

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

## TRAVELING TO NEW CLIMATES THE TRONDHEIM CONFERENCE

*By Suzanne Juhasz*

On August 3-5, 2001, approximately 150 Dickinson scholars gathered in Trondheim, Norway, to celebrate the poet and to explore her art in the context of diverse cultures, geographies, and histories.

Conference participants came from sixteen countries and five continents to share their ideas in the elegant Hotel Britannia, located in the heart of Trondheim, Norway's oldest city and its first capital, founded, according to the sagas, in 997. For many conference attendees this visit to the Far North occasioned exciting travel plans that took them across Norway, to other Scandinavian lands, and throughout Europe. Quite a few availed themselves of the pleasures of the Norwegian coastal cruises for short or more extended voyages. In brief, we were all travelers and adventurers when we convened to explore Dickinson herself, who has told us emphatically, "No Settler had the Mind."

Many of us began the conference experience a day or two earlier, when we had the opportunity to tour Trondheim by foot or bus. It really seemed like a fairytale city—so old and beautiful, with its painted wooden buildings in shades of ochre and rust built directly along the riverside, the ancient cathedral, the cheerful market square, and the splendid views of mountains and fjords. We were clearly a long way from New England!

But Dickinson has always been a traveler of the spirit, and in the faraway Norwegian northland she was a beneficent presence, stimulating evocative

scholarship and warm-hearted companionship alike among the conferencegoers. Her agents in the flesh, the conference organizers, were Domhnall Mitchell of the Norwegian University of Science and Technol-

*Photo by Jim Fraser**Conferencegoers gather for a walking tour of Trondheim*

ogy and Cristanne Miller of Pomona College, former president of EDIS. Their enterprise, imagination, and skill were evident in every aspect of this beautifully conceived event, from the setting to the program to the conference tee-shirt and poster, their striking design created by Birgit Kvamme-Lundheim.

There were occasions aplenty to promote the ubiquitous congeniality. As the sun shone far on into the evening, we enjoyed dinners along the river, banqueting in the Britannia, and a lively concert in the Trondheim Folkebiblioteket (Public Library). At the banquet Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, Emeritus Professor of American Literature at the University of Oslo, received the EDIS Distinguished Service Award for her pathbreaking contributions to Dickinson scholarship. She is the first

woman and the first non-American to receive this honor. Her bright eyes and keen intelligence were a delightful presence among us throughout the conference days; her participation in conference events was indeed an honor.

Delightful, too, was the wit of Martha Ackmann, whose after-banquet speech showed us, with the benefit of computer technology, the gradually aging face of Dickinson. She asked us to consider what these images, alternatives to the overly familiar teenage Emily Dickinson, do to our own sense of the poet. The following night we were treated to the superb musicianship of soprano Kristin Høiseth Rustad, pianist Margaret Stachiewicz, and violinist Tino Aleksander Fjeldli, as they charmed us with works known to have been in the concert that the "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind, performed before the Dickinson family in Northampton in 1851.

During the day, we gathered in conference rooms, the conference foyer, and even the hallways to talk of Emily Dickinson. The high intensity of scholarly exchange was hallmark of this conference. "Zero at the Bone" offered two plenary sessions, a series of panels and workshops, and a concluding discussion to explore "new climates for Dickinson study."

What were these new climates? "Newly mapped" might be a better way to define the rich focus on lyric poetry—with Dickinson as its brilliant and resourceful virtuoso—that characterized this gathering.



Photo by Jim Fraser

*In the opening plenary, Christa Buschendorf speaks of "Dickinson's Poetics of Experiment" in an age of doubt*

Many sessions and papers were devoted to her poetic subjectivity, to how her lyric language works, and to defining her lyric aesthetic; several panels and papers extended this enterprise to examine how her use of lyric modes influenced and carried forward into the twentieth century. At the same time, Dickinson the person was not ignored, as a cluster of panels and papers considered nineteenth-century contexts of biography and culture (for example, religion, gender, and race), providing a series of frames for Dickinson and her poetry. Papers devoted to the manuscripts and their editing, a major focus in the 1990s, showed this approach as less an end in itself than a means toward elaborating those nineteenth-century contexts. Indeed, the frequent discussions of textuality that were presented examined how the lyric is performed by way of its physical enactment, be it as manuscript, art object, theater, or webcast.

Plenary sessions on "Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century" and "Poetry's Manu-

scripts" gave us thoughtful and sophisticated ruminations on these central aspects of Dickinson study. Mary Loeffelholz (U.S.), Shira Wolosky (Israel) and Christa Buschendorf (Germany) introduced the nineteenth-century poet by way of the period as a field of struggle (Loeffelholz), a site of complex and con-

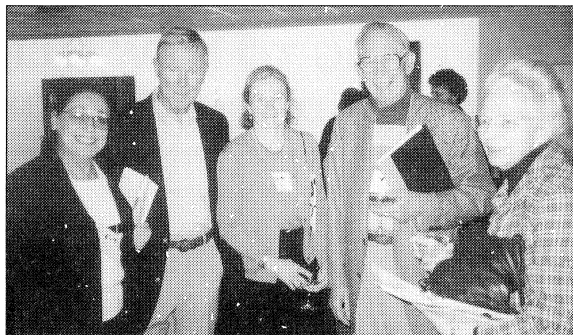


Photo by Jim Fraser

*Happy conferencegoers toast the gathering with "best Norwegian wines"*

tentious claims regarding gender, religion, citizenship, and artistry (Wolosky), and a pragmatic tradition of insecurity, risk and doubt in matters of truth and belief (Buschendorf). Philip Horne (England) and Susan Howe (U.S.) approached the field of manuscript study by examining the range of potential publication forms for Dickinson's wily experimentation with multiplicity (Horne) and through speculation on how Dickinson's openness to chance and process—to "the other side of the paper"—found resonance in the science and philosophy of her times (Howe).

The panels and workshops, showcasing the work of several generations of scholars, invited us to encounter a range of Dickinsons, from Othello to

the Lady of Shalott, but by far the most studied was Dickinson as the lyric "I." Her poetic subjectivity and the forms it produced were discussed in terms of, for example, the discourses of the sublime, gothicism, and romanticism; of trauma, asceticism, visibility, liminality, and play. Attention to the language of lyric ranged

from studies of her use of apostrophe to her figuration. Both the complexity of her lyric forms and their relationship, at once resonant and subversive, with both literary and cultural traditions were amply delineated.

A concluding discussion by Jonathan Morse of the University of Hawaii, who will host the 2004 international conference, offered a perspective on ways in which the midnight sun of beautiful Norway

illuminated a Dickinson who helps us to see ourselves in widened ways. The group at large speculated on, among other topics, the expanded possibilities for presentation of Dickinson's lyric art. After the annual EDIS business meeting, we enjoyed a sumptuous buffet luncheon in the



Photo by Jim Fraser

*Members express their appreciation for the evening of musical "Airs of Exile" inspired by the Jenny Lind concert heard by the Dickinson family in 1851*

*EDIS Bulletin* (ISSN 1055-3932) is published twice yearly, May/June and November/December, by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. Standard Mail non-profit postage is paid at Lexington, KY 40503. Membership in the Society is open to all persons with an interest in Emily Dickinson and her work; for further information, contact Jonnie Guerra, President, EDIS, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Cabrini College, Radnor, PA 19087 USA.

Annual dues are \$50.00 for regular members, \$30.00 for students, \$100.00 for contributing and institutional members (all of whom receive the *Bulletin* and *The Emily Dickinson Journal*), or \$20.00 for associate members (the *Bulletin* only). Membership inquiries should be directed to James C. Fraser, 5208 Clinton Rd., Alexandria, VA 22312 USA. Membership applications and changes of address should be sent to The Emily Dickinson International Society, c/o Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211-0966 USA.

Address submissions and other communications for the *Bulletin* to Georgiana Strickland, 133 Lackawanna Rd., Lexington, KY 40503 USA. Submission deadlines are March 1 for the spring issue, September 1 for the fall issue. All articles become the property of the *Bulletin*. Back issues are available for \$5.00 each from the editor. Copyright © 2001 by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. The *Bulletin* is indexed in the American Humanities Index and the MLA Bibliography.

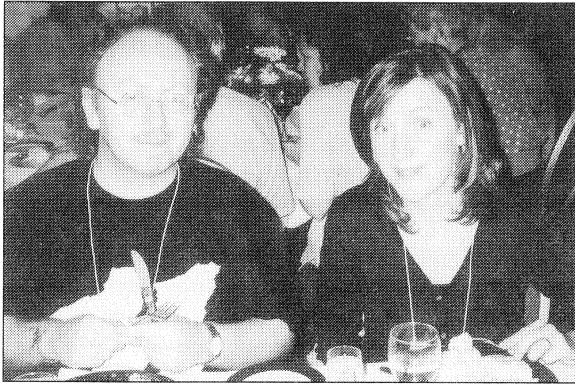


Photo by Eleanor Heginbotham

Conference co-director Domhnall Mitchell and Maria Stuart of University College, Dublin, enjoy the Trondheim banquet

Britannia's Palmehaven before setting off again on further geographical and intellectual journeys.

The voyage to Dickinson's Norway was a wonderful adventure. The memory of its many pleasures is warming to the spirit, and even to the bones, in these chilling times.

*Suzanne Juhasz is professor of English at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and founding editor of The Emily Dickinson Journal.*



Photo by Jim Fraser

In the closing session, Jonathan Morse offers a retrospection on the Trondheim conference a prospectus for our next conference, in faraway, tropical Hawaii

## THE EDIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

The following is the text of the presentation by EDIS president Jonnie Guerra to Brita Lindberg-Seyersted following the banquet at the Britannia Hotel in Trondheim on the evening of August 3, 2001:

In 1992, the Emily Dickinson International Society established the Distinguished Service Award to support its goal "to promote, perpetuate, and enhance the study and appreciation of Emily Dickinson throughout the world." The award is intended to recognize individuals whose scholarship and service have made an outstanding and permanent contribution to Dickinson studies. To date, the award has been given twice—first to Richard Sewall at the 1992 conference in Washington, D.C., and then to Ralph Franklin at the 1999 conference at Dickinson's alma mater, Mount Holyoke College.

This evening the Society is delighted to present its third award to Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the University of Oslo and author of, most notably, *The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, published in 1968 by Harvard University Press, and the monograph *Emily Dickinson's Punctuation*, published by the American Institute of the University of Oslo in 1976.

Shortly after the publication of the first volume of Dickinson's poetry in 1890, Thomas Wentworth Higginson received a letter from Samuel G. Ward in which Ward expressed his own strong interest in

Dickinson but questioned whether the poems would appeal to a large and diverse audience. He speculated: "She may become world famous, or she may never get out of New England."



Photo by Jim Fraser

*Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, center, received the EDIS Distinguished Service Award from Jonnie Guerra, left, and Gudrun Grabher, right*

*The Voice of the Poet* stands as a landmark in Dickinson studies for many reasons, two of which I wish to highlight. As the first major critical study authored by a scholar from outside the boundaries of the United States, it gave early credibility to Dickinson as a writer of international reputation and stature. And, within a critical context dominated by thematic studies of the poetry and biographical surmises about the poet, the book turned the focus of scholarly attention to Dickinson's verbal art. In its comprehensive analysis of Dickinson's poetry on all lev-

els of language (vocabulary, imagery, syntax, meter, and rhyme), *The Voice of the Poet* has remained widely influential. When mentioned by others, the work invariably is cited as a point of departure—as "pioneering," "groundbreaking," "seminal," "an invaluable guide to Dickinson's language structures."

This evening represents another landmark occasion for Brita Lindberg-Seyersted. She is the first person from outside the United States to be selected for the EDIS Distinguished Service Award. She is also the first woman to be so honored. And—most notably—she is the first awardee actually to receive the award in person.

The framed award we are presenting this evening was designed and hand calligraphed by artist Mary Lawler of South Hadley, Massachusetts, and reads as follows:

The Emily Dickinson International Society presents its Distinguished Service Award to Brita Lindberg-Seyersted for her pathbreaking contributions to Dickinson scholarship and her important role in expanding Dickinson's international reputation.

Also included is the complete text of the poem "I like a look of Agony" (Fr 339), one of Lindberg-Seyersted's favorites. The weeping willow shown on the plaque was inspired by the design on a headstone in the South Hadley Cemetery.

# COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO THE ECONOMY OF LANGUAGE IN DICKINSON'S POETRY

*Moderator:* Connie Ann Kirk; *panelists:* Anna Chesnokova, Kyiv State Linguistic University;  
Cynthia Hallen, Brigham Young University; Lilach Lachman, Tel-Aviv University

*By Connie Ann Kirk*

This panel was proposed and organized by Margaret H. Freeman to initiate issues for discussion that would be taken up again in the Translation Workshop to be held the following day. When Freeman was unable to come to Trondheim, I was asked to fill in for her as moderator.

The panel resulted in three diverse approaches to the topic, with papers focusing increasingly on cognitive issues as the session went along. Anna Chesnokova's paper focused on the commonalities and differences in Dickinson and a Ukrainian poet, and questions of how a cognitive approach might aid in translating one poet's work into another's language and how it might also serve as a vehicle for comparing the poetics of two writers from different backgrounds. Cynthia Hallen's presentation illustrated the ways in which basic grammatical units of thought can be quantified in Dickinson's body of work to chart observable shifts in productivity as well as the development of syntax complexity.

Finally, Lilach Lachman's paper emphasized cognitive and perceptual aspects in a close reading of "A Pit – but Heaven over it" (J1712). Whereas recent cognitive study investigates the ways by which poetry, among other things, reflects reasoning processes that are shared by the language of poetry and ordinary discourse, Lachman is interested in exploring the role of cognitive aspects in shaping Dickinson's distinctive art. Moreover, in investigating the role of space in Dickinson, Lachman did not confine herself to Dickinson's conceptual universe but expanded the category "cognitive" so that it can interact with the ontological and the performative.

Chesnokova's paper, "Human Immortality and Love Eternity in Dickinson and Lesya Ukrainka," posed this question: Between the global traditions of poetry that every great poet inherits and is called to and the peculiar national and personal identities with which they "flavor" these traditions, which force dominates? Both Dickinson and Ukrainian poet Lesya

Ukrainka, says Chesnokova, respond to the world's tradition of love poetry from their own personal disappointments in love by "contemplating immortality," in particular, an eternity that both poets fuse with passion. In her poem "Maybe the second miracle will come," Ukrainka uses the Bible story of Mary Magdalene to call her dying lover to resurrect as Jesus did. Demonstrating the Christian teachings in the New Testament that influenced her, Ukrainka does not seek a place for herself in the lover's new life but only desires that he have new life. After the death of her lover in her arms, Ukrainka writes, "Let year by year pass, / Let my life flow away with water, / You are still going to live with Beauty among flowers, / And I am going to live with tears among songs."

Dickinson too, influenced by Thomas Brown's *Hydrotaphia*, claimed Chesnokova, writes about love after death as though it were inevitable and a way and time of redeeming what went unfulfilled in this life. Dickinson, she contends, believed in the parallel existence of two worlds and even in the possibility of those in the other world communicating with those in this one. She cited "If I should 'nt be alive" among her examples. In contemplating the answer to her own question, Chesnokova concluded: "Similar aesthetic, philosophic, poetic, cultural, and personal backgrounds serve as the basis for forming the poetic credos of the two poets while national and individual features explicitly mark out their works as special, fresh, and deservedly unique."

Hallen opened her presentation, "The T-Unit as a Measure of Syntactic Complexity in Emily Dickinson Poems," with an explanation of Kellogg Hunt's 1970 theory of the terminable unit, or T-unit, made up of a main clause complete with its modifiers, such as embedded or attached clauses. Hallen argued that Hunt's theory is a "useful tool for identifying sentences in Dickinson's poetry" because Dickinson "rarely uses periods or other terminating markers for her sentences," and a "T-unit defines sentences by their grammatical

structures, not by their punctuation."

By using T-units, Hallen could take a chronological measure of Dickinson's syntactic complexity and cognitive maturity. Hallen described her analytical methods and gave selected results from what she found by counting T-units in Dickinson's poems. One result was the discovery that, from the early poems to the "flood" period in the mid-1860s, there was an increase in the average number of words per T-unit. This Hallen likened to the increasing cognitive maturity of the poet. There was a slight decrease in this measure from the "flood" period to the later poems. Overall, Dickinson's sentence length, measured in T-units, falls in the "average" category of nine to seventeen words. Interestingly, in 1863, Dickinson wrote the most poems, words, and T-units, but the year of highest average T-units was 1877.

Among several intriguing observations, Hallen charted the fact that in 1865 Dickinson wrote 42 out of 229 poems with only one T-unit each. This is a striking figure when considered beside the year with the next highest number of single T-unit poems, 1863, with 13. Hallen also explained that Dickinson uses "a variety of T-unit or sentence lengths with great rhetorical effect, as do most mature writers. She combines shorter T-units with longer ones in patterns of quantitative crescendo, decrescendo, chiasmus, and reverse chiasmus. Sometimes the quantitative effects of T-unit length iconically mirror the sense of the words in the clauses, so that the flow of meanings and ideas is supported by the actual length of successive clauses."

Panel listeners appreciated Hallen's handout charting her results in detail, which they could take home and study for possible further implications.

Lilach Lachman, in "The Degree Zero of Spatiality: Time-Space and Audience in Dickinson's Vacuity Scenes," focused on scenes in which the poet's experience is presented as both an act of plunging into the abyss and a controlled crossing over it. The theoretical argument that preceded

her close reading of "A Pit – but Heaven over it," opened with a *The Undiscovered Continent: Emily Dickinson and the Space of the Mind* by Suzanne Juhasz (1983) and Margaret Freeman's study "Metaphor Making Meaning: Emily Dickinson's Conceptual Universe" (1995).

