

**Bulletin**

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

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

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**EMILY DICKINSON'S POEMS IN A NEW AND CLEARER LIGHT**

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*A Review by Margaret H. Freeman*

**R.W. Franklin, ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*.** Variorum Edition. Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press. 3 vols., boxed. 1,680 pp. ISBN 0-674-67622-X, \$125.00.

Family and friends will have no trouble deciding what to give Dickinsonians this holiday season—providing, that is, that the Dickinsonian in question has not already rushed out to buy the new Franklin variorum edition of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*.

Handsomely bound as a two-toned, three-volume boxed set, this edition replaces the Johnson three-volume edition of 1955. As Franklin notes in his introduction, the Johnson edition has served scholars well for more than forty years. But much has been discovered and learned in the past four decades, and the Franklin edition reflects that knowledge. From now on, this will be the standard text and primary research source for any scholar working with Dickinson's poems.

Dickinson's publishing history is a convoluted and complex story, one that Franklin admirably covers in his introduction. Whether or not one agrees with Franklin's assessment that Dickinson's decision not to publish her poems in print was deliberate, the fact that they were published only after her death and therefore without her supervision has consequences for all subsequent editions of her work. The progression in editorial style from the first edition in 1890 has been a steady movement back to the moment of transcription—from the earliest editorial practice of transforming the

poems into standards acceptable for the age with respect to grammar, punctuation, meter, rhyme, and even titles, to this latest edition, which attempts to capture, as much as is possible in typography, the sometimes ephemeral quality of Dickinson's multiple manuscript versions.

The three volumes of Franklin's variorum edition present Dickinson's poems in a new chronology, with new numbers, and increase the number of poems from the classic 1775 to 1789. This latter number reflects the addition of seventeen poems not included in the 1955 edition, five texts treated as poems by Johnson but moved to an appendix by Franklin, and several instances of a new arrangement of poems combined or separated. For ease of comparison, Franklin lists these changes in an appendix.

There are fourteen appendices, all told, meticulously recording such information as poems published in Dickinson's lifetime; distribution of poems by year; cross-references to manuscripts of poems from different years; poems Dickinson titled, signed, or characterized in some way; listings of the poems in fascicles and sets; poem recipients; and so on. There is even an appendix citing all the instances when a word is divided across a line break, and a listing—including the Hofmann forgery—of poems falsely attributed to Dickinson. A great deal can be learned about the poet just by wandering through the appendices.

Those who, like me, could never remember which poem went with which Johnson number will be relieved to learn that it was just as well, given Franklin's new numbering system. I was surprised to learn from Franklin's introduction that Johnson had to work almost entirely from photostats for

the Bingham collection of poems. (He was allowed to see the originals on only two occasions.) That mistakes crept into Johnson's work was inevitable, and his achievement is by no means lessened by Franklin's revisions. The new numbering reflects Franklin's meticulous work with the fascicles and unbound manuscripts, providing in many cases more accurate dating.

The poems are divided according to approximate year of the earliest known manuscript. Within each year, poems that appear in fascicles and sets follow those in individual drafts or copies. A helpful detail is the recording of year, with the words "Fascicles" or "Fascicles (Set)" where relevant, next to the page number at the bottom of the page, so that the reader can quickly determine the given year and location for the poems that appear on any open page. An undated section at the end of the collection is reserved for transcripts of lost manuscripts.

In addition to the revised chronology and new numbering system, the greatest changes that will strike readers familiar with the Johnson edition are the detailed citation, provenance, and history for each extant manuscript and the unfamiliar appearance of a well known poem in all its extant versions, with corrections made in spelling, words, and arrangement. Franklin's introduction is required reading, for, in addition to a very clear account of the poems' publishing history, Franklin spells out his theory of Dickinson's working practice, identifying manuscripts at different stages of production and ultimate destination, whether bound in a fascicle, sent to a recipient, or simply retained

unbound in the poet's possession. Most welcome are the introductory comments to each text, placing it in context of composition or provenance.

One major difference from the Johnson edition is the equal weight Franklin gives to each extant version of a poem. Johnson presented a poem in fair copy first, either from its fascicle version or from a copy sent with a letter, and then gave the others in reduced typography. In contrast, Franklin places the different versions in the order in which he thinks they were composed. One consequence of this rearrangement is that Johnson's assumption that Dickinson drew from her store of poems in the fascicles to send copies to friends turns out not to be the case. It appears, instead, that Dickinson would often send in a letter a poem she had recently written and would only later transcribe it into a fascicle. From Franklin's arrangement of the multiple versions, a much clearer picture emerges of the history and development of each poetic text.

Franklin has provided the first line of each poem in italics with its number, a mnemonic device which will surely help register poem with number in the future. One peculiarity of the new edition is that the poems have been given titles for each extant manuscript when the first lines differ; thus poem Fr277, for example, has three titles: "Going to them, happy letter!"; "Going to her!"; and "Going to him! Happy letter!" (No attempt has been made to reflect the capitalization and punctuation of these lines.) Each variant text is given a letter, from A onward, in the left-hand column. On the right of each text appears, if relevant, the fascicle or set number in which the manuscript appears. This means that scholars referring to a particular poem will be able to cite poem

number, title, and letter for the particular manuscript they are discussing.

For the general reader, however, this practice problematizes citation. By representing the poems with "increasing fidelity to what Dickinson wrote" (page 27), Franklin calls into question the stability of a Dickinson text. Dickinson readers who "know" a poem from its appearance in the single volume of *The Complete Poems* or another edited version may no longer assume the existence of a "final" version. Franklin adopts the theory in this edition that "a literary work is separable from its artifact" (page 27), as though a Dickinson poem were like a plate etched by William Blake which, when printed on different occasions, might change in subtle ways its hues and shades.

Alternatives Dickinson listed for individual words or phrases are treated as in the Johnson edition, appearing below each manuscript as variants. Whether Franklin will follow Johnson's practice and produce a one-volume text based on his new variorum for undergraduate use and the general reader remains to be seen.

One of Franklin's previous contributions to Dickinson scholarship—giving readers access to photographs of original manuscripts in *The Manuscript Books* (1981)—sensitized a generation of Dickinson readers to the irregular line breaks that had been suppressed in all previous editions of her poems. Although some readers might have preferred that Franklin follow Dickinson's own practice, he has retained Johnson's line arrangements, providing, however, a section below the poem indicating Dickinson's original divisions.

Another new feature of this edition is the listing, also below the poem, of emendations or corrections Franklin has made to Dickinson's spelling when it was likely

an error and not her characteristic practice. Thus in poem Fr40, "I hav'nt told my garden yet," Franklin emends Dickinson's spelling of "heedlees" to "heedless" (as Johnson also did, but without comment).

One change that will strike the reader is Dickinson's characteristic spelling of "opon" for "upon," a practice she followed until 1880. A fascinating record of this spelling change can be found in Franklin's note to poem Fr1523, "How soft a caterpillar steps," where Dickinson apparently first wrote "upon" in line 7 but then overwrote the "u" with an "o." After that, she regularly spells the word with a "u." That Dickinson originally chose an obsolete spelling for this word, a spelling that occurs (according to my cursory survey of the *Oxford English Dictionary*) only from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, may provide a fascinating investigative avenue for spelling mavens, etymologists, or scholars interested in the influence on Dickinson of earlier writers.

There are silent changes that Franklin makes, such as differences in reading Dickinson's initial letters in words as "true" capitals or not, and—a feature I particularly appreciate—the rendering of her individualistic markings with a hyphen (rather than Johnson's choice of an en dash), which reflects better their unobtrusive presence in the manuscripts.

Franklin also clarifies the distinction made (one that has puzzled some Dickinsonians on the emweb internet discussion list) between the use of italics and underscores in the printed texts of her poems. Franklin keeps underscores to indicate Dickinson's preference for possible alternatives, adopting italics for words she underscored for emphasis. He retains the publication history Johnson gave for each poem but consolidates and

*EDIS Bulletin* (ISSN 1055-3932) is published twice yearly, May/June and November/December, by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. Standard Mail non-profit postage is paid at Lexington, KY 40503. Membership in the Society is open to all persons with an interest in Emily Dickinson and her work; for further information, contact Cristanne Miller, President, EDIS, Dept. of English, Pomona College, Claremont, CA. 91711, USA.

Annual dues are \$40.00 for regular members, \$30.00 for students, \$50.00 for contributing members, \$75.00 for institutional members (all of which receive the *Bulletin* and *The Emily Dickinson Journal*), or \$15.00 for associate members (the *Bulletin* only). Membership inquiries should be directed to Margaret H. Freeman, 1300 Greenleaf Canyon Rd., Topanga, CA 90290, USA. Membership applications and changes of address should be sent to The Emily Dickinson International Society, c/o Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211-0966 USA.

Address submissions and other communications for the *Bulletin* to Georgiana Strickland, 133 Lackawanna Rd., Lexington, KY 40503, USA. Submission deadlines are March 1 for the spring issue, September 1 for the fall issue. All articles become the property of the *Bulletin*. Back issues are available for \$5.00 each from the editor. Copyright © 1998 by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. The *Bulletin* is indexed in the American Humanities Index.

335 *Her smile was shaped like other smiles*

MANUSCRIPT: About early 1862, in Fascicle 12 (H 77). After line 8, where she left no additional space, ED drew a horizontal line to separate the two eight-line stanzas.

A Her smile was shaped like other smiles - FI 2.26  
 The Dimples ran along -  
 And still it hurt you, as some Bird  
 Did hoist herself, to sing,  
 Then recollect a Ball, she got - 5  
 And hold upon the Twig, -  
 Convulsive, while the Music crashed -  
 Like Beads - among the Bog -  
 A happy lip - breaks sudden -  
 It doesn't state you how IO  
 It contemplated - smiling -  
 Just consummated - now -  
 But this one, wears it's merriment  
 So patient - like a pain -  
 Fresh gilded - to elude the eyes I 5  
 Unqualified, to scan -  
 7 crashed] broke

Division 7 Music |

PUBLICATION: *UP* (1935), 123, in part, as three quatrains. Bingham, *AB* (1945), 393, entire, as four quatrains, from a transcript of *A* (A Tr 137). *Poems* (1955), 281-82 (lines 9-16), 395 (lines 1-8), as two poems; *CP* (1960), 167 (lines 9-16), 251 (lines 1-8), with the alternative adopted. *MB* (1981), 256, in facsimile. (J514, J353)

A 7 crashed] cracked UP35 P37 9-12] omitted UP35 P37 1-8, 9-16] as separate poems P55 CP60 13 it's] a UP35 P37

336 *Before I got my eye put out*

MANUSCRIPTS: Two, variant, about summer 1862. A fair copy was enclosed in ED's fifth letter to T. W. Higginson, about August 1862 (Harvard).

A Before I got my eye put out  
 I liked as well to see -

361 ~ 1862 Fascicles

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abbreviates Johnson's notes, presumably to save space. This is an unfortunate price to pay, since Johnson's sometimes quite revealing comments are thereby lost.

The most provocative aspect of Franklin's edition will doubtless be the editorial judgments he has made with respect to what constitutes a poem and whether certain lines or stanzas should be com-

bined in one poem or separated into different poems. Some poems that were treated separately in the Johnson edition were clearly versions or parts of others, and these have been restored to their rightful places as artifacts of one literary work. The most striking of these is the discovery, since Johnson's edition, of more manuscripts of poem Fr895, "Further in summer

than the birds." This deservedly celebrated poem is given for the first time in its earliest version of seven stanzas, including two that were published as a separate poem (Johnson's 1775, "The earth has many keys" from a transcript made by Mabel Loomis Todd and published in *Bolts of Melody*). To discover that the poem Dickinson called "My Cricket" originally included her "other" cricket poem provides a fascinating insight into her poetic development.

When a poem exists in only one version in a bound fascicle, it is sometimes difficult to determine where it begins and ends. In the case of the poem Franklin numbers as 335, "Her smile was shaped like other smiles," Johnson separated into two poems (J353 and 514) the two stanzas that appear on one fascicle page, following the horizontal line drawn as a sign of Dickinson's "invariable method" of separating poems (Johnson, page 282). The second stanza begins "A happy lip - breaks sudden -," and the development of thought between the two stanzas is consistent. I think Franklin is right to restore Millicent Todd Bingham's earlier combining of the two into one poem (*Ancestors' Brocades*, page 393), and all his other combinations make similar sense.

Less successful, to my mind, are the separations Franklin makes of poems previously combined. He adopts, for example, a conservative treatment of the first few pages of the first fascicle, treating each stanza separated by space as a different poem. This obscures the common thread of a poem's development that Franklin successfully noted in the case of poem Fr335. The first page of Fascicle 1, for example, contains three stanzas, which Franklin presents as poem 21, "The gentian weaves her fringes," poem 22, "A brief but patient illness," and poem 23, "In the name of the bee." The theme of a parade of flowers at summer's end merging with a funeral procession, with a final mock blessing of nature instead of scripture, is thereby destroyed. The separations he makes of later poems—Johnson's poems 1037 and 1123—seem more justified.

Unless more evidence is found to illuminate Dickinson's poetic composition, *Continued on page 23*

## IN EMILY'S PERSON: A RICH JOURNEY

By Connie Clark

This article initiates what I hope will be a continuing series focusing on representations of Dickinson on the stage.

—Ed.

On Tuesday night, June 30, 1981, I was cast as Emily Dickinson in a community theatre production of *The Belle of Amherst*. Auditions for an October production had been held early so that the poor woman fool enough to take the role would have three months in which to memorize seventy-seven pages of script verbatim—and do the research necessary to have Emily, her family, and her friends become real, living people in her mind and, through her performance, in the audiences' minds. I didn't know it at the time, but my life had just been changed forever.

I thought performing as Emily Dickinson would end when the curtain came down for that final October performance seventeen years ago. Instead, my research made me realize that I had a unique opportunity to teach nineteenth-century American history, poetry, and Emily herself. Within a few months this led to my giving varied programs as Emily in our local schools for students in grades K-12—which led to invitations to perform in other school systems—which led to further research and to writing my own solo play *Emily* by 1986, then one on the brilliant French actress Sarah Bernhardt by 1988.

To date, the result has been performances for more than 95,000 students in twelve states and in an English-speaking school in Norway, and performances for adults not only in those same places but also in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland, and the Library for the Performing Arts at New York's Lincoln Center. And all thanks to that remarkable woman who so captured my mind and heart seventeen years ago.

Solo performing has unique challenges. Normally when an actor is on stage, he or she plays off other actors, responding to their words, gestures, emotions, actions.

But when you are alone on stage, any other characters are there only through your mind's eye, and you must have those people become so real to you that the audience "sees" them as well and believes that you are interacting with them.



Connie Clark performs her own one-woman play, *Emily*.

For that reason, when I was first rehearsing as Emily, I had to know how she would behave with Father as opposed to with Vinnie, Austin, Mother, Sue, Samuel Bowles, Charles Wadsworth, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Maggie Maher, and others. And not only what the relationship was between Emily and that person, but what that person looked like. How tall was Father? How high in thin air should I focus my eyes when talking to him? If I didn't truly *see* the real person I was talking to on stage, then surely the audience wouldn't see him or her either and would be unable to believe in the performance. So extensive research was necessary to perform *The Belle of Amherst* well, and that led to everything else.

