

# Bulletin

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

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*Emily Dickinson Abroad**August 4-6, 1995*

## The Immortal Alps in August

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*By Gary Lee Stonum*

As Emily Dickinson forecast in Poem 124, upon an August day "Immortal Alps" looked down as more than a hundred Dickinson scholars gathered for the second international EDIS conference in Innsbruck, Austria. Participants from sixteen European, Asian, and North American countries assembled from August 4 through August 6 in lands Dickinson never saw to consider the topic "Emily Dickinson Abroad."

This pleasant task was made more pleasant by the generous hospitality of the University of Innsbruck, co-sponsor of the meeting, and by the organizational grace and skill shown by Professor Dr. Gudrun Grabher and other members of the Department of American Studies.

The beauty of Innsbruck added greatly to the meeting, so it was appropriate that the first event was a walking tour of the city. Baroque and Rococo buildings line the main street of the Old City across the picturesque River Inn from the hotels where most conference participants were lodged. The conference itself took place in the University's humanities buildings, a modern complex overlooking the river and featuring from every window breathtaking views of the 9,000-foot mountains that ring the city.

The first evening's activities more than set the stage for the entire meeting; they anticipated most of the events that took place during the next two days. Papers by Margaret Dickie and Vivian Pollak initiated a general concern to set Dickinson's work in various cultural and historical contexts. Dickie argued that Dickinson responded to the American Civil War by inverting and transforming its events rather than by internalizing or representing them,

and that her response prefigures several twentieth-century novelists' ways of dealing with our century's wars.

Pollak demonstrated that Dickinson had the opportunity to read versions of what became "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," and she went on to compare Dickinson's and Walt Whitman's representation of maternity and female sexuality. The two papers thus set the stage for several panels on gender, on the historical embeddedness of Dickinson's work, and on links between Dickinson and other artists.



Roland Hagenbüchle followed with a talk on the phenomenology of desire and consciousness in Dickinson's poetry. His Hegelian and Lacanian approach introduced and partly prefigured similar claims made in later papers, particularly those by Joanne Feit Diehl and Sabine Sielke in the plenary sessions and by several of the participants in a panel on privacy and isolation.

Such work shared at least one surprising feature: a renewed interest in subjectivity, even of a universal or transcendental kind, as a desideratum emerging beyond or after the particularism of gender negotiations.

The only large categories not represented the first evening were editorial and biographical scholarship. This was more than remedied the next morning in a panel chaired

by Martha Nell Smith and in papers at a number of subsequent panels. Smith herself reported on how a hypermedia archive of Dickinson manuscripts, print reproductions, and related critical, historical, and biographical articles might be developed for distribution on the World Wide Web. In other discussions, initial plans were laid for establishing an EDIS home page on the Web.

A highlight of the conference's interest in biography was the report by Martha Ackmann, from newly discovered recollections of the poet, that Dickinson sometimes recited her poems aloud. That report validated another distinctive feature of the Innsbruck conference, the emphasis on festivity and on the entwining of scholarship and performance.

As a delightful conclusion to the first evening's papers, Gudrun Grabher, with the assistance of Helga Jud, staged several imaginary conversations between Dickinson and Austrian luminaries: Hofmannsthal, Wittgenstein, Freud, Mozart, and Klimt. These deft impersonations were echoed a few days later in a paper by Cristanne Miller and Suzanne Juhasz, a performance piece in which they enacted Dickinson and her reader talking back to one another.

And, for the closing session, Cynthia Griffin Wolff prepared a similar talk in which she imagined herself as a docent at the Homestead, confronted by various scholarly heirs and even the poet herself, all come to claim the literary corpus. All this impersonation was uncannily redoubled by a second appearance from Suzanne Juhasz, who, in the absence of the author, performed Wolff's paper.

Other links to performance and the performing arts were also established on open-

ing night with presentations of music and poetry and the premier of a film made by Gudrun Grabher's students that artfully transposed Dickinson's poetry into visual images.

The scholarship and performance continued for the next two days, punctuated by various meals and festivities arranged by the hosts, including an evening of music and folk dancing at a Renaissance castle on a hill outside the city.

I myself then had the difficult pleasure, at the closing session, of reflecting on the conference's work and its relation to Dickinson studies. Much of our activity, I pro-

posed, continued the venerable but also somewhat limited task of naturalizing Dickinson within familiar discursive contexts, especially ones arising from or authorized by American studies.

One side of this descended from the intellectual history of Perry Miller and from subsequent critics for whom the New England mind was a prototype for modernity in general. Another, more recent side draws on feminism and the new historicism to make Dickinson less an author of the mind's empire than a poet of speech acts and emotive images.

In keeping with the conference's loca-

tion away from American soil, I then proposed that we might look to loftier and less nationalistic critical tasks. As if that were not churlish enough, I also came out against reading Dickinson in order to learn more about Victorian America, a declaration that met with cordial and unanimous disagreement and hastened our departure for a parting glass of champagne—this last a fittingly festive and characteristic touch provided by our Innsbruck hosts.

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## Friday, August 4

### Opening Plenary Session: Emily Dickinson Abroad

*Moderator:* VIVIAN POLLAK; *panelists:* MARGARET DICKIE, University of Georgia; VIVIAN POLLAK, Washington University, St. Louis; ROLAND HAGENBÜCHLE, Catholic University of Eichstätt; GUDRUN GRABHER, University of Innsbruck

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*By Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin*

The eclectic opening plenary session, "Emily Dickinson Abroad," set the tone for the entire three-day conference. The evening session began with three powerful performances: two music selections, "The Heart Asks Pleasure First," from the film *The Piano*, performed by Andrea Braiddt, and Richard Strauss's lovely "Zueignung" (Dedication) sung by baritone Thomas Zisterer (both performers are from the American Studies Department at the University of Innsbruck), and a reading of the very fitting Dickinson poem beginning "In lands I never saw – they say / Immortal Alps look down."

After welcoming remarks from conference director Gudrun Grabher, EDIS president Vivian Pollak, and Josef Riedmann, dean of the University of Innsbruck humanities faculty, participants were treated to very different but equally engaging papers from four renowned scholars.

Margaret Dickie defined her presentation "Dickinson and War" as an interpretation of Dickinson in two cultures: history and literary history. Since war often dominates the study of history, one might assume that Dickinson would enter literary history at the point of the American Civil War. Yet scholars have consistently claimed that Dickinson was isolated from her historical moment. Dickie argued that, far from being indifferent to the conflict, Dickinson was overwhelmed by the Civil War; it was the muse that made her modern. Dickie suggested that we first study Dickinson's body of war poetry seriously and then proceed to build literary history around this still marginalized poet. She closed by proposing that Dickinson perhaps belongs at the beginning of a redefined period of realism in American literature.

Vivian Pollak's "Reading Dickinson

Reading Whitman" probed Dickinson's relationship to Walt Whitman and both poets' relationship to sexuality. Pollak argued that in celebrating women's fertility, Whitman valued the role of mother above all others. He displaced his own desire onto the textual mother, and his poems thus seem aggressively heterosexual. Dickinson, in contrast, kept the body and text separate, producing poetry that does not encourage any particular sexuality. Can we detect any interaction between these two contemporaries? Pollak posited that Dickinson probably read isolated Whitman poems in magazines and at least one particularly angry review of Whitman's work. And in the poem "I started Early – Took my Dog –," Pollak discovered Dickinson engaging with but ultimately rejecting an alluring figure like Whitman.

Roland Hagenbüchle founded his presentation, "Dickinson's 'Sumptuous Desti-

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tution': The Function of Desire in Emily Dickinson's Poetry," on the premise that poetry is the expression of both the divided self and the desire to reunify it. Dickinson employed two strategies for achieving this sense of wholeness, he argued. The first was to attempt to possess the Other; but this approach proved self-destructive, since the Other is necessary to the self. Similarly, the second strategy, possession of the self by the Other, may result in loss of self.

Hagenbüchle concluded that Dickinson escaped this double bind through love, which creates circumference and recipro-

cal desire. He warned, however, that this recovered self is still an aesthetic self, a fiction created by Dickinson.

The final paper of the evening can only be described as captivating. Gudrun Grabher, together with one of her talented students, Helga Jud, performed a series of exchanges between Emily Dickinson and five examples of Austrian genius: philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and artist Gustav Klimt. Grabher prefaced "Dickinson and the Austrian Mind" by questioning whether such a mind exists but said there is

no doubt about the fact that Dickinson was herself a "mind traveler."

This fascinating presentation allowed the listeners to explore Dickinson's psyche and those of her fellow great minds through the artist's own extremely influential words. Nothing but a full transcription could begin to pay tribute to these dialogues. They were at once witty and thought provoking and were themselves an impressive work of art.

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## Of Voice and Vision: Arts Evening, Innsbruck

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*Reviewed by Georgiana Strickland*

One of the most characteristic musical forms developed in the nineteenth century was the art song, which came to first flowering in the *lieder* of Schubert and was further developed by composers of many nationalities. Fusing voice, piano, and poetry in equal proportions, the art song is the miniature of the music world, a tiny but complete drama demanding of both composer and performer the highest artistic skill.

That this form continues to flourish was abundantly evident in the recital by Austrian-American mezzo-soprano Barbara Hess and Austrian pianist Michael Hornek, one of the high points of the opening festivities of "Emily Dickinson Abroad." They performed settings of twelve Dickinson works by a variety of composers.

Their rich offering ranged from Vincent Persichetti's light-as-air "I'm Nobody" and the elegant chiaroscuro of John Duke's "Good Morning, Midnight" and J. De Rienzo's "The Dark" to the delicate lyricism of Sylvia Glickman's "It Will be Summer," Ernst Bacon's "It's All I Have to Bring," and Martin Kalmanoff's "I Dwell in Possibility" (the last a premier performance). Lee Hoiby's setting of portions of Dickinson's letter to T.W. Higginson beginning "You ask of my companions" was a special delight. Also heard were settings by Aaron Copland, Richard Hoyt, Walter Hilse, and Gitta Steiner.

One characteristic of the art song is the strong role assigned the piano. Michael Hornek, who stepped in at the last minute for an injured pianist, gave a polished per-

formance of the often demanding music, providing an expressive complement to the vocal line.



Barbara Hess's lovely lyric voice proved the perfect vehicle for both Dickinson's poetry and the composers' music. She handled the more intense moments and the delicate lyrical passages with equal ease. Hess's diction was impeccable, and her engagement with the text was evident at every moment. She displayed that rare ability to project the emotional core of the poem while retaining the intensely private, interior character that is Dickinson's hallmark. Through Hess's and Hornek's talents, these songs emerged as perfectly set jewels.

This reviewer's only complaint was the briefness of the program. We can at least hope that Hess's performance of Dickinson songs will eventually be made available on recordings.

Happily, the evening's second highlight is available for our continued enjoyment. The video *We doubt if it be Hers*, created by students of American literature at the University of Innsbruck, displays a multitude of

talents—literary, musical, and visual. A dozen Dickinson poems and one of her letters are presented in an array of styles that open new avenues for the visual enhancement of poetry.

Amid such riches it is difficult to choose the most delightful. My own vote would be for the cartoons created before the viewer's eyes by the deft hand of Karl Jud for "Over the fence —," "Snow flakes," and "A Bird came down the Walk —" or Jud's colorful rendering of "A slash of Blue." Also memorable are the picture-puzzle reconstruction of "Going — to — Her," Gudrun Grabher's zither performance for "Put up my lute!" and the imaginative photographic visualizations of "I died for Beauty" and "Four Trees — upon a solitary Acre —."

The readings of the poems display a solid appreciation for their aural qualities and nuances of meaning, while the use of works by renowned painters and composers adds much to the pleasures of the film.

Gudrun Grabher and her students deserve our gratitude for this beautifully conceived and skillfully achieved creation. To obtain a copy for personal or classroom use (it is not yet available for commercial use), send a check for ATS 280 (US\$28.00) to: Andrea Braidt, Institut für Amerikanistik, University of Innsbruck, Innrain 52A, Innsbruck, Austria. Specify PAL (European) or NTSC (American) video system.

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# Saturday, August 5

## Plenary Session: Editing Dickinson

Moderator: MARTHA NELL SMITH; panelists: BETSY ERKKILA, Northwestern University; ELLEN LOUISE HART, University of California, Santa Cruz; MARTHA NELL SMITH, University of Maryland

By Eleanor Heginbotham

In opening her presentation on “The Emily Dickinson Wars,” Betsy Erkkila declared that she would not be talking *about* those “wars” but would be joining them. Indeed, Saturday morning’s plenary session developed into a spirited if friendly volley between those intent on probing the Dickinson holographs and those concerned with establishing a definitive print representation of Dickinson’s work, continuing a discussion Margaret Dickie had highlighted in the Summer 1995 issue of *American Literary History*.

On this bright Saturday morning, with most of the hundred participants present, Erkkila took particular aim at Susan Howe’s two books on Dickinson but also criticized William Shurr’s excavation of “new” poems and at least questioned the work in progress of Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart on the manuscript letters between Emily and Susan Dickinson.

Explaining that work were Smith and Hart, who laid out the theoretical basis for, the editorial principles underlying, and the varying possibilities for publishing manuscript reproductions. They defended such practices against Erkkila’s remark that the recent “wars” over the editing of Dickinson reflect a “nostalgia for such pure intertextuality originating in the author as a figure of mind and genius writing for eternity.”