Analyzing the methodologies of these divergent studies, Lachman raised the question of the many possible correspondences between time and space as form and function. She set what she views as Juhasz's practice of a dynamic interaction between the axes of time and space against Freeman's case for the operation of one axis at the expense of the other. Lachman challenged Freeman's contention that the substitution for the metaphor "Life is a Journey through Time" with the metaphor "Life is a Voyage in Space" indicates an actual replacement of time by space. She questioned whether such a device, like others in Dickinson, figures not as an end in itself (i.e., as a "spatial" conceptualization) nor as a tool to be used against temporal thinking. From Lachman's point of view, space has become a perceptible force of communication in Dickinson's work precisely because of its particular convergence with time and perspective.

Lachman's main question was how spatial co-existence relates to temporal sequence and what effect this relationship has on Dickinson's interaction with her readers. By reference to Dickinson's use of "circumference" as both concept and a model of composition, Lachman argued that, rather than discrediting time, the spatial scheme of "circumference"—whether applied locally to images such as the "Pit – but Heaven over it" or the "Maelstrom with a notch" (J414), or applied more broadly, as an abstract formulation of the shifting perspective in Dickinson's poetics—is a paradigmatic image that exemplifies the repeated interchange between the axes of time and space. On the one hand, the center and the circuit of circumference define the "zero" spatially from a comprehensive, objective, and even static perspective. At the same time the shift from the center to the circumference, and vice versa, defines and is defined by a subjective perception of time.

Lachman examined Dickinson's activation of this spatio-temporal model by a close analysis of J1712 and comparative reference to J414. Both poems, she demonstrated, engage in a dialogue with Poe's concept of the "Pendulum," and she con-

tends that these two poems offer different variants of "circumference" and different ways with which Dickinson can confront her reader with the abyss.

Discussion following the presentations included a question about T-unit counts being typically lower in lyric poetry, and to what extent that would account for Dickinson's propensity for average, rather than long, sentence lengths. Hallen agreed that the lyric form was a factor in Dickinson's sentence lengths, and she postulated that her sentences were shorter because of the lyric than they might have been otherwise—had she written in free verse, for example. Another question was posed about the availability of Lesya Ukrainka's poems in English. Chesnokova responded that the English translations she has seen thus far are unsatisfactory and that better work is needed. With time running out, it was agreed that further questions and comments would be taken up, as was intended, in the Translation Workshop the following day (see p. 23).

---

*Connie Ann Kirk teaches at Mansfield University. She is working on a book about Dickinson's creative process.*

---

## SLANTS OF DICKINSON AMONG LATE TWENTIETH- AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY POETS

*Moderator:* Cynthia Hogue, Bucknell University; *panelists:* Nick Selby, University of Glasgow; Cristanne Miller, Pomona College; Taffy Martin, University of Poitiers

---

*By Cynthia Hogue*

Nick Selby's superb paper, "'but tell it slant': How(e) to Read Dickinson," opened this exciting panel. Asserting that Susan Howe seeks to engage a "radically indeterminate Dickinson," exemplary of a poetics of process, play, and possibility, Selby argued that "telling it slant is the generative tension" of Howe's oeuvre, "that which underpins the process of textual sifting and recovery from which her poems are made." Boundaries. Limits. The oblique and fragmentary. Scattering as Behavior Toward Risk (the title of one of Howe's exemplary poems).

Textual scattering slants the Howe poem, a scattering that "pitches text against wilderness," a poetic method characteristic of American poetics in general,

as well as of Dickinson and Howe, though few poets scatter the poem as strikingly across the page as Howe. Selby called it Howe's "violent textual order," which tracks the historical and ideological violence of America's national origins that she so often contemplates in her work. Her process of pulling text from text (and sometimes text through text, visually) uncovers "the ground of enforced silences, hesitations and violence upon which America has sought to trace the text of itself."

This process frets the relation between figure and ground, a key to Howe's as well as Dickinson's way of seeing "New Englandly." Of approaching the broken narratives that fascinate Howe and Dickinson (like captivity narratives, for example). Of

asserting poetic ownership of "America's broken language." As Howe reads Dickinson as riddle—reading her at her poetic edges, borders, barriers—she revises Dickinson in her own riddling poems, owning and dis/owning Dickinson, telling all the truth but telling it slant.

Cristanne Miller next presented an excellent paper entitled "Quantifying the Lyric 'I' in Poetry by Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich, and Rosmarie Waldrop," which, in its analysis of Dickinson's fluid poetic subjectivity, dovetailed well with Selby's presentation. Holding this paper as I write, I want to mention how it is still "in process," and how its penciled-in marginalia, revisions and erasures, and scattered comments visually echo Selby's

discussion of Howe's poetics. Miller employed the language of math to propose "that the 'I' or subjective presence of Dickinson's poems functions like a zero in that it provides the basis for determining multiple and unstable identities while having no concrete identity itself." The unanchored "I" of many Dickinson poems works much like the "I" of an autobiography—a performative presence that, as Sidonie Smith describes it, "does not exist outside language." The poet does not "find" her voice but constructs it.

Miller explored the differences in the way three poets who use "I" a lot use "I": the multiply-positioned subject of a Dickinson poem, the narrower "I" of Adrienne Rich's poetry, and the more abstract but less malleable "I" (that is, less malleable than Dickinson's "I") of Rosmarie Waldrop's poems. Dickinson experiments with language's capacity to "manifest complex and psychologically specific but situationally fragmented or vague aspects of being," what Miller aptly termed "a biographical zero."

In contrast, Rich's poetic subject is often a poet-surrogate closely associated with the facts of Rich's life, and her poems are based on their claim (Miller called it fictive) to authorial authenticity. The most crucial aspect of this authenticity is its sincerity, specifically its performance of sincerity. The point is not whether Rich *is* actually sincere but that the poem represents the poet-surrogate, quite unproblematically, as such. Rich "works against the grain of the lyric zero," attempting to produce not a multiply positioned "I" but a "speaker that is 'one.'"

Finally, Miller argued that although, as in Rich, there is some apparently autobiographical detail in Waldrop's work, her prominent poetic "I" is "constructed through a series of logically disjunctive statements...more a grammatical marker of idiosyncratic presence than a developed subject." Miller explored the ways Waldrop calls attention to the "I" as performative marker of a position (rather than a natural "self") and the workings of language (for example, the way sound and word association will pull a line in unpredictable or unexpected directions). And she usefully quoted another innovative poet (one who has, in fact, been compared to Dickinson), Rae Armantrout, who speaks of the "self as repertoire." A Waldrop poem presents a narrative whose

logical sequence it disrupts, at the center of which is "the free-floating presence of a witty but unplaceable subject, a 'zero' presence, awaiting the reader's input to take temporarily definite form."

Although Miller found this linguistic and poetic play more full of possibilities and interest than the narrower poetic subject of Rich's poetry, she also speculated that the focus in language-oriented, post-modern poetics on the play of ideas might mark the end of the lyric poem as we know it, or the transformation of that genre. Are we at the end of the lyric, she asked, moving from a poetic subjectivity defined as a "speaking presence" to that defined as a performer or an arranger/editor of a textual assemblage? Miller's point was that Dickinson's poetry may have been the high point of a lyric poem based on cultural assumptions that there is a (homogeneous) audience to whom the poem "*speaks*" (Miller's emphasis).

The final paper, by Taffy Martin, "Zero as Target: Dickinson and Ted Hughes on 'The dark hold of the head,'" was an astute look at the question of the modernist debt to romanticism, focusing on two exemplary moderns, Ted Hughes (as inveterate a romantic as Whitman) and Denise Levertov (as resolutely skeptically romantic—or anti-romantic—as Dickinson), and their responses to Dickinson and Wordsworth. Martin reviewed the master plot of Wordsworth's "Lucy Gray" as paradigmatic of the romantic narrative of the eternal return and quest for wholeness: the girl Lucy who disappears without a trace in the snow is restored as legend and prophetic singer by the poem's close. Thus the poem "has fulfilled its romantic contract. It has restored wholeness and left its mark on the page, including the blank page of the imagination." Although both Hughes (in "The Thought Fox") and Levertov (in "To the Reader") create a pretext for materializing such a mark on the page (and both, interestingly, entrust this task to an animal), only Hughes's poem represents the speaker/poet-surrogate as guardian of memory. And only Hughes's poem "closes with the awaited consecration, words on the page." Such determining closure reveals its debt to Wordsworth, and its misreading of Dickinson's most "modern" poems, such as "They called me to the window" (J628).

Although, as in a Wordsworthian scene,

the poet-speaker is at the center of both Dickinson's and Hughes's poems, the movement in the act of witnessing the scene is crucially different. Dickinson's speaker is summoned to regard a sunset and beholds, like Stevens's snowman, the "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." She is an unwilling witness and refuses to be forced to find inspiration in the natural scene before her. She "defiantly catalogues diminishment, disappearance and absence." Hughes, in contrast, "convokes himself" to the window, at least in his imagination, which fills in the natural scene he imagines witnessing. He combats absence and "fills the imaginative void with raw animal power," demonstrating the poet-speaker's creative prowess. Thus Hughes "has forged a solution to the blank page." While struggling to come to an imaginatively unified closure is an accurate reading of Wordsworth on the part of Hughes, it is a misreading of Dickinson, who characteristically stops short of such forced closure.

Levertov's poem "dismantles Hughes' creation fable," for there is no "I" at its center, no poet from whom the poem is bodied forth, and, like Dickinson's poem J628, it refrains from closure. The page is there, but it is "blank." No romantic return or unity. No tribute to permanence. But also no modernist impersonality. Martin suggested that Levertov, at least in this poem, is not romantic, modern, or even postmodern, which she usefully termed Levertov's "zero degree of reliability," her resistance to classification in the realm of periodization, reminding us of Dickinson, of course. One hundred years after Dickinson, Levertov learned her lessons, for Dickinson, the undeniable romantic whose "I" is so often central to the poem, "refuses the illusion of the eternal return." And Dickinson the wayward modernist ("detached and ironic") "remains as unfathomable as her zero."

With their differing analyses of poetic subjectivity, these three papers fortuitously complemented, supplemented, and conversed with each other.

---

*Cynthia Hogue, professor of English at Bucknell University, has published three collections of poetry, most recently The Never Wife, and has co-edited We Who Love to Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics.*

# WORKSHOP A: THE DICKINSON ELECTRONIC ARCHIVES AND TECHNOLOGIES OF DISTRIBUTION

## VOICE, MANUSCRIPT PAGE, PRINTED PAGE, AND THE SCREEN

*Workshop leader:* Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland; *panelists:* Geoffrey Schramm, National Endowment for the Humanities; Marta Werner, D'Youville College; Martha Nell Smith; Lena Christensen, Lund University; *virtually speaking:* Laura Lauth and Lara Vetter, University of Maryland

*By Martha Nell Smith*

The participation via networking by Laura Lauth and Lara Vetter was even more remote than had been planned because, although the hotel could handle display from a single computer, their facilities were not equipped to handle the webcasts that the *Dickinson Electronic Archives (DEA)* had planned. Thus the workshop began by explaining to audience members how to access sound files from *Titanic Operas: Poets' Responses to Dickinson's Legacy*, to participate in online critical feedback to the *DEA*, and, for those interested, to become a coeditor of the *DEA*. *DEA* editors were delighted to learn that many in the audience were already aware of these features, and a brief discussion of the sound file presentations by Adrienne Rich, Gwendolyn Brooks, Alicia Ostriker, Sandra Gilbert, Toi Derricotte, and Denise Leverlov ensued, concluding by noting that the sound files cannot be downloaded (as an MP3 file can, for example) be-

cause of copyright protection of the contemporary poets. When we listen to Rich reading Dickinson's words, the audience wondered, what/whose texts are we listening to?

In "Dickinson Spaced Out," Geoffrey Schramm then offered a humorous transition into consideration of other aspects of the *DEA*. Remarking that Diana Fuss has opined how extant discussions of Dickinson's reclusion often hinge on reductively oppositional understandings of interiority and exteriority, Schramm agreed with Fuss that "for Dickinson, interiority...was a complicated conceptual problem, continually posited and reexamined in a body of writing that relies heavily on spatial metaphors to advance its recurrent themes of joy, despair, death, time, and immortality." While Dickinson physically retreated to the interior spaces of her family home, he

observed, she spaced out in her imagination and poetry, using spatial imagery to traverse her self-imposed physical enclosures. As a person in the world of digital studies, Schramm declared that Fuss's explanation of Dickinson's interiority mirrors, to some extent, the workings of the web. With the advent of SGML, HTML, and other mark-up languages, web-surfers similarly have become more active in the production of textual meaning, deciding which hyperlinks to click on and sub-



*Photo by Jim Fraser*

sequently determining the order and direction of their virtual meanderings. In such a way, the luminescent holographs of Dickinson's fascicles eerily anticipate the pixilated glow of the computer monitor.

Schramm then demonstrated two sites from *The Classroom Electric: Dickinson, Whitman, and American Culture*, a constellation of websites that plumb further the webbed-imaginings of Dickinson and her nineteenth-century contemporary. A co-production by eleven American literature professors from across the United States and from a range of institutions, large and small, *The Classroom Electric* has been a four-year project of the *DEA* with the Walt Whitman Archive, as those inexperienced with digital technologies learned to use resources from these two major research archives in their undergraduate and graduate classrooms.

Schramm concluded by showing how *The Classroom Electric* is an important resource to those more deeply engaged in the study of Dickinson's life and work, featuring, as it does, new biographical material (for example, of Dickinson family relationships and the Civil War).

Marta Werner then featured one of her contributions to *The Classroom Electric*, "Emily Dickinson, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century American Culture," musing on the hold of the lone daguerreotype of the poet on critical speculation about her work. "Like the extras of spirit photographs obtained by means of a remote photography, the subjects of these daguerreotypes appear to be moving out of focus into the past and the future at once." Quoting Susan Williams, Werner observed that "the daguerreotype image does not stay fixed, but rather shifts in and out of view according to the position of the viewer. Because the image of the daguerreotype is traced on a silver-iodized plate, it hovers eerily between presence and absence: holding it one way, viewers can see the image, but holding it another, they see a reflection of themselves. What startles us in these images resides in the quality of an encounter: our eyes meet the eyes of Dickinson women in the deep focus/overexposure of the future perfect."

Werner's contributions to the group's discussion richly oriented our critiques by framing them with observations by Barthes, Derrida, Sontag, and even Kierkegaard, who observed in 1854 that "with the daguerreotype everyone will be able to have their portrait taken...and at the same time everything is being done to make us all look exactly the same." Werner concluded by using the example of the daguerreotype and theories about photography's impact to address the widespread misunderstanding that the *DEA* editors fancy themselves getting Dickinson's readers closer to something more authentic: "The beauty of this almost

undifferentiated ground, in which text and screen exist in a seamless continuum, overpowers the material objects within it and makes them appear disembodied—suspended or floating someplace before or perhaps just behind my eyes. Each time I make an effort to refocus my eyes, to penetrate the middle or the far ground, moreover, I do not have an experience of deep recession but instead an experience of absolute distance—of optical otherness—separating myself from the object of my gaze. I am looking at the vanishing point, the reduction of all lines of sight to zero.” Werner’s extended reflections can be found in *The Classroom Electric* at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/fdw/volume3/werner/index.html>.

In “Give Peace a Chance: A Proposal to End the ‘Dickinson Wars,’” Martha Nell Smith responded to Betsy Erkkila’s declaration at an EDIS session of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers (February 2001) and in her forthcoming article in *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson* that editors and critics in Dickinson studies are “at war.” Wars are military battles between nations over political goals, not apt metaphors for critical disagreements, Smith asserted. There are, after all, no literary emergencies that require language of conquest and destruction to characterize their import, and Smith argued that such metaphors actually limit critical exchange. She then proclaimed that the “Dickinson Wars” are so called by others, and that “I am not a part of them....As Gertrude Stein might say, ‘They asked me what I thought of the [Dickinson Wars]. I said I had not been able to take any interest in [them]....It’s the [ideas] that are interesting, not the way of killing them, because if there were not a lot [of

ideas] left living how could there be any interest in destruction?’ I am not now, have never been, and will never be a combatant in anything one might call the ‘Dickinson Wars.’ I am not interested.”

Smith then urged the audience to sup at the table of Dickinson’s marvelous literary banquet rather than yield to the temptation of the technology of scold and critical food fight, explaining that by the term “technology” she refers to “the means by which we accomplish various ends,... tools, devices on which our critical suppositions rely.” She then listed three technologies to be eschewed in order to foster critical exchange: ridicule and scold; withholding, refusal, secrecy; and changing the subject; and three technologies that might be adopted to truly engage one another’s work, even in critical disagreement: critical exchange, responding to actual arguments made by others rather than cartoons of those arguments; collaboration and sharing critical insights instead of trying to score points with them; and access, democratizing the view of primary materials.

Smith concluded: “In war, everyone, including the victors, suffers waste and destruction. Once again, I suspect that the poets are ahead of the critics, that poets are the most profound, sophisticated theorists, and that the poet who brings us together here in Trondheim rendered the most sage advice—dwell in Possibility, not in closure or the dismissiveness of definitude. Then we will find ourselves Carpenters in houses ‘More numerous of Windows – / Superior – for Doors’ as we spread wide our hands to gather Paradise, the stuff of Peace.”

In “Back to the Future: The Electric ‘Return’ to the Manuscript Page,” Lena

Christensen responded and critically engaged with the comments made throughout the session and to the published work of several session participants as she explored the methods applied by critics concerned with the Dickinson manuscript. In doing so, Christensen contributed to analysis of critical modes of thought, observing that “although the study of Dickinson’s manuscripts is commonplace today, it functions as the most distinct area of investigation in Dickinson research. Critical endeavor revolves primarily around the three following issues: reading the variants; reading for publication of a different kind—the relationship between Dickinson and her addressees; and finally, the juxtaposition of the manuscript page and the Internet—the reception of Dickinson’s poetry today.”