People often ask me after a performance if I'm not completely drained by the emotions they have watched on stage from Emily's life—not only the laughter and delight, but also the loss of her early

mentor, Benjamin Newton, the anguish of being forbidden to use her eyes and the fear of blindness, heartache over Austin's sad marriage, wrestling with religious doctrine, struggling with whether or not to publish, coming to terms with her unreturned love for Bowles, Father's death, the relationship with and death of Wadsworth, the love for and loss of Otis Lord, Mother's death, Gib's death.... The answer is no, I never feel drained. Rather, I feel immensely honored to have been permitted to share Emily's life yet again in a very intimate way, as an actress experiencing her life from the inside out.

When I performed *Emily* in the sanctuary of a lovely old church in Hatfield, Massachusetts, for an annual Dickinson Family Reunion, the feeling that I was performing for my own family was extremely strong. These were descendants of Nathaniel Dickinson, the patriarch who came to the Colonies from England in 1659. Afterward, in an anteroom off the sanctuary, several people formed a line to speak to me. When it was her turn, one woman walked up to me, put her arms around me, and for a good thirty seconds held me close without moving. Then she stepped back, softly said "Thank you," and walked away.

I have never forgotten something that happened after my first school performance, in March 1982. The audience was composed of students in grades K-5. Then as now, with the younger grades the performance is not scripted; I follow a mental outline while asking the children questions and answering anything and everything they come up with. (Thank goodness I love history and have a good memory.) The children are finding out what their lives would have been like if they had been in school with Emily, Austin, and Vinnie in the 1830s and 1840s. The older the students, the more poetry I include and the more about Emily herself.

After that first performance, I was invited to visit with a fourth-grade class for further questions. The chairs in the room

were arranged in two concentric semi-circles, and I (as Emily in long white dress and auburn wig) perched on the front of the teacher's desk. There were about eighteen children in the class, and all were having a marvelous time chatting with Emily Dickinson, asking her about nineteenth-century life (What did lawnmowers look like? What did you use for toothpaste?), about her poems, and reading Emily some of their own poetry. The teacher stood leaning against the wall off to one side, taking pleasure in her students' enthusiasm.

All were having a grand time except one nine-year-old girl seated in the front row. Her face might have been stone—her expression frozen in deep fear. I was quite concerned about her but didn't want to embarrass her by calling attention to her behavior. Finally, after sitting absolutely still for thirty-five minutes, she raised her hand. I called on her at once.

She took a moment, then asked, "Emily, your nephew died of epilepsy, didn't he?" During my performance, I hadn't mentioned Ned Dickinson's epilepsy or his death in his mid-thirties. The teacher had prepared her class for Emily's visit by going into detail about the Dickinson family. I realized at once the source of this child's fear, and my supposition was confirmed when the teacher stepped forward to reach out and stroke the young girl's hair.

I looked at this terrified child and said, "You take medicine for your epilepsy, don't you?" She nodded. "Well, Ned didn't have any medicines for his epilepsy. They hadn't been invented yet." And all of a sudden it was as if the weight of the world had fallen off her shoulders. She broke into a glorious smile and sat comfortably back in her chair. Ever since her teacher had spoken of Ned's death from epilepsy, this fourth grader had thought she too must be dying.

Since then I've told the story of that girl hundreds of times as an example of the positive changes time has brought our world. On more than one occasion, a cheerful voice from the audience has piped up to say that he or she has epilepsy. I always confirm that this student too has medicine to control it—and am always answered by a firm nod of the head and a broad smile.

In the early days of my school perfor-

mances before I wrote my own play, I used the device William Luce uses near the end of *Belle* to give Emily a reason to leave the stage. She says it is late and she has to go peel the apples. A few days after a performance at an inner-city high school in Greenville, South Carolina, I received a letter from a teacher which I still treasure. In it she told of one of her tenth-grade students, a young man who had rarely seen any kind of theatrical performance, and certainly not one on a poet. After my performance, this teacher and her class went back to their room to discuss Emily, her poetry, and what they had just seen. The teacher asked her students what they thought of Emily Dickinson. And this young man—at that age when bravado is king—raised his hand and said that he hadn't wanted Emily to stop talking, to leave. He said he had almost jumped up in the auditorium (in front of five hundred others) to call out, "Emily, please stay. I'll go peel the apples!"

That this fifteen-year-old inner-city boy would feel that way about the Emily he had met through me was wonderful. But even more wonderful was that he would admit in front of his peers that he had been moved so strongly.

A very different incident occurred with tenth-grade boys in Stowe, Vermont. I was there to perform *Emily* for the Vermont Council on the Humanities Fall Conference, which in 1986 was a tribute to Emily on the hundredth anniversary of her death. In addition to performing for those attending the conference, I gave an earlier performance for local high school students.

The evening before the conference began, those of us leading sessions were treated to a lovely dinner. Part way through the meal, one of the waitresses, told that I was the actress playing Emily Dickinson, came hurrying over to our table, glowing. She just had to tell me something. That afternoon her tenth-grade son and his buddies had come zooming into her yard on their motorcycles, jumped off, all pumped up about something, and hurried to the kitchen door. "Mom! Mom! We had the BEST assembly this afternoon! It was AWESOME!!!" "Oh," said Mom, "what was it about?" "Emily Dickinson!" And at that, Mom's jaw dropped.

There was an elementary school in Connecticut where the principal was lucky to live through the day. Emily Dickinson was to be at the school the entire day, and after two fifty-minute performances was to visit various individual classrooms. And the principal *had not* scheduled Emily to visit with a group of fifth graders who met once a week solely to write poetry. And today was Wednesday, the day they met.

I have never seen a teacher so hopping mad! Several times I passed her in the hallway as I headed to my assigned rooms. You could almost see smoke rising from her scalp. I told her I was terribly sorry, but I had to stick to the schedule given me by the principal. At day's end, when I had taken off the white dress and wig and looked like me again, I passed this Pillar of Anger one more time and offered to come back to work with her poets another Wednesday. She demurred, then finally said, "We couldn't pay you." "I know," I replied. "I knew that when I offered." "OH!! OKAY!!" And we set up a time—five weeks hence, my next free Wednesday.

In penance, I think, the principal gave the poets a double period to spend with Emily. Those fifth-grade poets were fabulous. They read me their poems, some written alone and some in groups, and I spoke many of Emily's poems. What a delight! And that teacher finally felt content.

After I finished with the poetry class, I revisited a certain third-grade class that had had wonderful history and poetry questions for Emily during her visit, and where many hands were still in the air waving frantically when I had to leave on my scheduled rounds. This time when I walked in, I said, "Now, I guess what we had best do is see what you remember of my performance before we go back to your questions." Hands shot up all over the room of this splendid gaggle. And they practically told me my entire performance from five weeks before. Living history—history that can answer back—is memorable to young students.

At one elementary school, a student asked if there were drugs in Emily's day. (The school lobby had a big banner proclaiming "Just Say No.") I answered  
*Continued on page 24*

## “WHO GOES TO DINE”: JUDY CHICAGO’S *DINNER PARTY*

By Maryanne Garbowsky

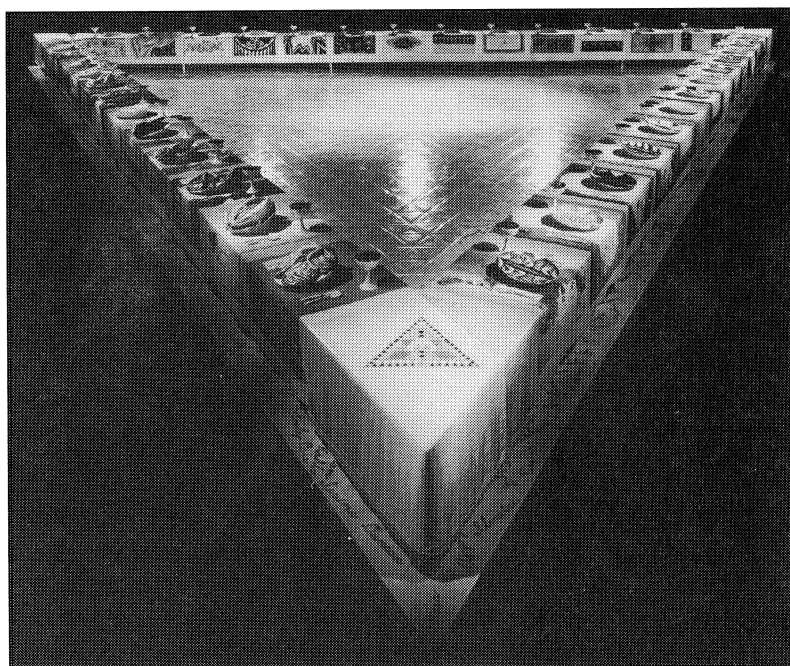
Despite Emily Dickinson’s reclusiveness, which prevented her from accepting invitations to dinner parties, Judy Chicago went ahead and invited her anyway. The “party” was held in March 1979, when Chicago’s landmark exhibition opened in San Francisco. Chicago went even further and designed a place setting for Dickinson (as well as for her other guests) that would be distinct and representative of her life.

The approaching millennium is the optimum time to discuss Chicago’s *Dinner Party*. The millennium was built into the work and visualized by Chicago back in 1979 as “that moment in the future when the double standard—which defines men’s rituals as not only significant but sacred, while rendering women invisible—will end, and all human effort will be honored for its part in the richness of human experience.”<sup>1</sup>

Now that the millennium is less than two years away, we can ask if Chicago’s prediction will be realized. If the answer hinges on the situation of *The Dinner Party* itself, then it has to be no. As recently as 1991, Chicago’s planned gift of the sculpture to the University of the District of Columbia created such dissension that her offer had to be withdrawn. The offer somehow got mixed up with funding for the school, political agenda, and accusations of pornography, so that Chicago had to admit she was beaten and give up the fight. *The Dinner Party* remains in storage, where it will stay until a permanent home can be found. As Lucy Lippard affirms, however, “The vision of a multicultural/feminist art center...remains an important one.”<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not Chicago’s dream of

placing her work at such a center comes true, we have to admit that *The Dinner Party* is still capable of arousing strong emotions and powerful responses. After almost thirty years there remains a sharp division between those who believe the work is an outstanding example of feminist art and are willing to support it, and those who prefer to think of it as “not art, just sociology” or as “weird sexual art.”<sup>3</sup>



*The Dinner Party*. Copyright © Judy Chicago 1979. Mixed media, 48' x 42' x 3'.  
Photo: © Donald Woodman

The force, the power, the inspiration behind *The Dinner Party* was Judy Chicago’s own, but the actual work of production was shared by many—male and female, though predominantly female. Chicago kept “esthetic control of all aspects of the Project” to guarantee “visual consistency in a work of art that contained an enormous range of images, styles, and techniques.”<sup>4</sup>

Much of the power of the piece comes from its deliberateness; that is, no part of the work was left to chance. Meticulously crafted and scrupulously researched, the work was based on a solid foundation of

myth, tradition, and symbolism. But it has a twist; it plays off a familiar male-ordered world view. In *The Dinner Party*, Chicago changes the order to give voice to a female sensibility, to envision the world according to women.

The idea of a gathering around a table was carefully selected as a subject. Unlike Da Vinci’s *Last Supper*, where only men are guests, women would be invited. What

more appropriate for women than a dinner party, since, says Chicago, the concept commemorates “the sundry unacknowledged contributions of women to Western civilization while simultaneously alluding to and protesting their oppression through the metaphors of plates set upon and thus ‘contained’ by the table.”<sup>5</sup> Chicago also thought of the countless meals women through history had provided silently and without recognition, preparing, serving, and watching them be consumed.

As a teacher of art history, Chicago noted the role played by women in domestic scenes. Comparing a painting done in the Middle Ages with one by Matisse, both involving “the preparation of the table,” Chicago writes, “Interestingly, the body gestures, as well as the actions of both women are the same, despite the span of centuries and the historic changes that separate them. Both have a compliant attitude and a total lack of facial expression. Both seem resigned to their roles. Both are images of women as men have seen us. What is not seen is the rage and despair that women have often felt and expressed as they labored for hours over yet another meal to

be quickly consumed and forgotten.”<sup>6</sup>

This is the idea that informs the original series Chicago had planned: “Twenty-five Women Who Were Eaten Alive,” because Chicago realized that “women’s achievements had been left out of history and the records of their lives had apparently disappeared.” As her thinking progressed, the idea emerged of a counterpoint to *The Last Supper*. At her dinner party, “women would be the honored guests.”<sup>7</sup>

The number thirteen took on significance. There were thirteen men at the Last Supper. Thirteen was also the number of witches in a coven. The original twenty-five women soon changed to become thirteen until Chicago realized that number was too small to include all the women through history she wanted present. Thus the number multiplied by three became thirty-nine, giving way to the symbolic form of the triangle—an image of feminine power that was traditionally associated with matriarchy. The table would be an equilateral triangle and would “reflect the goal of feminism—an equalized world.”<sup>8</sup>

On each of the three sides of the table there would be thirteen places. The women at the table would trace the progress of women through history, beginning with early matrilineal societies through Christianity, “Feudalism, Chivalry, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and then into modern times.”<sup>9</sup> Chicago’s criteria for those invited were three: “Her contribution or circumstance had to render her representative of a particular historical epoch. Second, her life needed to embody some type of significant achievement. Also, she had to have worked toward the betterment of conditions for women.”<sup>10</sup>

Set before each woman would be a plate depicted in the style of her times, which would be tilted upward so that it could be seen more easily. In this way the plates would appear to “rise up,” symbolically affirming “women’s struggle for freedom from such containment.”<sup>11</sup> The plates, which took three years to make, rest on a runner in a coordinated design. There is also a napkin, utensils, and a “cup/chalice modeled on those used for communion.”<sup>12</sup>

An important aspect of Chicago’s vision involved a juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular, the holy and the everyday. For the most part, men’s art has always been seen as sacred, special, set apart. Through history, it has been venerated. In contrast, women’s work has been overlooked and ignored, even though at one time it too was regarded as sacred. Chicago traces this development in textiles and suggests that “women’s changing position in society” could be interpreted from “the changes that occurred” in needlework.<sup>13</sup>

Beginning with images of the earth mother—“Eternal Weaver”—through the spinner, which was always associated with

women’s work through history. At each corner is an “altar cloth,” or Millennium runner, as they are called. The “M,” which has the central position on each runner, is the thirteenth letter of the alphabet and refers also to that time to come when all work done by either gender will be regarded equally. Although all runners are made from the same material, each one differs in technique. The first, which is between the Primordial Goddess and Georgia O’Keeffe, is done in petit point and symbolizes “the strength of the female principle as it existed in pre-history and as it is emerging today.” This runner is a link between “past and present and signifies the future.”<sup>15</sup>

The second Millennium runner comes between Hypatia and Marcella and has the M in the central position, but “it is more difficult to perceive.” The third runner, however, shows that “women’s status has reached its lowest point.” It reflects this loss by using a crocheted pattern that obscures the M. Crochet was used because, of all needlework, it is “the most devalued” and most often overlooked.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to needlework, the lost art of china painting was revived. Chicago studied china painting for a year and a half before beginning work on *The Dinner Party*. To her, china painting “seemed to be a perfect metaphor for women’s domesticated and trivialized circumstances.” The plates were

to be fourteen inches across and were individualized to represent each of the women. Through carving and china painting, they would combine “historical facts, iconographical sources, symbolic meaning and my imagination. I fashioned them from my sense of the women, the artistic style of the time, and my own imagery.”<sup>17</sup>

The imagery Chicago used was based on the butterfly, a motif that was “prominent in my early work.”<sup>18</sup> The butterfly image would also relate directly to the “vulval forms” and represent women’s desire to be free from the patriarchal society that had bound them for so long.



