

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

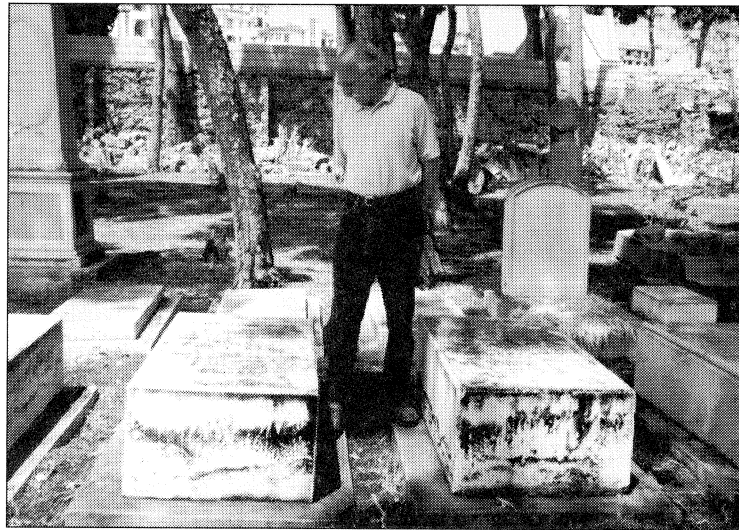
A LETTER FROM LEBANON

By Norbert Hirschhorn

The Anglo-American Cemetery lies at the edge of Beirut, walled in between the new highway to Damascus and scabbled fields filled with building debris. It is a lovely old place, with the feel of a small ruin. Bougainvillea covers one stone wall, an olive tree and fig tree intertwine at the wrought-iron gate. The cemetery did not escape the sixteen years of civil war and sectarian violence, as some broken crosses and headstones testify. But peace has returned, a caretaker sweeps the dirt lanes, and the umbrella pines still shelter the nearly two hundred people buried beneath: missionaries, teachers, diplomats, soldiers, physicians, and nurses who came to Lebanon to serve its people. Among the graves are those of Abby Wood Bliss and her husband, Daniel Bliss. Their inscriptions offer only brief biographies: "Daniel Bliss. For sixty years missionary in Syria. First president of the Syrian Protestant College. Born in Georgia Vermont August 17, 1823. Died in Syria July 27, 1916." (When Lebanon was separated from Syria in 1920, the college was renamed the American University of Beirut.) "Abby Wood Bliss. Wife of Rev. Daniel Bliss, D.D. His unfailing helper and a friend to generations of his students. Born in Westminster Massachusetts October 12, 1830. Died in Beirut, Syria April 12, 1915."

Abby was known playfully to her

friends and descendants as "Westminster Abby," but it was no playful matter when, at age eight, a few years after her father's death, she was separated from her mother and siblings and sent to Amherst to be raised by her maternal uncle Luke Sweetser and his wife, also named Abby. There she became one of Emily Dickinson's circle of



Author Bert Hirschhorn between the graves of Daniel and Abby Wood Bliss in the Anglo-American Cemetery, Beirut, Lebanon.

five special friends, as well as her schoolmate at Amherst Academy. Abby and Emily shared a Latin textbook, *The Works of Virgil*, one that Bliss family tradition says Emily gave to Abby as a parting memento of their friendship, with the inscription (quoted in part from Virgil's *Aeneid*): "Afterwards you may rejoice at the remembrance of these (our school days)[.] When I am far far away then think of me – E. Dickinson."¹ [See the note on page 19.]

In Amherst, Abby also came to know Daniel Bliss, a member of the Amherst

College class of 1852 and an 1855 graduate of Andover Theological Seminary, who trained to be a missionary. They were married on November 22, 1855, and left for Syria three weeks later on the steamer *Sultana*, reaching Beirut on February 7, 1856.

My wife and I have spent the last academic year teaching at the American University of Beirut. There I was fortunate enough to meet Eleanor Dorman Johnson, Abby's great-great granddaughter and the fifth generation of the Bliss family to serve in Lebanon as educators and to be affiliated with the university. Her daughter, Elizabeth Dorman Crook, will be the sixth. Eleanor graciously shared family stories about Emily handed down orally through the generations. One story, not previously published, relates that, along with the Virgil text, Emily prepared a generous tin of gingersnaps to accompany

the Blisses on their long journey because the dry, spicy biscuits would not spoil. The recipe has been handed down through the Bliss-Dorman generations. (See the box on page 3.)

Belle Dorman Rugh, Abby Wood Bliss's great-granddaughter and Eleanor's aunt, is now in her eighties. Mrs. Rugh recalls a story told by her mother, Mary Dale Dorman—who as a child lived with her grandparents, Abby and Daniel—about how Luke Sweetser opposed the marriage to Daniel Bliss because of young Abby's

frail health, which might not withstand missionary life; how Luke locked Abby in her upstairs room until she would get some sense; and how Emily, tossing pebbles against Abby's window, shouted up encouragement to her friend: "Don't give in, Abby! Don't give in!"²

The Blisses' eldest son, Frederick, is the source of the well-known story of Abby's visit to Emily in 1873 on her sojourn back to Amherst. Fourteen at the time, Frederick likely witnessed the event, which he recounted in 1920 in his memoirs:

When Mrs. Bliss made her second visit to America from Syria in 1873 [the first was in 1862-64, when Daniel was raising funds for his "New Campus"], Emily Dickinson had become the village mystery, inaccessible to all but an elect few, who were admitted to the sanctuary with appropriate preliminaries and ceremonies. The good-natured refusal of Mrs. Bliss to approach her old crony as a Sybil finally resulted in her being received on the old basis.³

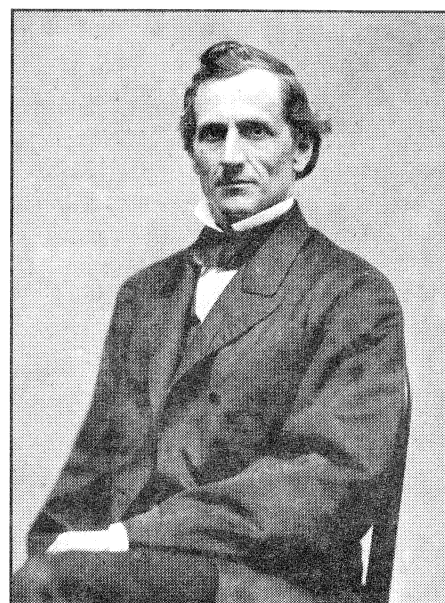
It is thought that poem Fr1304 (J1267) commemorates that visit; one can hear the two old friends tease one another about getting on in years:

I saw that the Flake was on it
But plotted with Time to dispute –
"Unchanged" I urged with a candor
That cost me my honest Heart –

But "you" – she returned with valor
Sagacious of my mistake
"Have altered – Accept the pillage
For the progress' sake" –

The visit to the Dickinson household took place within a day or two of Abby's arrival in Amherst on August 19, 1873, as Daniel replied to Abby's letter of August 20: "Mrs. Tyler has had her day and so

Lavinia Dickinson," indicating the social custom of making courtesy calls to old friends and family as soon as possible after coming to town.⁴ As Daniel Bliss was especially close to Professor and Mrs. William S. Tyler, the same-day visit to the Dickinson home shows its importance. It could not have been long after that before the persistent Abby found her way to her old classmate for a less formal reunion.



*Abby Wood Bliss and Daniel Bliss at the time of their marriage in 1855.
Courtesy of Dr. Daniel Bliss, a descendant.*

There is another, and intriguing, bit of indirect evidence of that visit. It involves the charming and much-recounted story of how Emily lowered baskets of baked goodies to children below her window. The tale first surfaced in 1891, written by one of the children, MacGregor Jenkins, in his twenties at the time of publication and so with the event fresh in mind:

Every year we played gypsy. We

pitched our tent in the pines near the [Dickinson] barn. We dressed in fantastic costumes and roved and marauded in true gypsy fashion, with the usual effect upon neighboring pantries. On one occasion our supplies utterly failed. In vain did we appeal to the servants at the Mansion [Homestead], in vain besiege the pantry window. We were in desperate straits, when unexpected help came. A win-

dow overlooking our camp was raised and Miss Emily's well-known voice called softly to us. To our amazement and joy, a basket was slowly lowered to us. It contained dainties dear to our hearts. Such gingerbread, such cookies and cake, no gypsies ever dreamed of! Many times afterwards our pressing needs were supplied by means of that fascinating basket. We adored our

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unseen deliverer! She was our friend and champion, keenly interested in all our doings.”⁵

In 1874-76 Mac would have been six to eight years old, just right for the game of “gypsy.” His playmates were his sister Sarah and Emily’s niece, Martha (“Mattie”), some three years older. I have not come across any Amherst custom of lowering baskets, but it certainly was common in Lebanon up until the 1970s and can still be seen in some precincts of Cairo. As a matter of modesty and also convenience, the woman of a house would, after some shouted-down negotiation, lower her basket from a second- or third-floor balcony to a fruit and vegetable vendor below; down would go the money, up would come the produce. One can imagine how charmed Emily would have been by this anecdote from the distant Levant, how she would have enjoyed playing the game with the children while at the same time memorializing her friend.

Abby and Emily were undoubtedly in touch by mail over the years before the 1873 visit. Jay Leyda notes that Emily’s herbarium, now in the Amherst College archives, “contains Eastern specimens sent by Abby.”⁶ The archives of the American University of Beirut hold Abby’s own herbarium: a 20- by 12-inch folio of construction paper with pressed plants between the sheets. The earliest specimen, *Camptosorus rhizophyllus* (walking fern), came from a relative in New Jersey, Alphonso Wood. Other samples include *Adiantum capsilis veneris* (maiden’s hair fern), *Cryopteris fragilis*, and from Nazareth *Polypsodium proliferans*. It would be instructive to compare the two herbariums and identify which in Emily’s came from the Middle East.

The American University of Beirut is in its 134th year. Daniel Bliss chose a bleak, bare promontory overlooking the Mediterranean, where he supervised the building of his “New Campus.” The site is now one of the most beautiful university campuses in the world, landscaped with cypress pines, banyan trees, ficus, jacaranda, oleander, and wildflower gardens rolling down to the sea. I am reminded that Bliss’s Amherst colleague

and friend Austin Dickinson supervised the landscaping of Amherst College and its environs.

Bliss also encountered the spasms of sectarian violence that, from time to time, have seized Lebanon, with its seventeen different confessional groups. At one time he bravely faced down militias as he ran checkpoints and blockades in order to bring provisions to missionaries trapped by the fighting. Modern AUB too has had

Abby’s Gingersnaps

1 1/3 cups sugar
1 tbsp ginger
1 tbsp cinnamon
1 tsp cloves
1 tsp salt
3 tsp baking soda, dissolved
1 1/2 cups butter
1 cup molasses

Mix these well, then add flour, as little as possible to roll (about 7 1/2 cups). Roll out thin, cut into rounds or shapes, and bake quickly at 350 degrees.

(It also helps to have an army of children to help frost them if you are making Christmas cookies!)

its share of violence. One president was held hostage for a year, one was assassinated on campus, and the main College Hall, with its beautiful clock tower, was destroyed in 1991 by a car bomb. But at no time have classes been suspended, even if students and faculty have had to sleep in corridors to avoid the mayhem.

AUB gave up its Christian missionary focus decades ago, and today it continues to provide a liberal and worldly education to students from all over the Middle East. Its graduates, men and women, are prominent in all human endeavors, in the region and the world. College Hall was rebuilt to its original exterior design; rededicated last year, its clock tower is once more a proud Beirut landmark.

Other changes have evolved more slowly: Abby Wood Bliss may have been Daniel’s “unfailing helper,” but it took

until 1999 for AUB to appoint the first woman as an academic dean. Buildings and institutions are more readily advanced than women’s public roles, it seems, something Emily Dickinson keenly understood. In an 1852 letter (L94) to her future sister-in-law, Susan, she wrote, “Why can’t I be a delegate to the great Whig Convention? – dont I know all about Daniel Webster, and the Tariff, and the Law?”

On the main gate of AUB is inscribed the university’s motto: “That they may have life and have it more abundantly.” One wonders if Emily or Abby, when they met as old friends, ever imagined the abundant good that would flow from both their lives.

Notes

My thanks to Polly Longworth for her encouragement and for sharing her encyclopedic knowledge about the Dickinson and Bliss families.

1. Grace E. Perkins, *Latin Scholars at the Academy: A Monograph on an Emily Dickinson Textbook* (Deer Isle, Me.: Skye-field Press, 1986), 6.

2. *Letters from a New Campus Written by Daniel Bliss to His Wife and Four Children during Their 1873-74 Visit to Amherst*, ed. Albert Howell and Belle Dorman Rugh (Beirut: American Univ. of Beirut Press, 1994), 284-85 n 80.

3. *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss, Edited and Supplemented by His Eldest Son* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1920), 62.

4. *Letters from a New Campus*, 280 n 72, 69, 244 n 53.

5. MacGregor Jenkins, “A Child’s Recollections of Emily Dickinson,” *Christian Union* 44 (Oct. 1891): 776-77.

6. Jay Leyda, *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), 1:lxix.

Norbert Hirschhorn, M.D., spent the past academic year as a senior lecturer in public health at the American University of Beirut. He is the author and co-author of articles dealing with Dickinson’s health.

MARILYN NELSON CELEBRATES EMILY DICKINSON

By Marcy Tanter

Although I was previously acquainted with the poetry of Marilyn Nelson, I must confess that I had overlooked her connection to Emily Dickinson until Marcy Tanter pointed it out to me. Special thanks are due to Marcy Tanter for illuminating this “Poet to Poet” relationship. I also want to express special appreciation to Marilyn Nelson for granting the *Bulletin* the honor of publishing “Veil Raisers” for the very first time.

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

Starting at about age twelve, says Marilyn Nelson, she began to write poems and “just never stopped.” In graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, Nelson treated herself to a poetry workshop, and later, in 1978, with the support of her mentor, Daniel Hoffman, and her friend Pamela Espeland, she published her first book of poems, titled *For the Body*.

Nelson has enjoyed much success with her poetry, with two Pushcart Prizes, two fellowships from the NEA, and the 1998 and 1999 Poet’s Prizes to her credit. She has been a finalist for the PEN Winship Award, for the Lenore Marshall Prize, and twice for the National Book Award. Nelson has published five books of poetry, two books of children’s verse, and most recently a translation of *Hecuba* by Euripides in the first volume of the Penn Greek Drama Series. Her current project is a full-length biography of George Washington Carver—in verse.

Nelson is not only prolific as a poet but also a professor of English at the University of Connecticut, where she teaches poetry in addition to an occasional Emily Dickinson course. How does such a busy woman find time for her writing, her teaching, her family, her life? For Nelson, life is writing, teaching, and family. Many of her poems are autobiographical, the topics ranging from personal experiences to war to love to childhood to motherhood. What strikes me most about her poems is the way she, like Dickinson, is able to capture the essence of a situation or char-

acter and to present the very core of an experience so that the reader has a full, rich sense of the event.