These issues bring with them questions about what counts as a “poem,” about the very complicated and probably most misunderstood concept of authorial intention, and about the neglect in critical responses to manuscript study of readers’ production of meaning, and of authorial intentions of readers. Intentionalities are, then, multiple and complex, not simple matters, as some critics of manuscript study have suggested. One consequence of this “return” to the Dickinson manuscript page and Internet display is that multiple intentionalities are foregrounded rather than occluded (as they often are in bibliographically-bound study), though critics of the *DEA* and of manuscript study usually overlook this fact.

---

*Martha Nell Smith is professor of English and director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland.*

---

## FIRST PLENARY SESSION: FILLING THE CIRCLE DICKINSON IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

*Moderator:* Cristanne Miller, Pomona College; *panelists:* Mary Loeffelholz, Northeastern University; Shira Wolosky, Hebrew University; Christa Buschendorf, Goethe University

---

*By Cristanne Miller*

This session was extremely well attended and got the conference off to a dynamic start. After welcoming remarks from Domhnall Mitchell, co-director of the conference, and Neil Klopfenstein, Cultural

Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Oslo, Mary Loeffelholz presented “‘Plied from Nought to Nought’: The Field of Dickinson’s Refusals.” She began with an examination of the meanings of zero, quoting

Alfred Whitehead and moving to a text Dickinson would have used, in which zero is defined as “nought.” Playing with this figure of “nought” in relation to Bourdieu’s theory of culture, Loeffelholz asked



what happens when we look at Dickinson's poems through the lens of her cultural mathematics, based on the assumption of the primacy of art and the value of autonomy. Reading "The Spider holds a Silver Ball," Loeffelholz figured the cultural value of Dickinson's art (and life) in terms of the historical and social conditions of nineteenth-century Amherst. She concluded by calling on critics to understand culture as a field of struggle and to draw broadly on a variety of cultural frames when reading Dickinson in her century.

In "Being in the Body," Shira Wolosky examined Dickinson's texts as highly structured systems of figures that, on the one hand, seem to offer images of each other but that then, on the other hand, prove not to correspond fully but to contradict or gainsay each other. The result is a sense of figural mismatch or slippage within the poems. This is especially the case when texts (as they so often do) propose images for Dickinson's various identities: as a poet, as a woman, as a being concerned with religion, and as an American—identities that extend beyond Dickinson to central preoccupations of her culture. Complex tensions between these identities emerge, with the body itself

often acting as a site for their intercrossing, contentious claims. As Wolosky demonstrated in a gendered reading of "Publication – is the Auction," the result is a highly wrought but unstable and explosive set of poetic texts, with equally explosive implications for Dickinson's surrounding cultural worlds.



Photo by Jim Fraser

Shira Wolosky speaks on "Being in the Body" in the opening plenary session

Christa Buschendorf concluded the session with "'That Precarious Gait': Emily

Dickinson's Poetics of Experiment," positioning Dickinson in the tradition of American pragmatism inaugurated by Emerson. Reading "I stepped from Plank to Plank," "'Nature' is what we see," and other poems, Buschendorf showed that Dickinson develops her arguments by a process of probing hypotheses. Dickinson's thought experiments resemble Emerson's methodological principles: namely, to move forward circularly and by a series of fresh starts. This experimental mode of thinking and living implies the acknowledgment of the fluxional quality of experience, which, in turn, requires the acceptance of insecurity, risk, and doubt in matters of truth and belief. Not less than Whitman, Dickinson is an "experimenter" and the type of poet Emerson called for. Moreover, Dickinson's method proves that rather than standing apart from the intellectual discourse of her time, she participated in it; she is part of the American tradition that later developed into William James's pragmatism.

Cristanne Miller, immediate past president of EDIS, is professor of English at Pomona College and author of *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar*.

## DICKINSON'S NINETEENTH-CENTURY COMMUNITY OF WOMEN

Moderator: Barbara Kelly, independent scholar; panelists: Wendy Martin, Claremont Graduate University; Cheryl Walker, Scripps College; Paul Crumbley, Utah State University

By Barbara Kelly

Cheryl Walker and Paul Crumbley focused on Emily Dickinson's relationships with her nineteenth-century contemporaries, specifically Rose Terry (Cook), Maria White Lowell, and Helen Hunt Jackson, while Wendy Martin, viewing Dickinson through a feminist prism, saw a poet who transformed her religious and cultural heritage, offering a profound critique of the Puritan tradition.

Although feminist criticism may be taken for granted today, in "Emily Dickinson and the Community of Women," Martin described the fledgling feminist scholarship that developed during the early 1970s in New York City. A meeting that included Kate Millet and Elaine Showalter became a transforming experience that led Martin to become a committed feminist. Martin, founder of *Women's*

*Studies*, displeased her department chairman when her early scholarship focused on women in particular rather than early American literature in general. The established academic climate was not supportive of her work on *An American Triptych: Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich*.

Dickinson's letters to women caught Martin's imagination, but Martin's ideas seemed dangerous and were easily dismissed by the academic establishment. In such a climate, Martin was nervous about representing Dickinson's choices as personal choices. Dickinson uses religious language in her letters to suit her own purposes, said Martin. For example, she recreates the Puritan cosmology's language of the Bible to, among other things, celebrate nature. More important, she

offers a serious critique of the established traditions. Martin believes that it is important to situate Dickinson within a community of women and to foreground women's experiences.

In Cheryl Walker's "Silver Balls and Golden Bowls: Dickinson's Valuable Echoes," the echoes Walker referred to are those of other nineteenth-century women writers. Recognizing the work of fellow critics, Walker found that few critics had focused directly on linguistic similarities between Dickinson and her contemporaries. Walker is particularly interested in linguistic echoes and gave close comparative readings of several poems.

As a useful comparison to Dickinson, Walker first cited Rose Terry (Cook), a writer who published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, worked with T.W. Higginson,

spoke against the grain of most women poets, and was “quite as wild in her way as Dickinson was in hers.” Walker compared Terry’s “Daisies” with Dickinson’s “Further in Summer than the Birds,” finding that the echoes “still seem to me startling.” She suggested comparative readings of Terry’s “Bluebeard’s Closet” with Dickinson’s “One need not be a Chamber to be Haunted” for their gothic elements; and Terry’s “Wood Worship” with Dickinson’s “Some keep the Sabbath going to Church” for their focus on the Sabbath observed in nature.

The second cited poet, Maria White Lowell, was James Russell Lowell’s first wife, a minor poet, talented by nineteenth-century standards. Walker compared Lowell’s “Opium Fantasy” with Dickinson’s “I felt a Cleaving in my Mind,” both poems about mental disjunction. Although Dickinson’s space and time conflation is thought to be unique, Lowell is doing a similar thing in her poem, suggesting to Walker that “Dickinson was not entirely *sui generis*.”

Dickinson shared common themes with other women poets, but she also diverged from them. Walker believes we should carefully study and acknowledge both the similarities and the differences between Dickinson and her contemporaries.

In “As if for you to choose”: Conflict-

ing Textual Economies in Dickinson’s Correspondence with Helen Hunt Jackson,” Paul Crumbley focused on Dickinson’s correspondence with Jackson, spanning nearly ten years, from October 1875 to March 1885. Although their lives had remarkable biographical similarities, a reading of the Dickinson/Jackson correspondence reveals their different attitudes about the publication and circulation of their work.

Jackson’s fame and success came to her through commercial publication and distribution of her work, a method she valued and repeatedly recommended to Dickinson. But Dickinson rejected marketplace values and achieved lasting fame in her own way. Crumbley suggested that “the practice of gift distribution well established in nineteenth-century American culture provided an important alternative means for the distribution of her literary art.” After describing the three basic principles of gift donation and reception, Crumbley read selections from the letters illustrating three phases of the correspondence. Jackson is clearly committed to commercial publication, while Dickinson “promote[s] the value of gift-based circulation.” Dickinson’s gifts met with a mixed reception from Jackson, but Crumbley noted that Dickinson declared poetic independence from Jackson, and “the dig-

nity [Dickinson] models most impressively through her correspondence with... Jackson is finally her ability to persist with equanimity.”

Crumbley said that Dickinson’s poetry invites reader participation and that “As if for you to choose” is an invitation “to accept the gift Dickinson offers by participating in its creation.”

After the presentations, Vivian Pollak engaged the panel with several questions, asking Walker and Crumbley to clarify and expand on some points they had made about Dickinson and other poets. Walker replied that Dickinson’s contemporaries were not models Dickinson wanted; at least, she doesn’t mention them. Martin added that the gift economy was a female tradition to which Dickinson was committed; it may have been a kind of political statement; maybe that was why she didn’t mention contemporary poets.

The papers presented in this panel demonstrate that, reclusive though Dickinson may have been, close study of her work shows that she was very much a part of a community of women poets in a complex and nuanced way that invites further exploration.

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

---

## LANGUAGE APPROACHING ZERO

*Moderator:* Mary Loeffelholz, Northeastern University; *panelists:* Antoine Cazé, University of Orléans; Daniel Fineman, Occidental College; Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

---

*By Mary Loeffelholz*

To draw a metaphor from one of the panelists, the papers presented in this panel productively inhabited the rifts between various theoretical approaches, reading Dickinson’s poetic language from the perspectives of phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction, invoking Bachelard, Deleuze, Althusser, Foucault—and even Aristotle, taking us to the degree zero of literary theory’s origins.

In “Tropic Show,” or Dickinson’s Heliotropes,” Antoine Cazé offered a theoretical reading of Dickinson’s poetry, especially her extravagantly troped sunset and butterfly poems, that played on the etymology of “theory” itself—“exposing to sight.” Launching himself from previ-

ous Lacanian and feminist accounts of Dickinson’s questioning of the male gaze and its models of spectatorship, Cazé proposed that Dickinson’s poetry even more fundamentally entails “a broader speculation on the condition of visibility itself, a questioning of the visual model altogether.” Butterflies and sunsets conventionally figure perceptual beauty on the edge of vanishing; Dickinson’s butterflies and sunsets, in Cazé’s reading of “From Cocoon forth a Butterfly,” present visibility on the verge of its disappearance into language or figuration. What this disappearance leaves behind in its passing are not only metaphors but also the phonetic or auditory patterns of lan-

guage, Cazé suggested, as in the “ghost rhyme” implied by the words guest/host in “He was my host – he was my guest.” Such poems act out for us Dickinson’s “insistence on dwelling in [the] rift” between “the nineteenth-century *auditory* model” and the “twentieth-century *visual* model of poetry.” And it is exactly her dwelling in this great historical rift, Cazé concluded, that projects Dickinson’s poetry “beyond the Romantic/Modernist divide” and makes her, even today, “our best contemporary lyricist.”

The rift between eye and ear, in Cazé’s reading, is the place in which Dickinson constitutes the “I,” the subject of lyric poetry. Daniel Fineman’s paper, “After

Zero: Emily Dickinson Past the Last Word," began where Cazé ended, with a related exploration of the poetic subject's relationship to sight and, through sight, to Aristotelian forms of rationality conceived as taxonomy, categorization, the "parsing of Being." Taking as his central text "A Charm invests a face," Fineman argued, via Deleuze and Foucault, that Dickinson here resists sight, archetypally the "sense of control." By withholding the "face" that is nominally the poem's center of attention, Dickinson reminds us that "the goal of socialized faces is categorization"; thus she "make[s] visible the episteme of gendered vision" and, in doing so, "threaten[s] the structures of social division." We "see" our own social seeing in

this poem—in Fineman's words, "We mesh others and ourselves in the web of sight and the Cartesian grid of order"—but thanks to the "synaesthetic play" of Dickinson's poetic language, desire remains ever alive in the imperfections of the grid.

The final paper in the panel, Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins's "'Intimate Immensity' in Emily Dickinson," also located Dickinson's poetic "I" in anti-Cartesian space. Drawing on Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological description of "intimate immensity," Martins pointed us toward poems in which Dickinson investigates "The Capsule of the Mind" (Fr1012), or the paradox of limitless imagination in finite space, in which zero and infinity join hands. Often,

Martins suggested, Dickinson renders this paradox through images of physical displacement; the poet who so famously dwells in Possibility also imagines herself an "Emigrant" in "a Metropolis of Homes" (Fr807), a condition in which she invites her readers to join her. Like the "extimate subject" of Cazé's paper or the anti-Cartesian desiring subject of Fineman's, Martins's Dickinson also lives in an "intimate immensity" that we might understand as a kind of rift—as narrow as the brain and wider than the sky.

*Mary Loeffelholz is professor of English at Northeastern University and author of Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory.*

---

## WORKSHOP B: THE FLEEING OF THE BIOGRAPHIED FINDING DICKINSON AMONG HER POEMS AND LETTERS.

*Workshop leader:* Polly Longworth, independent scholar; *panelists:* Stephanie Tingley, Youngstown State University; Leslie Wheeler, Washington and Lee University; Cindy Dickinson, Director, Emily Dickinson Homestead; Norbert Hirschhorn, independent scholar

---

*By Polly Longworth*

As moderator, Polly Longworth opened the session with a few remarks justifying biographical interest in this most private of poets. She stated it the duty if not the imperative of scholars to probe Dickinson's record accurately, both to help others understand and to counter a tendency to read too much into Dickinson. The four workshop presenters then gave five-minute synopses of their papers before the session was thrown open to questions from the floor.

First, Stephanie Tingley spoke on "Becoming a Woman of Letters: Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's and George Sand's Contributions to Dickinson's Professional Development." Tingley pointed out that, as a woman of letters in both the domestic and the artistic realms, Dickinson found inspiration in the lives and literary careers of other female writers, adopting similar strategies to and being guided by the experiences of Barrett-Browning and Sand. Interested particularly in the Amherst poet's conflict over sacrificing her privacy through publishing, Tingley pointed up the choices Dickinson made in seeking an audience that were different from those of her fellow artists.

Leslie Wheeler spoke on "Openness and Closure in Emily Dickinson's Lyric," sharing work that will appear in her forthcoming book *The Poetics of Enclosure: American Women Poets from Dickinson*



*Photo by Jim Fraser*

to Dove. Wheeler identified Dickinson as concerned with constriction and escape, not only dwelling on multiple enclosure within her poems but personifying constriction and limited space through experimentation with the lyric form itself. Her seeming openness of personal experience coexists with an inaccessibility of subject matter that Wheeler concluded "invites while destabilizing biographical approaches to her poetry."

Cindy Dickinson talked about "Presence in Absence: The Challenges of Telling Emily Dickinson's Story at the Homestead." Recent revelations about the Homestead contained in a Historic Structure Report have led to reexamination of the furnishings of the poet's bedroom, a mecca for many of the Homestead's 7,000 annual visitors. This exercise and the reproduction of the poet's single extant white dress have been parts of a continuing effort to help Dickinson admirers understand and appreciate the context of her life through a limited number of material objects. While tangible objects don't explain the poetry, Cindy Dickinson pointed out, they extend appreciation for her genius.

Norbert Hirschhorn, a retired public health physician, has made some fascinating contributions to our knowledge about Dickinson's medical conditions. His paper, "The Life and Health of Emily Dickinson: A Physician Considers the Evidence," stimulated many questions concerning Dickinson's eye condition, which

Hirschhorn has identified as iritis/uveitis, and the cause of her death as most evidently severe hypertension rather than the umbrella designation of Bright's Disease under which hypertension was once herded. Hirschhorn spoke briefly, as well, about his suspicion, from clues in her letters, that Dickinson was being treated for possible tuberculosis for a period in her early thirties. He also raised what he

termed an intuitive possibility that Dickinson may have experienced sexual abuse, contributing to her inexplicable reclusion.

Active discussion ensued for forty minutes following the presentations, as nearly three dozen attendees at the workshop plied the speakers with questions and elicited further information. All the presenters had touched, from quite different angles, on the issue of Dickinson's in-

tense privacy. The poet's extreme self-protectiveness entices, they concurred, even as it shortchanges our knowledge of her and presents problems for interpreters who hesitate to trespass upon it.

---

*Polly Longworth is the author of Austin and Mabel and The World of Emily Dickinson. She is at work on a biography of Dickinson.*

---

## "SEEING" DICKINSON IN HER TIME

*Moderator:* Mary Elizabeth K. Bernhard, independent scholar; *panelists:* Karen Dandurand, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Ruth Owen Jones, independent scholar; Hiroko Uno, Kobe College

---

*By Mary Elizabeth K. Bernhard*

This was a panel that reviewed Emily Dickinson from diverse perspectives, both practical and theoretical, and at the same time imaginatively. Topics ranged from innovative assessment of Dickinson's ophthalmological care, to a possible new candidate for her "Master," ending with an analysis of her deft use of the geological terms that lace the poet's verse. The ultimate intent was to sharpen the picture of Dickinson "in her time."

Karen Dandurand presented the initial paper, "'Seeing' Dickinson's Dr. Williams through Another Patient's Experiences." She had made the discovery that Emily Dickinson shared the professional services of the distinguished ophthalmologist, Dr. Henry W. Williams of Boston, in the 1860s with Sarah Everett Hale. A member of a prominent family, Mrs. Hale was the wife of a newspaper publisher and the sister of Edward Everett, known for his brilliant oratory.

Since records of Dickinson's medical care under Dr. Williams have never been found and her comments about him tend to be cryptic, an examination of Hale family letters reveals and helps characterize the physician whose role in Dickinson's life was crucial. Dandurand does not claim that Sarah Hale's problems and solutions were identical at all to the poet's, but she examines comparatively certain kindred elements.

Fortunately, Dandurand, as a literary historian, has been able to establish analogous medical experiences through letters sent by Mrs. Hale and her daughter, Susan, to her son, Charles, and through

Emily Dickinson's letters. The pattern of Dr. Williams's approach to his patients is made eminently clear. Sarah Everett Hale was one of those patients from May 1862 through the autumn of 1864, whereas Dickinson's treatments began in April 1864. Surgery on Hale in 1862 did not improve her sight, but she endeavored to write in spite of being "as blind as a beetle." Dr. Williams operated on her for cataracts in 1864, greatly improving her vision. Dickinson was limited to writing in pencil by the doctor during her treatments; still, her compulsion to write persisted.