*Platesetting for Emily Dickinson, from The Dinner Party.*  
Copyright © Judy Chicago 1979. Photo: © Donald Woodman

the female, she moves through the Middle Ages, when ecclesiastical handiwork was done only by women, to the Industrial Revolution and modern times, when this work was taken out of homes and placed in factories, where “Women...had no part whatsoever in the transformation of this traditional work into a mechanized process over which they had no control.”<sup>14</sup> Thus the handiwork of women, which once had been highly valued and the focus of women’s education, was relegated to the trivial and insignificant.

The corners of the table where the three wings are joined represent this decline of

## “SYLLABLE FROM SOUND”: MARTHA COLLINS AND EMILY DICKINSON

By Ellen Davis

During the summer of 1996, Ellen Davis participated in a writers' workshop sponsored by the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. It was there that Davis first studied with Martha Collins in a translation workshop and found her “utterly engaged with language, culture, politics, ‘Meanings.’” In the following article, Davis shares her own deep admiration for Collins's work and explores the poet's interest in Dickinson.

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

Poet and scholar Martha Collins founded the creative writing program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which she co-directs with poet and Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic Lloyd Schwartz. Last year she accepted a position at Oberlin College co-directing its creative writing program and helping to edit *Field*, the distinguished literary magazine published there. She will return to U. Mass. during spring semesters.

Schwartz has “boundless admiration” for Collins: “She is a poet of a wild imagination....Our poems are so different. But we've taught occasional classes together and we zero in on the same things in students' poems. We love writers who are quirky, who don't fit in. My work is narrative, linear, conversational. Martha's is surreal, collage-like—it's coming at you from so many directions. It's what ‘words can do.’”

Collins first seriously grappled with Dickinson's “strangeness” when she was in college and read, among others, Poem J1068, “Further in Summer than the Birds”: “I remember finding her poems endlessly intriguing. I got involved in a conversation about the word ‘Antiquet.’ Because the words were so weird and they could do so many different things, I saw that they required incredible attention. Dickinson used words that were not in the dictionary, words that were always doing

strange things. That awareness has always stayed with me; it's what I love about Dickinson.”



Doug Macomber

A 1996 issue of *Field* included “Emily Dickinson: A Symposium,” in which Collins and several other poets contributed remarks about specific Dickinson poems. In speaking of Poem J280, Collins said in part: “‘I felt a Funeral, in my Brain’...travels in both directions, not only embodying both movements, but also conflating their terms. The distance between inner and outer is often an issue for Dickinson, a situation that metaphor seeks to overcome. It succeeds in this poem, and does something more besides: the poem's astonishing reversal of inner and outer is so powerful that it ends up producing something like the aesthetic opposite of the terrifying experience it sets out to describe.”

In an unpublished essay, Collins, discussing Dickinson's “posthumously voiced poems,” refers to Geoffrey Hartman's phrase “the liminal moment” in relation to Poem J615, “Our journey had advanced—.” In particular, two lines in the second stanza, “Before—were Cities—but Between—/The Forest of the Dead—,”

suggest the significance of liminal states for Dickinson, of places where “Between” is itself a situation.

Border states, shifting perceptions, circumference, and transformation are all important elements in Collins's work, as they are in Dickinson's. Collins devotes section 2 of “Women in American Literature: An Introduction,” the first poem in *The Arrangement of Space* (her second published poetry collection) to a contemporary search for Dickinson:

We're deep in the hills, in the noon sun,  
when we come  
to the town where I leave you alone, I  
need to see  
how far she saw on her own. Because  
if I  
can find her here, not in the center, its  
tall  
dark steeples, not even the seven  
doors of the house,  
but all around, where her business lay,  
on the edge,  
the measureless rim of the circle that  
turns both ways  
at once—

This is a vivid prefiguring of “Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886” from *The Book of Days*.

Collins has published four books of poetry and a book of essays on Louise Bogan. Her first book, *The Catastrophe of Rainbows*, was published in 1985 by Cleveland State University Poetry Center. Her second, *The Arrangement of Space*, won the Peregrine Smith Poetry contest and appeared in 1991. David Ignatow chose Collins's third collection, *A History of Small Life on a Windy Planet* for the Poetry Society of America's Alice Fay Di Castagnola work-in-progress award. The University of Georgia published it in 1993. The stunning opening poem, “The Border,” begins:

Hasta luego and over you go and it's  
not  
serapes, the big sombreros, not even  
coyotes,



**Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886**

Deep in the hills, in the noon sun,  
through the white gate, through the white front door,  
up the stairs to the room, and the white dress—

Up the stairs, to the cupola,  
where the turning world—the trees, the hills,  
the hills beyond circumference—returned.

Is this what body comes to, then,  
after the dinners, the talk, the wine,  
hello, goodbye, is this the way,  
most I, most who I am?

He was perfect muse, the god who was  
and was not there. She had no mother,  
she said, her mother was awe.

But awe was also muse, was house,  
was hills, beyond the hills—

Mother, wife, the earth at last.  
For us it goes the other way:

the deep green cave, the flesh  
of love, the wings  
of the white election—

*Reprinted by permission of Martha Collins*

rivers and hills, though that's more like  
it, towers  
with guards, Stop! or we'll shoot and  
they do but you don't  
need a border for that, a fence will do...

In addition to being an extraordinary poem, it is a devastating indictment of the limits of nationalism and identity. In marked contrast to Dickinson, Collins was not content to limit her social protest to writing. She helped organize an annual twenty-four-hour antinuclear-proliferation reading at a Cambridge church for New England Writers for Survival.

Collins also has helped to erase borders between Americans and Vietnamese through her work as translator with Nguyen Quang Thieu, one of the most highly regarded, prolific writers in northern Vietnam. The result was her translation with the author of his selected poetry, *The Women Carry River Water*, published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 1997. Reviewers have described the translations as "perfect." Lloyd Schwartz remarked about the project, "How many

people would learn Vietnamese because they fell in love with poems they wanted to translate?" Of Thieu's poems, Collins observed in her Translator's Preface: "Even in their rough English versions, the poems I first saw impressed me as a rare combination of exact observation and slightly surreal but always meaningful shifts of perception." Such a description might be applied equally well to Dickinson's work.

Collins's fourth collection, *Some Things Words Can Do*, was recently published by Sheep Meadow Press. In the same volume is also a reissue of *A History of Small Life on a Windy Planet*. In the *Boston Book Review*, poet Pamela Alexander had this to say about *Some Things*: "The idiosyncratic territory of Martha Collins' work lies south of Emily Dickinson, west of H.D., a little to the left of Louise Bogan, and within easy commuting distance of Gertrude Stein. While her poems deal with war and oppression, contemporary relationships, civil rights and censorship and homelessness, she is fluid, musical, full

of wit and wordplay and suggestiveness. Or think of her as a juggler: each time she catches an object and releases it, it becomes something different, reinventing itself spontaneously. This is exciting, you think, and then you see (or rather you don't) that the juggler has disappeared, and the objects are doing it all on their own."

Perhaps the most striking work from a sheerly linguistic standpoint appears in the middle section, a sonnetlike sequence of riffs on single words, including "Points," "Lines," "Lets," "Likes," "Lies," "Means," and "Races." *Some Things* is remarkable for its plays on words, its wholeness within brokenness, its use of poetic tradition, and its breathtaking departures from that tradition. One of several great poems in the third section is "The Language It Would Speak," whose diction and suggestion that we are made by language are not far from Dickinson's sensibility. Its final line reads: "You were a new word."

Dickinson poems J1212, "A word is dead," and J1651 "A Word made Flesh is seldom" come to mind in reading *Some Things Words Can Do*. The title poem could be read as a contemporary revisioning of "A word is dead." Again, Lloyd Schwartz: "One of the fascinating things about it is that it's making more explicit some of the things that [Collins is] doing. One of the things this book is about is her poetics. The poems are alive, inventive—a flowering of all the things that she's been doing so well."

Considering her teaching and administering, her fellowships from the NEA, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, and the Bunting Institute, her political activism, her two Pushcart Prizes, her work as translator, and publication in more than three hundred literary journals, Martha Collins has clearly earned her place as a citizen of the world of poetry. If, as Dickinson said in J883, "The Poets light but Lamps —," Martha Collins has done so, arranging space—"Circumference"—for her own white election.

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*Ellen Davis teaches writing at Boston University. Recent poems have appeared in California Quarterly, Ekphrasis, and the Harvard Review.*

## WELCOMING VISITORS

*By Gregory Farmer and Cindy Dickinson*

### The Dickinson Sofa

What goes around, comes around—how true it is! The impressive mahogany sofa that once graced the Dickinson Homestead is back, looking better than ever.



The massive Empire-style piece dates from the late 1820s and was probably acquired by Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson about the time of their marriage. It was originally covered in sleek black horsehair, a stylish and durable fabric of the period. For many years the sofa received all rank of visitors to the Dickinson household. During winter months it was traditionally moved into the dining room to help form a cozy winter sitting room.

About 1890, the old sofa (now worn and out of fashion) was moved over to the Evergreens. Susan Dickinson had it reupholstered in a pressed red velvet that echoed the new red Morris-style wallpaper and placed it in the front hall of her home. There it remained for many years, resting under a dramatic painting of *Abram and Sarah* and watching the changes in the household. Martha Dickinson Bianchi's dog Sport rested on it, as did many Dickinson pilgrims who came to visit the Evergreens in the 1920s and '30s.

By 1991, when the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust took over the Evergreens, the sofa was in very bad shape. The

mahogany veneer was dull and flaking, the cushions were misshapen, and the pressed red velvet was moth-eaten and worn thin. The horsehair stuffing made a comfortable home for a large family of mice.

The Dickinson family provenance of

the sofa and its deteriorating condition made it a high priority for conservation. John Payson, an accomplished furniture restorer from Millers Falls, Massachusetts, was called in for advice. He agreed to repair, rebuild, and recover the sofa according to museum conservation standards with thorough documentation every step of the way. The work was paid for by private donations and earned income from the Bianchi Trust.

The end result is visible now in the Evergreens vignette at the Dickinson Homestead. The mahogany surfaces glow with the patina of age, and the red velvet cover echoes the pressed velvet that Sue had chosen. The sofa will eventually return to its place of honor in the front hall of the Evergreens, but for now, visitors to the Homestead have an opportunity to see a prime example of the scale and type of furnishing that Emily knew so well.

For more information on this and other conservation projects at the Evergreens, please contact Gregory Farmer, Project Manager, The Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, P.O. Box 603, Amherst, MA 01004-0603.

### Evoking the Sense of Emily Dickinson: The Guides at the Dickinson Homestead

In a recent Homestead survey, many visitors commented that what they liked best about their tour was the guide. Over and over again, visitors chose words like "informative" and "knowledgeable," along with "charming," "vibrant," "lucid," and "enthusiastic" to describe the person who had led their tour at the Homestead. One visitor remarked that his guide "gave us a real 'sense' of Emily Dickinson."

Who are the guides who are entrusted to tell the story of Emily Dickinson and do so with enthusiasm and integrity, week after week, year after year?

Although the guiding program at the Homestead has formally existed since 1965, when Amherst College bought the Homestead, perhaps the first Homestead guide was Ethel Cushman Parke. Mrs. Parke and her husband, Hervey, bought the Homestead from Emily Dickinson's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, in 1916. Over the years, the family witnessed Dickinson's growing popularity as pilgrims from near and far began appearing at the Homestead door to glimpse the sanctuary of their favorite poet. The Parke family guest book chronicles the visits of numerous people, including Martha Grahame (who had recently completed a ballet about the poet), who shared tea and a tour with Mrs. Parke.

When Amherst College acquired the Homestead, the college agreed to open the poet's bedroom to the public while maintaining the rest of the house as a faculty residence. Volunteer guides were recruited from among Amherst College faculty spouses to talk with visitors about Emily Dickinson's life and work and to show them the famous bedroom. Until 1970, when Mary Landis Hampson at the Evergreens presented the Homestead with a significant collection of Dickinson family furniture, the bedroom was largely unfurnished. One guide, now retired, recalls with amusement ushering the guests upstairs for the big "finale," only to open the

door to a room with very few furnishings, not even a bed!

Since 1965, the guides have witnessed significant change: major developments in Dickinson scholarship (including the publication of Richard Sewall's landmark biography), special events like the centenary recognition of Dickinson's death, the issuance of an eight-cent postage stamp with Dickinson's image, the tenure of four curators, changes in objects on display, shifts in tour procedures (including the opening in 1987 of a garage Tour Center), and an expansion of rooms on the tour. Through it all, the guiding program has remained a reliable thread of continuity for the Homestead and its visitors.

At any given time, the guiding staff consists of fifteen to twenty-five people. The 1998 roster includes one guide, Ann May, who has been on the staff continuously since 1965, and Priscilla Parke, who continues to offer visitors her unique perspective as a former resident of the Homestead. Guides have been recruited from faculty members and spouses at Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts, graduate students at the university, community members with a special interest in local history, and schoolteachers. While most guides work two or three days a month, each summer several students from the Five Colleges are hired to guide each day and to help run the Tour Center. Although the Homestead guiding commitment began as a volunteer effort, guides are now paid a modest wage.

Homestead guides do not have a prepared script. Instead, they develop their own tours after reading a selected bibliography that includes major works (such as Sewall's biography), by trailing tours given by other guides, and by meeting several times with the curator. In recent years, before giving a public tour, each guide has also been required to do a practice tour.

The care that each guide takes to craft his or her own tour is not lost on visitors. One visitor remarked on a recent repeat visit to the Homestead: "We like the fact that each guide presents an individual tour. Every time we learn something new." In general, the guide presents informa-

tion about Emily Dickinson's life and work, her family, the Homestead itself, and nineteenth-century Amherst. Most tours begin with an overview of Dickinson's life and a brief review of the house history—either outside in favorable weather or in the front parlor.

As the tour makes its way through the house, topics for discussion include the Dickinson and Norcross families, Emily Dickinson's education, her early life, details from her experiences at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, and her attitude toward spirituality and religion. Two rooms, the library and the dining room (added to the tour in 1996), offer the opportunity to preview the life of Dickinson's brother and sister-in-law at the Evergreens next door, to talk about Emily's love of gardening, and to mention the baking skills for which she was so famous.

tour. Many guides have been impressed with the sensitivity and thoughtfulness that visitors display in giving these readings.

Why do the guides do it? Conversations with past and current guides reveal two major reasons for guiding. Guides appreciate the opportunity to learn more about a poet who has either intrigued or eluded them and about the history of the area in which they live. Second, guides like to share this information with the variety of people who come from all over the world to visit the Homestead each year. One guide has commented that what she likes best about guiding is the sense of "satisfaction, on occasion, that I've provided illumination about Emily Dickinson's life and genius." The guides are constantly reminded of Dickinson's international acclaim when they meet people who have



*A group of guides from the Homestead and the Amherst History Museum stand in front of the William Norcross house in Monson, the home of Emily Dickinson's great-grandfather, on a 1998 field trip.*

Upstairs, guides often choose to discuss Dickinson's writing habits and publication history, either in the bedroom or in an exhibition room that contains photographs of friends and editors as well as facsimiles of letters and poems. Although the third floor and cupola were once included on the tour, they were eliminated in the early 1980s, in part because of a bat problem!