All three participants linked their discussions of the significance of the materialities of texts to the broader history—and future—of Dickinson publication and critical reception. Noting the near centennial of the 1890s publications, Erkkila invited us to use this milestone “to reflect on the publication history of Dickinson’s work as a scene of cultural struggle in which significant social and cultural values have been both produced and contested.”

Reviewing the scenes of that struggle, Erkkila traced the originating (in Higginson) and ongoing (through Perry Miller and others) way in which “Emily Dickinson and her work were presented as a reaffirmation of the cultural power of mind and genius

against the debased imperatives of both the capital marketplace and the democratic masses.” Erkkila linked that tendency to dichotomize—the “genius” against capitalism—to Thomas Johnson and to Susan Howe and Martha Nell Smith who, said Erkkila, “re-enact Dickinson’s own resistance to the market and print.”

Differentiating Howe’s work from that of William Shurr, who, declared Erkkila, “shamelessly plays the market” in his “discovery” of *New Poems*, Erkkila noted that Howe is “at least honest” in her title, *My Emily Dickinson*. She added, however, that according to Howe’s “wild, poetic vision,” Dickinson is “outside authority”; she “sings of liberation...beyond gender...and indifferent to world events.” Erkkila reading Howe reading Dickinson argues that Howe’s “fetishistic” reading of “scrawls” circumscribes the poet in its own way as much as early scholars did in theirs.

Invoking Jerome McGann’s insistence on “the primacy of the manuscripts” as “Emily Dickinson’s horizon of finality,” Erkkila nevertheless questioned how far we should follow that horizon. In fact, she said, “there is no horizon of finality”—or none we can *know*.

McGann’s emphasis on “the primacy of the manuscripts” is central to the work Hart and Smith are doing in putting together the lifelong love relationship between Susan and Emily Dickinson. But Erkkila also criticized Hart and Smith for what she said was their privileging of “the primarily aesthetic and literary value” of this relationship rather than its more “broadly cultural and political value.” She also wondered aloud about the readership for such work.

Following such cautionary words, Ellen Louise Hart struck a positive note by saying that she was “excited to follow Betsy’s talk” in order to discuss “who would be the readers of these editions” and how they would look. The example she handed out of the typescript of a letter Dickinson sent Sue following the death of Gilbert, exact as to line and page breaks and with an approxi-

mation of all punctuation, differed radically not only in aesthetic impression but also in inference from both Martha Dickinson Bianchi’s 1924 version and Thomas Johnson’s 1958 version (L 871), just as the poem excavated from within it by Johnson as “Expanse cannot be lost —” differs in lineation and hence in the multiple possibilities offered by Dickinson’s manuscript.

Reconstituting contextuality is one of the primary objectives of the collection of 400 letters, poems, and letter poems, never previously published in one volume, that constitute the Emily/Sue correspondence currently being reproduced by Hart and Smith. Hart’s example and her clearly delineated set of editorial principles seemed strong defense against charges of fetishism or elitism. As to who would read such a production, Hart quoted from people within and outside of the academy. One woman from the latter group, reported Hart, said simply, “It is very important to know what Dickinson wrote and to see where Dickinson placed her words and phrases.”

Neither Hart nor Smith spoke as absolutists about their project. Hart acknowledged the “need to explore all readers’ and editors’ ways to represent texts on the page,” and Smith, who concluded the session, said, “I do not think we can ever *know* Emily Dickinson’s intentionality, but that doesn’t mean we can’t know *some* of her intentions.”

Smith opened her report on the work in progress toward “A Hypermedia Archive of Dickinson’s Writing” by noting that by returning to the manuscripts—by discovering, for example, “what in the world Johnson meant by ‘seven lines cut’ or ‘a page missing’”—she and members of the Emily Dickinson Editing Collective have “discovered a whole new poetry there,” and their discoveries and technologies move us “forward, not backward.”

Although new technology and new critical theories enable editorial reconstructions not possible to earlier editors, Smith acknowledged that there are many ways to

present Dickinson. She pointed out the necessity of early editors to make their own determinations of “the best,” recalling Sue’s remark to Higginson when the 1890 text was published: “‘The poems’ will ever be to me marvellous whether in ms. or type.”

Now, however, it is possible to meet the need for new editorial processes that replicate Dickinson’s attempt to eschew the “auction” of the only kind of publication possible in her own day. Now it is time, Smith maintained, to note that Johnson arbitrarily taxonomized forms (“fair copy,” “semi-final draft,” “worksheet draft”), limiting the possibilities Dickinson “consciously” extended toward expectant readers. Johnson also arbitrarily determined metrical units, avoiding the conscious variations Dickinson

offered and her resultant ironies.

If Erkkila had asked “Who would be the audience for a facsimile edition of all Dickinson’s poems, letters, and fragments?” Smith urged another question: What are the implications if—as the hypermedia text can represent—“de-stabilization is part of [Dickinson’s] intentionality”?

Smith indicated that the use of such new tools can lead to the reconstruction of American literary scholarship. At the same time, she repeated that a hypermedia version of texts would not compete with or diminish print versions of the poems that may be carried around and easily consulted.

Opening the vigorous discussion that followed, Cynthia Hallen raised questions about the focus on Dickinson’s sexuality,

particularly lesbianism, made by all three panelists. Cristanne Miller asked what constitutes the unit of study (poem as oral form, written form, the whole book?) and questioned Erkkila’s notion that all texts are political. And Margaret Freeman wondered how sound itself affects interpretation.

In “joining” the “Emily Dickinson wars,” Betsy Erkkila opened rounds of continuing skirmishes, all in the spirit of the poet who said, “To fight aloud is very brave.”

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## Gender Issues in Dickinson

*Moderator:* MARISA ANNE PAGNATTARO; *panelists:* LENA KOSKI, Abo Akademi University; MARISA PAGNATTARO, University of Georgia; SYLVIA HENNEBERG, University of Georgia; CETTINA TRAMONTANO MAGNO, University of Messina

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*By Erika Scheurer*

The issue of gender is central to interpretations of Emily Dickinson’s life and work. What is the nature of Dickinson’s relationships to the women and men in her life? to the “he’s” and “she’s” in her poetry? Instead of seeking concrete answers to these questions, the first three speakers in this panel emphasized the fluid, indeterminate quality of Dickinson’s sexual identity.

Using Adrienne Rich’s concept of a “lesbian continuum,” with heterosexuality at one end and homosexuality at the other, Lena Koski argued that Dickinson’s work cannot be categorized as either heterosexual or homosexual. Rather, it inhabits various places on the continuum.

Focusing on the correspondence of Dickinson and her sister-in-law, Sue, Koski identified and illustrated three categories of sexual language on the continuum: affectionate, romantic, and erotic. The first and last categories are most easily identified, said Koski; affectionate language was common between young nineteenth-century women, and erotic language focuses on physical intimacy. But romantic discourse constitutes a “gray area.” Like affectionate discourse, this language was common between nineteenth-century women, but from a twentieth-century viewpoint, she said, it can be seen to imply a lesbian relationship. Letter 74 to Sue, Koski suggested, provides

an example of romantic discourse. Koski concluded by stressing that Dickinson’s romantic language inhabits different places on the lesbian continuum depending on which century’s viewpoint one takes: “We need a wider definition of love between women to understand the relationship between Sue and Emily Dickinson as it is expressed by Dickinson in her letters.”

Marisa Anne Pagnattaro argued that Dickinson’s poetry was released from the narrow restrictions of her time and open to a wide range of eroticism. By frequently leaving the speaker’s sexual identity ambiguous, Dickinson was able to explore a bisexual or androgynous self in her poetry.

Pagnattaro closely read a number of poems as examples of Dickinson’s ambiguity and coded language. In “Wild Nights – Wild Nights!” for example, the “I” and the “thee” are both without gender and therefore open to any combination. In other poems, such as “So bashful when I spied her!” Dickinson’s coded language suggests an erotic relationship between two women. Likewise, “I showed her Hights she never saw –,” which was sent to Sue, leaves the speaker’s sexual identity ambiguous, allowing the possibility of one woman’s active seduction of another. In another version, however, the speaker is clearly being pursued by a male lover.

Not publishing freed Dickinson from the constraints of her time, allowing her to experiment with various erotic personae. “She should no longer be denigrated as the nun of Amherst,” concluded Pagnattaro.

Like Koski and Pagnattaro, Sylvia Henneberg noted that Dickinson’s work resists definition and therefore cannot be classified as either purely lesbian or purely straight. For example, in discussing the relationship of “Sun” and “Morning,” in “The Sun – just touched the Morning –,” Henneberg showed how the poem’s traditional reading may coincide with a more radical interpretation that implies female self-sufficiency. Different eroticisms, therefore, coexist in the poem; static either/or oppositions give way to perpetual *difference*.

Other poems Henneberg used as examples include “All the letters I can write” and “If I may have it, when it’s dead.” In the former, Dickinson’s sexualization of the text precludes fixed genders and eroticisms; in the latter, Dickinson’s variants (e.g., stroke/touch/greet) contribute to the various eroticisms present.

In order for sexuality to remain sexuality, said Henneberg (quoting Judith Butler), it must remain uncertain, fluid. Seen from a reader-response point of view, “There are as many erotic reading experi-

ences as there are readers.” Far from limiting erotic possibility, Dickinson allows the sexual identities of her speakers and addressees to oscillate between lesbian and straight, thus letting the erotic experiences she describes in her love poetry shift back and forth along a continuum of multiple eroticisms.

Cettina Tramontano Magno focused on the three poems in which Dickinson mentions the phoebe, showing how these poems illustrate Dickinson’s move toward a feminine poetic impulse. This impulse included resistance to patriarchy and to artistic patronage and “enabled her to turn into the Muse of herself.”

In “The Winters are so short –,” written during the Civil War, Dickinson does not welcome the phoebes as harbingers of spring because summer has already been ruined by the past winter. But she still imitates the phoebe’s voice. In “The ones that disappeared are back,” she again uses the phoebe as a sign of spring, but she sets her voice in opposition, overturning the sequence of the natural world. “Being a poet, she feels entitled to be both in time and out of time,” said Tramontano Magno. Finally, in “I was a Phebe – nothing more –,” Dickinson at first compares herself to the phoebe, using timidity to avoid censure. By the end, however, “she will no longer identify herself

with a phoebe, nor will she be captivated by the ‘notes’ dropped by others.” Instead, Dickinson embraces an attitude toward nature that fuses “the human and the spiritual with a bodily, feminine adherence.” In this way the poet “slowly became the winged messenger of her own messages.”

[For more on Dickinson and gender, see page 9.]

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## Interdisciplinary Approaches to Dickinson

*Moderator:* MARY DEJONG; *panelists:* ANDREA MARIANI, Università degli Studi “G. D’Annunzio”; MARY DEJONG, Pennsylvania State University; HIROKO UNO, Shiga University; MARIANNE ERICKSON, Washington University, St. Louis

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*By Cynthia Hallen*

One of the most eclectic and electric sessions of the EDIS conference in Innsbruck was the panel on “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Dickinson.” Themes included the use of color, hymnody, and science and technology in Dickinson’s poems.

In a paper on “Light and Colors in Emily Dickinson’s Verse,” Andrea Mariani discussed juxtapositions of light, color, and penumbra in Dickinson’s poetic “vision.” While Whitman uses sight and touch in his verse, said Mariani, Dickinson refuses to reveal tactile structure—she lets self and Other emerge through an impressionistic palette of incomprehensible colors.

Dickinson uses the presence and absence of color to defy reality and to lead us to another way of seeing. Through the language landscape of her visionary mind, Mariani noted, she takes us from the macrocosm to the microcosm of Nature. In ways reminiscent of Audubon, Kandinsky, Goethe, and Wittgenstein, Dickinson produces a “phenomenology of chromatic ecstasy” that tells us *how* to see.

Dickinson’s use of color includes synesthesia, akin to Kandinsky’s “yellow sounds,” as in the lines “Let no Sunrise’ yellow noise/Interrupt this Ground” (“Ample make this Bed –”). The play between eye and ear creates a “coloratura” of rich echoes, concluded Mariani, helping us to see that Dickinson made a significant contribution to modern art.

In “Dickinson and the Voice of Hymnody,” Mary DeJong pointed out that hymns were the most important poetic form in nineteenth-century New England culture. Many well known authors wrote hymn poems. Dickinson was well aware of this hymn tradition and called poetry “singing.”

DeJong argued that Dickinson constructed a unique poetic voice by revising popular hymn forms. She transformed the generally impersonal emphasis of traditional religious hymns into a personal and powerful presentation of self, nature, and nonreligious objects. She created distinctive “hymn” poems in working out her own definitions of truth and sincerity.

Hiroko Uno’s paper, “Science in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry,” cited Dickinson’s interest in new technological objects such as telescopes and microscopes. Uno documented Edward Hitchcock, professor of geology at Amherst College, 1845-1854, as one of the major sources of Dickinson’s scientific knowledge. In “The Religion of Geology,” Hitchcock tried to demonstrate how science can throw light on scripture. His thesis established a doctrine of geologic mechanical reaction in terms of telegraphic influences vibrating from center to circumference throughout the universe.