Susan Hale described how her mother in 1862 could finally go for a carriage ride with eyes totally covered, while two years later Dickinson wrote, "I have not looked at the Spring" (L289). Susan also pointed out her mother's "Arab look" when she left her darkened room with her head wrapped in a shawl. Similarly Dickinson, writing to her Norcross cousins from Amherst, suggests "Remember me to your company, their Bedouin guest" (L304).

Dandurand has been able to assume certain standard practices of Williams in treating his patients. Further, she has been able skillfully to see him as a keenly perceptive, sensitive, and empathetic specialist through the study of his relationship to the Hales. Clearly, Dandurand has opened new vistas into Dickinson's medical treatment.

With iconoclastic conviction, Ruth Owen Jones considered a startling new candidate in her paper "Dickinson's Master Figure, William Smith Clark: 'Neighbor - and friend - and Bridegroom.'" She

traced Smith biographically, outlining his actual and supposed relationship to the poet, and insisting that Dickinson's love and liaison explained her reclusive behavior, ending in familial censorship of her poetry and letters.

In outlining Clark's life, Jones was discussing a prominent, assertive, even gifted man who has long been remembered beyond the town of Amherst. Furthermore, he was both a near neighbor and a friend to the Dickinson family. A graduate of Amherst College in 1848, Clark was interested in science in general and in botany in particular. After completing a Ph.D. at Georg August University at Göttingen, Hanover (now Germany), he began to teach at Amherst College and subsequently married.

To structure the Dickinson-Clark relationship, Jones incorporated ingredients of the famous "Master Letters" in her definition. She characterized Clark as "spirited, dashing, magnetic," with wide-ranging interests from flowers (at one time growing a hundred varieties of peonies in his gardens) to poetry. Opposed to slavery, he plunged into recruiting Amherst College students as the Civil War began. After enlisting as a major himself, he requested the transfer of Frazar Stearns, the college president's son, to be his aide. A friend of Austin, Clark worked with Edward Dickinson to found the Massachusetts Agricultural College, of which he became an early president. To this day he is celebrated as a founder of Sapporo Agricultural College in Hokkaido, Japan. He died at fifty-nine, disillusioned by his

role in failed mine speculation involving friends and relatives.

In presenting her thesis that this man was the "Master" for whom Emily Dickinson wrote the "Master Letters" and "hundreds of poems," Jones meticulously interwove specific prose and poetry to support her claim. She believes that Clark was the poet's "muse and audience" between 1857 and 1865, when Dickinson terminated her love affair. Looking away from Charles Wadsworth, Samuel Bowles, Otis Lord, and Susan Dickinson, Jones is convinced of the validity of her argument, leaving it to be debated.

Hiroko Uno presented the third paper on this panel, choosing as her topic "Geology in Emily Dickinson's Poetry." The subject was actually a springboard for analyzing the poet's publishing ambitions and resignation. Uno initiated her discussion with a consideration of poems that imply agonized mental breakdown with a paralysis of will, reducing one to a mere

"stone." She cited "A Quartz contentment, like a stone" (Fr372), "The Forehead copied stone" (Fr614), as well as a reference to marble in "Who wrought Carrara in me / And chiselled all my tune" (Fr1088). In considering the last poem, Uno observed that the speaker becomes a sort of "stone" in order to "survive some psychological hell." Uno sees the speaker as the poet herself who, with "An Aptitude for Bird," hopes to revive "Centuries beyond," with marble symbolizing her own enduring verse.

Examining the poem "A long – long Sleep" with its lines "Opon a Bank of Stone / To bask the Centuries away," Uno did not interpret this as involving a candidate for a Christian Resurrection but as a "sleep in stone or death in life."

At this point, Uno turned from poetic to biographical interpretation. She discussed Dickinson's early publication and her keen disappointment that Samuel Bowles did not seem to understand her poetry. She

was, of course, further troubled by any tampering with rhyme or lineation appearing in print. Uno insisted that Thomas Wentworth Higginson was likewise a disappointment, as he failed to encourage publication when that was what Dickinson most wanted. Uno speculated that Dickinson must have renounced publication in her lifetime, hoping for her release from "sleep" and for her resurrection as a poet in the future. At the same time, Dickinson defined her creative work when she insisted (in Fr319) that "My Splendors, are Menagerie."

This was a congenial panel presenting challenging topics to a responsive audience. A brisk discussion was curtailed because of time restrictions.

---

*Mary Elizabeth Bernhard's scholarly research has focused on the Norcross family, with emphasis on Emily Dickinson's relationship to her mother. She is currently Member at Large on the EDIS Board.*

---

## DICKINSON AND THE MODERNS

*Moderator:* Taffy Martin, University of Poitiers; *panelists:* Benjamin Friedlander, University of Maine; Vivian Pollak, Washington University

---

### *By Taffy Martin*

The title of our workshop reflected the desire by the organizing committee for an exploration of Dickinson in light of modernist or, on a larger scale, twentieth-century creative process and practice. This is exactly what Benjamin Friedlander and Vivian Pollak did in their papers.

Friedlander's paper, "An Arctic Region of the Mind: Reading Dickinson after the Holocaust," is not only a provocative exploration of two Dickinson poems in light of "the problems of memory" and its representation, but also an attempt to situate Dickinson in the all-encompassing discourse that questions the very possibility of representing trauma and of speaking the unutterable.

Given the invitation implicit in the workshop title, Friedlander chose to explore the repercussions of reading Dickinson after the Holocaust. His starting point was Ruth K. Angress's essay "Lanzmann's *Shoah* and Its Audience," a study of the way in which survivors come to terms with the necessity and impossibility of remembering. Angress, as Friedlander pointed

out, concluded her essay with a subtle and previously unidentified reference to Dickinson: "The film *Shoah*, a look back, is memory that feels, in the words of the poet, like 'zero at the bone.'"

Friedlander took this appropriation of Dickinson as a two-faceted invitation, initially to continue to investigate Dickinson's "zero" as an appropriate response to unspeakable trauma, and second as an opportunity to argue that "the problems of representation, narratology, and historiography raised by the Holocaust draw attention to significant aspects of Dickinson's work that are by definition only intermittently legible." Friedlander's study of responses to trauma then compared Angress's use of a line from "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" with Paul Celan's fascination with Dickinson's expression "Real Memory" in "You cannot make Remembrance grow."

While Angress's reading of "zero at the bone" is apt, her interest in Dickinson begins and ends with the usefulness of the quotation for an argument about re-

membering and refusing to do so. Celan, on the other hand, seems to have recognized Dickinson as a kindred spirit. He was reportedly so moved upon encountering the expression "Real Memory" in a bilingual edition of Dickinson's poetry that he copied the entire poem into his notebook. Celan was intrigued, Friedlander proposed, by Dickinson's opposition of "real and deceptive" memory, real memory being that which, in Pierre Nora's words, "has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge." Friedlander went on to propose that the struggle between those two modes of memory is at the core of Dickinson's poetry, and he offered as an illustration an earlier poem, "There is a strength," in which Dickinson explicitly invokes the *burden* of memory.

Friedlander's exploration of the difficulty of speaking memory after the Holocaust proved to be uniquely pertinent to a reading of Dickinson. We realize, as Friedlander put it, that Celan's instincts

were right. He sensed in the density of Dickinson's language a meditation on memory and a psychological profundity that withstands the scrutiny of a post-Holocaust reading. Friedlander thus concluded that "Whether Celan grasped this profundity directly from his overall knowledge of Dickinson's work or merely sensed it in the density of her language matters less than the fact that his notation bears witness to an affinity, and that this affinity—like Angress's citation—can illuminate Dickinson's profundity for us."

In "The Wholesomeness of the Life": Marianne Moore on Emily Dickinson," Vivian Pollak recreated Moore's situation in the summer of 1932. She was emerging from a creative impasse and was reading extensively in the critical and biographical literature on Emily Dickinson. Moore had agreed to review a new edition of Dickinson's letters for *Poetry* magazine. Although she had had ample opportunity to

do so, Moore had not previously written on Dickinson for a public audience. Pollak observed that Moore's willingness to undertake this extensive review of Dickinson's letters at this time perhaps needs little explanation. In private, Moore had been tracking indications of Dickinson's rising reputation virtually from the inception of her own career and would continue to do so for many years to come.

Yet in 1924 Moore had passed up the opportunity to review *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by the poet's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi. This family-connected book was widely hailed as an authoritative biography, and almost any form of biography was Moore's favorite form of reading. Pollak suggested that in 1932 Moore was renegotiating her response to her literary foremothers, and that writing the review enabled Moore to respond creatively to what Pollak called her "Dickinson phobia." Moore had ear-

lier feared, for example, that Dickinson had an unwholesome erotic secret. Pollak traced the origins of this concern to Dickinson's immediate circle of family and friends and described its persistence in the first three decades of the twentieth century. For Moore, the value of Dickinson's letters was that they established once and for all "the wholesomeness of the life."

Pollak concluded by suggesting that Moore's review raises important questions about both the value for women of personal love and the profusion of choices that confront them. Thus in writing about Dickinson, Moore was defending not only the "wholesomeness" of Dickinson's life but the contextual and social displacements of her own.

---

*Taffy Martin, professor of literature at the University of Poitiers, has published on modern American and Irish poetry.*

---

## DICKINSON'S FLUID TEXTS AND PROCESSES

*Moderator:* Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland; *panelists:* Fred White, Santa Clara University; Connie Ann Kirk, Mansfield University; Idilko Csorba, Pazmany Peter Catholic University

---

*By Martha Nell Smith*

Fred D. White opened this session with a lively paper, "The Higher Dialectic: Multiple Surfaces of Truth in Dickinson's 'Worksheet' Poems," revisiting issues explored at length by Sharon Cameron, Roland Hagenbüchle, and others who have argued that variant words are part of Dickinson's poems and that poems within a fascicle may in fact be variants of one another. For those accustomed to teaching "finished" poems from which variants have been removed, seeing Dickinson's work in this way requires reconceiving what counts as a poem, its constitutive parts.

White spent considerable time romping in what he called Dickinson's "field of play" by examining "Pompless no Life can pass away" to argue that, more often than not, Dickinson "leaves her alternatives *un-canceled*" in order to "generate multi-surface or multi-faceted simultaneous readings" that we might today "associate with hypertext," and thereby stages "multiple visions of truth that engage one another playfully."

Connie Ann Kirk's "Climates of the Poet's Creative Process: Dickinson's Epistolary Journal" examines Dickinson's letters and hypothesizes that they are the closest thing to a journal that one finds in the Dickinson oeuvre, that perhaps the letters, "whether consciously or not," served a similar function for her as did journal keeping for other writers such as Louisa May Alcott. "Like a journal, the letters contain scraps of poems, feelings of loneliness and longing, responses to reading, descriptions, drawings, and pasted remembrances such as flowers, cartoons from the newspaper, etc. One observation becomes quite obvious early on in a study of the letters of Emily Dickinson—they clearly served a function aside from, or in addition to, telling her various correspondents the news from back home."

Kirk ranged impressively across the more than a thousand surviving Dickinson letters in order to examine the poet's writing process and consider the following questions: What might be revealed by

looking at the letters as means, rather than ends in themselves, or merely byproducts of her writing process? Considered as a kind of epistolary journal, do the letters give any clues into her creative process? What is the relationship between the letters and the unpublished poems (those not sent by her through the mail to select audiences or published by traditional means)? Do the letters inform the poems in a way that a journal might be expected to do?

Kirk integrated her own critiques into recent arguments made by the various contributors to the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*, as well as by Ellen Louise Hart, Martha Nell Smith, Cindy Mackenzie, and Marta Werner in recent books and articles, to consider various functions of imagery, persona, departures of lineation and stanzaic forms, word choices, allusions, puns, word play, experimentation with audience, metaphor/simile, and sound devices.

Idilko Csorba's "'Now I lay thee down to Sleep': The Problematic Co-Existence

of Variant Meanings and Readings” concluded this lively session by examining how Dickinson takes a well known and widely circulated prayerful blessing and, with the change of a word or two, makes the reverent wildly subversive: “And if thou / live before / thou wake – / I pray the / Lord thy / Soul to make” (the manuscript of this poem can be viewed at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/dickinson/working/hb22.htm>). By writing “live” in-

stead of “die,” Dickinson takes a simple, seemingly straightforward prayer and turns it into a radical philosophical statement that, implicitly at least, questions the existence of the soul, the relationship between the spiritual and the carnal or corporeal, and the relation of our present being to that state of being many imagine as an afterlife. Via an almost negligible revision of such a common, conventional, well known ditty of a prayer, Dickinson

sharply arrests one’s attention and turns her readers’ eyes on what would otherwise be taken for granted, thus imbuing the commonplace and clichéd with profundity.

*Martha Nell Smith is professor of English and director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland.*

## WORKSHOP C: “WE DO NOT PLAY ON GRAVES” – OR DO WE? GRAVITY AND LEVITY IN DICKINSON

*Workshop leader:* Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University; *panelists:* Gudrun Grabher, University of Innsbruck; Eve Gerken, Indiana University, Fort Wayne; Eleanor Heginbotham; Patricia Thompson Rizzo, University of Padova; Cheri Davis Langdell, California Baptist University; *in absentia:* Sheila Coghill, Minnesota State University, Moorhead; Benjamin Lease, Northeastern Illinois University, emeritus; Rise and Steven Axelrod, University of California, Riverside

*By Eleanor Heginbotham*

As the long list of participants and the varied takes on the topic in this lively workshop indicate, this was a panel as difficult to summarize as it was to lead. Its initial impulse indicates a dichotomy, one that appeared to be a timely answer to a recent article suggesting that Dickinson suffered from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The suggestion that the links between outer and inner weather could account for genius was only one notion this panel discounted.

Generally the thrust of the papers cut away at notions of such dichotomies, showing not the *distinctions* between gravity and levity but Dickinson’s Zenlike *embrace* of contraries. Two papers (those of Rizzo and Heginbotham) were close readings of individual works. Three (those of Langdell, the two Axelrods, and Lease) compared Dickinson’s extremes of despair and exuberance to other writers, and three (those of Gerken, Grabher, and Coghill) took a broad philosophical look at the interplay of gravity and levity in the poems and letters as aspects of Dickinson’s breadth and depth.

To take the last group first, Gudrun Grabher began the session with a remarkable find for this particular panel, Alan McGlashan’s *Gravity and Levity*. “It is surprising,” said Grabher, citing McGlashan, “how many otherwise intelligent people are unaware that some things are

too serious to be serious about.” Dickinson, “capable of grasping the gravity of the essential things of life,” was “endowed with the gift of countering it with levity.” That ability to hold a paradox, Grabher explained, is what Zen Buddhism calls a *koan*, “a question, a riddle, to which



*Photo by Jim Fraser*

there is no logical answer.” Grabher’s paper evolved into a study of Wittgenstein’s theory of the limits of language, a limit to which some attach the word “paradox,” a word that, borrowing from Nicholas Falletta, might be described as “truth standing on its head to attract attention.” Tracing Dickinson’s delight in paradox through such poems as “I heard, as if I had no Ear,” Grabher linked the topic to Dickinson’s struggle for self-identification.

Absent but present in spirit was Sheila

Coghill, whose paper spoke of Dickinson’s gift for paradox as a reflection of her powers to transform, powers that Coghill linked to “alchemy.” The word “alchemy” itself, one rich in literal (pseudoscientific) as well as metaphoric possibilities, appears apparently in only one letter (L799, to Sue)

and not at all in the poems, although related words (“magic,” “transformation,” “transport,” etc.) appear frequently. Yet the process of alchemy is implied in such poems as “After great pain,” “I started Early – Took my Dog,” “I can wade Grief,” and “Wild Nights.” They demonstrate, said Coghill, that “Dickinson’s poetry can be seen as a means to personal transformation.” Like Grabher, Coghill concluded that such

transforming images are part of the larger project of self-transformation through poetry.

Such transformations may also be linked to the gothic novel, as Eve Gerken explained. Gerken, drawing on the work of Daneen Wardrop and others, linked some dozen riddling poems to the often playful movements of the genre. In creating “a ghost narrator, a mad speaker, a gothic heroine to speak her thoughts,” and in inventing an audience that would under-

stand the convention, Dickinson “juxtaposed gothic and comic elements.”

Gerken’s paper actually touched on all others on the panel as she enumerated the characteristics of the riddling play of that gothic convention. Riddling, Gerken reminded us, is complex (as Rizzo’s paper on Dickinson’s elegy demonstrated); it is a process (as Grabher and Coghill demonstrated); it involves codes and control (as the Axelrods argued); it excludes through secrets and destabilizes, involving the reader in tricky, inclusive ways (as Langdell says Dickinson does for Rich). At the heart of Dickinson’s riddles and of the gothic novel is the tease involved in role playing. Calling on the analysis of the comic Dickinson posited by Juhasz, Smith, and others, Gerken concluded that “in her poetry she can present death as intriguing and mysterious; however, in real life death ends the possibility and hope.”

Death, specifically a child’s reaction to the adult’s view of it, was the opening images in the paper of this reviewer: those that balance levity (play, exhilaration, joy, children, balloons, bee, and so forth) and gravity (a term Dickinson knew well from studies of Newton). The poem that gave its first line to the topic for the session, “We do not play on Graves,” is situated midway through Fascicle 26, between “The Brain – is wider than the Sky” and “Her – last Poems,” both of which celebrate (play with) the imaginative power needed for and given by the poet. Indeed, perhaps even the poem’s placement in the fascicles indicates her playfulness.