A particular problem of incorporating poetry into a tour has recently been addressed with the inauguration of the Featured Poems Series handout. Guides are encouraged to ask their visitors to read one of the poems at the conclusion of the

traveled thousands of miles to see a home that they themselves walk or drive past every day. Almost daily at least one visitor arrives from outside the United States.

Learning about Emily Dickinson does not stop once a guide finishes his or her training. It's challenging to stay on top of the constantly evolving Dickinson scholarship and to answer probing visitor questions, which range from the straightforward "Where is Dickinson buried?" to "How was Dickinson influenced by the Metaphysicals and the Transcendentalists?" Guides stay abreast of new Dickinson scholarship by reading new articles and books about Dickinson and by attend-

ing meetings throughout the year. Recent speakers have included Polly Longworth on her current biography project, Dan Lombardo of the Jones Library in Amherst on the forged poem, and Susan Danly of the Mead Art Museum on Austin and Susan Dickinson's art collection. For the past three years, guides have also taken field trips to such places as Concord and Monson, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut.

For one guide, the challenge of guiding is the necessity of "putting into a brief time and into a common language what it is about the woman, the family, the art, that a person should know and appreciate." Several guides find particular satisfaction in reaching out to those people who have tagged along *with* a devoted Dickinson fan, helping those people to understand the appeal of Dickinson's life and work. One guide says that she "enjoys increasing people's knowledge about Emily Dickinson, especially when people know only a little about her." She believes that "Emily Dickinson is a person who becomes more interesting as you learn more about her. People who are enigmatic are inherently more interesting."

Sometimes the Homestead visitors are names recognized by many. One guide recalls arriving at the Homestead to have the door opened for her by Garrison Keillor of *Prairie Home Companion*, who was in Amherst to broadcast his show from the University of Massachusetts. Other notable visitors have included actress Julie Harris, the poet Seamus Heaney, and Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*. Several guides also recall with fondness a visit to the house by the director of the Brontë Parsonage in England.

Countless visitors, less famous but perhaps even more devoted, also imprint themselves on their guides' memories. One guide recalls a visitor who had tears in her eyes when she entered Dickinson's bedroom; the same woman carefully sat at the top of the stairs at the end of her tour to imagine how Emily Dickinson might have felt as she perched there listening to music or conversation below. A recent visitor embraced the large white oak tree on the east side of the Homestead once she learned that it probably was planted during Emily Dickinson's lifetime.

Perhaps the most challenging, and most memorable, tours that guides give are for schoolchildren. One guide, now a student at Amherst College who has worked at the Homestead for three summers, decided to inquire about guiding opportunities because of her positive experience at the Homestead as an elementary school student.

Indeed, the Homestead has a long tradition of providing visits for school groups, and many guides who have led those experiences remember them with great fondness. One guide remarked that "no enthusiasm for Dickinson was more refreshing than that of second graders reciting simple poems." Guides especially appreciate the advanced preparation that the children display and their eagerness to share that knowledge and to ask provocative questions—questions that may change the way a guide has thought about Emily Dickinson.

A former guide remembers the following anecdote: "I enjoyed guiding children through the Homestead because often they asked such lively, original, sometimes even wonderfully impertinent questions. I remember one young boy who listened carefully to the part of my tour in which I spoke about the unique relationship between Lavinia and Emily. I spoke about how the sisters were close, although very different—that Vinnie respected her sister's need for privacy and often 'ran interference' for the poet when Dickinson wanted time for herself. That last remark must have struck a chord with the boy because he quickly piped up: 'Didn't Vinnie ever get tired of that?!' I had never thought about any casual and totally understandable irritation between Vinnie and Emily. I realized I had probably fallen into the trap of idealizing their relationship. That young boy set me straight and made me more cautious in my research and less willing to take old stories about Emily Dickinson for granted."

Guiding for Emily Dickinson is never static. This year, a new opportunity arose as some Dickinson Homestead guides volunteered to train for supplemental duty at the Evergreens next door. Through training sessions organized by Gregory Farmer, the guides have had an opportunity to

learn firsthand about the architecture, artworks, furnishings, and family life of "the other Dickinson house." Because the Evergreens has survived with all of its furnishings intact and virtually no change to the structure, it offers a detailed view of a middle-class Amherst household in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The fascinating personalities and complex relationships represented at the Evergreens also enrich the Homestead tours. In the words of one guide, "Training at the Evergreens has given me a much better understanding of the physical environment and the family context in which Emily lived and worked. The multitude of distractions inherent in any extended family makes Emily's poetic accomplishments that much more remarkable."

Although Austin and Susan Dickinson's house is still under restoration, the Evergreens has been open occasionally throughout the year for preview tours. The small number of visitors has served as a sample audience, giving guides the opportunity to observe the range of impressions that the house makes on different people.

Typical reactions upon seeing the dark and close interior of the Evergreens are: "Did Mrs. Hampson [who lived in the Evergreens after the death in 1952 of her husband, Alfred Leete Hampson, until her own death in 1988] really live here like this?" (Yes, she did. In fact, it was even more crowded before the books, manuscripts, and artworks were removed for safekeeping.) "It's so dark!" (The original 1856 decorating scheme emphasized natural light, good ventilation, and a light color palette. The current richer color scheme is the result of Sue's redecorating in the 1880s.) "The parlor is so small—is this where Sue had her famous parties?" (The scale of the house is not grand. Even Sue's larger parties must have felt very intimate.)

As the restoration progresses, there will be more opportunities to visit the Evergreens and share the enthusiasm of the guides for this new frontier.

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*Gregory Farmer is Project Manager for the Evergreens. Cindy Dickinson is Curator of the Emily Dickinson Homestead.*

# GUIDING AT THE HOMESTEAD: A PERSONAL VIEW

by Dorothea A. Kissam

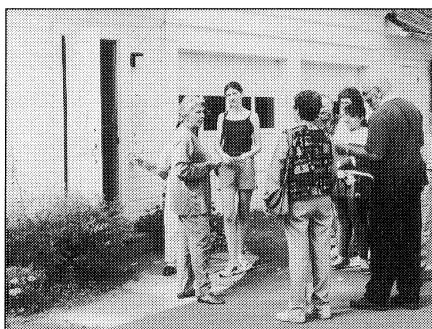
It was 1991 when I started as a guide at the Dickinson Homestead. Somewhat to my surprise, I began to put aside my usual reading to read about the Dickinson family and to read critiques of Emily Dickinson's poetry. I tried to ferret out answers to questions put to me by my tour groups and also to answer some of my own queries. One of the early questions I tried to answer was what made Thomas Wentworth Higginson change his mind about Emily's poetry. While doing the research for a paper on Mabel Loomis Todd, I discovered the answer in one of Todd's journal entries.

Emily's poetry for me was and is hard to fathom. I took classes in her poetry to better my understanding. A class with David Porter in 1992 was helpful. More recently I have attended three of Jay Ladin's classes to gain a better grasp of her work. Then I have gone to several Elderhostel sessions and learned there of different approaches to Dickinson and her poetry. Martha O'Keefe, a Dickinson scholar from Washington, D.C., led one of the Elderhostel sessions I attended. Afterward I pursued with interest the idea she had presented, that there was purpose in Emily's arrangement of her poems within a fascicle. Emily Dickinson and the lore that surrounds her, her family, and her friends have become an absorbing study and continue to be so.

Sometimes as a guide, I am hard put to choose the balance between what we think of as essential for a visitor to hear and what it is the visitor came for and wants to hear. Often the person has only passing interest in the poet and in the interior of the house. "But where is the furniture?" is a frequent question. I briefly explain that much of the furniture has been dispersed long since except for a few pieces set aside by Martha Bianchi, Emily's niece, which are currently in the Houghton Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

At the Homestead each guide is encouraged to develop her or his own style of delivery for the tours and hence emphasizes different aspects. A visitor may be

surprised by my detailed presentations of Emily Dickinson's life, her family—the three strong Dickinson men, Samuel Fowler, Edward, and Austin—and the contrast between Emily, a retiring poet, and Lavinia, the sociable, practical sister. (The Dickinson mother, Emily Norcross Dickinson, continues in her role as a background figure, nursed by her daughters, Emily and Lavinia.)



*A guide meets with a tour group outside the Tour Center at the Homestead.*

I have wanted to bring the poetry into my tour as much as possible. The Homestead, is after all, the home of a world-class poet, but how to feature the poetry in the tour time allotted? As a guide, I try to show the Homestead as the background for Emily's poetry. In order to feature a few of the poems I begin my tour by reading Poem J1767 as the group assembles in the front parlor:

Sweet hours have perished here;  
This is a mighty room,  
Within its precincts hopes have played, —  
Now shadows in the tomb.

This poem serves as an introduction to the poet's house and the poetry.

Then, after briefly pausing in the Evergreens preview room—a fascinating topic in itself—I take the visitors to the family dining room, which formerly led to Emily's conservatory, which fell victim to termite damage and was removed long ago. But in this room, with memories of the conservatory lovingly tended by Emily, I read a nature poem to mark the season of the year. Emily's nature poems are startlingly apt. "There's a certain Slant of Light, Win-

ter Afternoons" (J258) is one. For summer, "I taste a liquor never brewed" (J214). For autumn, it might be Poem J130, "These are the days when Birds come back."

Upstairs, I try to tell the story in the blue room (probably Mrs. Dickinson's room when an invalid) of Mabel Loomis Todd's meeting with Thomas Wentworth Higginson when she read twelve of Emily's poems aloud to him. At that moment Higginson at last comprehended their power, after years of receiving poems from Emily herself. The spoken poems held the magic. In this room, now used to feature Emily Dickinson memorabilia, each photograph—of Higginson, Todd, Samuel Bowles, Charles Wadsworth, Judge Lord, and others—can evoke a story. How many visitors know of Emily's late love affair with Judge Lord? But the minutes tick away, and once in a while I try to pause for questions.

Last is Emily's bedroom, a special place where much of the poetry was written and where stood the chest of drawers (the original is at the Houghton) in which Lavinia found some seven to eight hundred of Emily's poems—Lavinia's gift to posterity. In Emily's bedroom I ask a visitor to read aloud one of the poems selected by the curator and printed on a handout. Sometimes the visitor and perhaps others in the group, like Higginson, hear the poem anew.

Homestead visitors are diverse, coming from all over the world. Some are filling in time. "Let's go see the Homestead since we're in Amherst." Some have made a pilgrimage to it. Hence the groups are mixed. Once in a while a group will catch fire—some of the magic will come through when a poem is read aloud or when some aspect of the Dickinson saga is seen from a new point of view. This is the bit of serendipity that can reward a guide.

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*Dorothea A. Kissam is an active alumna of Columbia University School of Nursing Education. She has been a guide at the Homestead since 1991.*

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

## THE TENTH-ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING

With Colorado's Front Range as backdrop, forty-some enthusiastic Dickinsonians gathered in Boulder in mid-July to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of EDIS. A number of founding members were present and others sent their greetings.

The two-day meeting included small-group discussions of favorite Dickinson poems led by Paul Crumbley, Jane Eberwein, Robert McClure Smith, Vivian Pollak, Ellen Louise Hart, Eleanor Heginbotham, Mary Loeffelholz, and Michael Yetman.

Discussions often spilled over into lunch and dinner gatherings.

Saturday evening's gala Birthday Bash, complete with birthday hats and balloons, was followed by the highlight of the weekend, an introduction to "The Belle of Boulder." See the review at right.

Sunday morning began with participants discussing their own research projects. Georgiana Strickland then spoke on "Emily Dickinson's Colorado"—what the poet would have known about the state from the travel writings of Samuel

Bowles and Helen Hunt Jackson. She illustrated her talk with slides showing Colorado scenes, taken from books and periodicals of Dickinson's time.

The gathering closed with Jonnie Guerra's summary of the Society's accomplishments to date and hopes and plans for the future (see pages 16-18).

Those in attendance departed with a Rocky Mountain High they hoped would hold till next year's annual meeting, which will take place during the Mount Holyoke conference (see page 19).

### Academic Meetings

Two Dickinson sessions will be held at this year's annual meeting of the **Modern Language Association** at San Francisco's Hilton Hotel. On Sunday, December 27, from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m., a panel entitled "Queering Dickinson" will be presided over by Ellen Louise Hart of the University of California, Santa Cruz. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon of Yale University will speak on "'Rearrange a 'Wife's' Affection': Emily Dickinson and Same-Sex Marriage." Toni A.H. McNaron of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, will address the topic "'To Be or Not to Be' Is Not the Question." Hart's paper will be on "Lesbian Editorial Theory and the Homosexual Dickinson." Marilee Lindemann of the University of Maryland, College Park, will be the respondent.

The second session, to be held from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 29, will be a panel discussion focusing on Ralph W. Franklin's new variorum edition of Dickinson's poems. Katie King of the University of Maryland, College Park, will preside. Panelists will be Deborah Ann Cadman, Skidmore College, speaking on "Gift and Material Presence in the Manuscripts"; Paul Crumbley of Utah State University, on "Editions as Textual Homes"; Margaret H. Freeman of Los Angeles Valley College, on "Her Odd Secrets of the Line"; Elizabeth Horan of Arizona State University, on "Literary Property"; Marta Werner of Georgia State Univer-

sity, on "The Edges of the Editions of the Poems"; and Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, College Park, on "The Roundtable and Franklin's Gifts."

For the **1999 MLA meeting**, proposals are sought for another roundtable on the Franklin variorum edition after a year in print. Abstracts of one to two pages should describe the critical approach to be taken, addressing such questions as: How stable are Dickinson's poems and how does that matter? What counts as an Emily Dickinson poem? What sorts of interventions in Dickinson studies does this new edition make possible? Abstracts should be in dialogue with the 1998 roundtable, which will be available at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/dickinson>.

The second topic is open at present, but we are especially interested in proposals on new directions in Dickinson biography. Submissions should be sent by March 15 to Martha Nell Smith, Dept. of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 USA, or by e-mail to [ms63@umail.umd.edu](mailto:ms63@umail.umd.edu).

The **American Literature Association** will hold its annual meeting at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland, May 27 to 30, 1999. Two Dickinson panels are planned, one focusing on "Paradox in Emily Dickinson," the other on "Fictionalized Dickinson." Proposals

should be sent by December 31, 1998, to Gudrun Grabher, Dept. of American Studies, University of Innsbruck, Innrain 52, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria. She may be reached by phone at 43-512-507-4171, by fax at 43-512-507-2879, or by e-mail at [Gudrun.M.Grabher@uibk.ac.at](mailto:Gudrun.M.Grabher@uibk.ac.at).

For further information on the ALA meeting, contact co-director Laura Skandera-Trombley at [lskandera@coe.edu](mailto:lskandera@coe.edu) or visit the ALA website at <http://english.byu.edu/cronin/ala.htm>.