Photo by Doug Anderson

One of my favorite examples is the poem “Minor Miracle,” in which a white man yells a racist epithet at the narrator and a companion and then apologizes. The poem is a wonderful resolution of the painful experience had by eight-year-old Countee Cullen in his poem “Incident.” In Cullen’s poem, a white boy of his age blurts out a racial slur as the boys pass each other on the road. For Cullen, that one incident was all he remembered of a visit in Baltimore that lasted eight months. In Nelson’s poem, the situation is resolved as the white man realizes his error and tries to make up for it. When Nelson’s attacker drives away, she is left with his regret; Cullen never had that satisfaction.

When asked about the poets that matter to her, Nelson gives a very eclectic list: Yeats, Rilke, Dickinson, Rumi, Kabir. Of those, Dickinson is the one to whom she devotes an entire semester-long course. What is it in the work of a cryptic, difficult white woman writer that would attract a modern black woman writer/teacher?

Nelson says that “I teach her because I love her. I suppose all my teaching in all my classes is influenced by my work as a poet. [Dickinson] is a goddess on my inner altar. I keep her poems and letters on my writing desk. I don’t think it would be possible to draw...a clear line from Dickinson in my work.” When pressed to try to define what draws her to Dickinson’s work, she confides that, “like many young women, I thought I found some important part of myself in her poems. I love her brilliant, quirky wit, her refusal to bow to decorum. She’s one of a kind, yet I continue to find my longing in hers.”

Although Nelson did not elaborate on the exact meaning of that last statement, I believe it can be gleaned from her poems, where often the past, present, and future are merged to delineate a sense of longing. In Nelson’s fourth book of poetry, *Mama’s Promises*, the reader is treated to the intimate thoughts of a narrator whose life has been shaken and mesmerized by the birth of a boy who progresses from newborn to toddler through the poems. Much as Dickinson is reminded of death through images of life and vice versa, so too does Nelson recall her past through the new eyes of motherhood.

In an early poem, from 1978, “Emily Dickinson’s Defunct,” the narrator explicitly celebrates “New England’s / favorite daughter” while also recognizing her as a normal person:

She had hair,
imagine,
in certain places, and
believe me
she smelled human
on a hot summer day.

Nelson’s humanizing of Dickinson may seem unnecessary, but it works because of the powerful mythology that has haunted Dickinson studies since her death and that was still being reinforced when this poem was published. Nelson wrote the poem in graduate school after a friend told her that she had always felt

intimidated by Dickinson. The point of the poem is to write about Dickinson's intimidating qualities. The imagery of the poem evokes the American Old West and portrays Dickinson's poems being packed "in her hip pocket" and the poet herself as "dressed for action," "a two-fisted woman, / this babe." One of the important aspects of this poem for Nelson is that "all the details are true." This is what helps to humanize a literary persona who has long been seen as otherworldly.

When I asked Nelson for a poem to share with EDIS members, preferably something very Dickinsonian, I assumed she would send me an already published poem, since I knew she was working on the Carver biography. The one she sent, however, "Veil-Raisers," was written in September 1999 at the very time I asked for a contribution. Nelson's poem about Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver (which will be included in the Carver biography) alludes to Dickinson's work and is here published for the first time. The images in the first verse, of the plank breaking and the feeling of hopelessness, seem to derive directly from Dickinson's poem "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (Fr340, J280) and perhaps also from "Had I presumed to hope" (Fr634, J522).

Using allusions to Dickinson's work to discuss two black reformers may not seem an obvious choice, but the joining of the three is actually quite fitting. Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver set out to make radical changes in American life. Education for blacks was not a priority of the government or society as a whole, and these were the men who challenged convention and won. While Emily Dickinson was not a radical reformer and did not seek to make societal waves, she challenged convention by her distinctive way of writing poetry. Her contribution has profoundly changed American poetry, which allows us to see Dickinson, in effect, winning her own battle. Marilyn Nelson sees these three writers as being connected by despair. Nelson is emphatic in her belief that "despair doesn't come in brands.... We may be led to it by different routes, but once we arrive there at the brink of the abyss, it's the same abyss we look into, the knowledge that

Veil-Raisers

Sometimes one light burned late
in the Oaks, the stately home of the great
Principal, Booker T. Who sat and wrote
note after note, controlling faculty,
philanthropists, and family
with spiderweb reins.
When a plank broke and he plunged
into white hopelessness,
he shook himself
and rang up to the third floor,
where a student exchanging service
for tuition spronged to his feet.

The breathless summons reached
Carver's cluttered rooms
down in Rockefeller Hall,
where the Professor dozed in his easy
chair.

He still had lab notes to write,
tomorrow's classes to prepare,
letters, and his Bible reading.
He'd been up, as always,
since that godliest hour
when light is created anew,
and he would wake again
in a few more hours.
Roused, he nodded,
exchanged slippers for brogans.

You saw them sometimes
if you were sneaking in past curfew,
after a tête-a-tête on a town girl's porch:
shoulder to shoulder
and dream to dream,
two veil-raisers.
Walking our people
into history.

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life may be absolutely meaningless." The abyss for Washington and Carver was full of ignorance; for Dickinson it was full of uncertainty. Joining these three in one poem might not seem the most obvious method to achieve Nelson's effect, but the result in this poem is perfect, as we are first led into "white hopelessness" and then are lifted up "into history." This combination underscores Dickinson's universality and how profoundly she can speak to another poet.

For Marilyn Nelson, Dickinson is someone to admire and pay tribute to. Nelson is modest about her own place in American poetry, but she does recognize a connection between herself and Dickinson. As both a teacher and a poet, she continues in the path laid out by Dickinson and other nineteenth-century American women writers as she adds her own voice to literary history. Much as she acknowledges the importance of Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and Emily Dickinson, Nelson is herself a "veil-raiser," probing and questioning in her work, making her audience think about their own mortality, racism, religion. From "the ragged source of memory" ("The House on Moscow Street") Nelson pulls and tugs and combines, creating poems that join us all in a common humanity.

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Nelson, Marilyn, and Marcy Tanter. E-mail exchanges, Sept. 4, Oct. 10 and 13, Nov. 23 1999; July 19 and 28, 2000.

Marcy Tanter is an assistant professor of English at Tarleton State University. She will be presenting a paper on Dickinson, Tennyson, and Robert Browning at this year's MLA meeting and is currently writing on Ralph Ellison for the Oklahoma City University Law Review.

A PORTRAIT OF DAVID PORTER

By Erika Scheurer

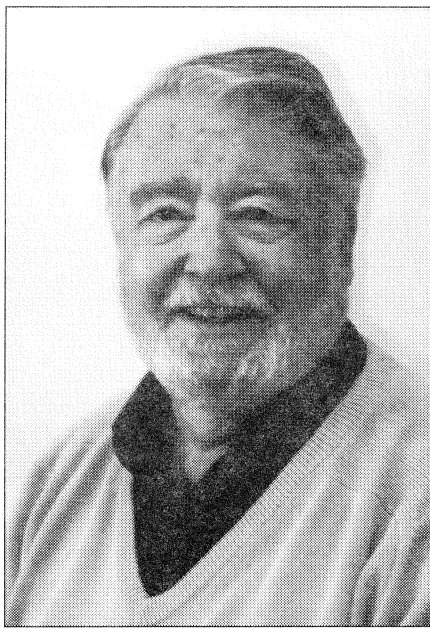
When discussing Emily Dickinson, the word David Porter uses most is “mystery.” After thirty-eight years of work on the poet, he continues to be fascinated by the elusiveness of her art, by her omissions and gaps in meaning. As I spoke with him in Bartlett Hall at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst (the home base from which he has traveled the world as a much-respected authority on Dickinson), Porter observed that what has been said of Albert Einstein applies equally well to Dickinson: “He was captivated by the mysteries of human experience.” This captivation, Porter notes, has led to the richness of Dickinson studies in the past half century: “It was always the utter mysteries about this remarkable woman. Because she didn’t tell us much about these mysteries, we were all able to ‘solve’ them in our own ways.”

Porter’s interest in Dickinson’s mysteries began when he was in graduate school at the University of Rochester. He served as a graduate assistant to William Gilman, who was editing Emerson’s journals. Gilman encouraged him to look at the Johnson edition of Dickinson’s poems, published just seven years earlier, in 1955; the poet thus became the focus of Porter’s dissertation.

Two years later, how perfect for him to land his first job immediately after graduate school in Dickinson’s hometown of Amherst. The ambiance would be ideal as he worked on his first book, *The Art of Emily Dickinson’s Early Poetry* (1966)—or so one would think. But Porter was such a pure New Critic that he did not go near the Dickinson Homestead until he had finished the book manuscript: “I didn’t want to be corrupted by what we purists called the biographical fallacy.” Serious attention to theory continued to saturate his work, leading him through New Criticism to Structuralism to Post-structuralism and Deconstruction.

Using theory as a tool to unlock the mystery of Dickinson’s uniqueness as an artist interests Porter deeply as a scholar. From the beginning of his career he won-

dered what gave her poetry, compact as it is, its impact: “I wanted to see *how* she was doing that,” he notes. It should not come as a surprise, then, that what have troubled him most are “adventures into her personal life, her denials—to forget we’re talking about an artist who had incredible skill of a unique kind. To again and again diminish this woman and overlook the artistry that distinguishes her is my biggest concern.”



In relating the history of his career’s beginning, Porter comments wryly that “it has been said that some of the most important things in life are arrived at entirely by chance.” Indeed, his arrival to Dickinson studies led him to a life not only as Dickinson scholar and teacher at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, but to lecturing around the world, to hosting international conferences, and to work in the visual arts. Here are just some of his career accomplishments:

In addition to his three books—*The Art of Emily Dickinson’s Early Poetry* (1966), *Emerson and Literary Change* (1978), and *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom* (1981), all published by Harvard University Press—Porter has published numer-

ous critical articles, book chapters, and reviews (see bibliography).

He has received fellowships and grants from the Fulbright Program and the U.S. Department of State (several), Rockefeller Foundation (Bellagio, Italy), the Guggenheim, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. He happily holds an honorary degree from Hamilton College, his alma mater.

Porter also has worked as a consultant for various institutions, including the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, the Dickinson Homestead, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, the BBC on American poetry, the Smithsonian Institution, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the William Cullen Bryant Homestead Project, and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy.

Porter identifies one of the main pleasures of his professional life as the opportunity to teach and lecture across the United States and abroad, a delight that continues in his retirement. The countries in which he has lectured include England, France, Norway, Italy, Finland, Romania, Turkey, Portugal, and Japan. He speaks especially fondly of his trips to Japan: “Traveling to Japan was a great adventure—to see their insights into Dickinson. To hear about the challenges of translating Dickinson was an eye-opener to a native speaker.”

He has worked also in the visual arts, serving as introducer for a video on Archibald MacLeish, as commentator for a Swedish National Television series on American Writers, as project director of a network television documentary series on language, as film consultant to the New York Center for Visual History, as a speaker to national press TV critics, and as film consultant for various video documentaries on Dickinson.

When I asked Porter which of his contributions to Dickinson studies he was most proud of, he responded, “*The Modern Idiom*.” A vital question prompted

him to write the book: "What did Dickinson bring to American literature that was the same as or different from what important writers like Whitman and Emerson brought? Because what is so astounding to me is that with other poets we know what holds their work together. But not with Dickinson."

To his continuing delight, Porter's assertion in *The Modern Idiom* that Dickinson is the only major American poet "without a project" has led to countless book-length studies "that specify *contrary* to Porter (who is quoted early in the work) exactly what Dickinson's project is. The remarkable result is that Dickinson is shown to have thirty or forty projects!" Porter stresses that the purpose of his focus on what Dickinson *lacks* is not to say that she is somehow lacking as a poet, but to demonstrate how she diverged from the usual standards and measurements we bring to poets: "I don't think there is anyone who has displayed the scope of the human mind and imagination as Emily Dickinson has."

Amid all of these various professional achievements, one fundamental accomplishment should not be forgotten: David Porter is a gifted teacher. Of teaching Dickinson, Porter observes, "What I enjoyed most was to always encourage the students to give their own interpretations and reactions and discover in the classroom what a range of responses she could provoke in her poetry. Then all together we'd clarify what the poem is doing—and not so infrequently discover that a poem is doing two or three things at the same time. Who else makes us engage this language of ours? I don't know anything else outside of a class in linguistics that makes us engage the narrative possibilities of our language. At the same time we discover that language is governed by rules—that language is rule-governed while also infinitely creative."

As one of his graduate students, I found this workshop approach to close reading of a Dickinson poem a lively and provocative experience. (I introduce it to my own students as the "Porter method for reading a poem.") He would lead us in exploring the limits of interpretation in such a way that it was clear that there was no preconceived "correct answer" to a

poem's meaning—only plausible and implausible readings. In addition to rigorous close reading, theory was a prime component of his courses. He could not only make the most complicated theory clear without being reductive (no mean feat), but make it interesting by showing how theory mattered in life and how it applied to other genres such as art and music.

What stands out most about Porter as a teacher, however, is his generosity; he immerses himself in the students' projects and treats their ideas with serious respect, even if he disagrees with them. Robert McClure Smith says it well: "Dave went out of his way in his graduate seminars to encourage his students to engage approaches to the poet with which he had little personal sympathy, and he displayed a remarkable tolerance, as a dissertation advisor, for his graduate students' often eccentric views of the poet. Always encouraging, always thoughtful, he was an exemplary mentor."

Porter's enthusiasm for Dickinson is positively contagious; former students who are now Dickinson scholars include Evelyn Hinz, Margaret Freeman, Leonard Gougeon, Karen Dandurand, William Shullenberger, Hiroko Uno, Joanne Dobson, Martha Ackmann, Takao Furukawa, Robert McClure Smith, Marcy Tanter, and Midori Asahina.

Luckily for us, the mystery that is Dickinson continues to lead Porter to write and speak about the poet: "She's writing about the adventures of our imaginations, the conflicts we seek out in our lives....In a single eight-line poem she can entertain utter opposites of experience. Yes—this is just amazing."

David Porter on Emily Dickinson

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IN THE WHITE GARDEN: SALLY COOK AND EMILY DICKINSON

By Maryanne Garbowsky

She has been described as “A New Age Grandma Moses,” her work as “lyrical” and “exuberant.”¹ Sally Cook is an artist who over the years has changed form and style, yet remains at core “an individual with something to say.” Friends had often compared her to Emily Dickinson. Curious to know why, Cook turned to the poet’s life and writings and discovered similarities in their approach to life and thinking. Like Dickinson, Cook has chosen not to align herself with her time. “I recognize in Emily a choice I’ve also made, to seclude myself.”

Cook’s work has gone from hard-edged abstraction in the 1960s to a type of folk art that is symbolic and meaningful on many levels. “My paintings are not made for immediate five-minute impact.” In this she finds a parallel to the poetry of Dickinson, which also cannot be understood within minutes but needs time, sometimes years, maybe even a lifetime, to penetrate. “Both of us” are “human distilling machines, driven and fueled by truth and inquiry to look into our surroundings.”