Two of Hitchcock’s points are especially significant in Dickinson’s poetry, suggested Uno. First, every action of ours modifies the existence of every other aspect of cre-

ation throughout all worlds. Each person occupies a center of influence, as if we are connected to every other creature by 10,000 telegraphic wires. Second, Hitchcock maintained that our minutest actions are known throughout the universe. Such principles could explain Dickinson’s need for privacy from “Nature’s sentinels.” Hitchcock’s geology also helps us understand Dickinson’s sense of eternity: if a poem is “alive” it will spread its influence to people throughout the ages.

Uno’s paper helps us see that Dickinson had a sense of her future audiences and helps us understand how it is that packets of poetry left in a woman’s dresser drawer now have international recognition.

A perfect complement to other papers in the session was Marianne Erickson’s “The Scientific Education and Technological Imagination of Emily Dickinson.” Dickinson was in a perfect position to mediate between Nature and technology in her poems, argued Erickson. She received a fine education in math and mental philosophy, and she saw the coming of train transportation to Amherst. One aspect of nineteenth-century technology she would have been aware of was the new industry of bookbinding. While twentieth-century scholars may express concern about the adaptation of Dickinson’s unique manuscripts to print editions, no one has written more engagingly of books. Dickinson praised books,

and it is wonderful that her hand-bound fascicles are now available internationally in printed form.

Dickinson was an artist engineer of great precision and structural integrity, concluded

Erickson. It is no coincidence that Hart Crane memorialized Dickinson in his poem "The Bridge," devoted in part to the Brooklyn Bridge, one of the technological marvels of the nineteenth century.

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## Dickinson Compared to International Artists

*Moderator:* CATHERINE COSTA; *panelists:* MARY ELIZABETH KROMER BERNHARD, Amherst, Mass.; JOANNA YIN, University of Hawaii; CATHERINE COSTA, LaGuardia College, City University of New York

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*By Jane Donahue Eberwein*

In a session that provided the conference's most intensive opportunity to compare Dickinson with writers from other cultures, revealing parallels were drawn between the nineteenth-century American poet, a German romanticist, an English Victorian novelist, and a twentieth-century Russian poet. Unfortunately, Sushila Singh's absence deprived the panel of the eastern inflections anticipated from her paper comparing Dickinson's devotional poetry with that of Míra Bái. It quickly became apparent, in any case, that New England's most notable recluse had much in common with women writers of other nations and of our century as well as her own.

Mary E.K. Bernhard's paper "Poets at the White Heat: Emily Dickinson and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff," stressed biographical parallels between those two celebrated poets. (Droste-Hülshoff is evidently even better known than Dickinson in her own country, if only because her portrait adorns the twenty-mark Deutschmark.) Making no claims for direct influence of the elder Droste (1797-1848) on Dickinson's artistic development, and acknowledging the improbability that either knew the other's work, Bernhard drew heavily on biographical resemblances.

Both writers came from comfortable and socially privileged backgrounds, benefitted from exceptional educational opportunities for women in their circumstances, were introduced early to scientific study of nature, and grew up in patriarchal households with "covertly assertive" mothers. Both poets remained with their mothers for most of their lives, and neither married even though each had romantic involvements with men who were unattainable or considered unsuitable. Each experienced some sort of displacement by a brother in young womanhood, and each endured spiritual struggles that called for artistic expression.

Droste-Hülshoff eventually achieved public recognition for her writing (more for her one novella than for several volumes of poems), though she deferred to her mother's sense of propriety by omitting her full name



from the title page of her first book. Parallels between these two poets, first noted in an 1890s German-language midwestern newspaper review by "A V E" (only recently identified as Amalie von Ende), have been drawn in this century by German readers of Dickinson and merit exploration.

Joanna Yin spoke on "Wild Nights and White Nights: Dickinson's Vision of the Poet in Anna Akhmatova," which drew parallels and contrasts between the New England poet who chose not to "sing aloud" in her lifetime but relied on the vitality of her hidden poems and the Russian poet whose poems, equally marvelously, asserted their own life-force in the midst of political repression: Akhmatova's friends committed her poems to memory and thereby preserved and transmitted them when she was silenced by Soviet authorities. Comparing Dickinson and Akhmatova poems, Yin brought out lyric parallels as well as shared elements of spiritual searching.

Catherine Costa presented the third paper, "All Men Say 'What' to Me: 'My George Eliot'—Dickinson 'Deutera' / 'Mutter'

Eliot." In this case, Dickinson's enthusiasm for the other author can be readily established: it is well known that she displayed a portrait of Eliot in her room and eagerly responded to books both by and about the English novelist.

Costa chose, however, not to focus on familiar information about Dickinson's ardent enthusiasm for Eliot, the Brontës, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning and concentrated on parallels between several Dickinson poems from about 1862-63 and an episode from Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). Reading "There came a Day at Summer's full," "Like Eyes that looked on Wastes—," and "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—" within the fictive context in which Maggie's intellectual and creative passions are awakened by a would-be lover whom she encounters in the hideaway where she has chosen to withdraw from the world's temptations, Costa demonstrated Eliot's and Dickinson's shared struggle between tendencies toward renunciation (based explicitly or implicitly on *The Imitation of Christ*) and fuller sensual, worldly, and expressive possibilities as represented by a forbidden lover.

Costa also discussed the problem of fame for women artists of that period, pointing out that Eliot's literary prominence came at a cost—that, for instance, she could never bring herself to read reviews of her books.

In the discussion that followed these three stimulating papers, Walter Grünzweig noted the many parallels that had been drawn between Dickinson, Akhmatova, and Eliot but wondered what cultural differences had emerged. Dorothea Steiner of the University of Salzburg thought that might be a misleading question—at least with respect to Dickinson and Eliot, since Victorian culture so powerfully linked England and the United States in the poet's

time. From her perspective, gender rather than nationality proved the key issue in developing such comparisons, with the understandable consequence that likenesses come into greater prominence than distinctions when Dickinson's personal situation and artistic career are compared to those of other literary women.

On a parting note, Christine Künzel of Hamburg questioned the basis for some

assumed parallels (stylistic, at least) by suggesting that similarities German critics find between Droste-Hülshoff and Dickinson may be based on faulty translations of Dickinson's poems, which she believed to have been cast into German in a way that makes them sound like the women's romantic poetry that German-speaking readers are already prepared to admire.

Although time constraints cut short the

ensuing interchange, several issues raised by this panel reemerged at other conference sessions, particularly the panel on "Dickinson's International Reception" [page 17].

*Jane Donahue Eberwein, professor of English at Oakland University, is author of Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation and is currently editing the forthcoming Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia.*

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## Privacy and Isolation in Dickinson

*Moderator:* PAUL CRUMBLEY; *panelists:* CHARLES ALTIERI, University of California, Berkeley; PAUL CRUMBLEY, Utah State University; MARK BAUERLEIN, Emory University; JAMES GUTHRIE, Wright State University

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*By Marilee Lindemann*

Readers of Dickinson have long understood, if only intuitively, that the poet's exile from the world that supposedly never wrote to her was complex—part myth, part charming eccentricity, part occupational necessity. The four papers presented at this panel went beyond intuition and myth to probe, from a variety of perspectives, the range of significances that may be culled from the fierce sense of privacy and isolation evidenced in the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson.

What is the sense of "self" that emerges out of such intense privacy? Whether examining Dickinson's grapplings with subjectivity, her literary inheritance, or her culture's contradictory discourses on gender, the presenters sought to illuminate the mystery without necessarily dispelling the enigma that is so much of the poet's appeal.

Charles Altieri's examination of "Dickinson's Dialectic" argued that Dickinson's poetry pursues dialectical versions of subjectivity, as her poems begin in "a strong negative or negational relation to the ways people usually attribute imaginary substance to their lives" and transform that negativity "into a mode of imaginative life that the poet can fully affirm or attest to, as if the negation brought the writing to the psyche's most fundamental intensities." Though more modest than Kant's or Hegel's, Dickinson's dialectic makes her poetry "both vehicle and test of alternatives to the nihilism apparently inescapable if one confines oneself to a realistic analysis of the limitations of the [Lacanian] imaginary."

Altieri's analysis focused on poems such as "I never hear the word 'escape,'" "To lose one's faith – surpass," "To know just

how He suffered – would be dear –," and "To be alive – is Power –" that realize the poet's commitment to "consciousness of consciousness" and her persistent struggle with fears of impotence and submission.

Arguing that poetry is for Dickinson a performative space in which her concision and precision serve as the means for turning the tables on finitude, Altieri asserted that the poems as acts achieve power through negotiating and comprehending their own limitations. The poems, then, are not to be read as ironic renderings of the fantasies we produce to deny our own finitude but as celebrations of the powers we have to affirm what we make within finitude.

Also psychological in his approach, Paul Crumbley, in "Art's Haunted House: Dickinson's Sense of Self," explored "ghostly insubstantiality" as the model of identity that characterizes the poet's life and writing, a "ghostliness" so powerful that Thomas Wentworth Higginson once expressed a desire to meet the poet in order to "know that you are real."

For Crumbley the ghostly self is one that "moves through, but is not contained by, any particular linguistic, social, religious, or material habitations," and his paper examined how metaphors related to haunting, homelessness, and being at sea contribute to sustaining such a self.

In exposing the limits of unified or socially determined identities, Dickinson's poetry and letters embrace disorientation and discomfort as "integral to a more expansive experience of selfhood," an expansiveness glimpsed in poems such as "We lose – because we win –" and "What mystery pervades a well!" as well as in the so-

called "Master" letter beginning "If you saw a bullet." The poet who wrote that "A Word is inundation" urges readers to apprehend the powers of the boundless self and the value of unsettled states, both of which are crucial to claiming the "Gymnastic Destiny" that Dickinson claimed for herself.

Shifting the focus from the poet to the world in which she lived and wrote, Mark Bauerlein and James Guthrie examined the implications of Dickinson's privacy by considering, respectively, contemporary public discourses about gender and "woman's place" and the importance of the snow imagery that Dickinson inherited from Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In "The Meaning of Dickinson's Social Withdrawal," Bauerlein scrutinized *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, to which Dickinson's family subscribed from its initial publication in 1850, for signs of cultural confusion and contradictions regarding women's roles and duties, noting in particular the gap between the magazine's delineation of the proper wife in an ideal marriage and its reports on what women actually suffered in marriage as a result of their enforced ignorance and loss of legal and social power. Bauerlein argued that Dickinson's supposed withdrawal from social life must be understood against this background of highly unstable public discourses, for it suggests how complex and ambiguous her "private" gesture is.

For Guthrie, in "A Tumultuous Privacy": Snow and Self-Representation in Emerson's "The Snow-Storm" and Dickinson's "It sifts from Leaden Sieves –," the Romantic image of the poet that was dominant in America—thanks largely to Emer-



son—is part of what prevented Dickinson from publishing more regularly.

In examining her several encounters with Emerson's "The Snow-Storm" (in the 1862 and 1864 versions of "It Sifts from Leaden Sieves" and in her 1879 attempt to get Thomas Niles to publish the latter), Guthrie

sees Dickinson grappling with Emerson's image of snow as an artistic medium, first countering his image of the snow as a masculine "fierce artificer" with a figure of feminine presence but ultimately removing virtually all traces of such a presence in the second, more turbulent version of the poem.

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## Plenary Session: Dickinson and Gender

*Moderator: CRISTANNE MILLER; panelists: JOANNE FEIT DIEHL, University of California, Davis; SABINE SIELKE, Free University of Berlin; SUZANNE JUHASZ, University of Colorado; CRISTANNE MILLER, Pomona College*

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*By Erika Scheurer*

The papers in this plenary session focused on the shiftingness of Dickinson's gender identification, culminating in a performance of her poems that illustrated not only the poet's indeterminate gender boundaries but the blurred boundaries between Dickinson and her readers.

Joanne Feit Diehl's paper, read by Cristanne Miller in Diehl's absence, examined Dickinson's shifting poetic ego and the relationship of that construction to desire. In her work, suggested Diehl, Dickinson presents a trans-gendered poetic ego "that evades the specificity of gender yet constitutes a desiring subject."

Diehl presented two strategies that Dickinson uses to relinquish the individuating attributes of gender: "a splitting of the self into autonomous entities" and "a de-corporealizing of subjective presence." Dickinson employs the first strategy, Diehl pointed out, in her presentations of consciousness. In some poems consciousness is inviolable ("This Consciousness that is aware"; "There is a Zone whose even Years"); in others its autonomy is limited by boundaries imposed by an Other, as in "Bind me – I still can sing –"; and in still others a relationship of equal reciprocity exists between the self and the Other ("I make His Crescent fill or lack –").

In depicting these contradictory images of consciousness, Dickinson creates "an ego that possesses a remarkable capacity for change, a self that is discontinuous," noted Diehl. This effect is furthered in Dickinson's depersonalized presentation of the body, with the cognitive self dissociated from the experiential subject in such poems as "It was not Death, for I stood up" or "I felt my life with both my hands." Dickinson thus invents a self that "sloughs off gender" and "eschews a sexualized iden-

tity to assume what I have called a trans-gendered position."

What are the psychosexual implications of Dickinson's assuming various conflicting roles and their impact on a theory of the



*Cristanne Miller performs "You've seen Balloons set – have'nt you?"*

self? According to Diehl, Dickinson responds to the permeable identity created by her fluid ego boundaries in two ways: by embracing the eroticized Other and by sealing off the threatened self. Thus "a poetic ego emerges that constitutes a world defined by its projected power."