### Chapter Notes

On December 11, **Mount Holyoke College** will celebrate its annual Emily Dickinson Birthday Bash with a reading of selected letters from the poet to Susan Dickinson. The reading will be accompanied by remarks from Ellen Louise Hart to celebrate the publication of her book, co-edited with Martha Nell Smith, entitled *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson*, published by Paris Press. Hart is an alumna of Mount Holyoke. The public is invited to attend the Birthday Bash, which is scheduled to be held at 7:30 in the New York Room of the college. For more details, call Martha Ackmann in the MHC Women's Studies Program at 413-538-2564 or contact her by e-mail at [mackmann@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:mackmann@mtholyoke.edu).

*Continued at right*

EDIS BULLETIN

## "THE BELLE OF BOULDER" PROVES BOLD VENTURE

Reviewed by Georgiana Strickland

"The Belle of Boulder," premiered at the EDIS tenth-anniversary meeting, is an original production that offers Dickinson admirers a Thoroughly Modern Emily. Written by Suzanne Juhasz and Jonnie Guerra, it starred Guerra (as host of the "Bolder Boulder Show") and Juhasz in a *tour de force* performance as Dickinson, now a Belle of the Golden West.

Emily, it seems, has moved west (along with sister Vinnie) to share a nest with "Helen [Hunt Jackson] of Colorado," who now runs a Boulder b&b. In her new life, Belle has shed her New England inhibitions, along with her Myth of Amherst persona ("a kind of whimsical idiot savant") and has joined the Boulder Women's Triathlon Team.

Indeed, her arrival *à bicyclette* introduces us to the New Emily—"transformed as befits a worm who has become a wonder woman!" Garbed in helmet, a "Bolder Boulder" T-shirt, and tight black bicycle shorts (discreetly concealed beneath "an abbreviated Truth or Dare white lace skirt"), Belle proceeds to offer her "introduction" (in the manner of *another* Belle), a "bran blueberry sunflower seed granola muffin. My own special recipe!"

The fun continues through an interview in which Belle spills the beans on family, friends, Amherst society, would-be editors of her poetry, her white dress, and her own old and new personas.

Father, we learn, was "so Big" that Emily used to wonder, "How could I be a



Eleanor Heginbotham

Cast of "The Belle of Boulder": left to right, Peggy and Gudrun Grabher, Emily Seelbinder, Martha Ackmann, Gary Lee Stonum, Cynthia Hogue, Dan Lombardo, and Suzanne Juhasz as the Belle.

Poet...when Father was there with his mental corrective pen?" Austin, now "the Squire of Amherst," is "safe at home..., his two wives keeping watch, one on either side." Susan, the object of Emily's unrequited "long wooing," has been left behind for a mountain eyrie with Helen.

For Higginson—"the Predator Editor, I used to call him, privately"—Belle tells us, Emily had created herself as "Poet. An exaggerated person...who wandered the orchards and woods in the company of a talking Dog...just the sort of eccentric but harmless little twerp...to appeal to a manly sort of Editor." Of her famous white dress, she proclaims, "the prim and prissy white, the virginal white, the renunciatory white has been transformed into *power white, white chic.*"

In a grand finale monologue, Belle boasts

of her newfound prowess and ultimate fame. "Up mountain and down dale, that's me. Out upon Circumference—Beyond the Dip of Bell—....I will light lamps and never go out! I will pile like thunder to its close, for I am Poetry....I am the Bolts of Melody! I am the Ransom in the Voice! I will write *thousands* of poems, letter-poems, poem-letters, variants and variations. My writing will be published in variorum editions, print and manu-

script alike. It will be translated, analyzed, deconstructed and reconstructed. I am Poet! I am Woman! I am the Belle of Boulder!"

This witty, frequently wise, and wonderfully entertaining show closed with presentation of the finalists in the "annual Emily Dickinson Impersonator competition," each offering a highly original and hilarious rendition of a favorite Dickinson poem, followed by an ensemble reading of "The Poets light but Lamps" and a well deserved standing ovation for the entire cast. We can only hope that Belle's wanderlust will carry her our way again soon.

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*Georgiana Strickland retired recently after a long career as a university press editor. She continues to edit the Bulletin.*

### Chapter notes, continued

The **Utah chapter** held its bi-annual meeting on Thursday, May 28, at Utah State University in Logan. The theme was "Drama's Vitallest Expression," and participants performed favorite Dickinson poems and letters in various creative ways. Chapter president Paul Crumbley was master of ceremonies, and several of his USU English students presented creative renditions of ED's works, including dramatic readings, the singing of poems, skits with costumes, serious interpretations, and parodies. Cynthia Hallen of Brigham Young

University put a Dickinsonian turn on some lyrics from *Fiddler on the Roof* by singing a parody entitled "If I Were A Recluse / Shooby dooby...doo."

The chapter's next meeting was scheduled for October 29 at Weber State University (too late for a report in this issue of the *Bulletin*).

The **Los Angeles chapter** has had a busy year. Meetings have included a discussion of Dickinson's "poetry poems" at Pacific Palisades; a dinner with a reading

by poet Marilyn Nelson; a Pasadena gathering with performances of scenes from the recently optioned screenplay *Select Society* (about the friendship between Emily and Susan Dickinson); and a fall course on Dickinson taught by Margaret Freeman at Los Angeles Valley College. The season will close on December 10 with a Dickinson birthday celebration with tea, sherry, and black cake. For further information, contact Barbara Nicolosi at [bruthnic@aol.com](mailto:bruthnic@aol.com) or Cheryl Langdell at [langdell@cco.caltech.edu](mailto:langdell@cco.caltech.edu).

# REFLECTIONS ON EDIS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

By Jonnie Guerra

The following remarks provided the finale to EDIS's tenth-anniversary gathering in Boulder, Colorado, this past July.

—Ed.

In an 1862 letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Emily Dickinson made a prophetic observation—and one you have heard quoted frequently this weekend: “If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her.” This gathering in Boulder, Colorado, to celebrate the tenth birthday of the author society devoted to Dickinson and her work and established with the express purpose of “Disseminating / [her] Circumference” is wonderful testimony to Dickinson's astute self-confidence in her own immortality.

As the current vice president of EDIS, I am pleased to fill in for President Cristanne Miller to offer some reflections on the beginnings of the Society, on its accomplishments to date, and on the future we envision. My remarks this afternoon illustrate the collaborative spirit that has sustained this Society from the very start, for the memories, accomplishments, and future vision belong to many besides myself. I ask that you think of me, not as me, but as a “supposed person,” the representative of others, more influential than myself, who launched EDIS a decade ago and continue to nurture its success.

It is worth noting that just about everyone who sent me their recollections remembers good food and even better camaraderie as hallmarks of the early days of planning for the Emily Dickinson International Society. According to Jane Eberwein, Margaret Freeman first broached “the idea of a society while a bunch of [ED enthusiasts] were standing in line at a Dayton, Ohio, restaurant toward the end of an October 1986 conference (having given ‘Dickinson’ as the name of the party).”

Rivaling the Chicago Five, this group—our own Dayton Five—included not only Jane and Margaret but also Suzanne Juhasz, Barbara Mossberg, and Gary Lee Stonum. Jane remembers thinking that the Society “seemed like an exciting idea but probably

one of those things nobody follows up on [and thus] I was happily surprised to be included in a social gathering [at the New York MLA that same year] where plans were further developed.”

A few months later the expanded group met again, this time at the District of Columbia Historical Society. On this occasion, the conversation included talk of a constitution and legal incorporation and bold plans for an international conference, two publications, MLA affiliation, an Amherst center for Dickinson study, and a secure future for the Dickinson houses. In addition, Cristanne Miller recalls “the wonderful catering served by Barbara [Mossberg]’s son [Nicolino], who recited ‘I’m Nobody’ for the group.”

Just as memorable, says Cris, was “the nearly hour-long discussion about what level of dues would be appropriate for Martha Nell Smith’s cleaning woman, who became the representative for all nonacademic, nonprofessional ED fans.” Likewise, founding president Margaret Freeman remembers that a primary goal for EDIS from its start was “to reach out to all who love Dickinson, and not just academics.” I am proud to say that our current membership represents a broad spectrum of professions and that the Society will continue to aim for this kind of inclusiveness as we move into our second decade.

Even with the ardent commitment of the founders, the actual process of incorporation took two years. Margaret insists that “No Pain, no Gain” was the motto of that period. Indeed, it was only after much hard work and many sessions of debate and decision-making that the inauguration and incorporation meetings were held on May 24, 1988. On this day, in the Special Collections Room at the Jones Library in Amherst, a firm legal foundation for the Society’s work was finally in place.

As the concept of a Dickinson Society progressed to the implementation stage, the founders were grateful for Christer Mossberg’s work as legal counsel, Don

Freeman’s assistance in retaining Barry White of Foley, Hoag, & Eliot in Boston as the Society’s registered agent in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Special Collections Curator Dan Lombardo’s gracious hospitality at the Jones.

Margaret Freeman also points out that, because the founders “knew Dickinson had a following all over the world,” the Society’s mission was international from the outset. Jane Eberwein, the first EDIS membership chair, shared some special memories of her efforts to recruit international members: “One person to whom I wrote was Takao Furukawa, whom I had met at the Folger Conference and who had given me his business card. I asked him to spread the word to the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan but never expected the generosity of Japanese response. Not long afterward I received a letter from him with a long list of Japanese members for EDIS and a check for all those memberships (many for up to five years and several as contributing members). For a while, we had more Japanese members than American ones. It was an amazing display of confidence in a fledgling organization and one we all appreciated.” Today the Society boasts international members from eighteen countries.

It was during Margaret’s presidency that both EDIS publications were successfully launched. In Margaret’s words, “It was the Society’s greatest fortune to discover Georgie [Strickland],” who answered an announcement in one of the early *Bulletins* that the Society was in search of someone to assume the editorship of the *Bulletin*, a post that Margaret and Cris Miller had been juggling back and forth. Georgie’s creativity and dedication to quality have produced a publication that is not only of compelling interest to all our members—academic and nonacademic alike—but also unmatched by the peer publications of other author societies. And surely the *EDIS Bulletin* is one of the few publications to receive its own (nearly) winning numbers from Publishers Clearing House.



The Society is equally proud of the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and indebted to Suzanne Juhasz, its founding editor. Margaret Freeman recalls that "Suzanne's goal, from the beginning, was to create a forum whereby Dickinson scholarship could be read in one place, where the interaction of ideas [about the poet and her work] could take place between the covers" of a single journal. That goal certainly was achieved during its five years of sponsorship by the University Press of Colorado, which ended in the spring of 1997. It is a tribute to Editor-in-Chief Juhasz, Managing Editor Lynne Spears, the editorial board, and all of the journal's many contributors that Johns Hopkins University Press, the premier publisher of humanities journals, has assumed sponsorship of the *Journal*. Now that's a birthday gift worthy of Dickinson!

The culminating event of Margaret's presidency was the Society's first international conference, "Translating Emily Dickinson in Language, Culture, and the Arts," in October 1992. Well over two hundred participants traveled to Washington, D.C., arriving from fifteen foreign countries and twenty-eight states. Richard Sewall, in absentia, received the first Distinguished Service award, and we heard Dickinson performed by a viol da gamba and the world premier of the Robert Chauls song cycle the Society had commissioned.

As the conference director, I remember even better than the occasion the serendipity of the planning: the letter from Roland Hagenbüchle introducing Gudrun Grabher as a potential speaker; another from David Porter recommending Italian translator Marisa Bulgheroni and Portuguese translator Maria de Paiva Correia for the translation workshops; the assistance from the American embassy in locating the Thai translator and scholar Chanthana Chaichit; the steady stream of registrations from our Japanese members; my many calls to distinguished scholars to extol the benefits of paying their own expenses to participate, and my subsequent sighs of relief when they were persuaded.

At the conference itself, the serendipity continued. In attendance were six actresses who had portrayed Dickinson, several in original pieces. It also was at the '92 conference that EDIS made its first acquaintance with Lesley Dill, our keynote speaker

at last summer's annual meeting. During the opening reception, Susanna Rich showed me some slides of Dill's early poem sculptures incorporating Dickinson words, and I quickly added her presentation on Dill to one of the art panels.

I think of Margaret's successor, Vivian Pollak, as the President for Three A's: Amherst, Austria, and Affiliation. First, it was during Vivian's presidency that the Society initiated the tradition of holding some of its annual meetings in Amherst and of planning a program in conjunction with the business meeting. You may recall that, thanks to the arrangements made by Polly Longworth, Vivian presided over the first annual meeting ever held in the Dickinson garden, in the summer of 1993.

It was on that same occasion that she announced plans for the second international conference, "Emily Dickinson Abroad," in Innsbruck, Austria. What a planning trio we had in Vivian, Gudrun, and Margaret Dickie, and what a magical conference in 1995 in Austria, complete with dinner in a Renaissance castle! Again the geographical representation was spectacular—more than a hundred participants from sixteen European, Asian, and North American countries. Among the highlights—and there were many—was Martha Nell Smith's report on the possibility of a hypermedia archive of ED materials on the World Wide Web. Suddenly, in this ancient city, the future seemed very much upon us! Those of you in attendance no doubt also will recall that the Dickinson impersonations continued, and we discovered the theatrical talents of Gudrun, Suzanne, and Cristanne.

Vivian's presidency also was marked by dedication to the Society's goal of winning MLA affiliation. Thanks to the work of both Vivian and Jane Eberwein, formal approval of our status as an allied organization of the Modern Language Association came shortly after Vivian passed the presidential gavel to Cristanne Miller. Beginning in December 1996, the Society has been able to present two Dickinson sessions at each annual convention, which means that our academic membership can count on sessions of interest at both the winter MLA and the late spring ALA meeting.

When Cris succeeded Vivian as the

Society's president, she says, "our publications were strong, our intellectual leadership in the field of Dickinson studies was clear, and our membership was substantial," and she rightly credits "the work of the first two presidents and all the early members of the Board" for a Society that, like Dickinson's house in Poem J1142, was now "adequate, erect." As Cris's presidency has evolved over the last three years, her primary role "has been to direct Society thought and energy to contemplating how to move forward toward other ambitious goals without losing the momentum we have gained in intellectual leadership or the sense of scholarly and celebratory community." It has been a challenge to achieve a balance, to maintain our reputation for strong publications, annual meetings, and conferences and to launch new initiatives.

Next summer's third international conference is an ambitious project. Aply led by Martha Ackmann, Gary Stonum, and Cris, this conference will have participants traveling between three sites important to understanding "Emily Dickinson at Home" and will represent an elaborate collaboration of EDIS with Mount Holyoke College, various Amherst institutions, and the Houghton Library at Harvard. In addition, as many of you know, Domhnall Mitchell has invited us to hold a conference in Trondheim, Norway, and we already are in the planning stages for that event in 2001.

Under Cris's leadership, the Society has sought ways to support the Dickinson houses, both of which are on much firmer financial and organizational grounds than they were ten years ago, thanks to Cindy Dickinson and the Homestead's new board, and to Gregory Farmer and the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust.

Cris also has moved along the Society's dream to initiate a program—to be called the EDIS Scholar in Amherst Program—that will annually bring a scholar to Amherst to study Dickinson's poetry, life, manuscripts, and culture. This is the first step toward the Society's goal to develop and support a center for Dickinson studies in Amherst. And, as you can imagine, these days the Board has both strategic planning for the future and fund raising very much on its mind.