Cook’s method of working with Dickinson begins with a search. Starting with an idea, she reads through Dickinson’s poems searching for an image that she will develop in her painting. Once she has found it, she begins to draw—first a thumbnail sketch and then directly on the canvas, where the image takes on fuller form. Cook’s method of working differs from that of other artists, who make elaborate sketches before they paint. Cook finds that “the intensity of the idea precludes any necessity” for sketches.² With her imagery intact, Cook works conscientiously to bring to the canvas what she already visualizes in her mind’s eye. This technique has proved successful for her.

In “White Garden, Emily Dickinson,” Cook pays homage to the poet who has been one of her most influential re-

sources. Like Dickinson, Cook claims New England roots. Both too are drawn to symbolic dress—Dickinson dressing in white while Cook has chosen stronger colors such as amethyst and topaz, colors her grandmother had worn before her.



White Garden, Emily Dickinson. 1986. Acrylic on canvas.

In “White Garden,” an acrylic painting measuring 32” x 28”, we see three Dickinson figures, all wearing white. The fourth and central figure stares out at us wearing a long dress in shades of blue. Over it, a darker blue apron “covered with galaxies composed of moon and stars” protects her dress, for she is in a domestic mode. As the artist explains, these four figures are multiple versions of Emily, representing different facets of her persona. In one of the smaller figures, she wears a crown, perhaps a reference to poem J508, in which she describes a second baptism: “But this time—Adequate—Erect, / With Will to choose, or to reject / And I choose, just a Crown.” In another, she holds a rainbow, perhaps referring to poem J257, in which Dickinson describes the rainbow as “A Skein / Flung colored, after

Rain.” In the third Dickinson, we see the poet’s back as she looks out to the horizon and beyond, appreciating an otherworldly vista.

The largest and dominant figure sits at a table on which rest a book and a crown. She is at work shelling peas, which the artist says is “symbolic of the ideas she takes from the rough pods of exterior things.” The background includes three chestnut trees, representative of Austin, Vinnie, and perhaps Dickinson’s father. Around her are cats, while in the foreground is a resting leopard along with the poet’s favorite flowers, Indian pipes. The leopard, which Cook suggests represents Dickinson’s “wilder side,” alludes to two poems, J209 and J492. This is Dickinson “in her own enchanted kingdom.”

In her own day, Dickinson’s poetry was misunderstood and unappreciated. Thus she waits in this secluded and special place for her time of recognition to come. Cook sees herself in this role today, waiting for her contemporaries to understand her work. Her art

is immediately attractive and beckons her audience to enter into the world within the frame. Like the art of Henri Rousseau, who has been “a constant inspiration” to Cook, her work reveals another worldview than the one most people are exposed to daily. In the paintings of Rousseau and the poetry of Dickinson, says Cook, we come in contact with a superreality in which “flowers think” and one wonders “what the table will do next.” Thus we enjoy the work even though to some it remains a “mystery,” but one worth giving time and energy to unravel.

In the past year, Cook has completed a series of four Dickinson paintings, and she is at work on two more. The first, entitled “As New England Used to Be,” comes from Dickinson’s poem “What—is ‘Paradise’” (J215). The painting, which

measures 20" x 24", is done in acrylic, Cook's favorite medium. In it we see the poet relaxing on a comfortable garden settee under "a tropical New England sky of orange, in a paradisiacal setting of flowers." In her poem, Dickinson, who often plays the role of a child in her poetry, asks a seemingly simple question about paradise, but by the poem's end she reveals the loneliness she has felt living in New England—isolated and withdrawn: "Maybe - 'Eden' a'nt so lonesome / As New England used to be!" Cook interprets this poem as the journey of the artist who works toward "fulfillment" but must wait, perhaps a whole lifetime, for reward.

"Imperial Affliction" is based on "There's a certain Slant of light" (J258). A smaller painting, measuring 16" x 20", it further elaborates the theme of the solitary artist and the loss that results from the creative gift. At the same time, the poem and painting are about light. Dickinson is shown standing at a window peering out at the light coming through. "The light exists," Cook explains. "It is palpable and peculiar." It is a light that permeates early Renaissance painting and is echoed in the nineteenth-century Pre-Raphaelites. Cook paints this light, which has "substance" and is "not an abstraction" as it comes "through a sheer curtain" and falls on the poet's "hair and face, her carpet, worktable...." To Cook this light denotes loss, since the poet "has no husband and children of her own, possessing in fact only the hope of literary and spiritual immortality."

The third painting, inspired by two four-line poems, is "Beauty Crowds Me." Based on "I Hide Myself Within My Flower" (J903) and "Beauty Crowds me Till I Die" (J1654), the painting measures 24" x 18" and, like the others, includes a hand-painted frame that extends the effect of the painting beyond the canvas. Dickinson looks out at the viewer, her arms open in a welcoming gesture. In front of her is a large vase containing nu-

merous flowers which surround her head and incorporate her into their display. "In my paintings, any vase, compote, or container is a metaphor for the soul out of

be historically accurate, glean details from her reading about the poet and integrates them into her paintings.

A fourth painting uses "The Poets Light But Lamps" (J883) as its inspiration. It is a double portrait showing the poet and the artist sitting together in a shared space. There is a camaraderie between them as well as sympathy and understanding of the artistic spirit and process. Each of them has a brightly colored lamp beside her, "teal green," "rich pink...pale yellow." From the lamps, "sparkles" emanate and "shoot out...into the sky, cubing the rainbow behind." Cook envisions the continuity of the creative spark that has a long history and will continue into the future. Individual artists like Dickinson and herself will light the flame that will pass to the next generation. "Poet and

painter, Emily and I are wicks, stimulated by that 'vital light' spoken of in the poem."

Cook's kinship with Dickinson has been rich and productive. The remaining paintings on which she is currently at work will not be the last. "Certainly I will continue to paint Emily Dickinson. She is a perfect example of the richest of inner lives contained in the shell of the mundane." To Cook, Dickinson is a remarkably visual poet whose symbolic language appeals to her. Cook feels that she and Dickinson are fellow travelers, "each producing, as an end result, a poetic distillation of ...our realities."

Notes:

1. John Zeaman, review in the Ridgewood (N.J.) *Record*.

2. Artist's statements are from Cook to author, May 31, 2000.

White Garden, Emily Dickinson is from the collection of Teresa Dabrowski.



As New England Used to Be. 2000. Acrylic on canvas.

which grows the expression of a particular experience. In this painting, ...Emily's flower, in which she hides, is her personal expression."

On the table in front of the poet is a gift Dickinson actually gave—a leaf and an acorn—along with blue notebooks representing the fascicles. Cook, who tries to



Beauty Crowds Me. 2000. Acrylic on canvas.

BENEFIT CONCERT A GREAT SUCCESS

By Gregory Farmer

A classic summer thunderstorm rumbled through Amherst on June 13, but even the steady rain and slick streets did not dampen the spirits of the crowd who attended a benefit concert for the Dickinson houses at the First Congregational Church that night. It was a rare evening of beauty and pathos that highlighted the universal appeal of music and poetry.

Many *Bulletin* readers have had the pleasure of meeting Masako Takeda, a gifted Dickinson scholar and translator whose enthusiasm for Dickinson has no limit. With the help of a Fulbright scholarship, Takeda has been residing in Amherst since February, working on a book about the Japanese perspective on Emily Dickinson and the challenges of bridging two cultures. The book is based on Takeda's own experiences visiting Amherst (in 1986, 1993, and 2000) and her perception of the pervasive relevance of Dickinson's poetry.

Tireless in her support of the Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens, Masako Takeda is always seeking ways to introduce the resources of the two houses to a wider audience. It is largely through her initiative that the first benefit concert came to be.

The Takeda family is doubly gifted, for Masako's younger sister, Makiko Takeda-Herms, is a world-class pianist who resides in Germany and tours extensively each year. Would it be possible, Masako wondered, to enlist Makiko's talents in support of the Dickinson houses?

After discussing the prospect with her sister, Masako made a proposal that was enthusiastically received by the administrators of both the Homestead and the Evergreens. Makiko generously offered to perform at no cost if the concert could be scheduled in mid-June between her other U.S. tour dates. In addition, she graciously agreed to attend a "meet the artist" reception at the Evergreens following the concert.

The choice of a concert venue was not difficult. It had to be a place that had

strong connections to the Dickinson family and one that was conveniently located in relation to the Evergreens. The First Congregational Church on Main St., directly opposite the Evergreens, was the perfect setting. The 1867 structure, constructed of Pelham gneiss in an English Gothic style, counted individuals from



Makiko Takeda-Herms. Photo courtesy of K&M Musikverlag.

both Dickinson households among its members. The conspicuous exception, of course, was Emily herself, who preferred to "keep the Sabbath...staying at home."

The First Congregational Church is one of the landmarks in Amherst and a cornerstone of the Dickinson Historic District established in 1977. As it happens, the church was in the midst of a major capital campaign and was just completing extensive repairs to the tall steeple and pointed spire. These were the same elements that Emily Dickinson glimpsed in the company of her brother, Austin, from behind the Evergreens fence in 1867 while the church was in process of building.

The interior of the church offered a large, high-ceilinged sanctuary with ample seating and good sightlines. The acoustics were ideal and the church council readily gave their consent for use of the building.

After much planning and anticipation, the day of the concert arrived. Makiko

Takeda-Herms appeared under escort of her sister Masako to tour the town and sample the quality of Emily Dickinson's presence in Amherst. She spent the afternoon in rehearsal, and before long the time of the concert had arrived.

The program, introduced by the performer, began with a short Bach excerpt to test the acoustics of the church and the feel of the piano. Next came Haydn's *Sonata in C minor* (Hob. XVI-20), a delightfully melodic piece whose balanced form was a perfect introduction.

The next offering was a contemporary Japanese piece by Masao Endo, called *Pathos into resonance for piano* (1999). With her precise touch, Takeda-Herms wove a delicate tapestry of sound that used the damper pedal and sympathetic vibration to sustain a veiled and floating harmony throughout the hall.

Robert Schumann's *Carnival Jest in Vienna* (Op. 26), next on the program, amply demonstrated why Takeda-Herms is such a popular performer. The colorful and wide-ranging sequence of five movements demands a highly cultivated musical sense and flawless technique. This performance drew waves of applause as Takeda-Herms revealed the humor, joy, and not-so-subtle politics of the young Schumann.

Following a brief intermission, the second half of the concert was devoted to Chopin's *Sonata in B minor* (Op. 58). Widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and most challenging pieces in the solo piano repertoire, the sonata was performed with grace and elegance by Takeda-Herms. Under her expert handling, the music conveyed the tension of a piece that seems always on the verge of falling into romantic abandon.

After the concert, the audience made their way on foot across Main Street and climbed the granite steps to the Evergreens, just as Austin and Susan's guests did a century ago. Candles lighting the front walk quickly succumbed to the unceasing rain, but the wide west veranda

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THE EMILY DICKINSON POETRY WALK

By Cindy Dickinson

On May 13, a beautiful spring day in Amherst, a group of a hundred people gathered under the oak tree at the Dickinson Homestead to take part in the Emily Dickinson Poetry Walk. The Poetry Walk has evolved from a long tradition in Amherst, the annual Memorial Walk to Emily Dickinson's grave. Although the principal purpose of the event is to honor Dickinson and to enjoy her poetry, the Poetry Walk offers a wonderful opportunity to combine history and literature in a unique way, presenting the poet's words in settings that have changed significantly since she roamed there. Standing across from a parking lot where her girlhood school stood, or beside a dumpster near the Mobil gas station that now covers the ground where Dickinson grew up, emphasizes the staying power of her poetry as its nineteenth-century roots meet head to head with its twenty-first-century following.

The 1960s saw the beginning of an annual Memorial Walk to commemorate the anniversary of the poet's death on May 15, 1886. A University of Massachusetts student organized a walk to the Town of Amherst's West Cemetery, where Dickinson is buried alongside her sister, parents, and grandparents. Dickinson enthusiasts and curiosity seekers have since met every year on the Saturday closest to the poet's death to walk together from the Homestead to West Cemetery.

Everett Emerson, now retired from the University of North Carolina, coordinated the Memorial Walk for about fifteen years while he was a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts. He remembers it as both a "solemn and a celebratory occasion." Emerson notes that as Dickinson's reputation grew significantly, the Walk served as an annual reminder to people of the significance of her achievements.

At the gravesite, participants read poems and offered a toast to the poet's memory. Some participants returned every year. Many remember the presence

of Margo Rand, wife of Frank Prentice Rand, chair of the University of Massachusetts English Department, who, even in her nineties, took part in the Walk and recited "Will there really be a 'morning'?" (Fr 148). A favorite memory for another participant was musician and composer Joann Snow Duncanson's musical set-

Amherst gave Emily her formal education, her passion for nature, her ironic eye, her concrete images, and her Emersonian scope, even her hymnlike meter. And the birds whose calls competed with our readings were, I enjoyed considering, the descendants of the birds in her poems. Most of the people who came on the Walk



The 1999 Poetry Walk began under the oak tree at the Homestead, with Betty Bernhard, a Homestead Guide, as one of the readers.
Photo courtesy of the Dickinson Homestead.

tings of Dickinson's poems, which she performed with her guitar beside Dickinson's grave, followed by a special salute she wrote for the poet, "The Ballad of Emily Dickinson." To toast the poet, walkers imbibed real champagne until the open-bottle law in Amherst made the use of sparkling cider a better idea. (This innovation was introduced with the reading of "I bring an unaccustomed wine," Fr 126).

Over the years the Walk attracted as few as 20 people and as many as 120 (in 1986, on the hundredth anniversary of the poet's death). Participants came from near and far to take part in such a special celebration. Harrison Gregg, who became the Walk's unofficial coordinator in the mid-1980s, cites several reasons for his and others' continued participation. "The Walk was unique—a kind of pilgrimage that seemed to declare, like its parallel in *Canterbury Tales*, that saints belong not only to the 'clerks' but to the people. The Walk also affirmed and celebrated the connection between Dickinson and Amherst.

seemed to have a personal relationship with Dickinson; the intensity and intimacy of her readers' response was continually evinced and declared. 'Admirers of Emily Dickinson' were addressed in my annual announcement. Admiration was the essence of the annual Emily Dickinson Walk."

In 1997, the gravesite walk was incorporated into a formal public program sponsored by the Dickinson Homestead and Amherst College's Mead Art Museum. In conjunction with the museum's special exhibition "Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art," the Homestead and the museum organized a series of poetry readings around Amherst at sites associated with Dickinson's life. The event concluded with the traditional walk to the grave. The poems were read by various members of the local community and, at the grave, other participants were invited to read their own favorites.