Death is also the subject Dickinson tries to control in the complex elegy to her nephew Gilbert on which Patricia Thompson Rizzo focused. Her close reading of Dickinson’s L868 to Sue took issue with Judith Farr’s praise of the letter’s “unself-conscious brilliance.” No less than the gothic stance described by Gerken or the Zen mode explored by Grabher, the *self-conscious*, controlled structure of the traditional elegy was privileged by Rizzo, who based her discussion of the form on the work of Peter Sacks. Like Cleopatra’s dream of “an Emperor Anthony,” to which Rizzo compared it, Dickinson’s letter/elegy begins with a “prophetic statement” and “offers the most paradoxical blend of absence and presence, of weakness and strength.” It is “studded” with images of light, with images of depth and ascent, with inferences of revelations and se-

crets. Among the startling comparisons between the texts (Dickinson’s and Shakespeare’s) are those involving words used by Dickinson, so far as we know, only in this brief letter, particularly the reference to Ajax, which becomes, as Rizzo describes it, an objective correlative.

The self-conscious literary mode in which Dickinson clothed her grief in this letter, praised by Benjamin Lease as one of the most “moving letters in the English language,” may have, says Rizzo, given Dickinson a pang of worry that it “was more a virtuoso piece of writing than a truly felt letter of condolence.” But she followed it with three more notes, the third of which (L871) ends with a poem (another elegy) that was also included (reworked) in L872 to Charles Clark. The “cryptic” and “aphoristic” style of both letters and the poems that end them indicates what Coghill called Dickinson’s alchemic talent. In letters 868 and 872 Dickinson transforms grief, as Rizzo concluded, into something “rich and strange.”

While the gravity of death weighed perhaps more heavily in the papers of Heginbotham and Rizzo, the levity of the bumblebee was the primary figure in Benjamin Lease’s delightful comparison of Dickinson to Lewis Carroll. Lease was very much an unseen presence in the other papers. He provided three poems for close reading of Dickinson’s playful spirit. The first, written to Gilbert a year before his death, was “His little hearse like Figure.” Preceded by the inscription “For Gilbert to carry to his Teacher” and the title (or description) “The Bumble Bee’s Religion,” followed by words from Jonathan Edwards and Revelation and perhaps accompanied by a dead bee, the poem sets up a relationship characterized by directness, transparency, and openness, a spirit very much in line with that of Lewis Carroll to the children in his life. Such a spirit (in L712) may be compared, said Lease, with a letter Carroll wrote to young Hallam Tennyson. Along with “From all the Jails the Boys and Girls” and “For each extatic instant,” the poem for Gilbert’s teacher shows “the artist at play” in much the same way as Carroll did in letters and in his *Alice* books.

For both Dickinson and Carroll, children not only may but *should* play, even trespass on adult preconceptions (for example, about “graves”). Dickinson’s “corrosive summation of a false sermon deliv-

ered by a false preacher” in “He preached upon ‘Breadth’ till it argued him narrow” parallels Carroll’s “outrage” at “insincere or hypocritical preachers,” and the “grimly hilarious” jokes in *Through the Looking Glass* are similar to Dickinson’s heresy of joy and pain. By comparing two “masters of seriocomic pain,” Lease concluded that “Though they lived an ocean apart and do not seem to have known of one another’s existence, their careers parallel and clarify one another.”

Dickens and Dickinson also lived an ocean apart, but as Martha Nell Smith and others have shown, Dickinson responded, at least once with hilarity, to the serialized works of Dickens. It was not the hilarious spirit, however, that formed the basis of the paper delivered in absentia by Rise and Steven Axelrod. For them the tragic yet redemptive figure of Tiny Tim formed an “alter ego” for Dickinson when she wrote about him in “We don’t cry – Tim and I.” Tim, “the speaker’s creative double,” found a female counterpart in poems involving “Dollie” (“I often passed the village” and “Dying! Dying in the night!”). “Tim” and “Dollie,” suggested the Axelrods, are “transitional objects, the first more interior, passive, and vulnerable than the second.” Indulging in some Dickinsonian word play, they reflected on the semiotic connections between, for example, “Tim” and “I’m.” “Dollie,” which was both the nickname of Susan Dickinson and the name of Esther Summerson’s doll in Dickens’s *Bleak House*, is “an unstable and contradictory figure, a source of painful disturbance or pleasurable excitement rather than comfort.” Concluding their psychological reading of these poems ostensibly about children, the Axelrods, unlike Lease, concluded that Dickinson’s poems—at least these that reference Dickens—“provide no outlet from anxiety except in fantasies of death” and that “they stage dramas of the soul in pain.”

The soul in pain was very much the subject, too, of Cheri Langdell’s comparison of the “formal feeling[s]” embodied in Dickinson and Adrienne Rich. While her paper, like those of Lease and the Axelrods, noted the much discussed parallels between Rich and Dickinson, primarily it focused on Rich’s reception of Dickinson as a representative of “the problem of female repression generally.” Langdell’s Rich’s Dickinson reacts to the “racket” of



the patriarchal household, embodying (literally and figuratively) "the pain of...love." Pausing on the poem selected as the title of her paper ("After great pain"), Langdell traced the "formal feeling" as the "impact of pain on the psyche...a messenger of death [as the] stillness of 'Nerves' symbolizes the entire body." Both poets, says Langdell, "believed that poetry could, and in Rich's case should, be transformative" (the alchemy discussed by Coghill). For Dickinson's reaction to pain, Langdell supplied this description: "A Zenlike an-

nihilation of the mind has been accomplished and life is 'A Wooden Way.'"

Although Langdell's focus was on pain far more than on its opposite, this phrase brings us full circle to the Zenlike *koans* that were the subject of Grabher's (and Gerken's, Lease's, Heginbotham's, and Lease's) discussions of Dickinson's ability to embody, sometimes apparently simultaneously, gravity and levity.

Discussion after the abbreviated paper presentations turned to Emerson and other examples of Zen thought in mid-century

New England. Dickinson's talent with paradox was not isolated, agreed those gathered for the panel, but it is one reason for the multiple possibilities of interpreting any of the poems, some forty or fifty of which (with very little duplication) were used to demonstrate the points of the eight papers.

*Eleanor Heginbotham is professor of English at Concordia University and was organizer of the 2000 EDIS annual meeting in St. Paul.*

---

## SECOND PLENARY SESSION: NEITHER EVEN NOR ODD: POETRY'S MANUSCRIPTS

*Moderator:* Vivian Pollak, Washington University; *panelists:* Philip Horne, University College, London; Susan Howe, State University of New York, Buffalo

---

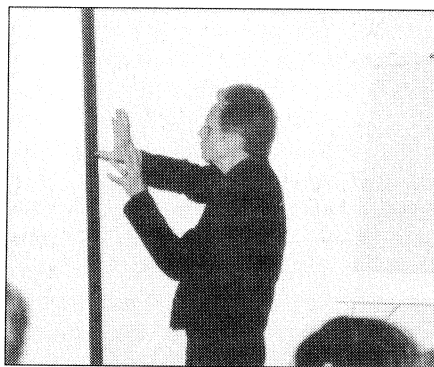
*By Vivian Pollak*

Philip Horne, in "The Poetry of Possibilities: Dickinson's Texts," took it as his brief to consider the current state of Dickinson's texts and current thinking about them, both editorial and critical, and—with much help from recently published accounts—to offer an impression and a few remarks on the reasoning behind the various approaches to the nature and status of the manuscripts. He hoped to provide freshness rather than expertise when it comes to Dickinson, although his work on Henry James is centrally concerned with revision and related textual issues. He asked whether Dickinson's aim was to shed or repudiate contexts, and argued that even if we don't believe poetry *can* escape from its contexts, Dickinson may have covered her tracks sufficiently in many cases for us not to know which context a poem has not escaped from.

After discussing the ideological investments of the narrative provided by the *Dickinson Electronic Archives* project, Horne concluded by addressing the question of publication and print. He suggested that we ought to be able to appreciate the possible scope of Dickinson's experimentation with the visual codes of her holographs without foreclosing on the advantages of print, which can be in its own way liberating, multiplicitous, and democratic as well as capitalistic, institutional, and fixed—a point well received.

Susan Howe's presentation, "Graphicer

for Grace," prompted in part by Dickinson's poem "Death sets a Thing significant," looked at some of the accidents and intentionalities in Dickinson's late career. Howe remarked in passing that while Dickinson is a poet of war, as some scholars have recognized, and that while more can be done on this aspect of her art, we



*Photo by Jim Fraser*

need to notice also specific ways in which her writing practices may have been influenced by American post-Civil War thought in science and philosophy. Intellectuals of Dickinson's generation were compelled to rethink the nature and sources of order. Howe addressed the impact of Darwinian biology as well as the 1872 all-male Metaphysical Club described by Louis Menand in his recent book of that title. Menand describes in detail the pervasive fascination in the New England intellectual community with theories of chance, probability, and statistics. The

topics of discussion were the same ones being debated in the Amherst intellectual community. While Dickinson may have been an agoraphobic, observed Howe, she traveled freely in her head. Howe also linked Dickinson's interest in the order created by chance to the epistemology of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James.

Howe's title, however, was taken from Dickinson's poem "Summer has two Beginnings," written about 1877 in pencil on a leaf of stationery on which was written, on the other side, "Lunch for Tizzie." Howe suggested that we need to see "Lunch for Tizzie," that it forms part of the poem's context, and she asked which came first: "Lunch for Tizzie" or the poem? She then showed overhead slides to reinforce her freeflowing and incisive emphasis on the philosophical or "metaphysical Dickinson," on the visual codes of Dickinson's writing practices, and more generally on the importance of being open to chance and process: to the other side of the paper.

Although time was running short, both talks provoked a lively discussion, much of it concerned with whether Dickinsonians exaggerate Dickinson's uniqueness. There was some agreement that they do and that the problems of interpretation posed by her texts should be contextualized in terms of other writers.

*Vivian Pollak is professor of English at Washington University and author of Dickinson: The Anxiety of Gender.*

# DICKINSON AND LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

Moderator: Paul Crumbley, Utah State University; panelists: Nancy Chinn, Baylor University; Martina Antretter, University of Innsbruck; Maria Anita Stefanelli, University of Rome

By Paul Crumbley

The three papers presented as part of this panel testify to Dickinson's international prominence and the extent to which her literary influence has transcended generic boundaries. Nancy Chinn, the only American on the panel, described the way English author A.S. Byatt deliberately modeled the fictional poet in her novel *Possession* on Dickinson's life and work. Austrian scholar Martina Antretter looked at the way American nature writer Annie Dillard drew on her early study of Dickinson when formulating her own pre-subjective encounters with the natural world. Maria Anita Stefanelli, an Italian drama professor, argued that the Dickinson character in Susan Sontag's play *Alice in Bed* utilizes Dickinson's own "aesthetic detachment from daily living" to achieve a theatrical liberation from gendered identity.

Chinn opened her paper, "Dickinson and Melusina: A.S. Byatt's Christabel LaMotte," by describing Byatt's search for a literary precursor on whom to base her LaMotte character. After initially thinking she would use Christina Rossetti, Byatt decided she "wanted someone tougher" and chose instead the artist she considered "the greatest woman poet ever, Emily Dickinson." Following this clear demonstration of Dickinson's presence in the author's mind, Chinn argued that Byatt carefully wove allusions to "The Lady of Shalott" into LaMotte's epic poem *The Fairy Melusina* in order to establish Tennyson's poem as "a metaphor for both Dickinson and LaMotte." Byatt's purposeful union of Dickinson and the Lady of Shalott in the person of LaMotte contributes significantly to the novel's concern with what Chinn referred to as the "difficulties of the woman artist." Prominent among these are "the necessity for isolation, the destructive effect of entry into the world outside the tower, and the inability of those in the world to understand the artist."

Apart from Byatt's acknowledgment of Dickinson as a model, the most compelling evidence supporting Dickinson's influence on the novel came through Chinn's analysis of LaMotte's poetic style. Chinn

pointed out an abundance of superficial similarities: the use of unconventional capitalization; reference to first lines as poem titles; consistent use of English hymn meter; "letters that are poems themselves"; the emergence of "Dickinson's dash" evident in the last eleven of twenty poems and in the correspondence between LaMotte and the character Randolph Henry Ash. Chinn cited the following passage from one of LaMotte's letters to Ash as a way of establishing parallels with Dickinson: "Here is a Riddle, Sir, an old Riddle, an easy Riddle – hardly worth your thinking about – a fragile Riddle in white and Gold...and these are wrapped in silk...and the silk lies inside Alabaster." Chinn concluded by pointing to LaMotte's use of snow imagery that serves to both "separate and protect...from the rest of the world."

In "Is God a 'Trickster'? Annie Dillard Revisiting Emily Dickinson's Circumference," Antretter employed the theoretical lens of French philosopher and psychologist M. Merleau-Ponty to illuminate the way Dillard and Dickinson both approach nature "on an unreflected or 'pre-subjective' level that is prior to the onset of the polarization of subjectivity and objectivity that reflection encompasses." Antretter traced this shared concern with pre-subjective experience to Dillard's Hollins College senior thesis, "The Merchant of the Picturesque": One Pattern in Emily Dickinson's Poetry." She explained that within that work, Dillard clearly articulates an understanding of Dickinson's term "circumference" that can be applied usefully to the "overwhelming intensity with which...Dillard depicts her narrator's encounters with nature."

Antretter drew attention to Dillard's observation that "things in Dickinson's nature move in time and space towards the circumference of death," at which point "Dickinson 'kills off' the thing in nature, which is then translated into a vague 'beyond.'" For this reason, Dillard pays special attention to last lines in which Dickinson describes "the arbitrary gap between nature and infinity" that

"can be bridged...by the perception of bare beauty." As Antretter made clear, however, Dillard does not find in Dickinson the possibility of a sustained pre-subjective encounter with nature. Instead, she described Dillard as wrapping up her study "with the assertion that Dickinson's eternity is a 'trickster' who 'reveal[s] only enough of himself to make his audience aware of how much more he is concealing.'"

Antretter provided impressive examples demonstrating both Dickinson's influence on Dillard's published work and the ways in which Dillard offers a more extensive pre-subjective experience of nature. Antretter argued that "in Dillard the subject is not only a distanced one that withdraws into primordial pre-reflective consciousness, as we have seen Dickinson do"; for Dillard "an embodied subject...partakes in the flesh of the world." Antretter supported her argument with a passage from Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*: "I center down wherever I am...I retreat not inside myself, but outside myself, so that I am a tissue of senses. Whatever I see is plenty, abundance. I am the skin of water the wind plays over; I am petal, feather, stone." Unlike Dickinson, who "except for a few instants, cannot transcend...the fleshly...barrier between the me and the not-me," Dillard presents the "phenomenal body" as "the basis of perception" from which she can "begin to understand the world."

Stefanelli's presentation, "Dickinson on the Stage," examined the way in which the biographical Dickinson informed Susan Sontag's creation of the Dickinson character in her dramatic work *Alice in Bed*, which concerns Alice James (sister of Henry and William). Sontag presents Dickinson as a ghost in a dream sequence who at first appears "deferential...and ready to comply though not submissive," but later transforms into an Ophelia figure who carries flowers while proclaiming "the pain deserves a blank." Stefanelli argued that Sontag's representation of Dickinson in these and other guises accurately reflects a significant theatrical dimension

discernible in Dickinson's actual life.

To establish a biographical origin for what would later become Dickinson's "privileged space" of theatrical performance, Stefanelli pointed to Dickinson's friendship with Sue and her youthful assertion that "we are the only poets and everyone else is prose." Dickinson's memory of that empowering imaginative space provided the incentive for the artistic seclusion in later life that would enable her to achieve what Stefanelli called "a durable aesthetic detachment from daily living." Ultimately, Stefanelli argued, Dickinson's was a life "in suspension, like the actor-performer, between acting and seeming."

Stefanelli sees Dickinson's function in

*Alice in Bed* as that of instructing the dreaming Alice James character on the liberating power of a theatrical life available to all women. The specific objective of this instruction is to provide a means of escaping the oppressive gendered identity imposed by patriarchal culture at large and the James family in particular. "Misrepresented for decades as the lonely spinster," Stefanelli argued, Dickinson "transgressed the limits of the Myth to experiment with her own gendered identity." Like a "theatrical Cheshire cat," Dickinson assumed numerous roles: "Emily the racist. Emily the elitist. Emily the proper. Emily the private rebel. Emily the classicist. Emily the dual identity. Emily the closet poet. Emily the public

poet. Emily the virgin. Emily the wife. Emily the lesbian." Sontag's presentation of a Dickinson who assumes "several disguises, masks, and roles" thus coincides with the actual biographical Dickinson. "By actively participating in the Carrollian tea-party where incongruity, relativism and reversibility are the norm," Stefanelli explained, "Emily sides with the company of women to free Alice from the burdensome patronage of mother and father and helps to open for her the way to a liberating orphanage."

*Paul Crumbley is associate professor of English and acting director of the American Studies Program at Utah State University.*

## REMAKING THE PURITAN WORD

*Moderator:* Jane Donahue Eberwein, Oakland University; *panelists:* Sylvia Mikkelsen, University of Aarhus; Jennifer Leader, Claremont Graduate University/Scripps College; Faith Barrett, California State Polytechnic University at Pomona

*By Jane Donahue Eberwein*

A goodly audience assembled to hear the three speakers from what Increase Mather would have termed "the rising generation" as they reported their findings about Dickinson's relationship to various religious traditions.

Sylvia Mikkelsen traced the inspiration for her paper, "Between 'Brocade' and 'Sackcloth': Dickinson's Apocalyptic Imaginary," to a recent special exhibit at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris: *Visions du Futur: une histoire des peurs et des espoirs de l'humanité*. She used visual images from the exhibition catalogue to illustrate her points about the varied Christian and even Islamic traditions on which Dickinson drew for imagined projections of the afterlife. From teen years to the end of her life, the poet speculated on the mysteries of immortality and explored possibilities of life after death.