Sabine Sielke argued that Dickinson's "threshold glances" into eternity are part of the poet's unorthodox dialectics of subjectivity. Distinguishing between Julia Kristeva's borderline figures and Dickinson's, Sielke noted that "Dickinson's borderline figures do not care for female origins" but rather feel a "Homesickness/After Eternity" that moves beyond the limitations of

both life and gender. Thus Dickinson's goal is to "deconstruct the boundary between this and the other side of life"; she accomplishes this intent in her poems by drawing parallels between pain, paralysis, parting, and paradise.

Dickinson represents paradise in her poems as a place without desire or difference, as a realm that compares to the pre-oedipal as it has been metaphorized by psychoanalytic theory. But to her, said Sielke, "lack of desire is by no means all that desirable." Writing poetry, which depends on absence and difference, reaffirms the lack that is supposedly transcended in representations of paradise. Paradise and pain are instead parallel in that both are inexpressible, but they differ in that, while pain has no object, paradise (being imaginary) "is wholly its objects." Thus, said Sielke, pain and paradise in Dickinson's poems are "part of a dialectics of a subjectivity-on-edge."

But the problem with Dickinson's sense of paradise remains that it is too similar to pain. Rather than dismissing this life for utopian self-identity, Dickinson's poems therefore aim to reassociate "eternity with desire and difference, to restore the sexual body and pleasure to identity." The resulting sense of an often disengendered subject-on-edge, concluded Sielke, surpasses by far the conventional notions of male and female subjectivity.

In the final paper, Suzanne Juhasz and Cristanne Miller asked, "What happens when a poem functions as performance? How is gender created?" They noted that poetry is always performance and that reader and poet, both performers, participate jointly in the production of the poem. "Performance has everything to do with gender," they said, arguing that a poem creates a

gendered identity.

Miller then performed “You’ve seen Balloons set – Hav’nt You?” while Juhasz played the part of the reader, asking questions that led the two to engage in dialogue. The performed discussion between Miller/Dickinson/the poem’s personae and Juhasz illustrated not only how Dickinson keeps the reader unstable, always between interpretations, but also the fluidity of the writer-reader boundary.

In a final performance, Juhasz—in a black fright wig and sunglasses—offered a teasing, sometimes campy version of “I

would not paint – a picture –,” leading into a dialogue with Miller, who took the part of the reader. Their interaction emphasized the *process* of art and the reciprocal relationship between writer and reader. This relationship, they said, shows Dickinson’s willingness to share power with her readers. As a woman poet, she is interested not in taking on godly positions of power but in using her power to *woo* her readers.

Juhasz and Miller stressed that performances change with circumstances. Poems construct poets, and Dickinson constructs herself as a woman poet in her

poems. They also noted ways in which performance of poems is a useful pedagogical tool. While oral performance cannot account for variants, handwriting, context, etc., it can help readers take responsibility for particular readings. Finally, they pointed out that gender is closely linked to performance since both are contextual. The conjunction of text and performance sets the poem into play.

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## Dickinson in Historical Contexts

*Moderator:* LEIGH-ANNE URBANOWICZ MARCELLIN; *panelists:* LEIGH-ANNE URBANOWICZ MARCELLIN, University of Georgia; ESTHER LOEHNDORF-GIGER, Hochschule St. Gallen; MARIETTA MESSMER, York University; MARTHA ACKMANN, Mt. Holyoke College

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*By Marisa Anne Pagnattaro*

Dickinson and history proved a somewhat contentious topic during the conference, but each of the presentations in this panel effectively explored the importance of both learning about history from Dickinson and learning more about Dickinson from history.

Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin opened the panel by persuasively arguing that the American Civil War was not a remote event for Dickinson. Drawing on both biography and poetry, she demonstrated that the war touched Dickinson directly and that Dickinson, in turn, explicitly dealt with war in her poetry. After noting that the seeds of Dickinson’s war poetry can be seen in her letters, especially those to Higginson, Urbanowicz Marcellin discussed “Our journey had advanced –” as a portrait of a soldier on his “last legs” facing the ultimate defeat of death. Similarly, in “My Portion is Defeat – today –,” as Dickinson explores the complexity of war, wrestling with the concept of “victory,” her characteristic ambiguity is most evident.

Urbanowicz Marcellin’s presentation was grounded in a thoughtful close reading of Dickinson’s verse. “They dropped like Flakes –,” for example, is a stunning metaphor for battlefield casualties, complete with questions about God and war. Questioning God’s role in the elegy “It feels a shame to be Alive –,” Dickinson ventures into the complex realm of politics and the economics of war. And in “It don’t sound so terrible – quite – as it did –,” Dickinson

uses the voice of a soldier of limited education trying to come to terms with the possibility of his own death. Clearly the Civil War was more than merely a trope in Dickinson’s poetry; it infiltrated her thoughts and work in complex representations.

Esther Loehndorf-Giger focused on what might be considered a delicate subject: Dickinson’s “spinsterhood.” Turning a potentially negative characterization into a positive one, Loehndorf-Giger contended that Dickinson’s poetry captures the predicaments and the explosive power of spinsterhood. Drawing on historical data about single women in the mid-nineteenth century, she asserted that Dickinson’s poetry and life epitomize the concerns of other single women of her time. Sometimes known as the “Cult of Single Blessedness,” this powerful counterpart to the “Cult of Domesticity” is associated with spiritual growth and refinement as well as self-discovery. Such self-reflection was, however, inevitably problematic because living outside of the existing social structure often resulted in a lack of self-esteem.

Loehndorf-Giger saw both the assertive and the self-effacing side of single women in Dickinson’s poetry. Far from resolved, these issues give rise to a “split disintegrated self,” outside of the prescribed roles and tasks for women. In her explanation of Dickinson’s radical and enigmatic seclusion, Loehndorf-Giger played on the definition of “spinster,” suggesting that Dickinson created a “new space” by challeng-

ing dominant values and seeking independence and autonomy in her work.

Another critical historical consideration presented was Dickinson’s treatment of her religious heritage. Marietta Messmer delved into several reasons for Dickinson’s skepticism toward doctrinal discourse. Concentrating on two Puritan concepts, the covenant of Grace and the trinitarian method of Bible exegesis, Messmer maintained that Dickinson’s fragmentation and eventual subversion of orthodox theological discourse is not based on an outright rejection of the ideological framework underlying Puritan doctrines but stems rather from a gradual realization that orthodox Puritan concepts contain in themselves the seeds of their own deconstruction, a fact that eventually undermines Dickinson’s faith in the substantiality of the signifier.

In three Dickinson poems, “I meant to have but modest needs –,” “Prayer is the little implement,” and “God is a distant – stately Lover –,” Messmer articulated the poet’s demonstration of how, in the absence of a direct link between signifier Christ and transcendental signifier God (that is, between incarnate and divine Logos), a seemingly linear, logical, and unambiguous discourse disintegrates into ambivalence, paradox, and multiplicity of meaning. In this way, Dickinson’s poems illustrate the figurativeness of Adamic language and thus the invalidity of a process of signification that originates in the divine Logos. Thus Messmer effectively argued that Dickinson ultimately

suspends “orthodox” logic in favor of subversive “madness,” as in “Much Madness is divinest Sense —”

Martha Ackmann, displaying great tenacity and the tactic of “follow the money” in her presentation, explained how she uncovered new information about Dickinson’s life and intriguing photographs of her Norcross relatives. Ackmann had originally embarked on a search for certain missing letters to the Norcross family by attempting to identify and contact descendants of Anna Norcross. While this literary detective work did not ultimately yield the sought-after correspondence, Ackmann was able to locate Sylvia Norcross Swett, the person she believes to be Dickinson’s oldest living descendant, and the manuscript of Dick-

inson’s May 5, 1862, condolence letter to her uncle, Joel Warren Norcross. (Margaret Dickie opened this panel with a brief acknowledgment that Ackmann was indeed the first to locate this letter.)

Over ten hours of interviews with Sylvia Swett revealed many recollections passed on by her grandmother, Anna Norcross. One of the most interesting was of Dickinson actually performing poetry. Apparently she would, on occasion, open her window or curtain and poetically describe what she saw in the garden below. Anna Norcross would stand in awe as she witnessed Dickinson “talking poetry.” This revelation opens up new avenues for consideration of Dickinson’s verse as performance text: her control over the pace, intonation, silence,

etc., of her text; the dramatic quality of the theatrical broadcast of her extroverted performance for a select audience; and issues about the purpose of poetry—Dickinson could “sing” by declaiming her poetry.

The final highlight of Ackmann’s presentation was a slide show of photographs and daguerreotypes from the Norcross family album. The wry sentiment of the eighty-year-old Norcross descendant—“I’m glad I finally surfaced”—was echoed by those attending this highly illuminating panel.

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## Editing Dickinson

*Moderator:* DOROTHY HUFF OBERHAUS; *panelists:* MARY CARNEY, University of Georgia; MARGET SANDS, University of Maryland; DOROTHY HUFF OBERHAUS, Mercy College; LIONEL KELLY, University of Reading

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### *By Eleanor Heginbotham*

Rounding out a day that began with a debate over the “fetishizing” of manuscripts, this late afternoon panel on “Editing Dickinson” explored by consensus, if by differing examples, the rewards of returning to the unmediated texts of Emily Dickinson. Panelists kept the small but attentive audience from gazing too much at the Alps beyond the windows with a series of surprises: the possibility that a missing manuscript has been found, that there is “a key” to the fascicle project, and that students in Britain are seduced away from Johnson’s edition by a cheaper alternative text based on the 1890s editions.

Mary Carney drew on the work of three scholars in approaching Dickinson’s variants: Sharon Cameron (the variants convey limitlessness), Paula Bennett (the variants reflect the poet’s devotion to play), and Martha Nell Smith (the variants reveal Dickinson’s regard for language in the “workshop” she formed with Sue and are a strategy in her resistance to the literary conventions of her time).

Carney called these variant choices that Dickinson left for readers “a dominant feature” of her work because “they destabilize the meaning of the words and shift the focus to the process of choosing words.” That Dickinson intentionally left these marks of her creative process indicates that

she was more interested in crafting poems than in doing the “housekeeping” of making books for her future audience.

Carney demonstrated the influence of typography on the resultant ironies in three manuscripts: “Victory comes late,” “Death is the supple Suitor,” and “The Admirations – and Contempts – of time.”

Such ironies, said Marget Sands in her presentation, are implicit in the Sue/Emily story. Part of a longer study, “‘The Revery Alone’: Emily Dickinson’s Poetics of Resistance and Desire,” Sands’s paper focused on the significance of her possible discovery of a “missing” manuscript of “There came a Day at Summer’s full.” To help her auditors through a complex argument, Sands covered the board with a chart of the four manuscript copies listed by Johnson for the poem and provided handouts of two print version and the manuscript version to Sue.

Taking off from the challenges posed by Margaret Dickie’s *ALH* review of “Dickinson in Context,” Sands declared that “Dickinson reveals herself tellingly in the differences among variant fair copies of the same poem.” Thus Sands’s “stunning” surmise that she may have “discovered” a copy (possibly the one that Emily sent to Sue and that Sue may have mixed with fascicle materials she held for a time and then re-

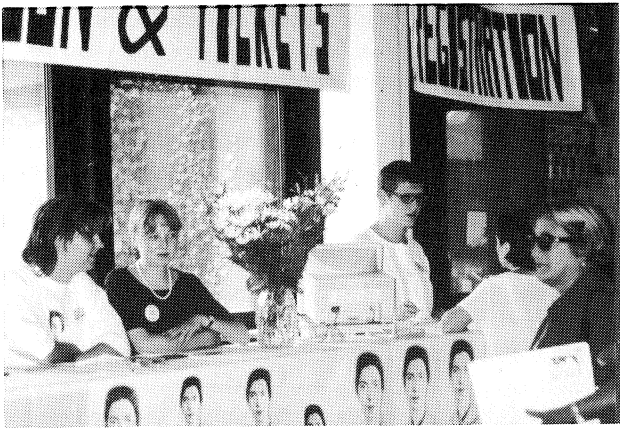
turned to Lavinia) holds inferences for the Sue/Emily relationship.

The final stanza of the solstice poem as found in that copy “is astonishing for its revelations,” said Sands, refuting Johnson’s notion that “the variants to friends follow no pattern and are marked by indifference.” For what those inferences are, stay tuned for Sands’s completed work.

*Emily Dickinson’s Fascicles: Method and Meaning*, the result of long work by Dorothy Oberhaus on the Christian meditative tradition as reflected in the fascicles and summed up in the last, the fortieth, has just appeared. [See the review in the Spring 1995 *Bulletin*.] Because *Bulletin* readers may read the book, this account will focus on what Oberhaus, who brought her own visual prop—a large “fascicle” of gentians—shared about her method of arriving at her “thrilling” discoveries. Among them is her belief that, along with “the Christian poet pilgrim,” another speaker appears five times in Fascicle 40, identified by Oberhaus as Jesus.