The Emily Dickinson Poetry Walk, as it is now known, has continued since 1997

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Benefit Concert, continued from page 10

was aglow with candles that shone through the French doors to cast lively shadows in the Evergreens parlor. Makiko's entrance was greeted enthusiastically amid the flow of conversation and refreshments. By special request, Makiko applied her light touch to the keys of Martha Dickinson Bianchi's own Steinway grand in the parlor. The piano, though out of tune and in need of restoration, rang with a clear rich tone that echoed throughout the large house. The promise was clearly there — with continued commitment, the joy of music, muffled for so many years, may once again flow through the Evergreens.

An added bonus at the concert and reception was the presence of Takeda-

Herms's fan club from Japan. Nine dedicated individuals had made the 6,000-mile journey to Amherst to hear their favorite classical pianist perform in a historic setting. They also helped at the concert itself by selling postcards and CDs and providing personal assistance to Makiko. The day following the concert, the visitors made a pilgrimage to the Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens to learn more about the drama of the Dickinson family and the magic of Dickinson's poetry. With Masako Takeda as their guide, they gained some insight into the layers of meaning embedded in the old houses.

Cindy Dickinson and I were privileged to have lunch with Makiko and the representatives of her fan club at the Lord

Jeffery Amherst Inn before they left. It proved to be a delightful meal with a relaxed atmosphere indicative of post-concert release. The conversation was wide ranging, but all agreed that a future concert featuring the skillful artistry of Makiko Takeda-Herms and the historic richness of the Dickinson legacy should be a high priority.

All proceeds from this first benefit concert went to support the programs and activities of the Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens. The kindness and generosity of those who planned the concert and those who attended the event are sincerely appreciated.

Gregory Farmer is Project Manager for the Evergreens.

Poetry Walk, continued from page 11

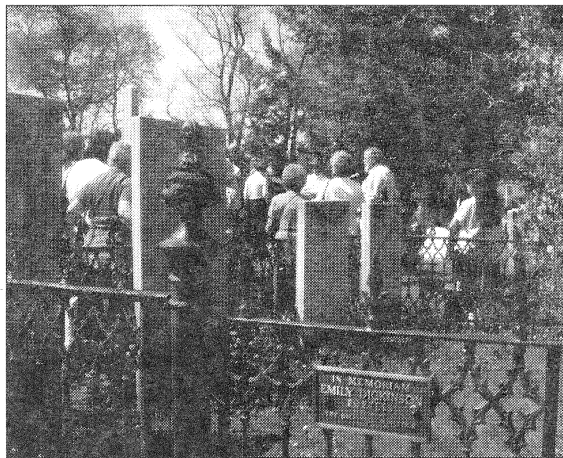
to engage the public in an understanding of Dickinson's life and work. The grassroots origins help to set the tone for the event, which is a way to remember this local and international poet, celebrating her words with fellow admirers.

In its present incarnation, the Poetry Walk begins at the Dickinson Homestead, where people assemble in the garden for the first readings, which begin at 1:00 p.m. Here walkers are reminded that this is the site where Dickinson was born and died and composed her verse. About eight poems, which are preassigned to readers who have been invited to take part, are then read. At the Homestead, these poems are generally associated with the theme of poetry, of poetic genius and inspiration.

The Walk then proceeds east on Main Street to the Railroad Station for readings of seasonal poems and poems about New England. Often the readings coincide with the arrival of the Amtrak train, headed north to Vermont on its daily run. The train station offers a place to reflect on the contributions the Dickinson family made to the town and those made by the large Irish immigrant population that lived near the railroad station in an area known as Kelly Square. A perennial favorite at the train station is the reading of "I like to see it lap the Miles."

Walkers face an uphill climb back on

Main Street, past the Homestead, to the next stop, the lawn of the Evergreens, 214 Main Street, home of Emily Dickinson's brother, Austin, and his wife, Susan Gilbert. From here, participants can look across the street to First Congregational Church, which was built in 1867-68 and



Poetry Walk participants gathered at the Dickinson gravesite in May 1999. Photo courtesy of the Dickinson Homestead.

was attended by members of the Dickinson family, though not by the poet herself. Poems read at the Evergreens reflect Dickinson's complex exploration of spirituality and religion.

The second half of the Poetry Walk moves further west to the lawn of the Jones Library, the town's public library, which is located across the street from the site of Amherst Academy. Emily Dickin-

son attended the academy for a number of years. Because of its association with Dickinson's childhood and early development, at this site readers recite poems that are particularly appealing to children. One favorite is "A narrow fellow in the grass," read each year by Seth Rothberg, a library

employee and the Homestead's Website master. Rothberg comments: "I always liked the snake poem because of that wonderful last line: 'Zero at the Bone.' Reading the poem aloud gives me a chance to get to know the whole poem and to try to figure out how it achieves or reaches that last line. Each year, I think I understand the poem a little bit better, or at least a little bit differently."

Walkers head next to the site of Dickinson's "other" house, the Pleasant Street

home where she and her family lived for fifteen years. The house has long been replaced by a Mobil gas station (now an Amherst institution itself), and for safety reasons the Walk participants gather in the parking lot of the adjacent shopping center. Since the Walk is now at the edge of the cemetery where Dickinson is buried, readings here explore her rich poems about death and bereavement.

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ELECTRONIC RESOURCES ON EMILY DICKINSON

By Martha Nell Smith

Running a web search on Emily Dickinson takes one to various and sundry places, from scholarly resources to fun sites such as the *Emily Dickinson Random Epigram Machine*. While there are numerous fan and other appreciative sites and two major scholarly sites on Dickinson, there are also three public e-mail discussion groups centered on Dickinson and aspects of her writings and culture.

The Dickinson List, edited by Tim Morris (University of Texas at Arlington), is devoted to discussions about the work, life, and world of Emily Dickinson and relevant criticism, theory, and biography. *EmMails* is, of the three lists, the one most focused on discussing individual Dickinson poems. *EmWeb*, started by Cynthia Hallen to discuss issues raised by her Lexicon project, has usually been the most active, with conversations ranging from discussion of the *Webster's* dictionaries in the Dickinson household and the meanings of words therein to details of Dickinson's life, the town of Amherst, and arguments over critical interpretations of her writings and biographical interpretations of her life. All three lists can be accessed from the Related Sites page of the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*, as well as from the EDIS Website.

The two scholarly sites focused on Dickinson are Marta Werner's *Radical Scatters: Emily Dickinson's Fragments and Related Texts, 1870-1886*, published by the University of Michigan Press, and the *Dickinson Electronic Archives* project, published by the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia.

Radical Scatters is a companion to Werner's 1995 book, *Emily Dickinson's Open Folios*. Both are crucial resources for anyone who intends to study the poet's manuscripts. *Radical Scatters* contains all the extant fragments composed by Dickinson between 1870 and 1886, as well as the poems, letters, and other writings with direct links to these fragments. This juxtaposition of Dickinson's finished and unfinished writings and distribution of them in various contexts reveals tension be-

tween autonomy and intertextuality in her works by allowing users to see how various fragments enter into and later break away from other documents. *Radical Scatters* is an SGML-encoded archive, which allows for deep structural encoding of texts that can in turn be used to analyze poetic meters and forms.

Electronic Addresses

Dickinson Electronic Archives: <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/dickinson>

EDIS Website: <http://www.cwru.edu/affil/edis/edisindex.html>

Radical Scatters: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/d/dickinson/>

The Dickinson Electronic Archives (DEA), produced by the Dickinson Editing Collective and coordinated by myself, features digital primary resources (digitized images of manuscripts and printings) and second-generation resources ("born-digital" creations that call digital primary resources into play). The *DEA* has four major sections: (1) *Writings by the Dickinson Family*, which features Emily Dickinson's writings as well as those of Susan Dickinson, Ned Dickinson, and Martha Dickinson Bianchi; (2) *Responses to Dickinson's Writings*; (3) *Teaching with the Archives*; and (4) *Citations and Research Resources*. Each has several subdivisions.

Correspondences of Emily Dickinson organizes her writings according to the addressee on the premise that she published her poems by circulating them in her correspondences (a practice not entirely exceptional for a woman of her circumstance). The *DEA* also offers access to previously unpublished writings that directly influenced Dickinson's work. The most important of these is undoubtedly the critical edition of *Writings by Susan Dickinson*—poems, essays, reviews, articles, short stories, letter-poems, and letters. The first online scholarly edition to incorporate user responses as part of its critical peer review process,

Writings by Susan Dickinson has proved to be of great interest to humanities computing and textual theory scholars outside Dickinson and nineteenth-century literary studies as its editors test, analyze, and revise their work and the possibilities and perils presented by a dynamic editorial model possible only in this medium.

Another key section is "Ned's Notebook," which can be found in *Edward (Ned) Dickinson: Correspondence and Notebook*. "Ned's Notebook" features transcriptions of Emily's and Susan Dickinson's poetry which were possibly made as Susan Dickinson tried to make her "Book of Emily" in the 1890s. I invite users to join us in evaluating these documents, indeed, all documents in the *DEA*.

Correspondences of Emily Dickinson, Writings by Susan Dickinson, and Edward (Ned) Dickinson all feature both digital primary resources and born-digital resources. *Titanic Operas* (a subdivision of *Responses to Dickinson*) will soon feature audio-streams of contemporary American women poets reading Dickinson's and their own poems as they muse on her influence. These will complement the essays already there. Sound files of Alicia Ostriker and Gwendolyn Brooks will be available this fall.

Other born-digital works in the *DEA* have been produced by students in American poetry and textual theory classes at several international universities and American middle schools, and by eleven American literature scholars from around the country, to produce *The Classroom Electric: Dickinson, Whitman, and American Culture*. The *DEA* also includes links to a variety of sites related to Dickinson, her writing practices, and editorial practices surrounding her work, as well as online articles about the work included in *Titanic Operas* and *The Classroom Electric* project.

The increasing visibility of Emily Dickinson's marks and of writings (her own and by others) related to their interpretation has been, is now, and will ever be the main purpose of both *Radical Scatters* and the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*.

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PERFORMANCES

THE BELLE OF AMHERST: BACK ON THE BOARDS

Reviewed by Cheri Langdell

There seem to be no gaps between the imaginary and the real in Julie Harris's current realization of Emily Dickinson in William Luce's one-woman play *The Belle of Amherst*. The play's twenty-fifth anniversary revival was launched at the Laguna Playhouse in Laguna Beach, California, and will be repeated across the United States in the coming months.

This is not the elfin, childlike Julie Harris of the 1976 production. Harris is now seventy-five, with the confidence born of long success. She steps briskly on stage and immediately establishes a close rapport with the audience, whom she treats as visiting guests, at once offering them her familiar black cake and explaining exactly how to make it. At the September 29 performance I attended, the well-heeled Orange County audience was eating out of Harris's experienced hands within seconds of this homespun opening. And this reviewer was utterly charmed.

While Harris is now a visibly older, more matronly Emily, she still commands the stage with passion and electricity. She seems to have rolled all her life's experience into this embodiment of Emily Dickinson as a sage, eccentric, self-aware woman, canny in the ways of small town gossip, yet through it all poignantly alone. In two minutes Harris had the fully packed house guffawing; in seven minutes we were crying. And when *she* cries, the tears are real; I saw them clearly from my front-row seat. At the end, the audience was on its feet for a universal ovation.

Through an Aristotelian catharsis, the playgoer vicariously experiences the agony, the joy, and the existential sorrows of the character. As Harris recreates the humorous, teasing, humble Dickinson, and the Dickinson who is alternately obsessed with death and consumed with passion, for the timeless moment of the play we believe she is real. In identifying with her hopes and fears, we experience not only her acceptance of and faith in life and death, but cathectically our own.

Harris enters at the beginning of the play without any air of vulnerability but with the domestic aplomb of a cook in the process of preparing the family meal. Her dress is patterned after the dress hanging in Emily Dickinson's bedroom at the Homestead for many years. Her boots, though not as authentic, are the ones Harris has worn in the role ever since her Tony Award-winning performances of *Belle* on Broadway in 1976.



Photo by Ed Krieger

Emily enters speaking to an offstage Vinnie, and at the end of Act II she exits responding to Vinnie's imaginary call. Although this is a one-woman show, it conveys the sense that one is watching a panoply of characters—not only her family but neighbor Henny Sweetser, Miss Woodbridge (her teacher), and Carlo (her dog), among others. Harris's impressive command of various accents and vocal inflections creates that vital sense of Dickinson's life in and of community; the stage is populated by the array of neighbors, relatives, and friends who come to visit.

One of my colleagues brought her eight-year-old son to the play, and he was so convinced these other characters were real that he kept insisting the play would have been better if they had been visible. For the rest of us, Harris's vivid acting

brought them to life, and their actual appearance was unnecessary. Still, this boy's reaction testifies to the power of Harris's rendition of Emily and her community.

Harris does not overplay the schoolgirl Emily, although she does convey her shrewd sense of humor. She remains throughout the fifty-three-year-old poet reliving the major stages of her life. The play is both a vehicle for Harris's performance of the poetry and a recounting of Dickinson's eventful life. Certainly one intent of the playwright was to show that Dickinson was both a woman and a poet, and that her roles as daughter, baker, and gardener at times overshadowed her role as poet. The scene in which Father surprises Emily still writing at 2:00 a.m., insists that she read him her poems, then cancels her mandate to rise early with the rest of the household, shows the interpenetration of her parallel lives. In this play her obedience to Father's orders obviously takes priority over any sense of her manifest destiny as a poet.

The play's chief paradox—and it is a delightful one—is that, although Dickinson's repudiation of formal religion is a recurrent theme, it in fact reveals her profoundly religious sensibility and her deep connection with God. This fact was keenly appreciated by the receptive Laguna Beach audience, who were undoubtedly of various faiths. Faith is substantial—almost palpable—in Harris's realization of the character, vividly experienced and emanating from her entire performance.

Luce's play expresses a romantic vision of Emily as unconsciously self-sacrificial and imbued with great love for everyone in her environs. In Harris's rendition, her deep faith in others and in her own future radiates from every pore and contrasts starkly with the irony of the real injustices done to her by Higginson and others in a position to perceive her poetic genius. Since she takes it all with dignity and bravado, we too are better able to cope with the slings and arrows of outr-

geous fortune. Thus the play is uplifting without taking itself too seriously. A deep joy and sanity reside here and render the play still relevant to today's world. We the audience are privileged to be within as "The Soul selects her own Society – / Then – shuts the door."

The stage set represents the parlor, bedroom, entrance, and drawing room of an Amherst home of 1883, although the furniture has more "gingerbread" than one sees in the actual federal-style furnishings of the Homestead. The Victorian clutter of this set, full of props that Harris employs with gusto, may be inauthentic, but it helps convey the sense of Dickinson as an ordinary person with many duties and playing many roles during her life.

Nothing in Dickinson's environment changes over the course of the play, but her character ranges emotionally from the giddiness of girlhood to the maturity and courage of a woman who can reject a suitor. Her stoicism and resilience reveal her as a mainstay of her family, ultimately wiser and saner than anyone else in her household. Self-pity and self-indulgence are absent. Her humility is disarming.