Margaret Freeman has suggested that other challenges that lie ahead for the Board include defining a clear role for local chapters and developing stronger connections between these groups and EDIS, providing more opportunities for the membership to play an active role in the Society, and establishing a greater presence on the Internet listserves. We appreciate that Margaret will direct her energy to these issues as our new Membership Chair.

Although EDIS cannot take credit for the incredible quantity of scholarship on Dickinson that has enriched study of the poet over the last decade, we do take parental pride in several recent projects that represent significant contributions to the reference works available in the field. We are delighted that members of EDIS played a key role as researchers and writers for Jane Eberwein's newly published *Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*. We also look forward to the publication in December 1998 of *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, edited by board members Gudrun Grabher and Cris Miller and our good friend Roland Hagenbüchle, and hailed in advance for its "original and exemplary" scholarship.

No review of the Society's first decade of accomplishments would be complete without public acknowledgment of the contributions to its success of many not with us today. First, I would like to acknowledge former members of the Board who were unable to join us this weekend: Margaret Dickie, Joanne Dobson, Rev. Niels Kjær of Denmark, Polly Longworth, Barbara and Christer Mossberg, Martha O'Keefe, Marc Pachter, and Walt Powell. Next, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the work of the current Board members and officers of the Society [whose names are listed on the back page of the *Bulletin*]. For the beautiful calligraphy recreating Dickinson's handwriting that has become emblematic of EDIS and that can be found on the front page of the *Bulletin* as well as on the covers of the *Journal* and our conference programs, we are indebted to artist Glenda King.

The Society is also grateful to its many friends in Amherst. In addition to Dan Lombardo and Cindy Dickinson, who are here today, and Gregory Farmer whom I have already mentioned, the Society would

like to express special thanks to Betty and Win Bernhard for the festive occasions at their home that enabled the EDIS Board to network with Amherst lovers of Dickinson; to Howard and Joy Gersten of the Jeffery Amherst Book Shop, who have hosted several Dickinson-related book signings; to Fred Marks and Bob Lucas, who can be counted on to arrange special hours for EDIS members to peruse their rare books during our Amherst annual meetings; to Susan Danly, whose collaboration with us last summer and work on the 1997 Mead Museum exhibition resulted in a most memorable annual meeting on Dickinson and the arts; and to the many docents at the Homestead who have indulged our lingering ways during our house tours.

The Board also extends a special thanks to Dan Lombardo and his staff for the hospitality we have enjoyed at the Jones Library from the beginning. In fact, EDIS is so at home at the Jones that we have designated it as our own final resting place—the home of our archives.

Of course, most of the credit for our success belongs to our membership, as of today four hundred strong, many of whom have joined the Society as contributing members and made generous donations in addition to paying dues. If you saw the film *Field of Dreams*, you will remember the words that became a haunting refrain: "Build it, and they will come." At the end of its first decade, the Emily Dickinson International Society has demonstrated a similar charisma in drawing together Dickinson scholars, readers, and fans from around the world.

In closing, it seems fitting to recall Dickinson's opening to Poem J1176:

We never know how high we are  
Till we are asked to rise  
And then if we are true to plan  
Our statures touch the skies —

Please join me in a round of applause for our first ten years!

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Currently *Jonnie Guerra* is "on leave" from academic administration. She is working on a study of dramas about Dickinson and doing volunteer work at an adult reading academy. She has been a member of the EDIS Board since 1992.

## TENTH-ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS

*From Cristanne Miller*

Cristanne Miller, current president of EDIS, was unable to attend the Society's tenth-anniversary celebration in Boulder but sent the following message from her home in Berlin. She has since returned to Pomona College. —Ed.

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On July 19, I will have returned from a visit to the "immortal Alps" that Dickinson imagined, and will myself be imagining all of you in the immortal Rockies. Fortunately the links of the imagination are in this instance more powerful than the restrictions of geography: Although you cannot see me, I am indeed celebrating EDIS's tenth birthday with you even while remaining in Berlin.

In its ten years of existence, EDIS has, I think, been extraordinarily successful in encouraging new scholarship on Dickinson, in publishing the ongoing "news" of activities, events, and thought relating to her life and poetry, and in bringing together people from around the world who are provoked and inspired by Dickinson's verse.

EDIS has been able to step in at early stages both to support the changing management and programs of the Dickinson houses and to establish a firm basis for ongoing conversation about how to continue such cooperative support in the future. And it has established itself nationally (if not internationally) as one of the key U.S. author societies through its association with institutions like the MLA, the ALA, and Johns Hopkins University Press.

I feel very proud to be the president of such a thriving, intellectually and socially constructive Society. To borrow Dickinson's words again, to me it feels "alive." I hope that in the next ten years we will together build from this vital base an even more welcoming, stimulating, supportive Society for the celebration and encouragement of Dickinson studies.

Happy Birthday, EDIS, and may there be many more birthdays to come!

# "EMILY DICKINSON AT HOME"

## MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE, AUGUST 12-15, 1999

By Martha Ackmann

Just hours before her first meeting with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Emily Dickinson scribbled off an enthusiastic note, remarking that he would find her "at Home and glad." More than a century and a quarter later, women and men from around the world will converge once more on the Connecticut River Valley, where organizers of the third Emily Dickinson International Society conference hope that modern-day encounters with the poet will be equally energetic and welcoming.

Mount Holyoke College, in South Hadley, Massachusetts, will be the site of the conference. The college—where Dickinson spent one year studying with the legendary Mary Lyon—is located just eleven miles south of Amherst. Shuttle buses will run regularly between the College and Amherst, allowing conference participants to take full advantage of the many Dickinson attractions in the poet's home town.

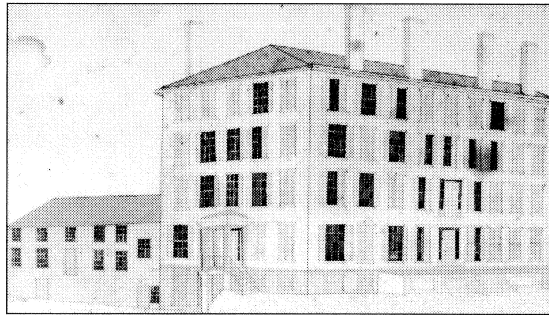
The conference will begin on Thursday afternoon with keynote addresses by Heinz Ickstadt, director of the Kennedy Institute for American Studies at the Free University of Berlin, and Marjorie Perloff, professor of English at Stanford University. Ickstadt, who also is president of the European Association of American Studies (EAAS), will emphasize the international focus of the conference in discussing Dickinson's place in literary history. Perloff's topic will be Dickinson and lyric poetry.

A third keynote address will be offered Friday when poet Alice Fulton, winner of the prestigious MacArthur Award and professor of English at the University of Michigan, will speak on Dickinson and American poetry at the millennium. All three keynote speakers will respond to the various events and presentations of the conference in a final plenary on Sunday morning.

The conference also will salute the work of Ralph Franklin of Yale University.

Franklin, long recognized as a meticulous scholar of Dickinson's manuscripts, will be honored for his most recent groundbreaking work—the new variorum edition of the complete poems. Franklin's citation will be awarded at an opening banquet for all conference participants, to be held Thursday evening.

In addition to the plenary sessions,



*The Mount Holyoke Female Seminary building in 1838.  
From a sketch by student Lydia Gould.*

more than a dozen panels will be offered on a wide variety of subjects, from biography to editing, from feminist criticism to pedagogy. Participants may choose from among three panels presented simultaneously each session. Sessions will run continuously throughout the conference.

A unique feature of the third international conference will be programming in three locations, with plenaries and panels held at Mount Holyoke, special tours and open houses at Dickinson sites in Amherst, and a trip to the Houghton Library at Harvard University for a special exhibit of Dickinson manuscripts.

In Amherst, participants will be able to view manuscripts at the Jones and Frost libraries, take part in tours of the Dickinson Homestead, and see the ongoing restoration of the Evergreens, Susan and Austin Dickinson's home located next door to the Homestead. Amherst booksellers—known for their extensive collections of new and rare Dickinson books—will have their doors open. Sites of historical importance to Dickinson scholars and admirers are within walking distance of each other;

among them are the Amherst History Museum, West Cemetery, and Mabel Loomis Todd's former home.

Local events in Amherst will culminate in a Saturday evening reception "between the houses," when participants will have time to meet each other or renew old friendships in the unique setting of the grove between the Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens.

On Friday afternoon, conference participants may choose to take an excursion to the Houghton Library at Harvard University—two hours east of South Hadley. In addition to the special exhibit of Dickinson manuscripts, the Houghton will present for the first time a comprehensive catalogue of their vast Dickinson holdings. Following a poetry reading in historic Harvard Yard, everyone will be able to soak up the vibrant atmosphere of Harvard Square by browsing among its numerous shops and bookstores and enjoying dinner in one of the Square's many fine restaurants before boarding buses for the return trip to South Hadley.

Those who elect not to travel to Cambridge may spend a leisurely afternoon and evening taking in Dickinson sites around the Valley, examining the manuscript holdings related to the poet in the Mount Holyoke College History/Archives, or simply reading and wandering the green and spacious grounds of the college, recently named "the most beautiful college campus" in the United States.

Registration and housing information for the conference will be mailed to all EDIS members this winter. For more details, contact Martha Ackmann, Conference Co-Director, Dickinson House, Women's Studies Program, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA 01075 USA; by phone at 413-538-2564; or by e-mail at [mackmann@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:mackmann@mtholyoke.edu).

*Martha Ackmann is professor of English at Mount Holyoke College.*

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor*

**Arnold, Bill.** *Emily Dickinson's Secret Love: Mystery "Master" Behind Poems.* Lake Worth, Fla.: PPB Press, 1998. 227 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-892582-00-7, \$19.95.

Arnold has written 115 poems interspersed with 15 explanatory pieces supporting his theory that Samuel Bowles, Jr., editor and owner of the *Springfield Daily Republican*, was the love of Dickinson's life. Arnold believes Dickinson's poems are coded—filled with motifs, symbols, emblems, acrostics, and especially anagrams (verso, reverso, and upside-down) that point to Bowles as a deliberately placed cryptographic presence in her poems. Arnold's diligent search for anagrams may interest some readers, but the number and variety of linguistic combinations can be overwhelming. His assertions linking Dickinson's poetry to a European cabalistic tradition, the conventions of courtly love found in medieval French troubadour poets, and the legacy of Freemasonry demonstrate an original and idiosyncratic approach to reading Dickinson.

**Barnstone, Alik; Michael Tomasek Manson; and Carol J. Singley, eds.** *The Calvinist Roots of the Modern Era.* Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1997. 317 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-87451-807-5, \$5.00. Paper, ISBN 0-87451-808-3, \$25.00.

Seventeen critics examine the influence of Calvinism on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American poets, novelists, and filmmakers of various religious, ethnic, and regional backgrounds. In her essay on Dickinson, Barnstone focuses on "Me from Myself—to banish—" (J642), "There's a certain Slant of light" (J258), and the second "Master" letter to show how Dickinson translated her Calvinist inheritance into poetry. Barnstone concludes that "in her ambiguity of meaning, her

fragmented form, her doubt and parody of tradition and God, in her finding her home in the wasteland of self-division, and in her transference of meaning from God to poetry, Dickinson anticipated the concerns and techniques of the modernists" and "her work, even more than that of her contemporary Walt Whitman, marks the beginning of American Modernism."

**Great Courses on Tape: Understanding Literature and Life: Poetry.** Arnold L. Weinstein, lecturer. 1995. Ten audio cassettes, \$129.95, or two videotapes, \$159.95. Order from The Teaching Company, 7405 Alban Station Court, A-107, Springfield, VA 22150-2318, 1-800-832-2412.

The Great Courses on Tape series features eminent professors, those ranked highest by students in independent surveys. Brown University Professor Arnold L. Weinstein's lectures on poetry include discussions of Shakespeare, Blake, Dickinson, Whitman, Baudelaire, Frost, Stevens, and Rich. The three lectures on Dickinson run thirty minutes each.

In his first lecture, "The Prophetic Voice from the Margins," Weinstein reads and discusses "The Soul selects her own Society," "Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat," "I'm ceded—I've stopped being theirs," and "My Life had stood—a loaded Gun," demonstrating that Dickinson is an aggressively antisocial "inzile," a voice from the margins capable of great power, a power not actualized in her life but in her poetry.

In his second lecture, "The Poetry of Consciousness," he describes Dickinson as an unparalleled nature poet, capable not only of noting microscopic physical details but also of giving spiritual meaning to the mundane phenomenal world. He demonstrates this in close readings of "A Bird came down the Walk," "A Route of

Evanescence," "There's a certain Slant of light," and "Further in Summer than the Birds."

In his third lecture, "Death and Beyond," Weinstein demonstrates Dickinson's range of voice, from whimsical bemusement to harrowing reportage, by examining "Because I could not stop for Death," "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died," and "I felt a Funeral—in my Brain." He achieves a synthesis of the eight poets under discussion by occasionally noting their similarities or differences as they address similar problems.

Weinstein is an erudite, engaging, and companionable guide, attentive to the nuances of language, its etymology, orthography, and syntax, and passionate about poetry and the power of metaphors to bring clarity, to transport us to other worlds. The ten audio cassettes are packaged in attractive book boxes and come with two well organized study guides.

**Johnson, Tamara, ed.** *Readings on Emily Dickinson.* San Diego, Calif.: Greenhaven Press, 1997. 154 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-56510-635-0, \$26.20. Paper, ISBN 1-56510-634-2, \$16.20.

Thoughtfully organized to appeal to young adults, this volume of twenty critical essays is part of the Greenhaven Press Literary Companion to American Authors Series. Essayists include Joyce Carol Oates, Helen McNeil, Adrienne Rich, Amy Lowell, Alan Tate, Thomas H. Johnson, John Ciardi, Marta L. Werner, Jane Langton, Richard Wilbur, Suzanne Juhasz, Cristanne Miller, Martha Nell Smith, Sharon Cameron, Archibald MacLeish, Cheryl Walker, and nine others. Preceded by a brief biography of Dickinson, the essays examine her life and its influence on her work, provide close analysis of specific poems, and explore Dickinson's

*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 650-321-8146.*

poetic themes. A carefully annotated table of contents, a concise introduction to each essay, supplementary inserts throughout, a chronology, a list for further research, and an index make this an attractive and accessible resource for students encountering critical essays on Dickinson for the first time.

**Koguchi, Hiroyuki.** *Emily Dickinson and the Romantic Poets.* Kyoto: Horitsu-bunka-sha, 1998. 199 pp. Cloth, ISBN 4-589-02050-5 c3098, ¥4000. [In English]

Koguchi investigates the romantic elements of Dickinson's poetry, focusing on her relationship with the English Romantics. Pointing out similarities and differences between Dickinson and the romantic poets, Koguchi discusses Blake's apocalyptic vision, Byron's diabolism and imprisonment themes, Coleridge's ideas on imagination, Wordsworth's romantic view of nature, Shelley's wind imagery, and Keats's use of the dream and his sense of paganism. An appendix includes an essay on pastoralism in Dickinson's poetry. Koguchi believes that "despite her religious and cultural background," Dickinson "needs to be recognized as firmly situated in the mainstream of European and American Romanticism." Koguchi offers a lucid study of "a great Promethean poet."