By invoking Jesus’ voice in the last fascicle, said Oberhaus, Dickinson brings closure to the quest of the pilgrim whose “The Only News I know / Is Bulletins all Day / From Immortality” begins this fascicle. Maintaining that the fascicles form a series of meditations centering upon a spirited

*Continued on page 14*



*Innsbruck American Studies students took care of conferees' many needs and sold T-shirts, videos, and other souvenirs.*

*Helga Jud and Andrea Braidt (below) prepare for the opening ceremonies, where Jud read from "Emily Dickinson and the Austrian Mind" with Gudrun Grabher and Braidt performed music from The Piano.*



*Gudrun Grabher (right) welcomes conference goers to Innsbruck. With her is Susanne Moser of the American Studies Department, who was responsible for recording the conference papers.*



*Champagne outside Schloss Ambras (above), a Renaissance castle high above Innsbruck, was only the beginning of our Tyrolean evening. Then came Wiener schnitzel, spaetzle, and Tyrolean wine (below), followed by music and folk dancers dressed in lederhosen and dirndles.*



*Win and Betty Bernhard from Dickinson's Amherst enjoy the Tyrolean ambience with Masako Takeda of Tokyo.*



*Renate Guggenberger, American Studies Department secretary, toasts the occasion with student (and baritone soloist) Thomas Zisterer.*



*Visitors from Thailand, Finland, and Japan were among scholars from many lands who came to share their admiration for Dickinson.*



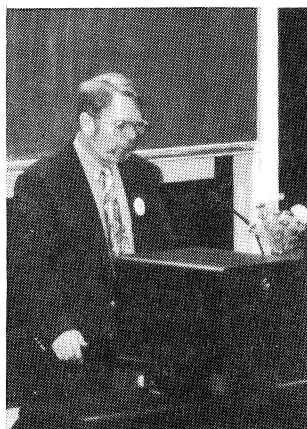
*Suzanne Juhasz, in "fright" wig and shades, performs "I would not paint - a picture - ."*

*Sonja Bahn (below) of the American Studies Department captured the conference's many occasions on film.*



*Vivian Pollak listens as Sandra Gilbert speaks about the state of literary scholarship in America after Saturday's luncheon.*

*Gary Lee Stonum neatly wraps up the conference's many themes in the closing session.*



*Sabine Sielke brings her characteristic enthusiasm to bear on Dickinson's "threshold glances" into Eternity.*



*Gudrun Grabher (dressed in white) gathers the students, faculty, and staff of her department who had joined forces to make the conference a success.*

*EDIS board members and conference organizers enjoy the glow. Left to right, conference director Margaret Dickie, outgoing president Vivian Pollak, incoming president Cristanne Miller, former treasurer Martha Nell Smith, and journal editor Suzanne Juhasz.*



*Gudrun Grabher, Jonnie Guerra, and Vivian Pollak share a moment of relaxation mid-conference.*



*Editing, continued from page 14*

pilgrimage, Oberhaus noted that the pilgrim begins the first fascicle with a metonymical trinitarian invocation (“In the name of the Bee – /And of the Butterfly /And of the Breeze – Amen!”).

A pilgrim of another sense was the final speaker of the panel. With the sun dipping behind the Alps beyond the windows, Lionel Kelly, the conference’s only British participant, brought distressing news from classrooms in England. Such “discoveries” as the disparate ones of Smith, Oberhaus, Sands, Carney, and others, he reports, are almost impossible there. Helen McNeil’s study for Virago Press, widely used in classrooms in England, accepts Johnson’s editing wholesale.

Even more troubling was Kelly’s report that what British students tend to buy is not

Faber’s \$12 Johnson but a \$3 edition by Emma Hartnoll (Wordsworth) assembled à la Higginson/Todd into “Life/Love/Eternity” segments. Hartnoll’s 1994 edition, said Kelly, offers a preface quoting Conrad Aiken (1931) and Ted Hughes (1968). “As far as Miss Hartnoll is concerned,” he continued, “most of you are laboring in vain.”

In vain or not, Kelly reviewed scholarship on the materialities of Dickinson’s texts from Shurr’s “wanton treatment” through Paula Bennett’s “provocative study” and the disagreement between David Porter and Susan Howe over “accidentals.” So we ended the day where we began: with the “Emily Dickinson wars.”

From a British vantage point on those wars, Kelly left this challenge: we should not only work from the fascicle collection

but get busy on the “sets.” Kelly pointed to the radical difference between the version in Franklin’s Set 14 and Johnson’s preferred version of Poem 1395.

That poem provided an appropriate closing for the day: “After all/Birds/have/been investigated/and laid aside – /Nature imparts/the little/Blue Bird – / . . . /Last at the/Scene/when Summer/swerves away/ Fortitude – /flanked with/Melody.” Readers should compare this with the lineation in the one-volume Johnson edition to see proof of Kelly’s point—and of the value of returning to manuscripts.

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*Eleanor Heginbotham teaches English at Concordia College, St. Paul. She is now revising her dissertation on Dickinson’s fascicles for a book.*

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## Dickinson and the “Foreign”

*Moderator:* JANE DONAHUE EBERWEIN; *panelists:* CHANTHANA CHAICHIT, Chulalongkorn University; CYNTHIA HALLEN, Brigham Young University; JANE DONAHUE EBERWEIN, Oakland University; PRATEETI PUNJA BALLAL, University of Massachusetts

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*By Margaret Freeman*

A South Wind – has a  
pathos  
Of individual Voice –  
As One detect on  
Landings  
An Emigrant’s address.

A Hint of Ports – and  
Peoples –  
And much not understood –  
The fairer – for the  
fairness –  
And for the foreignhood – [F 39]

In her characteristic way, Dickinson’s poem sums up the themes of all four papers presented in this panel on “Dickinson and the ‘Foreign.’” From Dickinson’s physical presence in Amherst, she could nevertheless encompass the world—the local inferring the global. Metaphorical resonances for life and religion, meaning and enlightenment echoed throughout the four papers, which dealt with four geographies: the geography of the imagination, the geography of religion, the geography of otherness, the geography of reality.

Chanthana Chaichit’s paper on “Dickinson Abroad: ‘The Paradox of Seclusion,’” focused on how Dickinson went abroad in her imagination, how she is experienced abroad through international recognition,

and how, finally, both are subsumed in her paradoxical withdrawal from the world. Commenting on poems such as “I never saw a Moor,” “I dwell in Possibility,” “I took my Power in my Hand,” and “The Brain – is wider than the Sky,” Chaichit showed how Dickinson’s artistic technique involved the movements of the mind: from conscious to unconscious, from reality to fantasy, from Amherst to the Universe.

In a review of Dickinson’s reception in foreign lands, Chaichit observed that she had “arrived in countries whose names she might not have even recognized,” noting that the lyrics “‘Nature’ is what we see –” and “Fame is the one that does not stay –” were flashed on a Thai cable channel in 1979. Dickinson’s “imaginative excursions” reveal a language of opposites: she escaped from a self-imposed confinement to wander round the world but shows always a willingness to return from fantasy to reality. Chaichit concluded her paper with the way in which Dickinson “dared to do strange things,” telling the world more about suffering and loss than the world knew.

Cynthia Hallen’s paper, “Brave Columbus, Brave Columba: Emily Dickinson’s Search for Land,” picked up one of Chaichit’s themes by exploring Dickinson’s search for land, both literal and figurative.

Hallen related Columbus’s four trips to the New World with four areas of research. First, she linked Dickinson’s travel in the foreign to Emerson’s idea of the American poet finding worlds to explore in home and garden, producing a “natural” aesthetic not artificially induced, and producing an “epic song” in her poems and letters.

Hallen saw Dickinson’s “epic” as a Columbiad, identifying connections between Dickinson’s works and references to Columbus. She likened Dickinson’s references to those also found in Irving’s works, and explored comparisons between Dickinson and Columbus, concluding that both were poetic in their works and both searched the scriptures for meaning. Just as Columbus searched for a terrestrial paradise in the New World, Dickinson located the search in the Eden that was Amherst and identified home as the definition of God.

Hallen’s final point dealt with Dickinson’s “circumference” words and the rhetorical figure defined in all of her “circle” words (which she was to take up in the post-conference seminar the following evening). She concluded that Dickinson, not Melville, should be seen as producing the great American epic, even suggesting a title: “Moby Dickinson: The Epic of the Great White Wheel.”

Jane Eberwein's paper, "The Siren Alps: The Lure of Europe for American Writers," echoed the search theme in its exploration of Italy as a metaphor for everything that is alien to America. Eberwein started by noting the number of Dickinson's friends who traveled to Europe. She found little interest in Europe's past in the poems, but thought Dickinson shared the recognition of Americans that they came from Europe, especially in her references to notable European politicians, writers, and painters. Dickinson's aristocratic imagery, Eberwein felt, came as much from Europe as from the Bible.

In commenting on the fact that Catholic culture both attracted and repulsed American visitors, Eberwein noted that when Dickinson mentioned great painters, they tended to be Italian. Eberwein developed an intriguing contrast between the struggles for religious liberty and democracy in Dickinson's references to Switzerland and the exciting and dangerous aspects of Italy, especially in "Our lives are Swiss—." Americans, Eberwein claimed, could not find "Italy at home."

She brought these cultural contrasts into one spatial metaphor that contrasted what-

ever is America with what is alien to it, concluding with the question whether "Italy" in Dickinson's poetry is equivalent to heaven. Eberwein doubted it, thereby suggestively leaving open the corroboration of Hallen's claim that Dickinson's Eden was in Amherst. She thought Dickinson characteristically gives a better picture of Switzerland as representing finite reality than of the "possibilities" of Italy.

In the final paper, "I have but to cross the floor to stand in the Spice Isles": Emily Dickinson and Alterity," Prateeti Punja Ballal came full circle from Chaichit's description of Dickinson's "travels" to Eberwein's idea of the alien with the claim that all Dickinson's Eastern references represent the same fictive, imaginative perspective of the exotic and unattainable, with Dickinson embracing the "otherness" in her own culture. Noting that the Dickinson library held six books on the East, including the Koran, Ballal discussed the influence of popular literature on Americans' knowledge and imaginings of the Orient.

Although alterity studies do not generally include the foreign, Ballal noted that nineteenth-century contemporary studies stressed qualities that made the East differ-

ent from the West, and that "culture" can be considered an imaginary zone defined by what it excludes.

In this way, Ballal linked the colonizing tendencies of the nineteenth century with a space that is seen as "female, pagan, other," thus linking femininity to geography. Dickinson, she felt, embraced this "otherness" within her own culture, using the exotic images of the East in her imaginative presentations of "gorgeous coloring" and "unattainable desire." Noting that Dickinson seemed to be aware that she was exoticizing, Ballal claimed that her references to the foreign in the end did not reflect real experience, and she referred to Dickinson's comments about going back to the Homestead.

Thus all four speakers, in exploring the fictive and the real, ironically brought Dickinson home again. Just as the "South Wind" carries with it the accent of the "foreign," it nevertheless arrives in the "fairness" of home.

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## Dickinson's Resistance to Patriarchal Convention

*Moderator:* CHERYL LANGDELL; *panelists:* LISA HOLLOWAY-ATTAWAY, Georgia Tech; DAVID SULLIVAN, University of California, Irvine; CHERYL LANGDELL, Woodbury University; JUTTA FRAUNHOLZ, Free University of Berlin

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### By Stephanie Tingley

Each of the four papers presented in this session explored one of the ways in which Emily Dickinson rebels against patriarchal power structures in her poetry. All drew on critical theory, feminist theory, American Victorian cultural contexts, and skillful close reading to demonstrate how the poet's successful short-circuiting of both patriarchal and linguistic conventions creates tensions in her poetry, fuels her art, and serves as an alternative source of power for it.

Lisa Holloway-Attaway began the session with "The Business of Circumference: Circularity and Dangerous Female Power in the Work of Emily Dickinson," focusing on the ways in which Dickinson's letters to Thomas Wentworth Higginson can be read as cryptic instructions to her mentor about her poetic project. The complex relationship between preceptor and scholar provided Dickinson an opportunity to develop

and test a linguistic strategy that privileges disjunction, circularity, and ambiguity.

Holloway-Attaway used "I saw no Way – the Heavens were stitched," a central text that develops Dickinson's definition of circumference, to demonstrate how the poet's disruptions of language can be linked with Julia Kristeva's theories about the ways women's language creates gaps, both fearful and pleasurable, that empower her creativity.

In the absence of David Sullivan, Gary Stonum read Sullivan's paper, "Running the 'Double Risk': Emily Dickinson Fleeing the Worm's Secretions." Sullivan used the often-explicated poem that begins "In Winter in my Room / I came upon a Worm" to demonstrate Dickinson's ambivalent attitude toward male sexuality. Sullivan drew upon the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, who has written about the ways in

which individuals work to regulate the impressions others receive of themselves and how others "read" these impressions.

Sullivan's reading of the "worm" poem demonstrated that Dickinson's storytelling strategies may be seen as a kind of performance in which the speaker tries to control the intrusion of male sexuality into her domestic space but is ultimately unable to do so. In the process, said Sullivan, the poem tests Dickinson's ideas about the power dynamics of the relationship between reader and writer.

Cheryl Langdell followed with a paper exploring connections between Dickinson's life and art and the world of Ada, the central character in Jane Campion's 1992 film *The Piano*. Langdell demonstrated Campion's borrowing and reworking of Dickinson's notion of silence to make it the center of her film. Like Dickinson's poetry, Langdell

argued, *The Piano* offers a powerful critique of patriarchy and suggests ways in which women and others who are marginalized can transform silence from repression to an alternative source of power.