An interesting scenic motif in this production is the stylized branches of trees that strut across the back of the stage, with a "real" tree on either side of the stage. These trees and Harris's kneeling to plant seeds impart a living sense of nature's relevance to Dickinson's everyday life. These trees are later illuminated in pink as she movingly describes the Aurora Borealis, revealing Father's passion for beauty as he alerted the town to the atmospheric phenomenon.

Harris's energy and agility are truly remarkable, whether she is kneeling to plant seeds in the invisible garden at the front of the stage or running on and off stage like a teenager. Of course, as I learned while speaking with her after the performance, Emily Dickinson, Emily Brontë, and their poetry have been lifelong passions for her. Interestingly, in person Harris seems far younger than she does on the stage wearing her light auburn wig. She wears her gray hair in a style usually chosen by "twenty-somethings," so that she is still able to portray characters far younger than her actual years.

My only criticisms are minor. First, at

After her Laguna Beach run, Julie Harris took her *Belle of Amherst* to a four-week stint in Seattle. Other venues are still being booked as we go to press, but the following are confirmed: November 7-9, Flint Center for Performing Arts, Cupertino, Calif.; November 16-19, Macomb Center for Performing Arts, Clinton Township, Mich.; December 1-10, Playhouse Theatre, Wilmington, Del.; February 1-11, Shubert Theatre, Boston, Mass.; March 30-31, Lexington Opera House, Lexington, Ky.; and April 7-8, Hershey Theatre, Hershey, Penn.

times there was insufficient distinction between the lines of poetry and the connecting monologues. The audience could not always differentiate between the two. In addition, Harris now brings to the role rather more confidence and cosmopolitan worldliness than I think Emily Dickinson herself actually possessed. But this may be purely a matter of my own surmise, since we can rely only on contemporary sources, many of whom were biased or immature.

Finally, the play remains fixed in the scholarship of the 1970s. There is no sense of further ramifications in Dickinson's relationship with Susan beyond her being Emily's chief local poetry critic and Austin's wife. Nor are her relationships with Samuel Bowles or Abiah Root painted as current scholarship might suggest they could be.

But as a theatre piece and as a vehicle for a great actress, *Belle* rings as true in 2000 as it did in 1976. I urge every Dickinson lover who can to see this classic portrayal in what may be Harris's last series of performances in the play. The warmth she generates stirs hearts with this "received rendition" of Emily Dickinson—articulate, intricate, passionate, always exciting.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to my colleagues at California Baptist University David Isaacs, Dawn Ellen Jacobs, Toni Dingman, and especially Helen Huntley for their shrewd observations on the play, which helped me in writing the review.

Cheri Langdell is associate professor of Modern Languages and Literature at California Baptist University, Riverside.

Raiken-Kolb, Miriam. *I Dwell in Possibility*. 45 min. Videotape, \$65.00. Audio cassette, \$15.00. Available from Miriam Raiken-Kolb, 10 Thorndike St., Somerville, MA 02144.

Reviewed by Polly Longworth

This charming performance, billed as "an original one-act musical play about the little-known friendship between Emily Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd which brought the poetry of Emily Dickinson to the world," must be seen at least twice for proper appreciation. A viewer familiar with the Dickinson saga will miss the opening statements in the distraction of adjusting to a blonde, pretty, and prettily dressed Emily and a plain-faced, dark haired, severely tailored Mabel. The facts that the two women (though they share the stage) never met, and that Emily is older (and dead), though she looks younger (and alive), emerge early and may be lost to the viewer's confused sense of role reversal. My review is based on a second viewing.

Miriam Raiken-Kolb, who has written the script and strikingly appropriate music for this forty-five minute play, is an actress, composer, and musician. Although her considerable experience includes performing *The Belle of Amherst*, here she plays the part of worldly Mabel Todd, whose piano playing opens the drama and then continues to support an appealing performance by soprano Margaret O'Connell playing the poet.

O'Connell, too, is a seasoned actress and musician, her voice and performance skills well matched to a carefully chosen selection of Dickinson's poems, which tend to be the homelier, narrative ones. They include "I was the slightest in the House," "There's been a Death, in the Opposite House," "I'll tell you how the Sun rose," and "I tie my Hat – I crease my Shawl." Except in her highest voice range, O'Connell's articulation is commendably clear.

Opening with Todd's initial playing and singing for the unseen poet and her invalid mother in the Homestead parlor in September 1882, the story of their extraordinary relationship and revelations of their personalities are conveyed by each actress in turn reciting from Dickinson's and Todd's own writings. The

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MEMBERS' NEWS

ST. PAUL SUMMER WEEKEND, 2000

Emily Dickinson, Martin Luther, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dillinger, Snoopy. What do they have in common? All were among the sights and subjects encountered at the 2000 annual meeting of EDIS in St. Paul, Minnesota, our first such gathering in the Midwest.

About 65 Dickinsonians gathered on a warm, mostly sunny weekend to share their enthusiasm for Dickinson and her poetry. The program moved from group discussions of particular poems to performances of those poems, to a guided trolley tour that took in many of Fitzgerald's haunts in St. Paul, the scene of Dillinger's near-capture, and a church window with a depiction of a red-haired Dickinson surrounded by other notable

literary figures. Statues of Snoopy (the cartoon creation of St. Paul native Charles Schultz) were teasingly spread about the city in various guises and disguises.



Dickinson admirers discuss interpretations of a poem and imaginative ways to perform it.

A bronze statue of Martin Luther presided over the campus of Concordia University, where Eleanor Heginbotham had arranged a wonderful array of events to

satisfy the appetites and literary tastes of those attending, from a reception to a picnic to a banquet; a performance-lecture by Gudrun Grabher, who played alternately Emily Dickinson and Estee Lauder; a talk by scholar-novelist Judith Farr on the pleasures and problems of fictionalizing Dickinson; tributes to Dickinson by several St. Paul poets; and performances of musical settings of Dickinson poems. We saw demonstrated the wonders of the *Dickinson Electronic Archives* and views of the Homestead's new white dress. EDIS president Cris Miller rounded out the meeting with a talk on the uses of imagination, a subject EDIS members had amply demonstrated throughout the weekend.

ACADEMIC MEETINGS

The **December 2000 Modern Language Association meeting** will include two EDIS-sponsored panels. "Dickinson and the Victorians," chaired by Virginia W. Jackson, will include Deborah Cadman's "Victorian Others: Beggars and Donors in the Writings of Dickinson, Mallarmé, and Baudelaire"; Nancy Mayer's "Finding Herself Alone: Emily Dickinson, Victorian Women Novelists and the Female Subject"; and Marcy Tanter's "Falling Asleep in Their Verse: Dickinson, Tennyson, and Browning."

A panel on "Dickinson's Civil War," with Mary Loeffelholz as chair, will feature Nancy Leonard speaking on "Emily Dickinson and Civil War Photography"; Katharine Rodier on "Planetary Forces: Emily Dickinson's Civil War Correspondence with Thomas Wentworth Higginson"; and Faith Barrett's "Addresses to a Divided Nation: Dickinson, Whitman, and the Civil War."

For the **2001 MLA meeting**, EDIS will again sponsor two sessions. The first will center on the theme "Mourning Dickinson." Essays will be welcome on any aspect of the relationship between Dickinson and mourning. Possible topics might include Dickinson's writings as consolation literature and how readers have em-

ployed them as such; Dickinson's bodily semiotics of grief and mourning; her relationship to nineteenth-century mourning practices; and her survival in her readers' mourning practices (e.g., cemetery visits, observations of the anniversaries of her birth and death).

A second MLA session will be open to papers on any topic in Dickinson studies. One-page abstracts for either session should reach Mary Loeffelholz by March 15 at m.loeffelholz@nunet.neu.edu.

EDIS will sponsor two sessions at the **American Literature Association** annual conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 24-27, 2001. We are especially interested in work on Dickinson's reception, Dickinson and her critics, Dickinson and material culture, or Dickinson and her times. Please send one-page abstracts to Vivian Pollak, English Department, Box 1122, Washington University, St. Louis, MO 63130 USA, by December 15. After that date, e-mail submissions will be accepted until January 5 at vrpollak@artsci.wustl.edu.

The first conference of the newly formed **SSAWW (Society for the Study of American Women Writers)**, with which EDIS is

affiliated, will be in San Antonio, Texas, February 14-18, 2001, and EDIS will sponsor two panels. The first, to be moderated by Eleanor Heginbotham, will focus on "Dickinson and American Women Writers" and will include papers by Connie Kirk speaking on "The House that Emily Built: Dickinson Rebuilds Bradstreet House 200 Years after Fire"; Marcy Tanter on "'Dear Friend, I can fly...': The Strange and Wonderful Friendship of Helen Hunt Jackson and Emily Dickinson"; David Sullivan on "H.D.'s Masque behind Sappho's and Dickinson's Masks"; and Martha Nell Smith on "Dickinson's Legacy and Contemporary Women Poets: Evolutions of *Titanic Operas* (<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/titanic>)."

The second panel, "Dickinson and Her Critics," will feature Paula Bennett speaking on "'The Negro never knew': Dickinson and the Question of Race"; Betsy Erkkila on "The Dickinson Wars"; and Vivian Pollak on "'The Wholesomeness of the Life': Marianne Moore on Emily Dickinson." Jane Donahue Eberwein will chair the panel.

For information on the conference, contact Susan Belasco at sbelasco@unlnotes.unl.edu. To join SSAWW, contact Jane Eberwein at jeberwei@Oakland.edu.

EDIS BOARD ELECTIONS

The EDIS Board of Directors chose new officers and Board members at its August meeting. Jonnie Guerra was elected president to succeed Cristanne Miller. Guerra is vice president for Academic Affairs at Cabrini College. Suzanne Juhasz, founding editor of the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and professor of English at the University of Colorado, was named vice president.

Ellen Louise Hart, lecturer for the Humanities Division at the University of California, Santa Cruz, was reelected Treasurer. Barbara Kelly, the *Bulletin's* book review editor, joins the Board as Secretary.

Two Board seats were filled by the reelection of Gudrun Grabher, professor of American Studies at the University of

Innsbruck, and Suzanne Juhasz. Paul Crumbley, assistant professor of English at Utah State University, was elected to the third Board vacancy.

Betty Bernhard assumed her duties as member-at-large at the August meeting. Martha Sjogreen, new EDIS legal counsel, also attended. James Fraser was elected Membership Chair.

AN INTRODUCTION TO BETTY BERNHARD

By *Connie Ann Kirk*

This is the first in a new series introducing EDIS officers and directors. We begin with the new Member-at-Large recently elected by the full membership.

Mary Elizabeth Kromer Bernhard—or Betty, as she encourages people to call her—was elected by majority vote of the membership to fill the Member-at-Large seat on the EDIS board in April. As a resident of Amherst for more than thirty years, Bernhard brings to the position a wealth of local experience as well as scholarly insight on the poet. On a cool Northeastern October afternoon, I had the opportunity to interview her by telephone for the *Bulletin* to better acquaint members with her background as well as to outline her hopes for the future of EDIS.

Bernhard recalls that her interest in art, literature, and music began in early childhood in Arlington, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus. Her mother, a former piano teacher, and her father, an architect and civil engineer, fostered animated dinner conversation on topics ranging from Shakespeare to George Sand, from Keats to the Emersonians. “Dad was gifted in adapting Shakespeare to the contemporary scene,” she recalls. “One of his favorite quotes was, ‘Come what come may, Time and the hour runs through the roughest day’” (*Macbeth*, 1.3).

Having delicate health as a teenager, Bernhard had private tutors, which she says was “socially limiting but intellectually stimulating,” and it was at this time that her love of books and poetry took hold. She later went to college in New York City, attending both Columbia University and City College before earning her Bach-

elor of Arts degree with an emphasis in American and English literature in 1957 from City College.

Immediately following college, she worked in administration at Union Theological Seminary in what she describes as “the halcyon days when it was possible to meet Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich in the hall.” Marriage to Win(fred) Bernhard detoured her plans for an advanced degree at Columbia, and she moved to Durham, North Carolina, with her husband, who joined the history department at Duke University.

The Bernhards moved to Amherst in the early 1960s when Win took a faculty position at the University of Massachusetts. The move fit both of their interests—Win’s as an Early Americanist and Betty’s as a partisan of the New England writers, especially the town’s own home-grown poet, whose work and life had long intrigued her. She immersed herself in Amherst’s historical and civic organizations. She became a Town Meeting member, joined the League of Women Voters, and was elected to the board of the Amherst Historical Society. Later she was appointed to the town Historical Commission, with its emphasis on historic preservation, where she served as chairperson.

Bernhard made her first visit to the Dickinson Homestead in the early 1960s when her daughter, Elizabeth, was three years old. She says they went “as the guests of the gracious Mrs. Parke,” the last owner of the home before it was sold to Amherst College. She recalls Mrs. Parke relating the famous neighbor Jenkins-Dickinson moth story to her daughter on

that visit. When I asked her if she recalled how the house looked then as compared with now, she said that the Parkes’ formal furniture gave the house a darker look. Bernhard became a guide at the Homestead in 1979 and, despite her many lectures and activities in other Dickinson venues since that time, she continues as a guide to this day because she finds the “variability of visitors in age and interest a challenge.”

In addition to her work in the Amherst community, Betty Bernhard has written numerous articles of Dickinson scholarship. Her major emphasis has been on Emily Norcross Dickinson, the poet’s mother, and the Norcross family. She published the first illuminating view of them in “Portrait of a Family: Emily Dickinson’s Norcross Connection” in the *New England Quarterly* in 1987. She is at work on an analytical study of the mother/daughter relationship between the two women. Readers may find her profiles of several of the Norcross relatives in *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, edited by Jane Donahue Eberwein.

Bernhard has published other articles and reviews in the *New England Quarterly*, as well as essays in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and the *Bulletin*. She has also presented papers at EDIS conferences—“Poets at the White Heat: Emily Dickinson and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff” in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1995, and “‘Let no one beside come’: Lavinia as Poet’s Apostle in the Triumvirate of Dickinson Women” at the Mount Holyoke conference in 1999. Recently, in an article published in the *New England Quarterly* at the end of last year, Bernhard docu-

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NORTHERN LIGHTS: THE TRONDHEIM CONFERENCE

By Cristanne Miller and Domhnall Mitchell

Reading and writing were Emily Dickinson's preferred forms of travel: her family library included several books by Norwegian authors in translation, and her poems and letters show that in Norway's climate and geography she found occasional equivalents for elements of her own imaginative landscape.

From August 3 to 5, 2001, Trondheim, Norway's oldest and third largest city, will have the chance to return the compliment when it hosts the fourth international EDIS conference, titled "Zero at the Bone." The gathering, jointly sponsored by EDIS and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, is expected to attract representatives from every continent. Conference panels will address the theme "New Climates for Dickinson Study" in a variety of ways—biographical, social, and technological. Special conference events will include a buffet luncheon, a festive dinner at which the EDIS Distinguished Scholar Award will be presented to Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, and an evening of music.