According to Mikkelsen, "There appears to be an interplay between Dickinson's apocalyptic imaginary and the oriental medievalism of Christian (as well as non-Christian) eschatological visions. Indeed, her mythopoeic trajectory seems to span from the literalism and materialism of early Christianity, through the scholastic rigors of Renaissance philosophy and iconography, to the northern landscapes of spiritual asceticism." She illus-

trated these points with pairings of poems and visual artworks, looking for parallels of sensibility rather than direct influences. This method allowed her to move beyond New England's Puritan heritage as a source for Dickinson's imagery of heaven and to posit correspondences with much earlier cultures and even our new millennium.



*Photo by Eleanor Heginbotham*

Islamic eschatological visions, characterized by opulence and elegance in representations of paradise as garden or palace, connect with Dickinson's readings in Revelation to figure the Celestial City in rich tropes. But when comparing "Sweet - safe - Houses" to a mosaic in the Damascus Mosque that depicts a palatial paradise, Mikkelsen argued that Dickinson typically responded to such views

of heaven with a sense of loss or exclusion that reflected the austerity of her Puritan background.

Next, Mikkelsen considered medieval Christian imaginings of heaven, purgatory, and hell for a contrasting apocalyptic scenario that replaces materialism with a more ethereal yet hierarchical idea of the beyond. Focusing on Dickinson's depiction of angels proceeding "Rank after Rank, with even feet - / And Uniforms of snow" (Fr138), Mikkelsen noted parallels with a sixteenth-century illustration of *The Divine Comedy* rendered by Giovanni Stradano. Another parallel linked Dickinson's "Fleshless Lovers" (Fr691) to Paolo and Francesca in *The Inferno*. A third pairing involved European fantasies of

the west, though Mikkelsen found Dickinson more attracted to Swedenborgian landscapes of "metallic winters" than to the Romantic escapism of exotic earthly paradises.

Finding Dickinson's imagination more often characterized by the "sackcloth of asceticism" than the "brocade of aestheticism," Mikkelsen showed the sublimity of her cosmological perspective by illustrat-

ing “I saw no Way – The Heavens were stitched” with reference to Tom Shannon’s icy “Airlands” as evidence that Dickinson’s apocalyptic imagination projects forward toward our time as well as back to the Puritans.

Jennifer Leader’s paper, “‘The Enchantless Pod’: Ghostly Types and Anti-Types in Dickinson’s Remaking of the Edwardsian Typological Tradition,” showed how Dickinson adapted her Puritan heritage of biblical typology that Jonathan Edwards had himself revolutionized in developing his “poetics of personal experience in which the natural world is neither static allegory nor Transcendental, self-referential mirror” but which posits nature as existing “in and of itself, apart from the human beholder.” For Edwards, nature pointed toward the divine antitype. For Dickinson, said Leader, a typological approach to nature could project the imagination horizontally as well as vertically. “Nature continues to speak for Dickinson,” she declared in exploring the poet’s use of Edwardsian tradition, “though its vernacular is unclear, and language itself no longer has the transparent correlation between idea and object that it did for Edwards.”

Calling attention to Dickinson’s inclination toward the “typic” in letters and poems, Leader distinguished a variety of typological stances, showing how the poet “reads the Book of Nature from widely differing subject positions.” These include her use of typological mechanisms to link earth-bound types to one another or to probe associations between the living and the dead or “between a haunted nature and a nearly incomprehensible God under erasure.” Leader interpreted “We should not mind so small a flower” as questioning the habit instilled by Edward Hitchcock of using the material world as an instrument of insight into spiritual truths. Leader also recognized Dickinson as resisting popular representations of God in sentimental and jingoistic aspects of nineteenth-century American culture that produced simplistic misrepresentations of unknowable divinity.

Showing how the poet characteristically used typological methods to associate her speakers with the beloved dead, Leader argued that “the antitype in these poems is metonymically displaced from the person of God or Christ to the loved ones, or saints, themselves”—a point es-

tablished with close reading of “We miss Her not because We see.” In poems like this, Leader discerned Dickinson “wrestling with a split subjectivity” in response to signs from a divinity termed by Jean-Luc Marion “a God without Being,” one no longer recognizable as the familiar Amherst God but instead “under erasure,” an intruder into the natural world. Key poems for this analysis were “What mystery pervades a well!” and “An ignorance a Sunset.” “As Dickinson constructs this typological relationship,” Leader concluded, “nature is, in its final analysis, as inaccessible, unpredictable, and maddeningly resistant to the poet’s wishes for permanence, presence, and control as is this infinite Other, the God without Being that seems to intersect the finite realm only to ‘entice’ toward that which remains incomprehensible to figuration and human epistemologies.”

Such parallels between Dickinson and Edwards then found their complement in Faith Barrett’s comparison of the Amherst poet to her Westfield, Massachusetts, forebear, the Puritan Edward Taylor. In “‘My Dear, Deare, Lord, I Do Thee Saviour Call’: Addresses to God in Edward Taylor and Emily Dickinson,” Barrett explored parallels between these two lyric poets to show how Dickinson found, in the Puritan model for conversion, ways of dealing with both poetic and spiritual challenges. According to Barrett, “Dickinson’s poetry engages with two important features of the Puritan conversion cycle, as Taylor represents it: First, both Taylor and Dickinson represent the lyric self as a confining structure whose limits must be overcome; and secondly, both present lyric selves who step out of linear temporality into a suspended lyric present by means of the address to God.” Both poets, she observed, used poetry as a force for resistance against theological developments of their times, and both did so by engaging in conversation with God. In Dickinson’s case, her resistance was to the Arminianized revival culture of the Connecticut Valley during the Second Great Awakening. Rejecting pressures to sacrifice her selfhood in accepting a public, pious identity, Dickinson engaged in a lyric dialogue with God and did so (like Taylor) by means of invented speakers.

The paradox of New England’s Puritan conversion culture, Barrett argued, was the requirement that the convert testify

publicly to the experience of overcoming the self. Yet those conversion narratives, like Taylor’s meditation, reflect a cyclical movement of responding to grace, falling away, and returning that was closer to the dynamic of Dickinson’s spiritual experience as registered in poems and letters than her own culture’s expectation of instantaneous, complete conversion. According to Barrett, “In the Puritan seeker’s repeated turns toward and away from God, Dickinson finds a fitting analogue for the scene of the lyric address, where the speaker turns first toward and then away from her addressee.”

What Barrett finds distinctive in Dickinson’s devotional writing, in contrast with Taylor’s, is her tendency “to ironize the theological impossibility of the completion of the self.” To establish this point, she compared Taylor’s Meditation 1.6 from *Preparatory Meditations, First Series* (“Am I thy God? Or Purse, Lord, for thy Wealth?”) with “I never lost as much but twice.” In both, she noted, economic metaphors serve to connect the human and divine worlds. Yet, “while Taylor’s poem opens with a question, asking Christ to confirm the poem’s central metaphor, Dickinson’s poem establishes its own metaphorical register through a confident and exclamatory series of apostrophes.” Taylor’s metaphor serves his pious devotional purpose, whereas Dickinson’s approach risks apostasy in its protest against losses for which she seeks redress from God. In terms of the self-surrender entailed in Puritan conversion, Barrett sees Taylor’s speaker as imploring Christ for aid in erasing his personal identity, while “Dickinson’s speaker wants to negotiate for alternatives.” They differ also in accepting the suspension of linear time that conversion entails (Taylor) or continuing in the immediacy of rebellion (Dickinson).

Concluding the session, Jane Eberwein called attention to the close connection between this session and the next morning’s workshop on “Dickinson and Calvin’s God” (see p. 29) and encouraged people to continue discussion in that forum.

---

*Jane Donahue Eberwein is professor of English at Oakland University, author of Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation, and editor of An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia.*

# DICKINSON AND THE CHALLENGES OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

*Moderator:* Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University; *panelists:* Paraic Finnerty, University of Kent; Aife Murray, independent scholar; Katharine Nicholson Ings, Manchester College.

*By Eleanor Heginbotham*

Within the gilded “moteroms” of Trondheim’s Britannia Hotel in the socialist/royalist country of Norway, some thirty Dickinsonians considered issues of “race, gender, and class” surrounding Emily Dickinson’s mid-nineteenth-century America. The disjunctions did not stop there. Although the papers presented intersected in important ways, they did so from radically diverse perspectives. How race, gender, and class were represented to (and to some extent by) Dickinson was the focus of Paraic Finnerty’s study of Dickinson’s Othello, Aife Murray’s examination of Dickinson’s “nannies” and the small multi-ethnic community of Amherst, and Ings’s consideration of Dickinson’s posthumous clothing in retouched, re-imagined, supposed Dickinsons. In fact, the panel might have been subtitled “Reconstructing Identity.”

The first reconstruction was that of Othello. What did it mean, asked Finnerty (whose dissertation is on Dickinson and Shakespeare), for Dickinson to identify herself in at least four separate letters (506, 882, 948, and 1015) with “a tawny Moor,” one who murdered his wife, at that? Why did this play— “the most pencil-marked play in her copy of Shakespeare’s works” at Harvard’s Houghton Library—elicit such profound and various implied comparisons from “the woman who in her late life dressed exclusively in white to symbolize virtue, heavenly election, worldly renunciation, cultural difference, and purity”?

Building on the work of Jane Eberwein, Judith Farr, Joanne Dobson, and others, Finnerty’s particular interest was not only in the fact and forms of Dickinson’s reflections in the letters, but in the reconstructions of identity of Shakespeare’s character up to the 1870s. With *which* Othello did Dickinson identify, asked Finnerty: the “white man with blackened face,” as Edmund Keane had played him before Dickinson’s time, a version widely followed, or the Othello whose “blackness” was constantly mentioned and exagger-

ated as a source of humor and amusement”—“the dignified Moor” or the “morally dangerous Black man”? Finnerty traced the critical reception of the various versions, pausing particularly on the startlingly racist response of John Quincy Adams in 1835, but focused especially on the specific interpretation—one seen by Austin Dickinson in the 1870s—of Tomasso Salvini. In addition to knowing of the performance through Austin, Dickinson may have read the vigorous praise of his performance by Emma Lazarus in *The Century* (1881) or the review and analysis by Henry James in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1883). Three of the four letter citations are written after 1880, allowing for the possibility that Dickinson’s Othello may have been influenced by these essays.

Of Salvini, whose picture Austin had brought her, Dickinson said, “The brow is that of Deity—the eyes, those of the lost, but the power lies in the *throat*—pleading, sovereign, savage—the panther and the dove! Each how innocent!” (L948). Although issues of “race, gender, and class” absolutely resonate as Finnerty compellingly demonstrated, Dickinson’s comments in this and the other three extant letter references are “the concentrated substance” of the cultural representations of her day, from burlesque to high tragedy. Othello was for Dickinson, finally, an extreme symbol of “‘otherness’ which represented that which her culture thought should not be found in herself.”

Issues of race gained dimension from the panel’s second speaker, Aife Murray, whose work has focused on Dickinson and her servants. Murray began her recreation of the Dickinson household and of Amherst’s demographics with an imaginative and lyrical scene: Austin at four, Emily at two, responding to the maid Delia’s “beautiful face” and her affectionate games. Accompanying her talk with period photographs of racially mixed groups, Murray not only re-counted (literally and figuratively) the number and names of the

Dickinsons’ domestic workers—many of whom were black—but also analyzed the significance of those “others” who first shaped the writer’s sexual, social, and economic identity.

Along with representing “qualities the white capitalist had abandoned, including being in touch with nature and unbridled sexuality,” African Americans (and Jews, Irish, women), says Murray, represented “dirt, degradation and contagious disease.” Thus the maid was “a threshold figure who moved and mediated between the contaminated street and the pure Victorian household where she ritually maintained class boundaries.”

Continuing to balance her talk between the specifics of the sociology of Amherst and theories of dress and domestic space by such scholars as Genevieve Taggard, Josephine Pollit, and more recently by Jeanne Holland and others, Murray focused particularly on Dickinson in the kitchen—and elsewhere—in her white dress. Countering other interpretations of that dress—that it was a class symbol in its whiteness—Murray called Dickinson’s choice to wear it even to receive visitors as one way she “trespassed and transgressed,” even cross-dressed (as, for example, Marie Antoinette did in dressing as a shepherdess). As Murray pointed out, in her “sartorial decision,” Dickinson reconstructed herself as separate from the women like her mother, clad in bombazine. Such choices, said Murray, “revalorized the hearth as a site of power, especially imaginative and literary power.”

Questions of dress were central to the panel’s third paper, that of Katharine Nicholson Ings. Ings once worked at W.W. Norton in New York, where her analysis of posthumous portraits of Dickinson took shape. Researching representations of the poet from the one authenticated youthful daguerreotype through the “cabinet photographs” doctored for the earliest edition of Dickinson’s letters but not used because Mabel Loomis Todd thought it “dreadful,” illustrated changes

in the construction of Dickinson's identity as her earliest readers saw her. A packet of photographs accompanied Ings's talk, showing how each succeeding portrait gave Dickinson more and more the frilly look of an Austenish (to the eyes of this observer) maiden. The subject seemed to cry out for some words from Dickinson—"Portraits are to daily faces," for example—on the subject of self-representation. Primarily, however, Ings analyzed the reproductions of the reproductions. Readers interested in the daguerreotype may consult Jonathan Morse's entry in the *Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia* and the books to which he refers.

The ironic reconstruction by Dickin-

son's relatives and editors *away* from the "cross-dressing" as servant discussed by Murray, to cross-dressing through artists' brushstrokes as the softly feminine eighteenth-century romantic in this third presentation, was not lost on the gathered scholars, who included several who have researched biography deeply. Vivian Pollak, author of *A Poet's Parents*, noted a comment by Dickinson's father about a black servant in the Dickinson household that put Murray's poetic image of the little Emily in a new perspective. Predictably, the question of the latest purported Dickinson portrait surfaced. The gathered Dickinsonians seemed united in skepticism of the possibility that

the photograph recently purchased by Philip Gura might be the long awaited actual second look at the poet.

In a conference that had focused the night before on the intriguing process of "morphing" Emily Dickinson through technology, these discussions of earlier representations—from that of the comparisons with Othello to the poses of the poet in the day dress and on to the frills and curls of succeeding pictures—seemed exceedingly appropriate.

---

*Eleanor Heginbotham* is associate professor of English at Concordia University and author of a forthcoming study of Dickinson's fascicles.

---

## ALTERITY, INTERIORITY, AND ETHICS IN DICKINSON

Moderator: James Fraser, Utah State University; panelists: Magdalena Zapadowska, Adam Mickiewicz University; Hyesook Son, University of Massachusetts; Rachel Quastel, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

---

By James Fraser

The three young participants in this panel represent the new generation of enthusiastic international Dickinson scholars, and their presence reflected growing interest in the EDIS international conferences as a forum for new research. Their papers, abstracted from larger dissertations, were well presented but intricate.

Interiority—in this context, the self's separation from the external world and its absolute autonomy—was the subject of Magdalena Zapadowska's paper, "The Event of Interiority: Dickinson and Emmanuel Levinas' Phenomenology of the Home." By examining the "fundamental similarities" between the French philosopher of dialogue and Dickinson, using parallels and analogies, Zapadowska associated the failure of Calvinism to guide Dickinson in her religious quest with Levinas's protest of the failure of Western philosophy to "liberate itself" from the Greek concepts of being. Zapadowska sees both Dickinson and Levinas as probing "the inadequacy of the I to other people, God and Nature," referencing, for example, Dickinson's statement that "Nature and God – I neither knew."

Following Levinas's principle that "subjectivity is founded upon enjoyment," Zapadowska found this relationship in Dickinson's "I counted till they danced so," in which the poet abandons a punctilious

counting of snowflakes in the first stanza to dance with "elemental joy" in the second. Zapadowska explored other parallels as well, in particular the centrality to Dickinson of home and household imagery as interior space. In her analysis of "I dwell in Possibility," she finds that "Dickinson transforms the elevated realm of Possibility into domestic interior space without reducing its magnificence. The house of poetry thus becomes the frontier between self and world, its many doors and windows mediating between inner and outer." Zapadowska concluded that it is in the "absolute self-sufficiency of the separated being" that Dickinson "shows that her event of interiority is ultimately a poetic event."

Hyesook Son used the "underlying pattern of otherness" as the focus for her paper, "Alterity and Death in Emily Dickinson." She began with a quotation from Dickinson's August 1876 letter to her Norcross cousins (L471) in which she observes that "the unknown is the largest need of the intellect."

Son pointed out that many critics presuppose that Dickinson's sense of death functions as a positive energy, an impetus for her creativity. Though they differ in details, their premises are much the same: that it is only when Dickinson accepts death as unavoidable that she becomes

aware of the real sense of time in which she may actualize her authentic possibilities. This critical recognition is a literary version of the Heideggerian interpretation of time, death, and creativity. But Son argued that this premise raises critical questions: Is death what we are most certain about? Isn't it rather the thing that always evades our attempts to grasp? Levinas, like Derrida, said Son, feels that the Heideggerian reading of death overlooks the profoundly disturbing questionableness at the heart of this phenomenon. Levinas interprets death as mystery, as the absolutely unknowable. "Our certainty that death will come means nothing, compared to our ignorance of what death is and means." Thus the consciousness of death brings a feeling not of power but of vulnerability.

Son argued that for Dickinson, as for Levinas, death is absolutely unknowable and can never be possessed, the subject can never assert mastery over death. This is why her death poems almost always end with agony and despair, with the subject's failure to find a solution or consummation. Son illustrated this through analyses of "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain," particularly the last stanza, "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died," and "A Clock stopped." In each of these, death "remains to the last absolutely unknowable."

Son sees death as “a decisive factor in shaping Dickinson’s poetic form....as really the interior and exterior logic of her poetry.” She concluded that Dickinson’s poetic experiments “reveal a possibility of keeping the self while questioning it as it encounters the irreducible Other. This possibility is essential when we attempt to understand ourselves and the world in this age of anti-humanism, multiculturalism and pluralism.”

