Note: All Bingham quotations are from unpublished papers in the Millicent Todd Bingham Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

Ostriker, continued from page 7

of woman's role in the everyday, and so acknowledges the inextricable yoke of the physical to the spiritual, which so many religions deny:

Food ready, it is around her hands
The family faces gather, the homeless
She has gathered, like sheep, it is her
veiny hands
That light the candles, so that suddenly,
Our human grief illuminated, we're a
circle
Practical and magical, it's
Strong wine and food time coming,
and from outside time
.....
Our mother's palms like branches
lifted in prayer
Lead our rejoicing voices, our small
chorus

One is reminded of Jean Baker Miller's assertion that women's work has, through the ages, made the real heroes. Traditionally, while their male mates have been off legislating, writing the law of the land, judging those who transgress, "defending" against, even killing those who trespass, women have kept the home fires burning, making the real fabric that clothes and comforts society. Connecting poetry, thoughts made corporeal, to flesh and blood existence, Ostriker employs the physical metaphor to depict the importance of the American poet who "ate and drank the precious Words" and who does not hoard her power for the fortunate erudite few, but offers it to every one of her readers.

With material metaphors, Ostriker exhorts those on the margins, like herself, to confront "the tales of the tribe," the sociopolitical tales that purport to explain "Ourself behind ourself, concealed": "What do the stories mean to me and what do I mean to them? I cannot tell until I write. And then each story opens to me.... We have to do it sometime. We have to enter the tents / texts, invade the sanctuary, uncover the father's nakedness. We have to do it, believe it or not, because we love him. It won't kill him. He won't kill us."

Urging us to "uncover the father's nakedness," Ostriker of course alludes to Noah's son Ham, who finds himself and his descendants banished to perpetual servitude because he dares to gaze upon his naked father and then tell his brothers about it (Gen. 9:20-27).

Why is gazing upon the father's nakedness such a transgression? Stripped of his patriarchal regalia, of his robes that denote the head of the tribe, the father knows nakedness is a leveling principle—we all come to this life that way. So uncovering the nakedness becomes a metaphor for our reading, for our writing, for an access to language all our own.

Parodying the privilege assumed by Martin Luther, the poem from which this paper takes its title portrays Ostriker as she nails her ninety-five theses not to the cathedral door but to the kitchen bulletin board. This is not simple deflation, mockery, but assumes power for the Jews, the

peasants, so different from, so marginal to Luther. Her theses read like this:

Ethically, I am looking for
An absolute endorsement of loving-kindness.
No loopholes except maybe mosquitoes.
Virtue and sin will henceforth be discouraged,
Along with suffering and martyrdom.
There will be no concept of infidels;
Consequently, the faithful must entertain
Themselves some other way than killing infidels.

We have a right to write our own theses for living.

For Ostriker and Dickinson, poetry is not merely fodder for graduate study, but a force in the world. Neither would mind, I think, my conjecture that they concur with Bruce Springsteen, that it is wrong for poets "to write nothing at all / to stand back and let all be." And both would surely agree with Gwendolyn Brooks that it's wrong for poets to write for editors who are "self-honeying and self-crowned in the seduced arena."

Indeed, these poets have not let me be, have made me think again about difference, so privileged in our critical discourse just now, so often used to divide us. Recognizing difference is sometimes made synonymous with intellectual sophistication and is almost always equated with political correctness. But it is just as complex to recognize, to read our similarities. When Ostriker talks about Jews rising in smoke from the Nazi ovens, or when Brooks talks about the "Near-Johannesburg Boy," detained, beaten bloody, it can seem so far from my white American privilege. But turned to cinders, my skin, your skin, looks like all others; when it falls, my blood, your blood, their blood, pools red.

Uncover the nakedness, tear off the gown that would keep the town from our reading. May each learn to read, really read for herself. After all, when Ostriker learned to read Dickinson for herself, the world split open and new worlds opened within. Ostriker, like Dickinson, says to each reader, "Hold my hand," however different you are, as you come to a reading, which is also of course a writing, all

your own. To "everywoman her own theology."