The official conference site will be the Britannia Hotel, rich in tradition and dating from the nineteenth century. It boasts a splendid Moorish-style restaurant, a business center, and state-of-the-art conference rooms. The hotel is ideally situated in the center of Trondheim, within easy walking distance of most of the city's attractions—cafés, galleries, museums, restaurants, and shopping areas.

The conference itself will include several special events. It will open with a session on "Cognitive Poetics: An Aid for Interpreters and Translators of Dickinson's Poetry." This session will be followed by a workshop (not previously announced) later in the conference. The workshop discussion will be led by Marianne Erickson and Margaret Freeman and is titled "Cognitive Strategies for Interpreting and Translating 'I stepped from Plank to Plank' (Fr 926, J875)." To receive further information on the session or workshop, please contact Freeman at freemamh@email.lavc.ca.us. To participate in the workshop, please submit a 200-

word proposal, as described in the spring 2000 issue of the *Bulletin*.

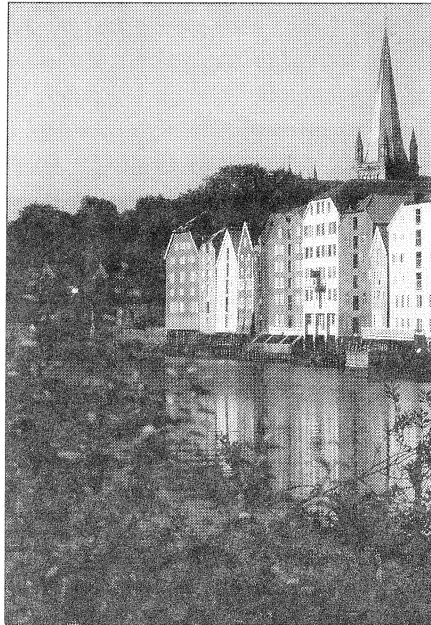


Photo by Joran Waerdal

Older buildings along the River Nidelven as it runs through Trondheim, with the steeple of Nidaros Cathedral in the background.

The opening session will be followed immediately by the first plenary session, with three speakers placing Dickinson in nineteenth-century cultures: Mary Loeffelholz of Northeastern University, Boston, speaking on "Plied from Nought to Nought: The Field of Dickinson's Refusals"; Shira Wolosky of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, on "Being in the Body"; and Christa Buschendorf of Goethe University, Frankfurt, on "'That precarious gait': Dickinson's Poetics of Experiment."

On the following day a second plenary session will focus on material aspects of reading Dickinson, specifically on the manuscripts. Speakers will be poet Susan Howe, whose topic will be "Thirds and Generals: Dickinson, Peirce, and Howe," and Philip Horne of University College, London, speaking on "The Poetry of Possibilities: Dickinson's Texts."

A third plenary session, "Retrospection Is Prospect's Half," will conclude the conference, with Jonathan Morse of the University of Hawaii responding to is-

ssues raised throughout the conference and engaging all participants in a discussion of these "new climates for Dickinson studies."

A conference registration form appears on page 27. We recommend you register before May 1. The registration fee includes the banquet and buffet luncheon; additional tickets are required only for spouses or other guests who are not registering for the conference. There will be no additional charge for non-registrants to attend a few meetings.

To participate in the conference, please submit one of the following: an abstract (200 words) for a paper to be presented in a panel session (session titles and groupings will be determined by the conference organizers); abstracts for a complete panel session, including title and chair; an abstract (200 words) for participation in a seminar workshop (see the spring 2000 *Bulletin* for the list of workshop topics and discussion leaders); or a proposal (100 words) for a poster or work to be displayed and discussed in a poster session. Speakers must be members of EDIS. See the membership application form on page 27.

All proposals should be submitted to Cristanne Miller by December 15, 2000, at Department of English, Pomona College, 140 West Sixth St., Claremont, CA 91711 USA, or via e-mail at ccm14747@pomona.edu, or by fax to 909-621-8296. Participation will be confirmed by February 2001.

Rooms at the Britannia are available to delegates for 650 Kroner per night single or 850 Kroner per night double; both rates include breakfast. (For up-to-date conversion rates, see <http://www.xe.net.ucc/>). Reservations should be made by contacting the hotel directly at Dronningens gt. 5, 7011 Trondheim, Norway; by phone at 47 73 80 08 00; or by fax at 47 73 80 08 01. For phone and fax, remember to dial the appropriate international code before the number; it differs depending on the country you're calling from. You can also book on-line at <http://www.britannia.no/engelsk>. The menu on the left side of the page includes a reservation link. Under

“Other information” be sure to include a reference to EDIS 2001; this will enable you to benefit from the reduced price being offered to delegates.

For those seeking less expensive accommodations, we recommend the SommerHotel a few blocks away; reservations can be made on-line at <http://sommerhotell.singsaker.no/>. General information on Trondheim hotels is available at http://www.srs-worldhotels.com/norway/trondheim/hotel_trdbri.html.

EDIS is pleased to announce that Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) has agreed to be the official airline for “Zero at the Bone.” To book SAS flights to Norway, contact your travel agent or phone SAS at 800-437-5804 (in the United States). You can also book on-line at various SAS Websites, including <http://www.flysas.com/booking/findex.htm>. Remember to



give the following reference number: NO 0105 (en oh zero-one-zero-five) to indicate that you'll be attending the conference.

We have already received several inquiries about the Hurtigruta, the Norwegian coastal steamers that offer what is reputed to be one of the world's most beautiful sea voyages. The boats go from Bergen in southern Norway to Kirkenes in the extreme north. A round-trip cruise (Bergen–Kirkenes–Bergen) takes eleven days, but you can board at Trondheim and take shorter trips, anything from a day trip to an overnight, in either direction, depending on availability. There are several boats that make this journey; if you deal with a travel agent, ask for information on the older and smaller but classic wood-and-brass ships, such as the *M/S Lofoten*, in addition to the more modern cruise ships, such as the *M/S Narvik* or *M/S Kong Harald*. But you need to act quickly—Hurtigruta trips are often booked

a year in advance. Tivete, a Norwegian travel agency, may be able to book a place on the Hurtigruta. Their website is <http://www.trondheim.cc/>. Their postal address is Tivete Arrangement, Prinsensgt. 51, N-7011, Trondheim, Norway. Or phone them at 47-7380 7720; their fax number is 47-7380-7707.

The planning committee for the conference is made up of Mary Loeffelholz, Cristanne Miller, Domhnall Mitchell, and Martha Nell Smith. Questions about the program should be directed to Miller (see the address listed earlier). For questions about Trondheim arrangements, contact Mitchell at domhnall.mitchell@hf.ntnu.no or at Department of English, N.U.S.T., N-7491 Dragvoll, Trondheim, Norway.

We hope many of you will attend this exciting conference. We look forward to greeting you in historic Trondheim.

PINSKY DELIVERS DICKINSON LECTURE

By Barbara Kelly

Robert Pinsky, the thirty-ninth Poet Laureate of the United States, delivered the second annual Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry at The Pennsylvania State University on October 4 to an audience of more than 400.

Pinsky spoke about his Favorite Poem Project, emphasizing two assumptions with which he started the project: first, that poetry is a bodily art in which the individual voice of any reader is a key component of poetic expression; second, that in the United States many people love poetry.

When Pinsky invited Americans to submit their favorite poem and a few words about the chosen work, he was surprised to receive 18,000 responses from people of all ages and walks of life, many of whom were later filmed on videotape reciting their poems and explaining their significance. The videotapes can be viewed on the Internet at www.favoritepoem.org.

A selection of these poems and letters may also be found in Pinsky's new book, *Americans' Favorite Poems*, from which he read during the lecture to illustrate the

wide range of poems and voices. He encourages local poetry readings, noting that the respect we give each other at such gatherings is good for the community and good for the nation.

Citing Emily Dickinson occasionally in his talk, he concluded by quoting from three letters written about Dickinson's "‘Hope’ is the things with feathers" (J254). From the Bronx, a thirty-two-year-old zookeeper working in the aviary wrote, "It takes so ridiculously little to keep [hope] alive...hope will pipe up...like a bird's song." After reading Dickinson's poem, Pinsky took questions from the audience, adding that he includes Dickinson's "Further in Summer than the Birds" (J1068) among his many personal favorites. He ended with a requested reading of one of his own poems, choosing "Samurai Song," the first poem in his new book, *Jersey Rain*. The festive evening ended with a standing ovation followed by a reception and book signing.

Barbara Kelly is Book Review Editor for the Bulletin and Secretary of EDIS.

NOTES & QUERIES

Unbound copies of Frederick Tucker's *Amherst Academy: A New England School of the Past, 1814-1861*, are now available for purchase from the Dickinson Homestead. Published in 1929, this work is considered the definitive chronicle of the academy Emily Dickinson attended periodically in the 1840s. The 250-page book includes an index and illustrations. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the Amherst Academy Scholarship Fund and the Dickinson Homestead. For a copy, send a check for \$10 (includes fourth-class postage), made out to Amherst College, to the Dickinson Homestead, 280 Main St., Amherst, MA 01002.

Amherst College Library has acquired a Latin textbook, *The Works of Virgil* (1838), that Emily Dickinson shared with Abby Wood when both were students at Amherst Academy. Later Dickinson presented it to Abby, who carried it with her to Syria, where her husband, Daniel Bliss, founded what is now the American University of Beirut. (See the article beginning on page 1.) In addition to an inscription on the flyleaf from Dickinson to her friend, the book contains numerous pencilled mar-

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A NEW "MOLD" OF DICKINSON?

If Emily Dickinson considered publication the "auction of the mind," what would she think of an auction of her likeness on the Internet? Such an event may in fact have occurred if the new photograph offered a few months ago on eBay proves to be an authentic image of the poet.

The purported likeness was offered for sale as a "Vintage Emily Dickinson Albumen Photo." The winning bid was made by Philip F. Gura, who is William S. Newman Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill.

Gura reports that the print, which measures 3 7/8 x 5 1/2", appears to be an albumen copy of a daguerreotype, probably made in the 1880s or 1890s, when daguerreotype owners could have their unique images copied by new photo-

graphic processes. It is not, however, a copy of the one known daguerreotype of Dickinson. Gura speculates that it may have been made from an 1850s daguerreotype, perhaps one made away from Amherst and given to a friend, then later copied by a descendant or other owner. The tentative date of the original is supported by historians of costume, who agree that the image dates to the early 1850s.

On the back of the photo appear the words: "Emily Dickinson/died/Dec[or possibly "rec" for "received"] 1886." If "Dec" is a correct reading, it is an incorrect date, since Dickinson died in May 1886, but the March 3, 1898, issue of the *Hampshire Gazette*, in reporting on the Todd/Dickinson feud, gives her death date as December 1886, a possible explanation for

the mistake. Gura is investigating the handwriting, which is not that of any member of the poet's immediate family.

The photo is now in the hands of a team of forensic anthropologists, who are comparing the facial structure of this photo with that of the known daguerreotype. Their preliminary report remarks that the "fit" between centers of eyes, nostrils, corners of mouth, and other salient points appears to be "pretty impressive." A positive fit cannot, of course, establish with certainty that the photo is indeed of the poet without further evidence; it can only confirm that possibility. The *Bulletin* hopes to report the anthropologists' final findings in a future issue.

Readers who want a glimpse of the new photo and handwriting can do so at Gura's Website: www.unc.edu/~gura.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In a "Letter to the Editor" in the May/June 2000 *Bulletin* (p. 17), Judith Farr claims that my 1999 EDIS conference paper, "Dickinson's Bawdy: Shakespeare and Sexual Symbolism in Emily Dickinson's Writing to Susan Huntington Dickinson," "contains misrepresentations of [her] vision of the significance of *Antony and Cleopatra* to Emily Dickinson." Since she did not attend the conference, her account is based only on the brief summary provided in the Nov./Dec. 1999 *Bulletin* (p. 14). Under the circumstances, I can understand how her own misunderstanding of my argument occurred. While the summary is good, it necessarily takes my quotations out of context and omits significant portions of the paper.

Farr believes that I wrongly denied her acknowledgment of the way Antony represents Dickinson's "unsatisfied desire" for Susan when I suggested that she "overlook[s] the sexual dynamic in Antony and Cleopatra's relationship." While the term "overlook" may be overstated, I was speaking specifically of the sexually explicit metaphors that appear in both *Antony* and two of Dickinson's letter-poems to Susan, several of which Farr does not consider in her published work. I never intended to deny Farr's recognition of Dickinson's "desire" for Susan.

Although the summary of my paper makes it appear so, I did not use Ellen Louise Hart's phrase calling Dickinson's allusions "coded declarations of desire" in opposition to Farr's work. Farr's recognition of this desire was implicit in a previous statement acknowledging both her and Paula Bennett's discussions of how the play "echoes in many ways [Dickinson's] relationship with Sue." And even if these initial remarks were unintentionally misleading, I believe my subsequent discussion of "Her breast is fit for pearls" (Fr121), which quoted significant portions of Farr's interpretation of this poem in *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (133-34), made her position clear.

The *Bulletin* summary does not elucidate what I believe is the essential difference between our understandings of the way Dickinson used the play—our perceptions of how conscious Dickinson was of the explicitly sexual nature of her "desire" for Susan, and the degree to which she intentionally incorporated sexual symbolism into her poetry. Indeed, Farr does liken Dickinson's "affection" for Susan to that of a "lover," but she also attaches to that statement a note that reads: "I do not mean to suggest, as some recent critics have, that this affection was distinctly lesbian, though Dickinson's

wistful delight in both Susan's appearance and her kisses have their measure of eros." She then quotes and agrees with Vivian Pollak's claim that "'Carnality' was not the major focus of [Dickinson's] relationship with Sue" ("Emily Dickinson's 'Engulfing' Play" 237, 249 n 16). In contrast to Farr (and Pollak), I argue that the *Antony* allusions suggest that "carnality" was a major focus in Dickinson's relationship to Susan; therefore, that relationship should be viewed as "lesbian."

I hope this clarifies an unfortunate misunderstanding for both Judith Farr and EDIS *Bulletin* readers.

Kristin M. Comment

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DICKINSON AND CONSOLATION

By Lois Kaufman

After many years of reading the poems of Emily Dickinson for intellectual stimulation and spiritual refreshment, the death of my sixteen-year-old daughter in 1983 gave me an even deeper hunger for Dickinson's art. In her poetry I discovered unsentimental encouragement and a seeming commitment to tell-it-like-it-is analyses of the impact of profound loss. For me, this brought comfort and a validation of my emotions. In the past couple of years, the urge to offer Dickinson to children and parents in mourning has become, for me, overwhelming.

During the recent EDIS annual meeting, I encountered sincere interest in developing Dickinson programs for grief recovery support groups. Ellen Hart spoke of her work-in-progress dealing with "consolation poetry" on the EDIS Website. Cris Miller's enthusiasm for "taking Dickinson" to those struggling to cope with death was reinforced in her Sunday presentation, which emphasized the auditory value of Dickinson's poems.