In “Capital against Despair –: The Ethics of Ecstasy in Dickinson’s Poetry,” Rachel Quastel began by asking why Dickinson’s critics, even the New Critics, have been unable to separate her biography from her poetry. She then answered the question herself: “The critics cannot possibly separate [them] because Dickinson had no biography but her poetry,” which Quastel later characterized as an “encoded diary.” Quastel thus embarked with the assumption that there was a biographical “void” in Dickinson’s life result-

ing from an absence of social or public life, and that her poems reflect this in “textual discrepancies.”

Quastel explained the paradigm she has developed, which suggests interplay and tension between the opposing “realms” she identified as “reality” and “fantasy,” reality being time-related and fantasy being beyond-time. The transition from reality to fantasy represents, she said, a “metaphorical exit from time.”

According to Quastel, Dickinson’s reality is represented in the poems by monotony and morbidity in language and metaphors. Her fantasy, an “alternate existence,” provided a place of “omnipotent control” in which to “assume an assortment of fictional experiences and personas.” Dickinson’s world of fantasy Quastel found to be characterized by erotic and religious ecstasy. The “leap” from reality to fantasy is represented in the poems by idiosyncratic capitalization and “violent” imagery.

Quastel illustrated her thesis with a number of graphics showing the parallel ingredients of reality and fantasy in specific poems, including “I heard a Fly buzz – when I died,” “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” and “A still – Volcano – Life.” “The language of ‘fantasy’ appears with those words that are ‘ungrammatically’ capitalized,” she argued, and “Dickinson uses this unusual capitalization [not only] as a transition marker in the movement between ‘reality’ and ‘fantasy,’ but also as a stylistic/aesthetic device that visually accentuates her fantastic descriptions.” She concluded that “ruptures” between reality and fantasy stand out as “the ethical crises at the end which force us to reevaluate the entire aesthetic message of the poem.”

---

*Jim Fraser is senior technical liaison for the Space Dynamics Laboratory at Utah State University and EDIS membership chair.*

---

## WORKSHOP D: TRANSLATING EMILY DICKINSON’S “I STEPPED FROM PLANK TO PLANK”

*Organizer:* Margaret Freeman, Los Angeles Valley College; *discussion leader:* Gudrun Grabher, University of Innsbruck

---

*By Gudrun Grabher*

This workshop was initiated by Margaret Freeman. Since she was unable to attend the conference, I was asked to step in as discussion leader. The session would have profited from Freeman’s profound knowledge in the field of cognitive linguistics, but the result nevertheless was a lively discussion of translation questions by the fifteen or so Dickinson scholars present, who work in several languages: French, Hebrew, Danish, Swedish, German, Ukrainian, and others.

No papers were distributed in advance, but I began the session by reading portions of Freeman’s paper on translation difficulties in regard to two lines of “I stepped from Plank to Plank” (Fr926): “I knew not but the next / Would be my final inch.” Freeman focused in particular on the ambiguous meaning of the construction “not but.” One possible reading, she suggested, is the restrictive “I knew only that the next would be my final inch.” Another meaning would be the negative interpretation “I did not know whether or

not the next would be my final inch.” As Freeman pointed out, speakers who are British tend toward the first version, while American English speakers prefer the second.

Freeman’s paper initiated a spirited exchange on other words and phrases in Fr926, in particular the polysyllabic Latin “precarious” and “Experience” that conclude the poem. They were deemed difficult to translate in French, Russian, and Hebrew. There ensued also a consideration of Dickinson’s poetics of negativity.

The discussion then moved to difficulties in rendering Dickinson’s poems in other languages. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted provided some illuminating information about Swedish and Norwegian translations of other poems. She noted the dates of the translations and the influence on them of Modernist Scandinavian poetry. Anna Chesnokova spoke of the inadequacy of various Ukrainian translations because the rhythmic structures of English and Ukrainian are fairly

different, making it difficult to preserve the prosodic peculiarities and phonemic shape in translating the poems. She spoke particularly of Dickinson’s meaningful use of assonance and dissonance.

Antoine Cazé commented that the French could pun on the two senses of the word “pas,” meaning, alternatively, “step” and “not” (as in “ne...pas”). Thus, “I knew not but the next / Would be my final inch” could become in French “Je ne savais si ce pas / Serait ou non le dernier.” The word “inch” was also much commented upon: the striking metonymy used by Dickinson was again difficult for translators.

Thanks to the devoted engagement of the participants, this proved to be a fascinating workshop.

---

*Gudrun Grabher is professor and chair of American Studies at the University of Innsbruck, author of Emily Dickinson: Das transzendente Ich, and a co-editor of The Emily Dickinson Handbook.*

## DICKINSON AND LANGUAGE CONTRACT, IMAGINATION, AND ADDRESS

*Moderator:* Daniel Fineman, Occidental College; *panelists:* Per Serritslev Petersen, University of Aarhus; James Guthrie, Wright State University; Bryan C. Short, Northern Arizona University

---

*By Daniel Fineman*

This panel's audience was treated first to a delightful presentation by Per Petersen entitled "The Bee in Her 'Animaginative' Bonnet: A Case-Study of Dickinson's Animalizing Imagination." With verve and humor, Petersen demonstrated the centrality of the bee image to Dickinson's poetic imagination. He provided a taxonomy of this nearly ubiquitous insect symbol that went well beyond the beast fable. His paper elucidated the bee's poetic function in Dickinson's sense of the comic, the serious, and the philosophical.

James Guthrie, in his study "Dickinson and the 'Literal' Language of Law," not only provided illustrations of the variety

and complexity of legal terminology in the poems, but convincingly argued that such concerns and vocabularies saturated the Dickinson Homestead. More important, he presented a strong case that many of the internal dramas of her poetry stem from a courtroom model and that the moral and aesthetic problems adjudicated by her lyrics often are informed by law more than by literature.

Bryan Short's paper, "Emily Dickinson's Apostrophe," focused less on content and more on form. In it, Short provided a snapshot of the rich tradition and contemporary practices of rhetoric, including those of direct address. After

summarizing the range of effects available through apostrophe, Short established not only Dickinson's familiarity with these figures of speech but also her canny ability to apply these tools flexibly for purposes ranging from the parodic to the adulatory.

All these papers were well received, but the brevity of the session did not allow adequate time to discuss the variety of concerns raised before we were forced to bring the session to a close.

---

*Daniel Fineman is professor of English at Occidental College.*

---

## WORKSHOP E: "THE SOUL HAS BANDAGED MOMENTS" INTERPRETATION IN THE ARTS, CRITICISM, AND TRANSLATION

*Workshop leader:* Jonnie Guerra, Cabrini College; *panelists:* Zsuzsanna Ujszaszi, College of Nyiregyhaza; Eva Heisler, University of Maryland; Jonnie Guerra; Suzanne Juhasz, University of Colorado; Michael Yetman, Purdue University

---

*By Jonnie Guerra*

What are the theoretical and practical issues involved in interpreting an Emily Dickinson poem? How do the issues differ for translators, visual artists, readers, and critics? The five participants in this workshop explored these questions in relation to a single Dickinson poem, "The Soul has Bandaged Moments," and discussed a range of interpretations/responses to the complex possibilities of the text.

Zsuzsanna Ujszaszi opened the workshop with some general remarks on the work of literary translators. She pointed out that "translation" and "interpretation" are not separate activities and that inspiration and imagination play an important role in translating poetry from one language to another. Ultimately a translated text constitutes a new work, one that focuses on certain aspects of the original poem and that may neglect others.

Ujszaszi then turned to Magda Szekely's translation of the Dickinson poem into

Hungarian as an example of how a translation changes the original text. She distributed a handout with the original poem, the Hungarian translation, and the back-translation, and then referred the audience to several of the most striking differences. An important structural feature of the Dickinson poem is the repetition of the three lines that start with "The Soul" followed by "moments" and a clause introduced by "When." The repetition, together with the simple present verb forms and the plural word "moments," suggests that the Soul's drama is more than a single event, that it is an integral part of the Soul's existence, a constant alternation between the contraries of life experience. Not so in the Hungarian translation, which highlights the drama as a single event. Ujszaszi also called attention to the shift in the speaker's role. In Dickinson's poem, the speaker is developed as a character with an evaluative function; in the Hun-

garian text, the narrator is less a participant in the action and does not use direct address.

In addition, Ujszaszi considered several specific liberties taken by the Hungarian translator. Most notably, in the translation of "long fingers," Szekely used an idiomatic phrase from a children's rhyme employed in talking to babies. This imaginative choice heightened the irony of the original image.

Eva Heisler, the second panelist, introduced workshop participants to the visual art of Roni Horn with a special focus on a series of six works inspired by Dickinson and titled *When Dickinson Shut Her Eyes* (1993). Each work in the series uses aluminum bars with set-in plastic letters to present the individual lines of a two-quatrains Dickinson poem. Horn then arranges the bars in groupings of four to replicate Dickinson's quatrains and places the groupings against a wall, leaning the



bars at different angles. Although "The Soul has Bandaged Moments" was not among the Dickinson poems Horn adapted, Heisler contributed a valuable perspective on issues involved in translating Dickinson's work into other art forms.

Heisler gave particular emphasis to the fact that Horn intends the art objects to present Dickinson's poems so as to be readable. As Heisler illustrated with slides, however, Horn's positioning of the bars can interfere with the legibility of the poetic line and may compel her viewer to change physical position in order to successfully read the poem. Such physical shifting replicates the mental shifting that Dickinson's eccentric syntax necessitates. Because "Horn puts Dickinson's language in the world in such a way that it interacts with the viewer's own presence," Heisler argued, Horn's sculpture is best described as "doubling" rather than "representing" Dickinson.

To clarify the difference, Heisler compared Horn's sculpture series to several works by Lesley Dill. In one of these, a photolithograph of a female body titled *Word Made Flesh* (1994), the opening line of "The Soul has Bandaged Moments" runs down the spine of the seated woman. Here, as is characteristic of Dill generally, the artist evokes thematic preoccupations of Dickinson—for example, the dual nature of language to wound and to protect, as well as gender constraints on writing, but reading the entire Dickinson poem is not an essential component of the work. In contrast, each of Horn's artworks creates the Dickinson lyric as not only a place that is "a reading of Dickinson [by Horn] but also a place in which the viewer of Horn reads Dickinson."

Jonnie Guerra next summarized her paper on Lesley Dill with a short overview of the artist's Dickinson connection. Since 1989, Dill has created hundreds of artworks that incorporate or juxtapose lines or the complete text of a Dickinson poem with body or clothing images. Some of Dill's works make it easy for a viewer to read the poet's words; many do not. Dill's projects have included poem sculptures, fabric banners, paper dresses, prints, photo collages, performance pieces, and billboards.

The artist's special interest in "The Soul has Bandaged Moments" has expressed itself in a number of works in several media, including performance.

Guerra showed a video segment from one performance piece, titled *Speaking Dress* (Paris, 1996), in which the poem became the basis for a quarter-hour theatrical event involving dramatic characters, music, costumes, lighting, choreographed movement, and scripted language.

Guerra explained the concept of artistic adaptation as a kind of "collaboration" between the dead poet and the living artist and noted that Dill herself has regularly used the term to describe her relation with Dickinson. During a phone interview with Guerra, Dill talked at length about the poem's appeal to her, and it became clear that certain of the poem's images influenced visual elements of the performance piece. For example, bandages, long fingers, and sipping are all prominent iconic features in *Speaking Dress*.

Other elements of the performance piece are original. The verbal content of the piece weaves together the Dickinson poem with three short texts written by Dill herself. The piece also uses a musical soundtrack that reflects sounds Dill heard during the year she lived in India. Dill intensifies the viewer/listener's experience by a choral reading of the poem that shifts between English and French, repeats lines for emphasis, and uses overlapping and echoing voices. Overall the theatricality of Dill's response to the poem impressed Guerra, since it "fit" her own view of the power and mystery of Dickinson's language, unlike the minimalist work of Roni Horn that foregrounded other aspects of the poet's art.

Suzanne Juhasz opened her presentation with the premise "that reading a Dickinson poem is an act of performance." After inviting audience members to consider how they themselves might act out the script of "The Soul has Bandaged Moments," Juhasz elaborated on her own performative processes as a reader of the poem. She explored her strong kinetic responses to Dickinson's images and language throughout the poem, demonstrating her readerly identification with the poem's protagonist, "the Soul," and the fluctuations in inner life portrayed. In the process, she illustrated not only the kind of choices readers make in interpretation, but also how the choices get made.

Juhasz noted that her "performance became a dance, because from the start it was clear that the moments of the soul documented in the poem are all about

movement and/or its hindrance." By the choreographed movements Juhasz imagined, she "gave shape to the psychological conditions" implied by the poem's metaphors for the Soul's moments. These in turn, catalyzed the process of analytic interpretation, prompting Juhasz to "come to see intimations [in the poem] of a social commentary that contrasts polar privacy and worldly agency" and raises complex interpretive questions about what Dickinson is suggesting about the relationship between gender and power. Perhaps, speculated Juhasz, Dickinson intends her reader to recognize that there is something important in both positionalities—"the yielding up of overt power as well as the gaining of it."

Concluding her remarks with a provocative dance metaphor, Juhasz reminded the audience that Dickinson remains "the prima ballerina." What a critic does "may best be understood as partnering: standing just behind her, hand on waist, facilitating her *fouetté* and *penchée* dives and *grande elevation*."

The final panelist, Michael Yetman, talked about "The Soul has Bandaged Moments" from a philosophical perspective as a document of romantic consciousness. He called attention to the construction of the character "the Soul" as well as to the presentation of subjectivity in the poem. He noted that Dickinson conceived of her life as "an unending drama of 'superior instants,' whether positive, negative, or any number of states in between."

The audience was called on to consider Dickinson's treatment of time and eternity in the poem. Characteristically, Dickinson attempts to escape time or linearity into a higher realm designated here as "Liberty," or "Noon," or "Paradise." Yet, as Yetman pointed out, the poem paradoxically is a linearly constructed recording of opposing experiences—freedom and arrest, elation and horror, anticipation and retrospection.

Yetman argued that "The Soul has Bandaged Moments" is representative of Dickinson poems that suggest that "being is capable of exponential intensification when the raw material of experience is reconstituted by a mind of exceptional dramatic and affective recapitulation." His commentary further illuminated the way in which the poet's talent for concision and paradox contributes to her ability to confer on ordinary experience the "feeling" of

epiphany or apocalypse. According to Yetman, both realms are off-limits to poetry: "They lie beyond language—though, interestingly, not beyond experience."

The variety of approaches to this poem,

as displayed in this session, prompted a number of audience questions on thematic, technical, and interdisciplinary issues raised. The discussion demonstrated clearly how inexhaustibly even one Dickinson poem can be interpreted and how

many more interpretations might be explored in this single poem.

*Jonnie Guerra is vice president for Academic Affairs at Cabrini College and current president of EDIS.*

## "AIRS OF EXILE": A MUSICAL EVENING

*Reviewed by Virginia Dupuy*

A "Bolt of Melody" on a lovely summer evening in a charming, little-known haven—this was the privilege of the hundred and fifty admirers of Emily Dickinson brought together in Trondheim by their passion for this mysterious, magnificent American poet. The "Melody" we heard was music the Dickinson family—Emily, Mr. and Mrs. Dickinson, and Lavinia—heard in Northampton in July 1851 as part of the American tour by the "Swedish Nightingale," soprano Jenny Lind.

We can surmise that Lind's concert was a happily anticipated event. Lind had arrived in New York in September 1850 to begin a fifteen-month American concert tour under the auspices of P.T. Barnum, with ninety-three appearances. Everywhere Lind sang she was showered with flowers and gifts and admiring letters. Towns, streets, theatres, ships, even culinary dishes were named for her.

Emily Dickinson had declined her brother's invitation to hear Lind's Boston concert in June 1851, but wrote him a month later to describe, in comic detail, the family's experiences in traveling to Northampton for her concert, enduring en route "drops, sheets, cataracts" of rain and "a plunging horse." But of Lind's performance, Dickinson reported, in a more serious tone: "How we all loved Jennie Lind, but not accustomed oft to her manner of singing did't fancy *that* so well as we did *her....Herself*, and not her music, was what we seemed to love – she has an air of *exile* in her mild blue eyes, and a something sweet and touching in her native accent which charms her many friends" (L46).

Those attending the Trondheim concert were probably more familiar with and appreciative of Lind's "manner of singing," represented on this occasion by soprano Kristin Høiseh Rustad, ably partnered by pianist Margaret Stachiewicz and violinist Tino Aleksander Fjeldli. All are

active on the Trondheim music scene. Stachiewicz teaches at the Trondheim Conservatory of Music; Rustad is a member of the Gregorian choir Schola Sanctae Sunnivae and has appeared as soloist with the Trondheim Symphony and Trondheim Soloists; Fjeldli was a founder of the Trondheim Soloists and performs



*Photo by Jim Fraser*

*Violinist Tino Aleksander Fjeldli, pianist Margaret Stachiewicz, and soprano Kristin Høiseh Rustad accept the enthusiastic applause of the Dickinson audience.*

with the Berlin Kammerorchester and the Camerata Roman, the leading string orchestra in Norway.

Their performance was made up almost entirely of works known to have been in the Northampton concert heard by the Dickinson family, with special emphasis on those sung by Lind. They followed the nineteenth-century custom of combining vocal and instrumental works. The intimate hall at the Trondheim Folkebiblioteket was ideal for the evening's performance.

Although the Dickinsons heard only the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in F Major, the Trondheim audience had the pleasure of hearing this demanding work in its entirety, played with impressive musical prowess and nuance by

Stachiewicz and Fjeldli. Lovely vocal colors and the "cooing" of the "nightingale" were demonstrated by Rustad in the aria "On Mighty Pens" from *The Creation* by Haydn. Stachiewicz followed with a piano transcription of Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* by the German-born composer Henselt (1814-1889), whose piano compositions compared in importance with those of Liszt.