Finally, Jutta Fraunholz spoke about Dickinson's use of literary contexts, particularly George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. Her paper, "'I Hit a World, at every plunge': Dickinson's and George Eliot's Orientation Toward a New Code," focused

on Dickinson's use of Eliot's novel as a source of metaphors in her search for both new worlds and new words. She offered explications of three poems, "This is my letter to the World," "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain," and "To this World she returned," as illustrations of Dickinson's strategy of putting other writers' words in her own fresh, original contexts.

Both Dickinson's speakers and Eliot's character Maggie Tolleriver, Fraunholz ar-

gued, experience a broadening of their individual consciousness to transcend the limitations of the everyday and the mundane domestic spheres in which they dwell.

[For other references to Eliot's Maggie, see page 7.]

*Stephanie A. Tingley* is associate professor of English at Youngstown State University. She is currently working on a book on Dickinson's letters.

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## Sunday, August 6

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### Dickinson in Cultural Contexts

Moderator: JONATHAN MORSE; panelists: NANCY HONNICKER, University of Paris VIII; STEPHANIE TINGLEY, Youngstown State University; JONATHAN MORSE, University of Hawaii

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By Ellen Louise Hart

Jonathan Morse began this session by explaining that the papers of the three presenters would be linked by a common interest in how Dickinson's cultural contexts are mediated by language.

Nancy Honnicker focused her discussion of "Dickinson's Place in the Great Code" on the writer's use and interpretation of the Bible, the "incarnational sign," and her position as an "unaccommodated poet after the Fall." Using Saussure to trace "the fall from the language of eternity," Locke to speak of language as a "social institution," and passages from Scripture ("the fleshy tables of the heart" [2 Corinthians 3.3]), Honnicker led us through a reading of "A Word made Flesh." (It should be noted that this poem exists only as a transcript made by Susan Dickinson; Johnson numbers it as Poem 1651.)

When "a word," not "the word," participating mystically in the Logos, is "made Flesh," asked Honnicker, is this essence or accident? In the lines "seldom / And tremblingly partook / Nor then perhaps reported / But have I not mistook?" does the poet write of erring in selection or in interpretation? Dickinson, she argued, explores the nature of language by looking at words in component parts. This we did together, surveying her polysemic play: "if He - / 'Made Flesh and dwelt among us / Could condescension be / Like this consent of Language / This loved Philology."

A word that "breathes" and "may expire"

becomes the intercourse between the human and the divine, and Dickinson answers her question of faith through determining, in Honnicker's words, "that after two thousand years of debate, the only certainty is words."

Stephanie Tingley, speaking on "Dickinson's Letters and Victorian Epistolary Conventions," pointed out that Dickinson chose the personal letter as her chief means of interacting with culture. For Dickinson the art of letter writing became a regular practice, and the early letters show her self-conscious development as writer and poet. Her letters are sites of creative thinking—"radical stylistic experiments," Tingley called them—in which Dickinson works at her goal of being "uncommon and original."

Writing letters was a household task, the responsibility of "young ladies," and Dickinson was told by Victorian guidebooks to draft, correct, and copy her letters. This she did, but there were also rules she resisted, such as "Do not deface a letter by peppering it with dashes." Letter writing was meant to serve the family, said Tingley, but it also served Dickinson's literary aims. She turned the duty into a pleasure, defying the Puritan restrictions on writing if it became an "evil entertainment" and making imaginative letter writing part of her poetic project.

The third speaker for this diverse, thematically linked session took us to Amherst via Hawaii in "Some of the Things We

Mean When We Say 'New England.'" Jonathan Morse teaches Dickinson "in translation" at a university in the tropics where "words like *coat* and *cold* are only abstract concepts," where "New England" is "an image standing in for another image."

He invited us to read this "enormous" word in the lexical context of the Dickinson family vocabulary, making an illuminating move by quoting Austin writing to Sue in 1851: "I love New England & New England customs & New England institutions for I remember our fathers loved them and that it was they who founded them & gave them to us." Austin "loves for he remembers," Morse showed us, and it follows that "for a New Englander, love is the only historically coherent emotion."

Of course, "New England" can never hold the meanings for us that it held for a Dickinson. Morse turned at the end to remind us that Dickinson "cut words free from their ordinary referents," "defamiliarized" them, and that "the unique thing about Dickinson is that the terms *stay* defamiliarized"—terms such as "Whiplash" and "Eternity."

Other words come to mind in the wake of such a session: "word" and "flesh" and "letter" and "love." Codes—the Bible, Victorian letter writing guides, what Dickinson means when she says "New England," what students in Honolulu see when they read it—these were "motivated and arbitrary signs" that came together through EDIS



that Sunday morning in Innsbruck.

And now, what do we mean when we say "Innsbruck"?

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*Martha Nell Smith and preparing to write a book on ways of reading Dickinson's correspondences.*

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## Dickinson's International Reception

*Moderator:* AGNIESZKA SALSKA; *panelists:* AGNIESZKA SALSKA, University of Lodz; MIDORI ANDO, Hosel and Meiji Universities; WILLIAM DOW, American University of Paris; Walter Grünzweig, University of Dortmund

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*By Mary Carney*

In a classroom with an inspiring view of the Alps, panelists and participants discussed not only the reception of Dickinson in Poland, Japan, France, and Germany but also the problems of translating her poetry, the ways in which Dickinson's poems transcend her cultural context, and the importance of integrating non-American scholarship into American Dickinson studies.

Agnieszka Salska opened the panel with a warm welcome and presented her paper examining the Polish translations of Dickinson. Midori Ando then offered insights into a means by which Japanese readers bridge the cultural gap between Amherst and Japan. Arguing for the trove of non-English-language scholarship, William Dow outlined the significant French scholarship on Dickinson. Walter Grünzweig then discussed the earliest German-language translator and critic of Dickinson.

Salska began by analyzing the new Polish edition of Dickinson letters which, though not well advertised, still enjoyed a warm reception. Salska found that in trying to be accurate, the literal translations of Dickinson's idiosyncratic images and metaphors missed the spirit and subtleties of meaning in the letters. Using a Polish translation of "Further in Summer than the Birds," she explained how a translation can strip away the mystery and rhythm at the heart of Dickinson's verse. The polyphonic effect of sound and sense is at risk of being lost in translation. In conclusion, Salska pointed to Polish translations as evidence that Dickinson's "spasmodic gait" is still being regulated by editors and translators.

For Japanese readers, the Puritan underpinning of Dickinson's culture is little known or understood, but Midori Ando showed how fundamental spiritual ideas in Japan can provide an interpretive correlation for

Dickinson's spiritual questing. One fundamental idea underlying Japanese culture, for instance, is expressed by the word "Shugo," which means compromise and fusion: the favorable is accepted and the unfavorable rejected so that something new is created. Dickinson's complex and often contradictory explorations of belief and disbelief reveal an ambiguity that the Japa-



nese appreciate as a demonstration of "Shugo." By use of this concept, Dickinson's "images of skepticism" are appreciated through a non-Western aesthetic.

William Dow opened his talk by arguing for an end to the "exclusionary stance" of American Dickinson scholars toward non-American critics. Valuable work has been and is being done on Emily Dickinson by some of France's finest literary critics, he pointed out, yet it is being overlooked by most American scholars. Dow discussed the highlights of French scholarship on Dickinson for the last seventy years.

Dow began with an examination of "the most extensive foreign critical survey to date," Ann Lilliedahl's *Emily Dickinson in Europe: Her Reputation in Selected Countries*, then discussed several trends since Lilliedahl's study was published in 1977. Two of the most prevalent areas of interest

for French Dickinson scholars are Dickinson's unique, condensed language and the commonalities between Dickinson and the work of Stéphane Mallarmé.

Unfortunately, space constraints here prohibit reviewing Dow's examination of the history of French scholarship on Dickinson, but he persuasively argued that her critical history should be remapped to include non-American scholarship, a step that will in turn remap all Dickinson scholarship. Dow noted that the MLA International Bibliography is not comprehensive but that the Dickinson international bibliography project now moving forward is setting out to remedy that problem.

German critics have also suffered exclusion at the hands of American scholars. One critic and activist was Amalie von Ende, who was the first to "introduce Dickinson abroad."

Walter Grünzweig provided a biographical sketch of von Ende and her activities as a self-appointed ambassador of Dickinson. The first appearance in translation of Dickinson's work is believed to be von Ende's translation of four poems that appeared June 12 and 19, 1898, in the German-language *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*.

Von Ende was a staunch feminist dedicated to raising the public's awareness of great women writers. She saw Dickinson as "the most original woman poet that America has produced." For von Ende, Dickinson was not simply a feminist symbol of women's achievements but an artist whose mysterious language deeply affected her. Von Ende compared Dickinson to German poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, asserting that these women created works that transcend both their time and their gender. [For more on von Droste-Hülshoff, see the

report on "Dickinson Compared to International Artists," page 7.]

Pointing to von Ende's perception that Dickinson's originality and independence acted to preserve her originality in the face of restrictive norms, said Grünzweig, von Ende emphasized Dickinson's "emancipatory and revolutionary" work, which separates it from the old gender structure to create new possibilities.

Cristanne Miller opened the discussion period by agreeing with Dow that the lack

of attention to non-U.S. scholars should be reversed. She asserted that much of the best Dickinson criticism was being done not in English but in other languages because, for instance, often these scholars offer more precise and detailed analyses of Dickinson's *oeuvre*. Miller suggested that reviews of non-American books be sent to the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. She also announced that a collection of French critical essays on Dickinson is to be published in March 1996. The session closed with a discussion

of Amalie von Ende; many found it surprising that she is virtually unknown in the United States.

A microcosm of the EDIS conference, this panel served as a reminder of the fertile intellectual activity in Dickinson scholarship outside of North America.

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*Mary Carney is a graduate student in English at the University of Georgia with a special interest in American women's poetry.*

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## Dickinson and Her Contemporaries

Moderator: FAITH BARRETT; panelists: FAITH BARRETT, University of California, Berkeley;  
JOAN KIRKBY, Macquarie University; KATHERINE RODIER, University of Connecticut

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*By Faith Barrett*

In a poem that Johnson dates from 1862, Emily Dickinson writes "The Soul selects her own Society – / Then – shuts the Door –." This poem and others that address the theme of isolation doubtless encouraged the tendency to read Dickinson's work as having been written by a "Soul" who had shut the Door, by a woman who had chosen to absent herself from the company of her contemporaries. Indeed, critical reception of Dickinson's work has often insisted on seeing her work as a complete anomaly in its time, implying that even those writers who were her historical contemporaries could not have been her poetic and intellectual peers.

Like many of the panels at Innsbruck, this session aimed at revising this vision of Dickinson's work. More specifically, the participants sought to reexamine the poems both in the context of the nineteenth-century lyric and in the context of that society of her contemporaries that Dickinson's soul *did* select.

Faith Barrett began by considering the metaphors of exclusion that Dickinson's poems use in positing models for the isolated lyric self; these metaphors of exclusion Barrett then juxtaposed with Whitman's metaphors of inclusion, specifically metaphors for the inclusion of the lyric self in the American nation.

In considering Civil War-era poems by Whitman and Dickinson, Barrett emphasized that both poets read suffering as a kind of truth and posit a lyric self in relation to suffering. Yet the gap between suffering and witnessing suffering—or the gap be-

tween the truth of suffering and the representation of it—inevitably disrupts the stability of the poet's metaphors for the self.

Barrett suggested that the carefully constructed public personae of Whitman and Dickinson become inseparable from the lyric selves in their work. Thus Whitman's self-promotion and Dickinson's self-effacement tend to heighten our emphasis on *his* metaphors of inclusion and *her* metaphors of exclusion.

Further, in considering poems by Dickinson and Whitman in the context of the Civil War, Barrett argued that the crisis of self-representation in the poems occurs when they reveal that both "self" and "nation" are nothing more than metaphors, inadequate fictions. When Whitman is faced by the Civil War, his metaphors of national inclusion founder; in a related fashion, the isolation of the speaker in Dickinson's poems comes to seem not so much an autobiographical fact as a carefully constructed fiction, a fiction that suggests that there is no true "self" to preserve in isolation.

While Whitman persists in declaring that he can invent metaphors that will overcome the gap between the lyric speaker and the suffering represented, Dickinson's metaphors expose this gap. And because her poems take as their philosophical goal the exposing of this gap, Barrett argued, they deliberately expose the unsteadiness of their own metaphors for the self.

Joan Kirkby, offering a fascinating overview of her research into Dickinson's reading, addressed in detail the question of Dickinson's engagement with her nine-

teenth-century intellectual milieu. Kirkby's research explores the poet's response to contemporary debates, considering Dickinson's textbooks and the family library as well as the wide range of newspapers, journals, and magazines to which she would have had access. This research reveals definitively the extent to which Dickinson's poems respond dialogically to their own historical and intellectual contexts. Kirkby's timely study will undoubtedly prove invaluable in demonstrating the rigor of Dickinson's engagement with her culture, revealing a Dickinson who was very much of her own time.