Anyone with an interest in developing their own "take" on Dickinson's ability to speak to the bereaved is invited to contact me to discuss how she/he might participate in this effort through local organizations.

Since I live in a suburb of Atlanta, the primary focus of my own effort at present is through involvement with a new Atlanta nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide support to children and their families after the death of an immediate family member. I am interested in this specific type of program because of my own experience of how losing a child impacted cruelly my other children.

There are many venues that would likely welcome creative thinking and programming. Anyone interested in hospice programs, for example, or in Compassionate Friends, a nonprofit organization for bereaved parents, or in grief support programs in a community hospital is invited to contact me at 3531 Ridge Brook Trail, Duluth, GA 30096, or at lpkaufman@mindspring.com.

PIONEER VALLEY CELEBRATES

On Saturday, December 9, the Pioneer Valley Symphony and Chorus continues its sixty-second season with "A New England Celebration" of music and art from Amherst and the surrounding region. Music by Massachusetts composers will be performed, along with works based on texts by two of New England's greatest poets, Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost. The concert will cap off a full day of events marking Dickinson's birthday.

Aaron Copland's *Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson*, sung by mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato, will celebrate Copland's centenary and Dickinson's 170th birthday (December 10). Also on the pro-

gram will be "Jubilee" and "Noel" from *Symphonic Sketches* by George Chadwick (1854-1931).

The PVS Chorus will join the orchestra for *Frostiana*, settings of Frost poems by another Massachusetts composer, Randall Thompson (1899-1984), commissioned by the town of Amherst for its bicentennial in 1959, and Thompson's well known "Alleluia," composed for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center. Bruckner's setting of Psalm 150 concludes the program, which begins at 8:00 p.m. at Greenfield High School, Greenfield, Massachusetts. For more information, contact the PVS office at 413-773-3664.

Poetry Walk, continued from page 12

Finally, walkers make their way into the cemetery to the Dickinson family gravesite. A few people are already at the site, awaiting their arrival. Here Harrison Gregg reads a description of Dickinson's funeral and joins participants in offering a toast to the poet. Then participants are invited to read their favorite Dickinson poems. Both longtime participants and newcomers are encouraged to come forward.

Why is the Walk significant? Why has it continued and evolved for so many years? In part, it reflects Dickinson's own timelessness and her poetry's continued admiration from readers new and old alike. But the Walk is also an enjoyable experience in and of itself. When asked why he reads at the Poetry Walk, Seth Rothberg said, "It's fun. That's why I do it and that seems to me to be a good enough reason to do anything. When I look at all the people who come for it, they seem to be there because it's enjoyable. The poems, the history, the landmarks are all presented just right."

If you consider yourself a "Dickinson admirer," mark your calendars to attend next year's Poetry Walk on May 12, 2001. The Walk begins at 1:00 p.m. at the Dickinson Homestead. If you are traveling from far away, please note that accommodations are often difficult to obtain, so plan ahead.

Cindy Dickinson is Director of the Emily Dickinson Homestead.

Notes & Queries, continued from page 19

ginalia, including indications of school assignments, quotations from various poets, and humorous remarks. The book offers fascinating opportunities for biographers and literary scholars.

The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., will hold its annual Emily Dickinson Birthday Tribute, this year on December 11. Jim Fraser, new EDIS membership chair, will offer a display on the Dickinson houses, as he has done for several years, with help from Cindy Dickinson, Gregory Farmer, and Doug Evans. Black cake and other refreshments will be served. In the past, the event has helped secure donations for the houses. For further information, contact the library at 202-544-4600.

The Poetry Society of America presented *The Writer Magazine/Emily Dickinson Award* for 2000 jointly to Jean Merrill Balderston, for a poem entitled "Dickinson Weather," and Dolores Hayden for "Language of Flowers." The award was established in honor of Charles Angoff "for a poem inspired by Emily Dickinson." Poet Lucie Brock-Broido was judge for the award.

A new **Emily Dickinson coffee mug** offers a very serious looking portrait of the poet with a quotation from "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain." For a view of the mug on the mug and ordering information, go to <http://www.geniusestorevelation.com>.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

Beach, Christopher, ed. *Artifice and Indeterminacy: An Anthology of New Poetics*. Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1998. 354 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8173-0946-2, \$44.95; paper, ISBN 0-8173-0954-3, \$19.95.

This collection gathers previously uncollected writings of the past two decades by eighteen avant-garde poets and critics. In Susan Howe's "experimentally hybrid" piece, "'These Flames and Generosities of the Heart': Emily Dickinson and the Illogic of Sumptuary Values," the author acknowledges the contributions of Thomas H. Johnson and Ralph W. Franklin to Dickinson scholarship but, favoring the manuscript facsimiles, she also chides the editors and publishers for the misediting and misappropriation of "a woman poet who refused to conform to the rules of conventional verse." This volume, celebrating the "'artifice' of the poetic text while also accepting as a given the 'indeterminacy' of its inception and reception," is intended for readers of contemporary poetry.

Bornstein, George, and Theresa Tinkle, eds. *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1998. 294 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-472-10865-4, \$49.50.

Twelve scholars interested in literature, history, the fine arts, and philosophy consider the iconic or material aspects of texts and their cultural transmission. They ask, "How does the material form of a work shape its understanding in a particular historical moment, in a particular culture?" Their essays represent various periods and subjects, from Boethius and medieval illuminated manuscripts, through the Renaissance and Victorian periods, to Dickinson, Yeats, Joyce, Fitzgerald, and Styron. More than two dozen illustrations show the iconic features of the works analyzed. In "Corporealizations of Dickinson and

Interpretive Machines," Martha Nell Smith traces the editing practices of Todd, Higginson, Bianchi, Johnson, Shurr, and Franklin to show how the renderings of Dickinson poems have evolved from manuscript to various printed forms. She uses "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" to demonstrate the indeterminacy of Dickinson's text and suggests that "the 'Alabaster Chamber' of Dickinson's poem might be the printed page itself, which seems to put words 'safely' out of touch from change." Smith persuasively explains that by offering readers access to the original manuscripts, electronic renderings open the poems to deeper investigation and re-imaginings.

Conrad, Angela. *The Wayward Nun of Amherst: Emily Dickinson and Medieval Mystical Women*. New York: Garland Publishing/Taylor & Francis Group, 2000. 164 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8153-3913-5, \$53.00.

Conrad examines the similarities between Dickinson's life and work and those of medieval mystics, including Hildegard of Bingen, Gertrude the Great, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Antwerp, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, and Dame Margery Kempe. The author does not claim that they had a direct influence on Dickinson, but the poet's reclusion and her expressions of renunciation, espousal to Christ, ecstatic experience, and struggle to keep her faith suggest an affinity with these women who "equate their voices with the revelation of the Divine." Like them, Dickinson transforms "humility, enclosure, and pain" into "power, freedom, and bliss." Conrad focuses on the mystic's view of herself, her multivalent relationships with God, and her poetic expressions of transcendent experience, explicating relevant Dickinson poems in a clearly written exploration.

Harris, Morag. *Emily Dickinson in Time: Experience and Its Analysis in Progressive Verbal Form*. London: Karnac Books (distributed by Other Press, New York), 1999. 190 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-85575-185-2, \$32.00.

Harris suggests that studying the poetic language of Dickinson's letters (those dated with certainty) could lead to significant dating and chronological sequencing of her poems, either corroborating or contesting the existing sequence. This pilot study offers close readings of three letters representing different phases of Dickinson's writing: Letter 50, 19 August 1851, to Abiah Root; Letter 235, Autumn 1861, to Mary Bowles; and Letter 432, January 1875, to Mrs. Holland. Focusing on Dickinson's network of thought and metaphor and noting that the quality of these changed over the years, Harris is convinced that "the poetic diction of the poems was elaborated equally and reciprocally in the letters." Footnoted with erudite references to Coleridge, Goethe, Keats, Schiller, and others, the sophistication of Harris's approach is formidable. A comprehensive index divided into nine sections offers serious scholars finely detailed, alternative ways to study Harris's work.

Idol, John L., Jr., and Melinda M. Ponder, eds. *Hawthorne and Women: Engendering and Expanding the Hawthorne Tradition*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 323 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-55849-174-0, \$60.00; paper, ISBN 1-55849-178-3, \$19.95.

Twenty-four essays focus on women who influenced Hawthorne or are linked to him in other ways. Included are Margaret Fuller, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickinson, Sarah Orne Jewett, Willa Cather, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Flannery

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.

O'Connor, and Toni Morrison, among others. In "Emily Dickinson's Pearls," Karen Kilcup finds sexual resonances between Hawthorne's Hester and Pearl and erotic elements in Dickinson's "pearl poems" (J70, 214, 299, 320, 452, 520, 732, and 998). Citing several references to Hawthorne in Dickinson's letters, Kilcup believes that "Dickinson shares with Hawthorne a number of attitudes and images that render her familiarity with his work both likely and significant," but she considers him a "resource...rather than an influence." Though Dickinson's connection to Hawthorne is slight, Kilcup's essay is thought provoking and provides notes for further reading.

Meyer, Howard N., ed. *The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911)*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press/Perseus Books, 2000. 618 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-306-80954-0, \$25.00.

Best known as Dickinson's lifelong correspondent and early editor, Higginson was an abolitionist, the commander of the first black Union regiment in the Civil War, an advocate for women's rights and suffrage, and a man of letters. Meyer's comprehensive chronology and introduction portray a man of staggering achievements. Trained as a minister at Harvard and conversant in several languages, Higginson worked as a journalist, lecturer, teacher, state legislator, literary critic, editor, biographer, historian, and translator. Meyer considers him an important writer and chronicler of his age and has gathered fifty-five of Higginson's essays that reflect his diversity of interests—from passionate polemic essays on civil rights to an essay on water lilies and a prescient essay warning of tobacco as a carcinogen. Included are his 1862 "Letter to a Young Contributor," which prompted Dickinson to respond, and his 1891 "Emily Dickinson," both from the *Atlantic Monthly*. In his introduction, Meyer tries to correct long-standing distortions of the Higginson/Dickinson relationship. Noting that Higginson was "a major American, one of whom his country can be proud but whom it nevertheless forgot," Meyer confidently rein-

troduces Higginson as a man whose visionary ideas remain relevant.

Murray, Aife. "Miss Margaret's Emily Dickinson." *Signs* 24.3 (Spring 1999): 697-732.

Murray raises the question of how Dickinson managed to write so prolifically during an era when housework was arduous and unending. She links the poet's productivity to the arrival of domestic help in the Dickinson home, believing that the presence of "a permanent maid-of-all-work was critical to her defining herself as a poet." Scant documentation of the Dickinson servants exists, but Murray deftly reimagines their place in the household, reminding us that Dickinson broke class and cultural taboos when she chose her Irish servants as pallbearers, "an unambiguous gesture of honor and recognition." Focusing on Margaret Maher, described by Dickinson as "warm and wild and mighty" (L907), Murray interviewed distant relatives, checked the Amherst directory and town maps, and drew on extant correspondence, account books, and family papers, including Maher's 1897 legal deposition in the Lavinia Dickinson/Mabel Loomis Todd trial. Her profile of Maher reveals a strong woman who worked in the Homestead for thirty years and played a pivotal role in saving Dickinson's poems and da-guerreotype.

Porte, Joel, and Sandra Morris, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999. 280 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-521-49611-X, \$59.95; paper, ISBN 0-521-49946-1, \$18.95.

Intended as an accessible but challenging introduction to Emerson's work, this collection of thirteen newly commissioned essays "reopen[s] the questions of Emerson's place as a figure in the American culture and his achievement as a poet." Catherine Tufariello's "'The Remembering Wine': Emerson's Influence on Whitman and Dickinson" traces the two poets' relationship to Emerson. Although Dickinson twice turned down opportunities to meet Emerson, she read and pencil-marked his work, quoting his

poetry in her letters. With Emersonian boldness, she appropriates his vocabulary and makes it her own: his circle symbolism becomes her "Circumference"; his "representative" becomes her "Representative of the Verse." Tufariello believes they were kindred spirits in poetry, "find[ing] the sublime hidden in the trivial and the familiar." Drawing interesting parallels, she concludes her well written twenty-nine-page essay with close readings of Emerson's "Snowstorm" and Dickinson's response, "It sifts from Leaden Sieves" (J311), noting that "the recognition of the soul's radical aloneness with God, or the gods, pervades the poetry of Emily Dickinson, and constitutes one of her deepest affinities with Emerson."

Smith, Martha Nell. "Because the Plunge from the Front Overturned Us": The Dickinson Electronic Archives Project" (<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/dickinson>). *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 32.1 (Spring 1999): 133-51.

Smith's instructive article answers the who, what, when, why, and how questions regarding the *Dickinson Electronic Archive (DEA)*, one of several collaborative projects that resulted from the formation of the Dickinson Editing Collective in 1992. She compares the DEA to Jefferson's dream of an academic village, "an institution of higher learning, that, without matriculation and dispensing of degrees, distributes and pursues and produces knowledge," one where collaboration rather than competition is emphasized. The principal editors of the DEA are Smith, Ellen Louise Hart, and Marta Werner. Placing the DEA in context with R. W. Franklin's work, Smith notes that Franklin's *Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* (1981) directed critical attention toward the fascicles, privileging the poems, while the *DEA* intends to re-edit the Dickinson writings outside the fascicles, including poems, letters, and letter-poems sent to ninety-nine or more correspondents, plus other unbound pieces. She addresses the problem of conventional typographical representation, noting that while Franklin's 1998 variorum erases Dickinson's holographics, the *DEA*

presents manuscripts in their original form. Most important, the DEA gives anyone with a web browser access to documents otherwise closely guarded, presenting them, as well as diplomatic transcriptions and notes, in searchable form. Read the article for more on the history, goals, procedures, problems, and underlying philosophy of the archives.

Book Reviews

McIntosh, James. Nimble Believing: Dickinson and the Unknown. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2000. 194 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-472-11080-2, \$42.50.

Reviewed by Benjamin Lease

James McIntosh has written a valuable book on a subject of central importance to our understanding of Emily Dickinson's unique achievement. His engaging title is drawn from a draft letter written in her later life, in the midst of an expression of love to Judge Otis Phillips Lord: "On subjects of which we know nothing...we both believe, and disbelieve a hundred times an Hour, which keeps Believing nimble" (L750).

"Nimble believing," McIntosh claims, means constantly moving back and forth—throughout her poetic career—between doubt and faith. The undoing of Amherst orthodoxy, he points out, makes possible and necessary Dickinson's urgent expositions of experimental faith. Her reworkings of Christian texts are daringly innovative, creating a newly religious language to reach an audience "that begins with herself and spreads to an imagined posterity." "Her Protestant heritage," he says further, "provides her with figures for poetry and textual strategies to 'keep Believing nimble.'" McIntosh sees Melville and Dickinson as linked in their strong involvement with Calvinism—and in their concern with "the abdication of Belief."