**Lundin, Roger.** *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998. 305 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8028-3857-X, \$24.00. Paper, ISBN 0-8028-0157-9, \$16.00.

In the newest addition to the Eerdmans Library of Religious Biography series, Lundin presents a carefully researched and well written narrative that evokes the intellectual, religious, and cultural spirit of the nineteenth century while respectfully tracing Dickinson's life, presenting many interesting statistics (the Dickinson family owned nineteen Bibles), and skillfully interweaving excerpts from her poems and letters. Portraying Dickinson as "a descendant of Calvinism," "a child of romanticism," and "a product of Whig culture," Lundin shows how she struggles through profound religious doubt, finds "a tenuous but genuine faith," and "stands as

one of the major religious thinkers of her age." Recognizing the work of Dickinson scholars and drawing upon the works of Max Weber, Mikhail Bakhtin, and C.S. Lewis, among others, Lundin's scholarship is free of jargon. In the tradition of Harold Bloom, Alfred Kazin, and Roger Shattuck, Lundin is a graceful writer with a broad base of learning; both novice and sophisticated readers of Dickinson will enjoy his engaging book.

**Napierkowski, Marie Rose, and Mary K. Ruby, eds.** *Poetry for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context and Criticism on Commonly Studied Poetry.* Vol. 3. Detroit: Gale Research, 1998. 337 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7876-2724-0, \$55.00.

A reference work for young adults and general readers interested in specific poems, volume 3 of this biannual series includes twenty-two poets, from Shakespeare to Maya Angelou. The fifteen-page entry for Dickinson focuses on "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (J254), providing a line-by-line analysis of the poem; discussion of its themes, style, historical context, and critical reception; an extended excerpt from a previously published essay by David Porter; and an essay by Sean Robisch commissioned specifically to deal with the poem. Also included are a biographical sketch and the daguerreotype of Dickinson, questions and topics for further study, suggested reading, and audio/video resources. Annotated bibliographical references serve as models of MLA style for beginning scholars. Though the entries are randomly arranged, a subject/theme index and a cumulative index of nationality/ethnicity suggest alternative approaches to the poems. A glossary of literary terms, a literary chronology (700-1997), and a cumulative author/title index are useful additions.

Volume 1 includes Dickinson's "The Soul selects her own Society" (J303); volume 2, "Because I could not stop for Death" (J712); and volume 4, "This is my letter to the World" (J441). Future volumes will focus on poems J67, 258, 341, 465, 585, 986, 1078, and 1732.

Though the editors make some debatable assertions, readers will find helpful

the focus on a single poem in a user-friendly format.

**Petrino, Elizabeth A.** *Emily Dickinson and Her Contemporaries: Women's Verse in America, 1820-1885.* Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1998. 240 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-87451-838-5, \$40.00.

Examining the attitudes of the nineteenth-century publishing world and the poetry of Helen Hunt Jackson, Frances Sargent Osgood, Lydia Sigourney, and Dickinson, Petrino maintains that we should consider Dickinson's poetry in relation to the often underrated work of other nineteenth-century women poets, distinctive in their own ways. Although Dickinson rejected nineteenth-century publishing standards—and Petrino believes that "the most significant fact of Dickinson's literary biography is her decision not to publish"—Dickinson read and enjoyed the literature of her day and was "thoroughly imbued in and shaped by it," adapting and transforming many of the popular nineteenth-century genres. Joining the current debate over values in literature, Petrino argues thoughtfully for teaching nineteenth-century women's poetry in the classroom.

**Pritchard, William H.** *Talking Back to Emily Dickinson and Other Essays.* Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1998. 303 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-55849-138-4, \$29.95.

In twenty-seven essays on English and American literary figures from Shakespeare and Blake to Amis, Mailer, and Lessing, Pritchard is both appreciative and argumentative as he "talks back" to poets, novelists, and critics. A "non-Dickinsonian," he says he has difficulty "talking back to Emily Dickinson," and though he discusses and finds reasons to admire Poems J130, 303, 664, 712, 816, 856, 870, and 1075, he is testy about Dickinson's elusiveness and cantankerous about her critics' obscure comments. He admits "relief" when he puts down her poems and takes up less challenging poetry. An "unrepentant academic," Pritchard is neither pedantic nor polemical but is clearly opinionated; his enthusiastic and aggressive personal engagement with literature will make readers want to "talk back."

Steffens, Bradley. *The Importance of Emily Dickinson*. San Diego, Calif.: Lucent Books, 1998. 96 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-56006-089-1, \$22.45.

With a format designed to interest students in grades 4-12, this attractive volume is part of a series focusing on prominent world figures in the arts and sciences. Steffens's well written biography of Dickinson incorporates excerpts from her poetry and letters, some set off from the text within distinctive borders. Generously illustrated with photographs of her family and friends and facsimiles of manuscript pages, the book draws from primary and secondary sources. Comprehensive for its intended audience, the book helps a beginning student explore further with notes, a list of suggested reading, a list of works consulted, and a chronology.

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#### Book Reviews

Eberwein, Jane Donahue, ed. *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998, 405 pp. Cloth, ISBN a0-313-29781-9, \$85.00.

##### Reviewed by Jonathan Morse

*An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia* opens with a chronology extending from 1828 to 1986 and closes with a table of Franklin's reconstruction of the fascicles, a detailed directory of the major archives of Dickinson material, and a bibliography. In between are more than 400 articles about Dickinson's life and work.

These treasure maps come to us in alphabetical order. But imagine a *Britannica*-style macropedia that sorts most of the volume's contents into five broad categories: historical (containing, for instance, the articles "Amherst Academy" and "Whig Party"), biographical ("Handwriting," "Health and Medical History," and the eight articles about members of the Norcross family), thematic ("Flowers," "Bride role"), rhetorical ("Hymns," "The Yellow Rose of Texas"), and critical ("Feminist Approaches," "Because I could not stop for Death"). Reorganizing the book that way would facilitate sequential reading and systematic thinking, but Dickinson, perhaps more than other writers, thrives under the traditional alphabetical arrangement.

Consider, for instance, the Dickinson who emerges from Paula Bennett's article "Eroticism." On the one hand, Bennett points out, the language of the letter-poem "All the letters I can write" (JP334) seems freighted with all-but-explicit sexual reference. On the other hand, Bennett also points out, the letter was actually mailed to Eudocia Flynt, "a cousin with whom [Dickinson] was on friendly but by no means intimate terms." Such contradictions between the perceptions of the body and the language that denies them while it affirms are the heart of Dickinson's life in language, with its "Spices [that] fly / In the Receipt" and its "White Sustenance – / Despair" (JP439, 640). It is as if Dickinson wrote a language that didn't permit any linguistic instrument but itself to take its readings.

A systematic reading of such a language would falsify it. But alphabetical order—encyclopedic order—precludes logical preconception. We read the article called "Eroticism," for instance, between "Emmons, Henry Vaughan" and "The Evergreens." Inserted into language in that arbitrary way, the Emily Dickinson of the *Encyclopedia* becomes a Michel Foucault *avant les lettres*, writing what Foucault called modern literature: "that which compensates for (and not that which confirms) the signifying function of language" (*The Order of Things* I.2.v).

Which is to say that this work benefits from the lucky accident of its structure. When she asked me to write this review, Barbara Kelly called the *Encyclopedia* "a browser's delight," and I think the sources of that delight may be both profound and significant. But there are delights in the detail, too. As a synopsis of the scholarship at the end of Dickinson's first century, this is a reference book that automatically becomes a standard source, and it admirably fulfills that responsibility.

I must declare a conflict of interest: six of the *Encyclopedia*'s articles were written by me. It would have been hard for Ms Kelly to find an unbiased reviewer, though, because Eberwein has gathered Dickinsonians from throughout the world to write about their specialties.

Unfortunately, *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia* comes to us from a publisher that markets primarily to libraries,

not to readers. Libraries will have to pay its iniquitous price; too many readers won't be able to. But I predict a well deserved rise in the share price of Xerox.

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*Jonathan Morse is a professor of English at the University of Hawaii.*

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Grabher, Gudrun, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Cristanne Miller, eds. *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1998. 512 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-55849-169-4, \$34.95.

##### Reviewed by Domhnall Mitchell

*The Emily Dickinson Handbook* provides both established and new readers with a single authoritative source for information about Dickinson's historical, cultural, and biographical contexts, as well as the editing and transmission of her texts, their critical reception, and the most recent interpretive, pedagogical, and theoretical approaches within Dickinson scholarship. The essays are written mostly by recognized specialists (or by experts-in-the-making), include historical overviews of the field under discussion, and are without exception informed and informative.

Although the nature of such a collection might appear to encourage description more than innovation, most contributors manage to combine the two: Jonnie Guerra's paper on adaptations of the poems in the arts and Margaret Freeman's short, brilliant appeal on behalf of tropes and cognitive metaphors are two fine instances.

Elsewhere the articles by Crumbley, Farr, Salska, Smith, Cameron, and Juhasz represent a lively range of thinking on the status and significance of Dickinson's manuscripts—arguably the core issue in the last two decades and likely to remain so for some time. Although there is a degree of overlap here, the essayists write from diverse fields of competence and interest, which leads to significant differences in the particular aspect that each chooses to emphasize. Farr attends to the visual qualities of the manuscripts, Crumbley discusses their dialogic potential, Salska concentrates on questions of genre and their importance for Dickinson's epistolarium, Cameron looks at the fascicle as a unit of meaning (supplementing

the individual poem), and Juhász focuses on the variants to each lyric and how they establish an internal dynamics independent of a poem's relationship to others within a manuscript miscellany. Smith, finally, writes the most balanced and informative overview of the history of Dickinson's publication that I have yet read. Her contribution is exemplary.

Six of the twenty-two writers here are non-American nationals, and the traditions and insights they bring to bear on the poetry make this a truly international collaboration. Kerstin Behnke's essay on translating Dickinson, for example, is one of the best in the collection and has implications not only for foreign-language students and scholars but for the ways in which native speakers of English attend to Dickinson's complex and intricate linguistic particularities.

The three co-editors of this fine collection also contribute essays of their own. Grabher and Hagenbüchle write wonderfully dense but clear essays on (respectively) self-fashioning and literary theory, while Cristanne Miller offers a typically stimulating and engaged overview of linguistic approaches to writing.

Although the collection might have been enlivened by a cultural-materialist or Marxist approach to Dickinson's legend-

ary nonappearance at the festival of nineteenth-century literature, this does not detract from the overall sense that the *Handbook* is a timely and indispensable addition to the field of Dickinson studies. For librarians, students, and scholars mindful of both economic and academic criteria when looking for secondary materials about Dickinson's life and writing, textual and manuscript editions, cultural background, literary reception, and contemporary position, the search is over. This book has it all.

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*Domhnall Mitchell is an associate professor of nineteenth-century American literature at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology at Trondheim.*

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### Book Notes

*Now available in paperback:*

**Joanne Dobson.** *Quieter Than Sleep: A Modern Mystery of Emily Dickinson.* New York: Bantam Books. ISBN 0-553-57660-7, \$5.99.

**Candace Ridington.** *Rubicon.* ISBN 0-9656773-1-1, \$19.95. Available by direct order to EDIS members for \$16.00 from Arlington Press, P.O. Box 130774, Birmingham, AL 35213, phone/FAX 205-870-4837.

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*Franklin's Variorum, continued from page 3* these editorial decisions will always give scholars opportunities to disagree. Assessment of Franklin's editorial judgment to accept some epigrammatic lines or metrical scraps from letters as poems, as in the case of poem Fr1676, "A chastened grace is twice a grace," but to reject others, such as Johnson's poem 16, "I would distill a cup," will depend on one's theory of what to count as poetry and will continue to be a matter of preference.

Out of the five hundred "new poems" identified by Dunlap and the Shurrs, only twelve have found their way into the seventeen additional poems. The other five additions are drawn from the prose fragments in Johnson's 1958 edition of the letters. One is even a single line, Fr1591, "If I should see a single bird," reflecting a lost manuscript sent to Gilbert. One wonders why Franklin did not adopt Johnson's

practice in the prose fragments and move all such instances to a separate section.

In this sense, Franklin's variorum edition is not definitive. But it takes us a long way toward a further understanding of Dickinson's poetic corpus and her poetic practice. It is a masterly achievement, one that is sure to endure as the major scholarly resource for Dickinson's poetry for many years to come.

### References

Bingham, Millicent Todd. *Ancestors' Brocades: The Literary Debut of Emily Dickinson.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945.

Franklin, R. W., ed. *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson.* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1981.

Johnson, T. H., ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Including Variant Read-*

## NOTES & QUERIES

For a biography of Susan Dickinson and Martha Dickinson Bianchi, **Martha Nell Smith** seeks unpublished letters or other materials that have not previously come to light concerning these two women and life in the Evergreens. Those with information to share should contact Smith at the Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 USA, or by e-mail at [ms63@umail.umd.edu](mailto:ms63@umail.umd.edu).

Some of the striking "Belle of Boulder" T-shirts left from the EDIS tenth-anniversary celebration are still available in sizes L and XL. Prices are \$20.00 each (U.S.) or \$25.00 (non-U.S.), including shipping. Please make checks payable to *The Emily Dickinson Journal* and send to: Belle of Boulder T-shirts, c/o The Emily Dickinson Journal, Dept. of English, CB226, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309 USA; or phone 303-492-7506.

Homestead curator **Cindy Dickinson** followed up her attendance at the EDIS anniversary meeting in Boulder with a tour of Colorado. Among her discoveries was the Emily Dickinson apartment building in "Authors' Row" on Denver's Grant Street.

*ings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts.* 3 vols. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1955.

———, ed. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson.* 3 vols. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1958.

Shurr, William H., ed., with Anna Dunlap and Emily Grey Shurr. *New Poems of Emily Dickinson.* Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Todd, Mabel Loomis, and Millicent Todd Bingham, eds. *Bolts of Melody: New Poems of Emily Dickinson.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945.

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*Margaret Freeman is professor of English at Los Angeles Valley College and a specialist in cognitive poetics. She was a founder of EDIS and served as its first president.*

*In Emily's Person, continued from page 5*

that no, drugs were not widespread then as they are now, but people became addicted to painkillers and their lives were destroyed by the addiction. To my surprise, a few minutes later another child asked Emily if there was AIDS. I answered no, explaining that the first known case of AIDS was diagnosed around 1980. Then I realized that that was exactly the analogy to use in helping today's students realize the terror of illness in the days before modern medicines. I said to those students (and thousands since), "You know how afraid everyone is today of AIDS because there is no cure? Well, in my day there were many diseases for which there was no cure, and that's why we were so afraid of disease."

My most startling moment in a school program came about thirteen years ago. I knew that sometime, somewhere, I would be asked about Emily's wearing white, and I had no answer. I had asked Richard Sewall if he had read anything in which Emily explained her preference in later years for wearing white, and he had not. One of the world's leading authorities on Emily had no answer. So I had no answer. And when I perform for young audiences I never break character—and therefore don't have the luxury of saying, "I don't know." I have to know; I am she.

The question finally came at a school in Campobello, South Carolina. There were about three hundred kids in the school gym, grades 3-5, some bussed in from neighboring schools. Scores of hands were waving for attention. I happened to call on a boy seated on the bleachers. He stood to ask his question: "Emily, why do you always wear white?" And instantly, without a hair's breadth between question and answer, I heard myself say, "Well, God puts such beautiful colors in the flowers and all of nature that I want the colors there, and I wear something simple."