Kirkby offered a thought-provoking array of examples from her reading of Dickinson's reading—selections from the *Springfield Republican*, the family library, and the *Hampshire and Franklin Express*. One aspect of her research has been tracking book reviews in newspapers to determine the range of concerns in which Dickinson may have had an interest. Contemporary discussions particularly relevant include the topics of language, theology and spirituality, geology and natural science, psychology, and feminist issues. Kirkby found debates about religious issues to be among the most significant in their relevance to Dickinson's treatment of mystical and spiritual concerns.

In addition to offering examples from her research, Kirkby proposed a theoretical model for understanding the relationship between texts and their contexts as a dialogic and dynamic one. Citing Bakhtin's description of the literary text as a dialogue

among several texts, Kirkby emphasized the extent to which the writer participates in her own culture through reading and writing, through a signifying practice that inevitably occurs in relation to other writings of the time. She concluded that reading Dickinson's work in its intellectual context would inevitably give us a more rigorous poet, an artist very much engaged in her own culture.

Katherine Rodier explored a specific instance of Dickinson's poetic milieu by considering the relationship between Dickinson's work and that of her contemporary, Maria White Lowell, first wife of James Russell Lowell. Rodier cited two letters from Dickinson to Higginson in which she inquires about Maria Lowell, a published poet whose work Higginson had apparently recommended to her.

In the first of these two letters (L 352), Dickinson asks Higginson where she might find "Mrs Lowell's Poems." In the second (L 353), which may have remained unsent, Dickinson writes: "You told me Mrs Lowell was Mr Lowell's 'inspiration.' What is inspiration?" Rodier reflected on both Dickinson's expressed interest in Maria

Lowell's work and her inscrutable question regarding the nature of inspiration.

On the one hand, as Rodier notes, Higginson's choice to recommend Lowell's work may have signaled his limited understanding of Dickinson's poetic abilities; he may have seen Lowell's work as a model for a more regular and conventional—and thus more "feminine"—poetics. On the other hand, Rodier also emphasized the possibility of reading Higginson's recommendation as a thoughtful and apt choice that reveals much about both his admiration for Maria Lowell and his fascination with Emily Dickinson.

In his writings, Higginson celebrates Maria Lowell not merely as her husband's inspiration but as a creative force in her own right. While he is drawn to what he perceives as her delicate femininity, he also admires the union of minds in the Lowells' marriage and may have admired Lowell for both her subtle wit and her eye for detail.

Like Joan Kirkby's research, Rodier's reading of similarities in theme and tensions in Maria Lowell's and Dickinson's poems suggests the extent to which Dickinson was engaged in the pressing issues

and literary concerns of her day.

In the discussion that followed, Lionel Kelly posed a question about the rise of the public persona of the American poet, and the audience and panelists discussed the nature and significance of the public image of the poet in the nineteenth century.

A number of questions led Joan Kirkby to expand further her thoughts about the examples she had presented from Dickinson's reading. The session concluded with all participants expressing their eagerness to learn more about Kirkby's findings as her research into Dickinson's reading continues—research that will undoubtedly have much to offer scholars exploring Dickinson's relationship to the nineteenth century.

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## Language and Rhetoric in Dickinson

*Moderator:* ERIKA SCHEURER; *panelists:* BRYAN C. SHORT, Northern Arizona University; ERIKA SCHEURER, University of St. Thomas; MARGARITA ARDANAZ, University of Complutense; DAVID FRANCIS, University of Washington

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*By Donald C. Freeman*

All four of the papers in this session dealt with language, but two dealt with rhetoric, broadly conceived, while the other two focused on a kind of anti-rhetoric.

In "Emily Dickinson and the New Rhetoric," Bryan C. Short sought to demonstrate Dickinson's authorial intentions through an account of what Dickinson is likely to have been taught at Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary about what was called in her time the New Rhetoric, propounded by (among others) Samuel Newman, Richard Whately, and Henry Home (Lord Kames).

This work, of an overtly mentalist persuasion, had its roots in the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. It sought to relate properties of discourse to properties of mind. If particular qualities of a text are related to particular faculties of mind, the New Rhetoric held, then a text can be said to cause us

to read and, through reading, can teach us how to experience higher truths.

The New Rhetoric emphasized the ornamental character of belletristic writing and argued that poetry did not differ from other written forms—perhaps suggesting one reason why Dickinson was reluctant to distinguish clearly between prose and poetry and why she referred to her work as "verses." Dickinson's use of her rhetorical education, Short argued, led her to use versification to enhance her central intentional goal of "aliveness" in her written discourse, whether prose or poetry.

Erika Scheurer's "Near, but remote": Dickinson's Dialogic Voice" sought to explain Dickinson's preference for writing letters over speaking directly with people (including her next-door neighbor, Sue). That preference was part of her "vice for voices" and accounts for the quality of voice in her writing, her blending of orality

and literacy, and her "quintessentially dialogic voice," Scheurer argued. That blend, she pointed out, is analogous to modern electronic mail, which straddles the spoken and the written, the proximate and the distant, and permits a control of intimate communication not possible in speech, along with warrant for disregarding textual conventions. For Dickinson, as for the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, both writing and speech are answerable to others, dialogic, and an invitation to engagement.

In her closely argued analytical paper, "Emily Dickinson's Poetry: On Translating Silence," Margarita Ardanaz grappled with the contrary of Dickinson's "quintessentially dialogic voice," her silences. For Ardanaz, one of the most problematic issues in translating Dickinson is that her poetry describes not external but internal events, that it constitutes not findings but discoveries. This characteristic has consequences

for her poems' structure: narrative is rare; logical connections are suppressed and left for the reader to supply; the adjective/adverb distinction is obliterated; and syntactic inflection is reduced.

These characteristics produce a substantive, nominal style and an open structure in which her poems frequently begin *in medias res*, often do not conclude, and have stanzas that seem to stand alone. Dickinson's poems often appear, Ardanaz argued, as interruptions of the flow of consciousness. The result is a poetic in which what the poet does not say is often as significant as what she does say, requiring the translator to perform the impossible task of translating silence.

In "The Giant at the Other Side: Emily Dickinson and the Inhuman," David Francis paralleled Ardanaz's effort to deal with silence—the unspeakable—in Dickinson's

poetry by considering it in light of the French theorist Jean-François Lyotard's work on time and the inhuman. Francis suggested that by reading the inhuman in Dickinson "without recourse to interpretive mappings," we realize that in "It was not Death, for I stood up" Dickinson is writing not about despair but about the vastness that metaphor cannot reach to explain the strangeness of being human in the present.

Francis similarly analyzed Dickinson's view of time as contingent and unstable in "Because I could not stop for Death —." For Dickinson, in Francis's reading, "the place of poetry...become[s] the place of time" by an "estrangement from humanity." Dickinson's most obvious metaphor for the inhuman, the Giant, figures the problem of agency, where "the power to reveal the inhuman lies in language almost against

our will." The inhuman itself can be viewed as "the residue of time distilled out in a poetic language constantly estranging itself from itself."

The session was thus highly eclectic in its approaches—from the influence on Dickinson's language of eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoricians to a reading of that language in the atonal harmonies of fin-de-siècle Gallic theoreticians, from the loquacity of dialogic voice to the intricacies of silence. That liveliness of variety was mirrored in the liveliness of the audience's response, even on a Tyrolean Sunday morning after a Tyrolean Saturday night.

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## Sentimentality and Domesticity in Dickinson

*Moderator:* ALLISON GIFFEN; *panelists:* ALLISON GIFFEN, University of Puget Sound; MARIANNE NOBLE, American University, Washington, D.C.; AIFE MURRAY, San Francisco, Calif.

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### *By Paul Crumbley*

This session's three presenters focused on domesticity as the site of Dickinson's poetic creation, each demonstrating, though in markedly different investigations, how Dickinson made the literary and social conventions associated with the home accommodate her own artistic purposes.

In "That White Sustenance – Despair: Emily Dickinson and the Convention of Loss," Allison Giffen argued that "loss, itself, represents a gendered literary convention" that figures prominently in a tradition of American women poets. Dickinson's use of this convention contrasts sharply with dismissive caricatures of "the grieving poetess" such as Mark Twain's Emmeline Grangerford. Dickinson's treatment of loss was decidedly unsentimental, Giffen suggested, because it discouraged confidence that the losses pervading mortal existence would be divinely compensated in the next life. Dickinson replaced this sentimental faith with a belief in the power of the individual imagination.

The speaker of "The Missing All, pre-vented Me," Giffen's central example, simultaneously magnifies and detaches herself from desire for the departed other. Her refusal to "lift [her] forehead from [her]

work" implies a full and paralyzing experience of grief, but it also reveals a woman turning that socially acceptable "marginalized site of grief" into an opportunity for free expression through which she can, in Giffen's words, "define herself as a speaking subject." By keeping her head down, the speaker reflects Dickinson's own practice of sustaining a primary focus on imaginative creation so that she can bend conventional expressions of loss to her particular artistic objectives.

Marianne Noble's "Dickinson and the Wound: Sentimental Explorations of 'The Ecstasy of Parting'" investigated the way sentimental treatments of painful separations enabled readers and authors to "delight in probing and aggravating their deepest and most painful psychological wounds."

In particular, Dickinson uses wound imagery both to stimulate erotic delight and to resist immersion in personal identity. Citing the opening of Susan Warner's *The Wide Wide World* as a paradigm for sentimental partings in Dickinson, Noble explained that the anguish of separation paradoxically allows heart to meet heart in such "perfect comprehension" that "the barriers of identity are thrown down and two people

can experience a euphoric, intersubjective communion with one another."

Noble argued that Dickinson's use of wound imagery in the "Master" letter beginning "Oh, did I offend it —" adds a distinctly erotic dimension to this "paradox of sentimental separation" by drawing attention to physical traces of the distant lover's sexual presence. By focusing on evidence rather than actual acts of intimacy, Dickinson's poetry provides a fetishistic displacement of erotic desire, exemplified in the movement from wound to dirk in "Rehearsal to Ourselves": "We will not drop the Dirk — / Because We love the Wound / The Dirk Commemorate."

Noble concluded that the displacement of meaning Dickinson achieved with wound imagery enabled her to introduce "border-site(s) of ambiguity" that disrupted the closural processes of identity formation and thus prolonged the "intersubjective communion" of sentimental partings.

Aife Murray's fascination with the material circumstances out of which Dickinson wrote comes from her own experience as an American woman poet for whom language has become a multidimensional "site of resistance" not containable within the flat

plane of words on a page. She argued that by examining the silence that surrounds Dickinson's words we can put a face on that silence and find "the *place* that formed her voice."

To illuminate these additional dimensions, Murray introduced the "faces" of Margaret O'Brien and Margaret Maher, the two Irish maids who worked successively in the Dickinson home. It is their influence on Dickinson's life and language that Murray presented as the "place" of her voice.

Such "hallmarks of Dickinson's style" as "the juxtaposition of different verb tenses, truncated adverbs, reducing verbs to an infinitive state, and trimmed down language" are features of the Hiberno-English dialect Dickinson would have encountered as she "moved in and out of her own reverie with language into the linguistic field of her maid[s]."

Sketching what amounted to a collaboration of maids and mistress, Murray identified specific ways both maids, but espe-

cially Maher, influenced not just the shape but the perpetuation of Dickinson's poetry. In a direct challenge to R.W. Franklin's observation that Dickinson's poetic drive was "somewhat spent" by the late 1860s, Murray suggested that the pause in fascicle production between the early '60s and '70s coincided meaningfully with the three-and-a-half year period from 1865 to 1869 when the Dickinson household made do with "intermittent maids."

Murray sees Maher's arrival in 1869 as providing Dickinson a companion dedicated to her poetic endeavor; not only are there instances when both women's writing appears on the same page but, according to an 1897 deposition, it was in Maher's trunk that Dickinson stored her fascicles. More telling still was Maher's refusal to burn Dickinson's poetry after her death despite her promise to do so. In Murray's words, "This curious act of disobedience on Maher's part seems a rather Dickinsonian gesture," indicative of the way the two women's sensibilities merged during the

nearly eighteen years they worked together in the same house.

The Dickinson who emerged through these papers is an artist determined to exert control over an environment that threatened to silence her and other women of her day. Instead of providing consolation by heralding renewed life beyond the grave, for instance, Dickinson's language opened the rending experience of grief into a rich topos for poetic voicings. Similarly, her poetic anticipations of psychological distress enabled her speakers to sustain subjective agency in the presence of experiences that otherwise dictated specific female identities.

Finally, we discover a poet whose artistic production depended on the support of servant women whose companionship both enabled and informed her work.

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*Paul Crumbley is adjunct professor of English at Utah State University and the author of the forthcoming *Dash and Voice in Emily Dickinson*.*

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## Cognitive Approaches to Poetry and Translation: A Seminar

*Moderator:* GUDRUN GRABHER, University of Innsbruck; *panelists:* ELZBIETA TABAKOWSKA, Jagiellonian University; MARGARET FREEMAN, Los Angeles Valley College; ZSUZSANNA UJSZÁSZI, Bessenyei György Teacher Training College; CYNTHIA HALLEN, Brigham Young University; *respondent:* DONALD C. FREEMAN, University of California, Los Angeles

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*By Margaret Freeman*

Although many were feeling exhausted after an intensive and exhilarating three days of discussion at the "Emily Dickinson Abroad" conference, twenty-eight people attended a post-conference seminar held at 5.30 P.M. on Sunday, August 6.