McIntosh skillfully weaves explication of individual poems (from the Johnson edition, for Franklin's was not yet available) into persuasive and plainly written exposition. He closes his introductory chapter with a shrewd commentary on "This World is not Conclusion" (J501). He finds a structure of nimble believing in

the poem that opens with positive assertion but closes with an irresolution leaning toward acceptance. The species that stands beyond in the opening lines is "Invisible, as Music – / But Positive, as Sound." In the following lines, philosophers, scholars, martyrs, preachers respond to but fail to "still the Tooth / That nibbles at the Soul." The poem, he observes, "sustains a pose of uncertainty"—but closes with a "doubt-that-is-also-faith," leading "her readers toward wondering habits of thought" (32-34).

The three chapters that follow are titled "Varieties of Religion in Emily Dickinson," "Bible Stories and Divine Encounters," and "The Unknown as Needed and Dreadful." Throughout the book, McIntosh leads us toward the view that the poet's widely differing religious stances do not reflect transient moods, a lack of center, or a private withdrawal into a private self. Her poems at their best, he says, demonstrate a mastery of changing tonal modulation and thought "that keep pace with one another in her lifelong effort to keep believing nimble."

McIntosh explores Dickinson's religious imagination in all its "dynamic diversity." He sees her as one who can believe only while testing and challenging that belief in a variety of ways: as rebel (in "Papa above! / Regard a Mouse" [J61]); as child of faith (in "I never saw a Moor" [J1052]); and as idiosyncratic believer (in "Who has not found the Heaven – below – / Will fail of it above" [J1544]). He closes his fine survey of Dickinson's varied approaches to religion with a penetrating reading of "The Spirit lasts – but in what mode" (J1576).

From these varieties of religion McIntosh turns to the book that more than any other book helped make Emily Dickinson a poet: the King James Bible. She heard it read aloud at church and daily at home. And, not content with what others said, "she studied it and made it her own book as well" (81).

A group of narratives about Jacob, Moses, and Jesus Christ provides a focus for McIntosh's illuminating commentary on the ways Dickinson puts the Bible to use. Her responses range from a witty rewriting of the Abraham and Isaac story about a callous God ("Abra-

ham to kill him / Was distinctly told" [J1317]) to a moving celebration of Christ as the "Tender Pioneer" who sets a standard for us all ("Just His own endorsement – / That – sufficeth Me" [J698]).

In a letter to her Norcross cousins, Dickinson makes the surprising claim that "the unknown is the largest need of the intellect" (L471). This remark launches McIntosh's searching discussion (which closes the book) of how Dickinson's widely diverse responses to the unknown contribute to the power of her poems. "One needs the unknown," he observes, "to be a poet, not only of inner challenge and crisis" but also to be "an agnostic but reverent nature poet" (159). (It is appropriate here to quote Carol Johnson's trenchant observation, in *Reason's Double Agent*, about John Donne's religious uncertainty: "Doubt is never with Donne the abdication of reason, but the incitement to reason.")

This is a strong and admirable book that would have been stronger if McIntosh had incorporated a fuller awareness of a book (available to Dickinson in church and at home) as familiar and important to her as was her Bible: Isaac Watts's *Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship*, a musical redaction of the King James Bible that includes narratives of Jacob, Moses, and Jesus Christ, among others—and many divine encounters. The Bible was an essential book—and Watts was equally essential in shaping Dickinson's hymn-like poems, poems that reflect, reverently and irreverently, the music of the hymns (in long, short, and common meter) that she sang in church (and perhaps at home) throughout her growing-up years.

McIntosh refers to the "historical context" in which Dickinson's poetic career is embedded but overlooks a startling religious development of her time. His book would have been strengthened by an awareness of the Christian Spiritualism movement, a powerful rebellious response to Calvinist Orthodoxy that swept New England, including Amherst, from 1850 to 1890. Among the many who actively responded to this movement (and were also an important influence on the poet) were Edward Hitchcock, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, John Ruskin, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The hymn books that served as catalyst for Dickinson's hymn-like poems and the spiritualist movement that surrounded and involved her are aspects of Dickinson's dynamic and innovative religious expression too little attended to in *Nimble Believing*.

These reservations aside, I am deeply grateful to James McIntosh for the fresh perspectives he has given us on Dickinson's struggle with what she called "the Flood subject"—on how she "makes poetic use of her vacillations between faith and doubt." I strongly recommend this lucid and nimble and enlightening book.

Benjamin Lease is professor emeritus at Northeastern Illinois University and the author of Emily Dickinson's Readings of Men and Books: Sacred Soundings. He was the first editor of the Bulletin's Scholars series.

Tripp, Raymond P., Jr. *Duty, Body, and World in the Works of Emily Dickinson: Reorganizing the Estimate*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000. vi + 337 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-7734-7850-7, \$99.95.

Reviewed by Beth Maclay Doriani

As the first sentence of the book puts it, this author embarks upon "reading a religious poet in an irreligious age," and does so "when the poet's religion is not *religious* but perennial and reflects the metaphysics behind all great traditions" (1). Recognizing that Dickinson's life "cannot be neatly divided between sacred and profane," Tripp asserts that neither "religious" nor "irreligious" applies to Dickinson, and thus "Reading in her case especially means reading a perennial poet perennially" (1). This assertion goes largely undefined, although it is central to the study, and the claims about Dickinson's "perennialism" may ultimately not be all that helpful or novel.

Yet what Tripp attempts to do that is new is to read Dickinson not through the lenses of the accretions of Dickinson scholarship but against the background of what he identifies as "perennial" philosophies—first and foremost, American Transcendentalism, but also the spirituality of C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Søren Kierkegaard, George Herbert, Jakob

Boehme, Martin Heidegger, Carl Jung, Ernst Cassirer, and others. Tripp draws widely for his references, and it is the breadth of background he brings that adds to the value of this study, since he is able to see not only past the standard Dickinson criticism but even beyond the American and European figures, to place Dickinson ultimately somewhere between the East and the West.

Hers is a spirituality that does not adhere to the "theological dualism generated by naïve materialism," as Tripp puts it, but is that of a "wise and *mature* Christian who has grown into a unity" that others the world over have embraced when they have recognized the invisible world in the visible, the spirit in the material, and the universal in the particular (60).

First, however, one does have to get past Tripp's contempt for nearly all contemporary Dickinson scholars, whom he terms "the savants" and dismisses as readers who merely attempt "easy reading" (8). From Yvor Winters to Cynthia Wolff, he finds the established Dickinson critics unable to understand and appreciate the poet's religious impulse. While it is refreshing to find someone at last willing to state publicly his distaste for the myriad and abundance of sexual and psycho-sexual interpretations, one finds his dismissal of this great body of scholarship a bit too glib. Nonreligious critics will, of course, take issue with the major premise of the book and with Tripp's repeated assertions that nonreligious explanations of Dickinson are "lesser" (41). Ironically, there may be an unintended Gnosticism in Tripp's approach, precisely of the sort of which he indirectly accuses the Dickinson Establishment—that the true knowers of Dickinson have special knowledge and experience, having ascended to a higher plane—in Tripp's case, the plane of religious understanding. His is a Thomist view that privileges the religious over the nonreligious, and Tripp is bold in his continual assertions of this.

But once one discovers the latter half of the book, in which Tripp explores Dickinson's imagery, grammar, and linguistics, the richness of what this erudite scholar brings to the poetry emerges. He pointedly explores Dickinson's metaphysics

of body and bodilessness, of epiphany, and of the spirit's dwelling in the material, including words and grammar themselves. Duty, Tripp asserts, is important to Dickinson because "surrender to duty is the first act of originality" (110). Thus her many poems on duty. But "If Dickinson all but exhausts the subject of duty, she also has just about 'everything' to say about living in a body amidst a world of forms" (116).

Fundamentally a Platonist, Dickinson writes poems that are "magical frontiers" (as she herself seems to call them in J1764) to the world of spirit. Poetry-writing for her, Tripp explains, is an exercise in creating "radical contrasts between manifest and unmanifest existence" as she "crosses the linguistic ordinary and transcendental experience to jolt her reader 'With Bolts of Melody!' [J505] into a condition beyond the alternating current of life and death" (207-8). Her oxymorons, heavy use of the subjunctive, distinctive verbs, and other grammatical constructions and elements are all part of this poetics that is fundamentally spiritual, fundamentally Transcendental in its capacity to etherealize and to reach beyond the confines of material referents.

If this poet calls us at times to a "linguistic leap of faith," Tripp ultimately asserts, we must "do our poetic *duty* humbly" (275) and embrace her particular world of faith and art, not as the Dickinson savants would do in their murdering to dissect, but as does the happy little stone "That rambles in the Road alone" (J1510)—as one who is willing to take the solitary path of recognizing that God "is always present" in her poetry (273). Indeed, if we are willing to follow the three great threads of duty, body, and world in Dickinson's poetry, we just may be able to join Tripp in turning reading into transcendental experience, in discovering the Divine Logos in her linguistics, and in moving further toward the final participation with God that only perennial poets such as she are able to embrace.

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Electronic Resources, continued from page 13

Yet two major misconceptions about the electronic archives projects persist. One is that their editors presume to recover Dickinson's intentions and thus get readers closer to the poet herself. None of the editors are so simplistic in our understanding of authorial intentions that we presume we can recover Dickinson's and then present them in an unadulterated form. While we are making the physical signs of her writing practices more widely visible by displaying images of her manuscripts as well as our transcriptions of them, and while we are committed (as is the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust) to new research and greater access to Dickinson materials, we do not claim to have a purer knowledge of the poet.

Nor do we insist that readers find the same meanings in those marks that we do. (Indeed, the editors of the electronic archives do not all agree on what those marks mean.) But we know that if readers cannot see the marks, they cannot decide whether Dickinson intended anything by them. We are making available and visible marks routinely erased in typography—angled dashes, poetic lines broken in unexpected places, unusually formed alphabetic letters, words situated on the page in ways that appear to underscore their meanings. Readers can decide for themselves whether those marks mean anything poetically and whether Dickin-

son intended the meanings readers find.

The editors of the electronic archives believe that words attributed to Dickinson and passed down through her Norcross cousins tell us something crucial about intentions. "A word is dead when it is said, some say. I say it just begins to live that day." (Many editors have deemed these words a poem.) In those simple words are a simple truth even for the poet herself. A lyric written at one time may have had a particular meaning for her then, another meaning when she reread her own words at a different time, and yet other meanings for other readers at other times. This is not a twist of poststructuralist interpretation but a fact of language's dynamism. Gaining an understanding of the intentions of poets and their readers has, then, always been a complicated matter. And those complexities and dynamisms are, I would argue, part of the deep joys we take in language itself, particularly when poetically expressed. That multiple meanings can be found in the very same words witnesses that language, rather than being fragile, is strong, vital, living.

The other major misconception is that the electronic archives are produced in opposition to R.W. Franklin's variorum. Though we may disagree with some of Franklin's editorial decisions, and though our philosophy of scholarly editing and adherence to the highest standards may

differ from his, we are not his opponents. Rather, we are offering different and complementary editorial praxes that make more elements of Dickinson's manuscripts available to her readers.

While the aims and goals of these scholarly sites have been wildly misunderstood, it seems only a matter of a very short time until readers will become accustomed to the new medium and learn to avail themselves of the advantages and useful limitations of electronic access to editions and scholarship. The producers of these scholarly sites do not aim to have the last or most authoritative word about Emily Dickinson, her writings, and the wealth of scholarly and creative works generated by them. Instead, by featuring perpetually updatable rather than static, soon-to-be-dated materials, we hope to encourage an online critical exchange that is likewise dynamic, where critical positions can be constantly deepened and updated rather than become fixed and entrenched.

If there is a ghost of Emily Dickinson in the machines that drive the productions of the electronic archives projects, its clear demand is that we always remember that "I dwell in Possibility."

Martha Nell Smith is professor of English at the University of Maryland and director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities. She is writing a biography of Susan Dickinson.

"I Dwell in Possibility," continued from page 15

poet's reclusiveness, her scant love for organized religion, and her inordinate focus on death emerge from skillful interweavings of letters and verse, the latter sometimes recited, sometimes sung.

Particularly effective is the dramatic focus on Dickinson's achievement in creating the fascicles and Todd's difficult labors in bringing them to publication. Raiken-Kolb conveys well the stupendousness of being the first reader of Dickinson's full poetic corpus. The temper of the women's oddly distanced friendship is suggested through an alternate-line sharing of "A Route of Evanescence." At the end, a sense of their gift to one another is sealed by their voices joining to sing "I dwell in Possibility."

The performance is not without flaws. There are a few muffed lines ("I have no Tribunal in my life; I have no Monarch"), and in an attempt to impart Dickinson's flippancy, O'Connell at one point breaks into a rather extraordinary stagedoor rendition of "Going to Heaven!" Toward the end, the talented singer's too trilling performance of "Wild Nights" brings to mind Dickinson's comment about Jennie Lind, that "not accustomed oft to her manner of singing [we] did'nt fancy *that* so well as we did *her*" (L46).

These things aside, the play is a well researched, well constructed joining of happily combined talents, definitely worth seeing. The video and audio versions are available from Raiken-Kolb. The performance itself can be hired for \$300, and

several libraries, theaters, and museums in the Boston area have done so to their evident satisfaction.

Polly Longworth is author of Austin and Mabel and The World of Emily Dickinson. She is writing a biography of the poet.

Betty Bernhard, continued from page 17

mented William C. North as Dickinson's daguerreotypist, information that opens additional avenues of insight and inquiry into the only known photograph of the poet.

When asked what might surprise EDIS members about life in Amherst today, Betty had this to say: "For those who

know that \$500,000 houses are springing up in a setting with enough sophistication to astonish a native, it is comforting to see that the natural beauty of the town is intact, especially on the outlying fringes. If Dickinson were here, she could see that even now 'The Hills erect their Purple Heads.'" Bernhard can view those hills from her own home, she says, a pleasure most of the rest of us can only imagine.

Bernhard looks forward to her term on

the EDIS Board. When asked what she hopes to contribute to the organization in this capacity, she says, "As a Board member, I should like to spur an enlarged membership of those who, though they may be outside academia, are challenged to explore Dickinson and poetic language. I wish to whet the public imagination with provocative programs geared to excite their interest." If my brief conversation with Betty Bernhard is any indication, the

membership has chosen well in voting someone onto the EDIS governing body who has this fresh approach in mind, someone who has herself contributed for three decades to Amherst's illustrious history.

Connie Ann Kirk, a writer, poet, and scholar, teaches at Mansfield University in Pennsylvania. She is writing a book about Emily Dickinson's creative process.

"Zero at the Bone": Registration Form

Name _____

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The morns are meeker than they were –

The nuts are getting brown –

The berry's cheek is plumper –

The Rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf –

The field – a scarlet gown –

Lest I sh'd seem old fashioned

I'll put a trinket on!

—Fr32A, J12

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