I heard myself say that, turned upstage, and said, *sotto voce*, "My God!" I promptly memorized what I had just said and then turned back to the students. In the years since, whenever I have been asked why Emily wore white, I've given that same answer—which makes perfect sense for Emily. With her love of the beauties of nature, such an answer suits her.

My only explanation for such a response coming full-blown out of my mouth without any forethought is one that gives people pause, I'm sure, but I really cannot think of a better explanation. As far as I can tell, my friend Emily fed me that answer. She has probably come to the conclusion that if I have the audacity to traipse around the countryside representing her, she's jolly well going to make sure I do it right.

There is one other time I think Emily took pity on me and helped me find what I was looking for; I truly don't believe it was mere chance that I found this poem so quickly. Back when I was writing *Emily*, I wasn't satisfied with the poem I had chosen for the Charles Wadsworth section. Heaving a deep sigh, I reached for my well worn *Complete Poems*, wondering how in the world I would locate just the right poem without reading through all 1,775. Yet within four minutes I was looking at a poem I had never read before but which fit their relationship exactly: Poem J740, "You taught me Waiting with Myself."

Not all the memories over these years deal with school performances. In Bennington, Vermont, I gave a performance of *Emily* one Sunday afternoon in the local library. Throughout every performance, I make eye contact with the audience constantly, since the premise is that they are guests in my home. During this particular performance I was aware of a very beautiful older woman sitting toward the back of the room with an expression on her face that was truly radiant.

When the performance and question period were over and my husband was beginning to pack up the props, several in the audience came forward to continue questions, and this beautiful lady was among them. She held back from the group for several minutes, waiting quietly. Finally I was able to turn directly to her. She introduced herself: she was the granddaughter of Joseph Lyman, who lived in the Dickinsons' home during his college years at Amherst and with whom Vinnie was much in love. (There is a scene between Vinnie and Joseph in *Emily*.) It was in her father's attic that all Emily's letters to Joseph were discovered after Thomas Johnson had brought out the three-volume *Letters*.

And then there was the physical educa-

tion teacher who took the summer course on teaching Dickinson that I taught for the Connecticut Department of Education—taking the course only because it met near his home and he had to earn some continuing education units somehow. The first day of the week-long course he had his chair as far back in a corner and away from everyone else as it could go, and he scowled the entire four hours. The next day began with a performance of *Emily*, which is my best way of letting people get to know her. He pulled his chair closer. By Wednesday he was really involved with the other teachers about Emily's poetry and the lady herself.

I gave the assignment that on Friday each teacher was to teach one of Emily's poems as if to his or her other students at their grade level of 4-12. The poem this fellow chose? "Success is counted sweetest." Friday he spoke the poem with passion and was wonderfully enthusiastic about how it would relate to his high school's wrestling team. In fact, he assured us that, come fall, his school's boys' locker room would have quotes from Emily's poems all over the walls to fire the guys up.

In Stavanger, Norway, in 1993, I met with an honors English class the day after my performance of *Emily* and was asked a question by an eleventh grader that I had never been asked before: "What do you think Emily would think about what you're doing?" My instantaneous reaction stunned me: my face froze and must have drained of color because suddenly everyone was looking at me with real concern. Tears came to my eyes. For a moment I couldn't speak. Then I said quietly, "If I thought what I'm doing would hurt her in any way, I couldn't bear it."

By contrast, after a performance of *Sarah*, when a college student in Maine asked me what I thought Bernhardt would think of what I was doing, I paused for a moment and then burst out laughing: "I think she'd say she could do it better!"

Back in the summer of 1981, after I was cast as Emily, my astute mother said, "You will be a better person for playing this role." How right she was.

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*Connie Clark is a professional actress who lives in Tryon, North Carolina.*



*The Dinner Party, continued from page 7*

Over the years, Chicago had worked with abstract forms that she had planned to use in a series on women. By “peeling back” her abstractions, she came up with an image that would work as a “physically defining characteristic of women in an almost metaphysical sense; that is, as an entry way into an aesthetic exploration of what it has meant to be a woman.” The result was the birth of a “winged butterfly,” an organic form that gave the artist “the beginning of an active female iconography.” Eventually she discovered that the image was “an ancient symbol of the Goddess.”<sup>19</sup>

The concept was complete as early as 1975, four years before its first exhibition, but the question remained: Who would come? What women would Chicago invite to her “Dinner Party”?

As early as 1974, Chicago had definite ideas about the guest list: It would “range from very famous accomplished women who have been obscured by history to wives of famous men who gave up their careers, to unknown women who somehow got lost in their lives.”<sup>20</sup> A group of researchers helped with her decisions by gathering background on the candidates. Chicago also had some names in mind from her earlier project: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Virginia Woolf, and Georgia O’Keeffe. She identified strongly with many of them: “Each of them is me, and I am all of them.”<sup>21</sup>

The thirty-nine women would be representative. Since there were so many others, a Heritage Floor listing 999 names of women was devised. The floor, made up of 2,300 twelve-inch triangular porcelain tiles, would symbolize all the other women not guests at the table: “The thousands of other women—some famous, some anonymous, but all struggling as the women on the table struggled, to have some sense of their own worth through 5,000 years of a civilization dominated by men.”<sup>22</sup>

Emily Dickinson was one of the guests Chicago had decided early to invite, one of the names included in March 1975.<sup>23</sup> At the third wing of the table, which includes women “from the American Revolution to the Women’s Revolution,” Dickinson sits between Elizabeth Blackwell, the first

American female physician, and Ethel Smyth, an English composer. The poet Adrienne Rich influenced Chicago’s thinking about Dickinson and her “powerful will.”<sup>24</sup>

Dickinson’s plate, which is pink and made of lace dipped in porcelain slip, appears to be delicate and feminine. Chicago explains that when she “thought about the Victorian lady that a woman like Dickinson was expected to be, I envisioned lace.” Rather than thinking of the lace as literal, however, Chicago sees it as symbolically trapping the poet—“lace ...embodies the tragedy of women’s past.”<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, not everyone sees it this way. Years after the exhibition, Chicago met a woman who “looked [her] in the eye, and said ‘Emily Dickinson was not lacy!’”<sup>26</sup> To suggest Dickinson’s power, Chicago directly carved the center of the lace. The immobility of the lace represents Dickinson’s imprisonment in a world out of touch with female power. To highlight this, Chicago’s study for the plate, done in 1977, includes four lines from Poem J540, “I took my power in my hand.” (They do not appear on the final work.)

Dickinson’s runner is also lace, with pink ribbon running along the borders. A butterfly pattern is visible in the front of the runner, which is decorated with embroidered “silk ribbon flowers.” The technique was “popular...during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” Although the lace makes the poet appear to be one of the countless voiceless Victorian ladies of the day, Chicago affirms that the “core,” though surrounded by “layers of porcelain lace and the lacy beribboned runner...remains strong and untouched.”<sup>27</sup>

*The Dinner Party* took five years to complete and cost \$250,000.<sup>28</sup> The emotional cost to Chicago was even greater. Her original concept became a dream for herself and for all women: “I will make a piece so far beyond judgement that it will enter the cultural pool and never be erased from history, as women’s work has been erased before.”<sup>29</sup> Despite her dreams and the “life-changing experience” the work had on those who contributed to it,<sup>30</sup> however, *The Dinner Party* has been misinterpreted and dismissed as “genitalia on plates” and “grotesque kitsch.”<sup>31</sup>

These reactions attest to the power of the work, which continues after almost thirty years to create a sensation. Judy Chicago’s dream may not have come true yet. Her vision of the millennium may be further in the future. But, as she said after withdrawing her offer to give her work to the University of D.C., “Foolhardy or not, it’s important to dream.”<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

1. Judy Chicago, *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1980), 265.
2. Lucy Lippard, “Uninvited Guests: How Washington Lost ‘The Dinner Party,’” *Art in America* 79 (Dec. 1991): 39-49.
3. *Ibid.*, 41.
4. *Embroidering*, 279.
5. Judy Chicago, *Beyond the Flower: The Autobiography of a Feminist Artist* (New York: Viking, 1996), 47.
6. *Embroidering*, 266.
7. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1979), 11.
8. *Ibid.*, 11, 12.
9. *Ibid.*, 25.
10. *Beyond the Flower*, 48.
11. *Ibid.*, 47.
12. *Dinner Party*, 28 (12/10/75 entry).
13. *Embroidering*, 24.
14. *Ibid.*, 191.
15. *Ibid.*, 274, 33.
16. *Ibid.*, 272.
17. *Dinner Party*, 9, 11, 52.
18. *Beyond the Flower*, 39.
19. *Ibid.*, 38-39.
20. *Dinner Party*, 22.
21. *Ibid.*, 44.
22. *Ibid.*, 52.
23. *Ibid.*, 25.
24. *Embroidering*, 235.
25. *Dinner Party*, 91.
26. Robin Abcarian, “The Lesson of Judy Chicago: Fame Has Its Detractions,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1996, E1.
27. *Embroidering*, 234, 235.
28. *Beyond the Flower*, 48.
29. *Dinner Party*, 29.
30. *Beyond the Flower*, 56.
31. *Ibid.*, 226, 260.
32. Lippard, “Uninvited Guests,” 49.

*Maryanne Garbowsky is professor of English at the County College of Morris, New Jersey, and the author of The House Without the Door. She is at work on a study of contemporary artists inspired by Dickinson.*

# MEMBERSHIP UPDATE AND SURVEY

*By Margaret Freeman, Membership Chair*

With Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP) taking over our subscriptions and records, I am pleased to report that procedures for joining EDIS or renewing a membership are now much simpler. As of September 1, according to JHUP records, EDIS had a total of 413 members: 3 honorary, 75 contributing, 235 regular, 30 student, 66 associate, and 4 institutional. The regional breakdown is as follows: 359 U.S., 24 European, 3 Canadian, and 27 other (region not specified). We have active chapters operating in Saskatchewan, Minnesota, Utah, and Los Angeles, and affiliated organizations in Japan and Denmark.

The Society is formally associated with the American Literature Association and the Modern Language Association, holding regular sessions on Dickinson at their annual meetings. Dickinsonians present at these meetings usually join together for dinner at a local restaurant. In addition, the Society continues to sponsor international conferences and offers special programs of interest to the membership at its own annual meetings. See the report on this year's meeting in Boulder (p. 14), and on our forthcoming conference (p. 19).

As new membership chair, I am especially interested in helping establish local chapters. The goals of local chapters are

to provide a forum for area members to meet on a more regular basis than the annual meetings allow and to encourage new members to join EDIS. Reports of local chapter activities appear regularly in the *Bulletin* and reveal a range of activities, including poetry readings, guest speakers, workshop discussions, visits to Dickinson performances, and social events in December and May celebrating Dickinson's birthday and death date. If you are interested in joining or helping to establish an EDIS chapter in your area, please let me know. I hope to establish an e-mail committee of chapter chairs to discuss ways we can strengthen our chapter activities.

Having just celebrated our tenth anniversary, we should like to hear from the membership on how we are doing—how you respond to our publications, the *Bulletin* and the *Journal*; what additional features you would like to see represented in them; and how we can better serve you as a member. I hope, therefore, that you will take the time to fill out the brief survey opposite. (You may want to copy it so as not to mutilate your copy of the *Bulletin*.) And I hope you will feel free to write to me at any time with comments and suggestions.

## How to Join EDIS

*Membership categories and dues:*

Contributing: \$50  
Regular: \$40  
Student (with I.D.): \$30  
Institutional: \$75

(All of the above receive both the *Journal* and the *Bulletin*.)

Associate: \$15 (*Bulletin* only)

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You may also subscribe by credit card via fax (410-516-6968) or email. The encrypted address is <http://www.press.jhu.edu/press/journals/>

## A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS FOR DICKINSON POEMS

With the appearance of the Franklin variorum edition (see the review beginning on page 1), Dickinsonians have the problem of identifying which version of a Dickinson poem they are quoting or referring to. As editors of the two principal Dickinson periodicals, we wish to propose the following solutions:

Poems quoted from the Johnson variorum edition should be cited with the letter J before the poem number ("J680," for example); those quoted from the Franklin edition should use the abbreviation Fr before the poem number, and the letter of the version (A, B, C, etc.) after the

poem number ("Fr724B"). If only one version exists, the letter A may be omitted. The abbreviation F will continue to stand for Fascicle, S for Set, as used in the new Franklin edition.

Where the name of the editor is mentioned in the context, no abbreviation is needed ("the poem Franklin numbers 724B"; "Johnson's 680"). In cryptic and parenthetical references, the abbreviation should probably be used in all cases.

Where it is necessary to distinguish a Johnson poem number from a Johnson letter number, the abbreviations JP and JL should be used.

As other versions of Dickinson poems appear in future published editions, new abbreviations will need to be devised. We suggest that their editors propose appropriate forms.

We hope these suggestions will avoid confusion for those writing about and studying Dickinson in future.

Suzanne Juhasz, Editor  
*The Emily Dickinson Journal*

Georgiana Strickland, Editor  
*EDIS Bulletin*

## EDIS MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

This form may be duplicated for multiple use. Please feel free to use an extra sheet for longer answers.

1. How long have you been a member of EDIS? \_\_\_\_\_
2. When you receive the *Bulletin*, do you (mark all that apply):  
Read it immediately \_\_\_ Read some but not all \_\_\_ Hardly look at it \_\_\_ Save it \_\_\_
3. What additional types of material would you like to see in the *Bulletin*?
  
4. If you receive the *Journal*, do you (mark all that apply):  
Read it immediately \_\_\_ Read some but not all \_\_\_ Hardly look at it \_\_\_ Save it \_\_\_
5. What additional types of material would you like to see in the *Journal*?
  
6. Have you ever attended an annual EDIS meeting? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. Do you plan to attend an EDIS annual meeting in the future? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. If no, what might encourage you to attend?
  
9. Have you ever attended an EDIS conference? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Do you plan to attend the conference at Mount Holyoke College next year? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
11. If no, what might encourage you to attend?
  
12. Do you frequently attend Dickinson sessions at MLA Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ at ALA Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
13. Would you like information on registering for MLA and ALA conferences? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
14. Would you join a local EDIS chapter if one existed in your area? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
15. Would you help organize a local chapter in your area (with assistance from the national society)? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
(If Yes, please provide your name and address below.)
16. Would you be willing to volunteer time, energy, and expertise to the national society? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
17. If yes, please specify the special skills or knowledge you could contribute:
  
18. Do you have other suggestions for improving any aspect of the Society so that it could better serve you?
  
19. What other information or comments would you like to share with us?

Name and address (optional): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please return a copy of this survey to: Margaret H. Freeman, 1300 Greenleaf Canyon Rd., Topanga, CA 90290 USA. An electronic version of this survey is available at <http://www.colorado.edu.EDIS>. Send to: [freemamh@mail.lavc.cc.ca.us](mailto:freemamh@mail.lavc.cc.ca.us).

## Emily Dickinson International Society

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For more information on EDIS, see our  
Website at <http://www.colorado.edu/EDIS/>

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EDIS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial contributions of the following members (in addition to those listed in the spring issue) in support of its programs:

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