Gudrun Grabher, visibly tired after having organized a superbly run conference, nobly moderated the session, which introduced Dickinsonians and translators to the field of cognitive linguistics and its relevance for poetry interpretation and translation. Donald Freeman acted as formal respondent to the presentations, though it turned out that members of the audience took over his role in a lively discussion of the issues raised.

Elzbieta Tabakowska, author of *Cognitive Linguistics and Poetics of Translation* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993), who had traveled from her home in Krakow,

Poland, for the seminar, led the discussion with a description of the main principles of cognitive linguistics and its application to poetic interpretation.

Margaret Freeman then presented a case study of how cognitive linguistics can be applied to a reading of Dickinson's poetry. Zsuzsanna Ujszászi followed with a reappraisal of translating Dickinson into Hungarian, and Cynthia Hallen ended the session with a discussion of the way "circuit" and "circumference" words cognitively inhere in Dickinson's corpus.

The discussion was animated, and questions and challenges to the presenters woke everyone up. Time of course ran out, but informal discussion continued over dinner at the Hofgarten, a marvelous ending to an exhilarating gathering of Dickinsonians in Innsbruck.

The seminar was organized as a project

of TRANSLIT, a research network for interdisciplinary studies in cognitive linguistics, literature, and translation. Its first newsletter, an attempt to respond to a specific question raised at the seminar about how a cognitive linguistic approach can help in a specific problem of translating one word of a Dickinson poem into Japanese, was mailed out to seminar participants and TRANSLIT members after the conference. People interested in getting a copy, or in becoming members of TRANSLIT, should contact Margaret Freeman, 1300 Greenleaf Canyon Road, Topanga, CA 90290; tel. 310-455-3566; fax 310-455-3686; or by e-mail at freemamh@laccd.cc.ca.us.

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*Margaret Freeman is professor of English at Los Angeles Valley College. She is working on cognitive approaches to Dickinson's poetry.*

# M E M B E R S ' N E W S

## Annual Meeting Set for Amherst

EDIS will return to Amherst for its 1996 Annual Meeting, to be held the weekend of June 22-23. Plans are being developed for a variety of activities. Mark your calendars and watch for details in the spring *Bulletin*.

## A Note from the New President

On behalf of the Emily Dickinson International Society, I would like to extend special thanks to the Austrian government, the American Embassy, and the administration of the University of Innsbruck for making the conference possible, and to Professor Gudrun Grabher and the students, faculty, and staff of the Department of American Studies for making it both successful and thoroughly enjoyable. Similarly, I would like to thank conference director Margaret Dickie and her extremely capable staff of graduate students for their hard work. This was indeed a conference to remember!

Cristanne Miller

## ALA Call for Papers

Papers on the general topic "Emily Dickinson and World Literature" are invited for a panel at the American Literature Association meeting in San Diego, California, May 30-June 2, 1996. Papers should take about 20 minutes and may treat any facet of Dickinson's relation to international literary topics, trends, and ideas.

Send papers or inquiries to Gary Lee Stonum, Department of English, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH 44106-7117, by January 6, 1996 (earlier is better) or by e-mail to gxs11@po.cwru.edu.

## Calling All Scholars

Jane Eberwein invites volunteers to prepare entries for the *Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, to be published in 1998 by Greenwood Press. This reference volume for library use by students and advanced scholars will include entries on subjects and themes, roles Dickinson played in her poems, characteristics of her poetry, pertinent literary classifications, critical approaches,

## Officers and Board Members Elected

New officers and Board members were elected at the August 1995 meeting of the EDIS Board in Innsbruck. Elected president for 1995-96 was Cristanne Miller. Jonnie Guerra was named vice president; Gary Lee Stonum is the new treasurer; and Paul Crumbley was elected secretary. Eleanor Heginbotham was reelected membership chair.

New Board members elected are Ellen Hart and Mary Loeffelholz. Cristanne Miller and Jonnie Guerra were reelected to the Board. Continuing Board members are Gudrun Grabher, Eleanor Heginbotham, Suzanne Juhasz, Daniel Lombardo (member at large), Vivian Pollak, Martha Nell

Smith, Gary Lee Stonum, and Georgiana Strickland.

Miller is professor of English at Pomona College. She is author of *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar* and co-author (with Suzanne Juhasz and Martha Nell Smith) of *Comic Power in Emily Dickinson*. Jonnie Guerra, who recently assumed the post of dean at Randolph-Macon Woman's College, was director of the 1993 EDIS conference in Washington, D.C. Mary Loeffelholz is associate professor of English at Northeastern University and author of *Emily Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory*. Other officers and Board members are identified elsewhere in this issue.

## Chapter News

The **Los Angeles chapter** will host a Dickinson birthday celebration on December 10 at the Huntington Library Overseers Room from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., with sherry, tea, and black cake. Featured will be presentations on the resources of the Huntington useful for ED studies and discussion of forthcoming Dickinson publications. There will also be the premier LA showing of the video *We doubt if it be Hers*. (See review on page 3.) For information, contact Margaret Freeman, at 310-455-3566, fax 310-455-3686, or e-mail freemamh@laccd.cc.ca.us.

Also celebrating Dickinson's December 10 birthday will be the first meeting of the **St. Paul chapter**. Norbert Hirschhorn will be the featured speaker. Eleanor Heginbotham and Erika Scheurer will discuss the Innsbruck conference, and black cake will be served. For details contact Eleanor Heginbotham at 612-641-8267.

"Emily Dickinson and Europe" was the theme when the **Utah chapter** met August 16 at Utah Valley State College, in Orem.

One feature was the display, by collector Brent Ashworth, of rare Dickinson artifacts, including an original Dickinson letter dated April 24, 1886. Cynthia Hallen reported on the Innsbruck conference. Also featured were readings and musical performances of Dickinson poems and the election of officers. For information on future meetings, contact Cynthia Hallen, English Department, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

The newly formed **New England chapter** held its first meeting, organized by Linda Evers with assistance from Polly Longworth, September 20 at the Boston Public Library. Twenty-five enthusiasts heard a talk by Dorothy Oberhaus preceded by a visit to the Dickinson room at the Houghton Library. An October 14 meeting in Amherst featured Gregory Farmer talking about restoration of the Evergreens and showing slides of the art works in the house. An organizational meeting will be held January 7 in Boston. For more information, contact Linda Evers at 617-566-4532.

influences, artistic adaptations, places and institutions related to the poet, editorial and publication history, people she knew, and representative poems.

Entries (from 75 to 1,500 words) will each be followed by a brief bibliography and identified by the contributor's name. Con-

tributors will receive a copy of the book.

Anyone interested in preparing one or more entries should write to Jane Eberwein, Department of English, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401 USA, or by e-mail at: jeberwei@oakland.edu.

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor*

**Albertine, Susan, ed.** *A Living of Words: American Women in Print Culture*. Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1995. 246 pp. ISBN 0-87049-867-3, \$38.00

Twelve biographical essays on American women's entrepreneurship in the print marketplace from colonial times to the early twentieth century. Elizabeth Horan's essay details the prolonged struggle for publication rights to the Dickinson materials, beginning with Millicent Todd Bingham and Martha Dickinson Bianchi and ending with publishers, lawyers, libraries, and university corporations.

**Bawer, Bruce.** *Prophets and Professors: Essays on the Lives and Works of Modern Poets*. Brownsville, Ore.: Storyline Press, 1995. 352 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-885266-05-7, \$26.95. Paper, ISBN 1-885266-04-9, \$15.95.

"The Audacity of Emily Dickinson" is the lead of twenty-three essays on poets, poetry, critics, and criticism. Bawer cites examples of Dickinson's audacity in her life and poetry and takes issue with Cynthia Griffin Wolff's assessment of her. Literary critic for *The New Criterion* for ten years, Bawer has firm opinions and an independent and confident voice. He also discusses workshops, literary interviews, the academy's lockstep mentality, and the PBS series "Voices and Visions."

**Brock-Broido, Lucie.** *The Master Letters*. New York: Knopf, 1995. 84 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-679-44174-3, \$20.00.

Dickinson's Master Letters are the touchstone for Brock-Broido's fifty-two poems. Echoing Dickinson's formal and rhetorical style, some verse letters are addressed to "Master," "Sir," or "Lord" and are signed "Your Faithfull Friend," "Your Scholar," or "your - Punitive Divine." In homage to Dickinson, italicized passages within the poems are from her letters, and archaic or anomalous spellings are intended. Brock-Broido describes her form as "the Old World sonnet—but American & cracked, the odd marriage between hysteria & haiku."

Endnotes supply background information for the poems.

**Cott, Jonathan, ed., illustrations by Mary Frank.** *Skies in Blossom: The Nature Poetry of Emily Dickinson*. New York: Doubleday, 1995. 96 pp. ISBN 0-385-47595-0, \$20.00.

A collection of forty-three poems that "speak of a visceral, almost erotic communion with nature that has the power of a religious ceremony." Cott's introduction "connects Dickinson's awareness of nature and her surroundings with a fourteen-hundred-year-old tradition of Zen Buddhist monks, poets, and seers." Frank's twenty-one original two-color "shadow papers" complete this small-format gift edition.

**Greene, Carol.** *Emily Dickinson, American Poet*. Rookie Biography Series. Chicago: Children's Press, 1994. 48 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-516-04263-7, \$12.90. Paper, ISBN 0-516-44263-5, \$4.95.

Simplified text for grades two to four focuses on Dickinson's life. Only one poem is printed in its entirety. The book is amply illustrated with historical photographs of Dickinson, her family, her friends, and Amherst, as well as contemporary photographs and illustrations. It includes a chronology of "important dates."

**Hogue, Cynthia.** *Scheming Women: Poetry, Privilege, and the Politics of Subjectivity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995. 262 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7914-2621-1, \$59.50. Paper, ISBN 0-7914-2622-X, \$19.95.

Hogue examines poetic subjectivity as an issue of sexual difference in the works of Dickinson, Moore, H.D., and Rich, addressing the poets' ambivalence about maternal conventions and their strategies of equivocation. Hogue believes these poets "destructure the poetic power they assert" and "represent the promise of ethical feminist poetic practices." Psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, and feminist literary theories inform Hogue's close readings.

**Langton, Jane, illustrations by Nancy Ekholm Burkert.** *Acts of Light*. New York: Bullfinch Press/Little Brown, 1995. 166 pp. ISBN 0-8212-2175-2, \$18.95.

Eighty Dickinson poems in a lavishly illustrated gift edition. Originally published in 1980 in a larger format and nominated for a National Book Award, it includes a forty-three-page essay by Langton on Dickinson's life and work.

**Morris, Timothy.** *Becoming Canonical in American Poetry*. Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1995. 174 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-252-02136-3, \$34.95. Paper, ISBN 0-252-06428-3, \$12.95.

Morris describes how Whitman, Dickinson, Moore, and Bishop achieved canonical status. Focusing on their early reception by readers, Morris shows how cultural values shape a poet's reputation. Dickinson is "the most indisputably canonical" of American women poets, "but it remains an anomaly that she achieved this stature." She was read "as a sort of female Whitman, sexually unbridled and spiritually heterodox—the ideal fantasy plaything for male critics."

**Sanchez-Eppler, Karen.** *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993. 197 pp. ISBN 0-520-07959-0, \$30.00.

Sanchez-Eppler examines the works of Harriet Ann Jacobs, Whitman, and Dickinson and demonstrates their relevance to feminist-abolitionist discourse and the politics of the human body. While Jacobs's autobiography is concerned with antislavery reform and Whitman envisions reconciliation of differences through his poetry, Dickinson internalizes the call for emancipation, "recasting social divisions into a language for describing the self." Sanchez-Eppler cautions against a too simplistic reading of the links between poetry and politics.

*Note: The Bulletin welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books. We would be especially happy to learn of those published outside the U.S. Information should be sent to Barbara Kelly, 444 Washington Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301, U.S.A., or faxed to her at 415-321-8146.*

**Emily Dickinson International Society**

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**Editor's Note**

This issue offers readers a fast-forward version of the Innsbruck conference, complete with Alpine backdrop. I'm extremely grateful to all those who survived jet lag and still managed to provide illuminating reports on conference sessions.

Another person who deserves heartiest thanks is Robin Heginbotham, who for the past two years has ably assisted her mother, Eleanor, in maintaining the membership list and preparing the mailing labels that get the *Bulletin* to EDIS members.

With considerable regret I announce the resignation of Benjamin Lease as editor of the Dickinson Scholars series. Ben has been an extremely effective editor, and his contributions will be missed. At the same time, I'm pleased to announce that Jane Donahue Eberwein has agreed to take over that series. She would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in writing a profile.

Finally, I extend my apologies to Martha Ackmann, whose prior discovery of the letter to Joel Warren Norcross that appeared in the last issue was unknown to both Polly Longworth and myself at the time of publication. The letter had lain unnoticed at

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*In lands I never saw – they say  
Immortal Alps look down –  
Whose Bonnets touch the firmament –  
Whose Sandals touch the town –*

*Meek at whose everlasting feet  
A Myriad Daisy play –  
Which, Sir, are you, and which am I –  
Upon an August day?*

Harvard's Houghton Library since 1988 and was only recently discovered by Ackmann and Longworth, working independently, but Ackmann was the first to locate it, as disclosed in her Innsbruck paper (p. 11).

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