Martha Nell Smith, associate professor of English at the University of Maryland, College Park, studied with Ostriker at Rutgers. Smith is the author of *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson (1992)* and coauthor, with Suzanne Juhasz and Cristanne Miller, of *Comic Power in Emily Dickinson (1993)*. This is an excerpt from a volume of such presentations that she and Jonnie Guerra are editing.

Barnet, continued from page 9

which Barnet included in his drawing.

Barnet feels satisfied with *The World in a Frame*, to which he gave "heart and soul." There will be no other books like it again, since the publisher issued only 5,000 copies. When the book first appeared, he traveled with an exhibition of twenty-four drawings, giving lectures and slide shows to audiences at clubs, museums, colleges, and universities.

Barnet, still under the spell of the poet he considers one of the finest, is always willing to share his love of Dickinson with others. A reading of the book makes clear the spiritual communion between the two: the artist working in tandem with the poet. I cannot but believe that Dickinson would be pleased by *The World in a Frame* and would delight in this interpretation of and respect for her words by an outstanding contemporary artist.

Notes

1. Will Barnet, *The World in a Frame* (New York: George Braziller, 1989).
2. Gerrit Henry, "Will Barnet—Art Students League," *Art News* 92 (Feb. 1993): 109.
3. Terry Trucco, "Will Barnet: A Part of and Apart from His Time," *Art News* 81 (Dec. 1982): 94-98.
4. *Ibid.*, 98.
5. Richard J. Boyle, "Will Barnet—The Survival of an Individualist," *Art News* 72 (Oct. 1983): 83.
6. Will Barnet to Maryanne Garbowsky, Sept. 11, 1992.
7. Will Barnet, *27 Master Prints* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979).

Maryanne Garbowsky is professor of English at the County College of Morris, New Jersey, and author of *The House without the Door*.

Conference Registration Form

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

Name, title, & affiliation _____

Mailing address _____

Telephone: (home) _____ (office) _____ (fax) _____

Conference Fee _____ Registering by March 1, 1995: **\$50.00** _____ Registering after March 1, 1995: **\$75.00**

Refunds: Requests must reach the Conference Director by June 1, 1995. A \$5.00 administration fee will be charged.

Send to: Margaret Dickie, Department of English, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 U.S.A.

Conference Hotel Registration Form (due March 1, 1995)

Name _____

Address _____

Number of persons you are registering for _____ Sharing with _____

Preferred hotel: Rossel in der Au \$40.00 (single) _____ \$30.00 (double, per person) _____

Mozart \$55.00 (single) _____ \$45.00 (double, per person) _____

Credit Card: Visa _____ Mastercard _____ American Express _____

Card # _____ Expiration date _____

Signature _____

Send to: Margaret Dickie, Department of English, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 U.S.A.

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Editor's Note: Once again I'm pleased to announce the appointment of a series editor for the *Bulletin*. Jonnie Guerra, academic dean at Walsh University, has agreed to serve as editor of the Poet to Poet series. She inaugurates her editorship in this issue with a portrait of Alicia Ostriker by Martha Nell Smith. Watch for many more offerings in a series that connects past and present in significant ways.

The series on Dickinson library collections will resume in our next issue. In its place, this issue provides a backstage view of two important Dickinson collections. Carlton Lowenberg reminisces about the pleasures of rambling New England in

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search of Dickinson materials, and Niels Kjær describes the origins of his collection. Such gatherings have greatly enriched and expanded the possibilities for research on Dickinson.

Next fall's issue will focus on the Innsbruck conference, and the *Bulletin* will need reporters to cover the various sessions. If you can serve in this capacity, please contact me. GS

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Annual dues are \$35.00 for regular members (includes subscription to the *Bulletin* and *The Emily Dickinson Journal*), \$15.00 for special members (the *Bulletin* only), and \$50.00 for contributing members. Membership inquiries should be sent to Eleanor Heginbotham, Towers of Galtier Place, 172 East 6th St., Apt. 1707J, St. Paul, MN 55101, U.S.A. Membership applications should be sent to Martha Nell Smith, Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, U.S.A.

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