Two lovely folklike melodies began the second half of the concert. How charming to hear Rustad in the Scottish ballad "Comin' thro' the Rye" and Fjeldli and Stachiewicz performing Fritz Kreisler's version of Dvorák's "Songs My Mother Taught Me." (The latter, composed in 1880, was added for the Trondheim concert.)

Rustad and Stachiewicz followed with beautiful performances of two vocal showcases, Mozart's "Deh vieni non tardar" from *The Marriage of Figaro* and Bellini's "Ma la Solà" from *Beatrice di Tenda*. Bellini was familiar to the Dickinson family, for selections from his operas *Norma* and *Tancredi* were included in Emily Dickinson's album of piano music. Closing the concert were two of Lind's signature songs, "Tarrantella!" by Thalberg (a contemporary of Liszt) and Taubert's "Bird Song," which includes bell-like incantations of the lark, the sparrow, and the finch.

Our evening was one of beauty and charm, and it was easy to imagine Emily Dickinson and her family listening to one of the most celebrated singers of her day a hundred and fifty years earlier. Dickinson must have been keenly aware of the contrasting nature of her own creative talent and Lind's, especially with the

many more interpretations might be explored in this single poem.

outpouring of public adoration for the Swedish soprano. Here was a young woman able to leave home, country, and continent to journey abroad for a fifteen-month tour across America, singing before audiences of thousands.

The unique connection provided by these three gifted and giving musicians enabled us to feel a powerful yet personal

connection to Emily Dickinson. The words that came immediately to my mind as I listened to these talented performers were the last verse of "I would not paint – a picture":

Nor woud I be a Poet –  
It's finer – Own the Ear –  
Enamored – impotent – content –  
The License to revere,

A privilege so awful  
What would the Dower be,  
Had I the Art to stun myself  
With Bolts – of Melody!

---

*Virginia Dupuy is associate professor of voice at Southern Methodist University. She has made an intensive study of musical settings of Dickinson's poems.*

---

## THE POLITICS OF THE SUBLIME

*Moderator:* Gary Lee Stonum, Case Western Reserve University; *panelists:* Gary Stonum; Shawn Alfrey, Denver University; Jed Deppman, Trinity University

---

### *By Gary Stonum*

A brief paper by Gary Stonum, "The Anti-Politics of Awe," opened the panel on the politics of the sublime by noting two independent developments that have brought the topic to attention. One is the renewed interest in Kantian ideas of the sublime by European political philosophers, notably Jean-François Lyotard, Slavoj Žižek, and Jean-Luc Nancy. The other is the stress many Dickinson scholars have recently put on her poetry's implications for the political issues of her day and ours. The two developments do not and cannot join, Stonum asserted. Dickinson's distinctive commitment to an esthetics of sublimity is precisely that part of her work she imagines as antithetical to social relations. By contrast to matters that can be gauged with lexicon or logarithm and also to the negotiable values of the marketplace, the sublime always directs us beyond any positive values, beliefs, and practices to a realm of the inherently unrepresentable.

In "The Function of Dickinson at the Present Time," Shawn Alfrey called attention to the sublime as a category of scholarly experience. Alongside a thematics of intensity and astonishment regularly encoded in the poems and much noticed in Dickinson criticism over the last ten years or so, she argued that there is also another sort of sublimity encountered by the critic's or the editor's investment in the poet and her writings. For example, our difficulty in saying just what counts as a Dickinson poem and the increasingly widespread recognition that her writings confound established concepts of textual scholarship (the difference between artifact and work, for example) produces what Alfrey called an "editorial sublime." In

good Kantian fashion, this comprises both pain that we are imaginatively inadequate to the matter at hand and pleasure that our reason recognizes this.

Is this sublime politically correct? Does it belong, Alfrey asked, with what Lyotard calls the nostalgic, modern mode, or in forgoing the solace of critical and editorial closure is it happily postmodern? Even the Emily Dickinson Editing Collective's project is nostalgic, Alfrey said, for promising a utopian form in which the excesses of Dickinson's work may at last be presentable and pleasurable to the eye. She partly aligned Lyotard's contrast between a bad modernity and a good post-modernity with the difference between Heidegger's notion of the artwork and Foucault's of the author-function. Even the latter arouses her suspicions, however, because it insists that the historical categories of authorship limit the exorbitance of writing. As an attempt at a resolution that might avoid quieting the many struggles within the reading of Emily Dickinson, she invoked the figure of the letter writer, who may bring us at last to a place of "total context and full historicity."

In "Dickinson's Inner Bataille: The Definition Poetry," Jed Deppman drew on the epistemological and phenomenological claims, rather than the political, of the French neo-Kantians. Noting that Dickinson's definition poems have been maligned by critics from R.P. Blackmur to Sharon Cameron as incoherent works that often begin with a crisp, evocative line and then fall to pieces, he argued that instead of presenting stable definitions they dramatize a process of figural thinking that, like the dynamic sublime, thwarts

closure. As a slogan for the way Dickinson's tropes thus present thought coming to its own limits and generating extreme inner experience, he quoted Georges Bataille: "We achieve ecstasy (we arrive at ecstasy) through a contestation of knowledge."

Most of Deppman's paper was taken up with a detailed explication of how this works in "Doom is the House without the Door." Like other definition poems, this includes both the universal, structural, and essential aspects of an experience—that is, those that would be appropriate to a dictionary definition of "doom"—and an analysis of the workings of the consciousness of the one involved in the experience.

Definition poems constitute a rather ill-defined category themselves, Deppman noted, and without proposing to be complete or systematic he suggested that they can be grouped into a number of types: essentials ("The Truth – is stirless"), dialecticals ("Life is death we're lengthy at"), differentials ("There is an arid Pleasure"), surprising facts ("God is a distant, stately lover"), self-corrections ("Nature is what we see"), multiple entries ("Fame is a bee"), shades of meaning ("There is a solitude of space"), anti-definitions ("Heaven is what I cannot reach"), or embedded (those in which a short definition is included in a poem on some other topic).

---

*Gary Lee Stonum is professor of English at Case Western Reserve University, author of The Dickinson Sublime, and editor of The Emily Dickinson Journal.*

# PRESENTING DICKINSON'S PRESENTATIONS

*Moderator:* Georgiana Strickland, editor, *EDIS Bulletin*; *panelists:* Edina Szalay, College of Nyerigyhaza; Masako Takeda, Osaka Shoin Women's University.

*By Georgiana Strickland*

This session featured papers focusing on Dickinson's "presentations" from two directions: as she presents herself to readers in her poetry and as she can be, in turn, presented to readers by today's scholars. Thai scholar Chanthana Chaichit was unable to attend the conference, and so we were deprived of her anticipated paper on one of Dickinson's self-presentations, as "Queen." We hope it can be heard on another occasion.

Edina Szalay began the session by addressing "Emily Dickinson's 'Fiery Mist': The Gothic Concept of Self in Dickinson's Poetry." Noting the "discrepancy ...between the overwhelming range of emotions, characters, and incidents that inhabit [Dickinson's] poetic universe...and the barren facts of her seemingly eventless everyday life," Szalay traced the "rich intertextuality" of her poetry to her familiarity with the traditions of Gothic literature, which the poet used as a "warehouse" of inspiration, a springboard for her imagination," especially in her construction of the Female Self.

The Gothic female, Szalay noted, provided such writers as Anne Radcliffe and the Brontës, whose work Dickinson admired, with "a means of exploring the 'monstrous' aspects of women's lives," passions and desires that "challenge and transgress socio-cultural expectations" and come into conflict with their passive, "feminine" roles. Dickinson's poetry, she pointed out, abounds with examples of female speakers, pulled between the emotional poles of ecstasy and fear, that "owe a lot to her Gothic sources, both in vision and in the imagery she borrows to paint her own picture of the Self."

But Dickinson's approach, Szalay finds, is more sophisticated than that of her predecessors and "radically new," merging positive and negative aspects in an interior drama in which the "dark" aspects are accepted and seen as "essential and invaluable for one's self-image." Dickinson's speaker gives herself to the "Stimulus there is/In Danger" and can admit that "The Dark - felt Beautiful." Dickinson

may borrow the Gothic landscape of prisons and dungeons, "but the self she presents is also dialogic (to apply Bakhtin's term) and thus also surpasses Gothic conventions."

While her speaker may be a "Self in agony," trapped in "a Gothic labyrinth ...where one turn or door leads to another ...but never to a final one," yet Dickinson's speaker abandons the conventional passivity of the Gothic heroine and becomes "a mischievous villainess by asserting her right to freedom...[and] possessing the power to fight against victimization" with "moments of Escape."

Szalay concluded that the Gothic sensibility, pervasive in Dickinson's poetry, provided the poet "a kind of epistemological tool: a means of challenging culturally unnegotiable modes of awareness."

The second speaker, Masako Takeda, in a paper titled "Untranslatable?" described the difficulties she encountered in presenting Dickinson to a group of Japanese exchange students who visited Amherst last year. Since Takeda could not be present during their visit, she prepared a brochure for their use. The principal difficulty, she found, was in choosing poems that could bridge the cultural and linguistic gaps.

She illustrated this problem with reference to several familiar poems. In "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" for example, the concept of "I'm a person of no importance," so neatly encapsulated in Dickinson's precise word "Nobody," has no equivalent word in Japanese that would be understandable to children. "Nobody" is actually a complicated word with several layers of meaning, suggested Takeda. "A person of no importance" is one; "no" plus "body," that is, "soul or essence," is another. The nearest a Japanese translator can come is "I'm a person who has no name," which lacks the impact of "I'm Nobody" and conveys a different message. Moreover, the humor in the poem is seemingly untranslatable.

In the case of "I dwell in Possibility," Takeda pointed out that the Japanese

word for "possibility" is one that young children would be unlikely to know. And, from a cultural rather than linguistic perspective, Japanese young people would have difficulty with a poem such as "Who has not found the Heaven below," in which "Angels rent the House next our's" and (in a variant) "God's residence is next to mine/His furniture is love," even though Dickinson wrote the poem specifically for her young niece. Lacking a Christian view of Heaven and of the relation between God and the angels, Japanese children are unable to grasp the poem's message.

Takeda then turned to ways in which the Japanese have presented their own poetry to their young people, as compared with the situation in America. While haiku and tanka by master poets have been presented to Japanese children, one difficulty is that many of the finest haiku and tanka were written in old Japanese, which differs more from modern Japanese than does Shakespearean English from twenty-first-century English. One modern Japanese poet, Misuzu Kaneko (1903-1930) has been taken up for presentation in children's anthologies. Although Takeda admits she is a good poet, she finds her poems sentimental and not of the first rank, a case similar to that of Christina Rossetti. She looks small, says Takeda, only when compared with Dickinson.

In addition, Japanese children were seldom asked to produce their own haiku until recent years, when the example of American children being asked to write haiku was adopted as a cultural re-importation.

Takeda distributed a list of anthologies of Dickinson poems published for American children, along with a list of the poems most frequently chosen for them. She concluded that "the confluence of Dickinson and American children is a rare happy case," since they are being put in touch with first-rate poetry at an early age. This compares interestingly with the situation in Britain, where Shelley or Keats cannot be presented to children in the same way,

yet the British are slow to admit Dickinson as great.

Takeda feels, regrettably, that the Japanese, rather than attempting to overcome the obstacles inherent in presenting Dickinson to their children, should “think more about how to inherit their own poetic legacies.”

The discussion that followed included shared views on the contemporary use of the Gothic in women’s literature in general and the importance of the grotesque in Dickinson’s poetry—the grotesque being a powerful means of expressing Gothicism. Connie Kirk spoke of her own experiences in presenting Dickinson’s

poetry to children, and there were suggestions of other meanings for “I’m Nobody!”

---

*Georgiana Strickland is a retired university press editor and is currently editor of the EDIS Bulletin.*

---

## WORKSHOP F: DICKINSON AND CALVIN’S GOD

*Discussion leader:* Jane Donahue Eberwein, Oakland University; *presenters:* Sandra McChesney, Pennsylvania State University, DuBois; Susan Kerr, independent scholar; Marianne Noble, American University; Emily Seelbinder, Queens College, North Carolina; Michael Manson, Anna Maria College; Jane Eberwein

---

*By Jane Donahue Eberwein*

Some kept the Sabbath going to church the morning of August 5, while many observed it by gathering for the last Trondheim workshop in an attempt to grapple with mysteries of Dickinson’s relationship to her church’s theological tradition. The approach taken in this workshop varied somewhat from others in that paper abstracts were distributed in advance, including several from the previous afternoon’s related session on “Remaking the Puritan Word” (see p. 19), so that presenters and audience members could focus attention on a succession of specific questions raised by Jane Eberwein as discussion leader. The first question, directed only to the six who had circulated workshop papers in advance, was “How would you characterize Dickinson’s attitude toward God, and to what extent was it Calvinistic?”

The first response came from Susan Kerr, who contributed a paper entitled “Puritan, Poet, Woman: Emily Dickinson Comes Full Circle.” She saw the poet drawing on a Puritan tradition of spiritual individuality that paradoxically helped her to maintain distance from fashionable but destructive religious practices of her immediate Connecticut Valley Congregational culture during the Second Great Awakening. Having seen the corruption of the present, Kerr argued, Dickinson sought the values of the New England past. She saw the world as a place of joy, God as a trickster but not a menacing one, and liberation as an ongoing process.

Sandra McChesney summarized aspects of her argument in “Secrets: Emily Dickinson, Calvin, God, and the Unitarian

Church.” She related Dickinson’s relationship with God to her quietly defiant response to her own father. Reading “I saw no Way – The Heavens were stitched” as evidence that Emily could not find her way back to childhood Calvinism, McChesney identified Benjamin Newton as the influence who awakened her to contrasting perspectives found through imaginative literature. Parallels between Emerson’s statements and Dickinson’s indicate a kinship of spirit while revealing Dickinson’s turn toward Unitarian freedom and away from Calvinist constriction. Keeping to home, according to McChesney, became the daughter’s defense against following her father to church.

Emily Seelbinder drew on research for her projected book on Dickinson’s use of scripture for “The Noted Clergyman Speaks? Reading Dickinson Reading Scripture.” Beginning with overhead images of cartoons, she maintained that Dickinson, unlike the little boy in one of the comic drawings, was not content to let heaven come as a surprise; she sought assurance. Referring to the famous poem in which the speaker conducts Sabbath worship in her garden and enjoys brief words from God as preacher (Fr905), Seelbinder redirected attention to another “noted clergyman,” John Calvin. For a somewhat startling perspective on Calvin, she drew on a pre-Vatican II Catholic encyclopedia pinpointing his heresies and then counterpointed some of Dickinson’s comments on scripture with others from the Geneva Reformer. Of particular interest to Seelbinder is a detailed and chal-

lenging study guide found in the Homestead that was written to assist lay persons in fulfilling their Protestant obligation to interpret the Bible independently. Seelbinder found Dickinson’s reading of scripture in “Split the Lark – and you’ll find the Music” “about as Calvinist as you can get.” Although often treated as a commentary on science, that poem provides a good reflection of her handling of a New Testament text. Seelbinder found irony in the seeker’s having to be shown the reasons behind faith when that “pierless bridge” (Fr987) had already been destroyed.

Jane Eberwein then referred to her paper, “What Happened to God’s Arm?” for insights into Dickinson’s response to changing American religious culture as projected in “Those – dying then,” with its memorably grotesque image of God’s amputated arm that overturns Calvinism’s assumption of a cavernous divide between God’s omnipotent glory and man’s helplessness unless transformed by grace. Although the poem is generally read as a contrast between the age of faith in which Dickinson reached adulthood and the period of doubt later occasioned by Darwin, the Civil War, and the Higher Criticism, Eberwein called attention to a childhood memory reported in a letter to Higginson (L503) that shows how early Dickinson’s alarm over a mutilated God emerged and traces its origin to the church. Close reading of the poem reveals decidedly un-Calvinistic anthropomorphic imagery, a remarkable degree of metric regularity when dealing with what might be perceived as the onslaught of chaos, and surprisingly Latinate diction (especially in the image of

the *ignis fatuus*) that raises the possibility that the age of faith to which the poet referred as back “then” might have been Puritan or even pre-Reformation.

Marianne Noble, whose paper dealt with “Dickinson’s Calvinist Perspective on Sympathetic Union,” thought Dickinson’s idea of God far different from Emerson’s and more Calvinistic: infinitely above the human, other, and unknowable. To Noble, Dickinson’s relation to the natural world was more typological than romantic, with nature interpreted as signifying the spiritual. The problem for the poet was that signs competed with God, creating a conflict. In keeping with her Calvinist upbringing, Dickinson tended to see her transcendent quest as separating self from others. Noble analyzed “The Soul selects her own Society” as an anomaly among Dickinson poems in its critique of the soul’s stonelike exclusion of others. The language of democratic sympathy found there struck her as more Whitmanian and sentimental than Dickinsonian; yet she noted that the poem has ways of undermining ideas of democratic human connectedness as natural. Other poems to which she contrasted “The Soul selects” typically reveal limitations of the sympathetic ideal and project a rather Calvinistic, individualistic self.

Michael Manson contributed insights from his larger project on the politics of poetic form in “The ‘Thews of Hymn’: Religious Transcendence and Stanzaic Form.” Raising the question of what was Dickinson’s felt experience of battling with God and/or embracing God, he proposed poetic form as a revealing indicator. Dickinson’s poetic form, he argued, characteristically loves completion, the feeling of roundedness. Common meter and some other favorite Dickinsonian hymnal meters often reflect this drive. Using Seelbinder’s overhead projection of “Split the Lark,” he illustrated his point about how the poet manipulated syntax and rhythm to pair half-lines and lines, creating stanzas experienced as completed wholes—perhaps to transmit moments of God’s completeness. In “I saw no Way,” at least rhythmically in the way lines relate to create stanzas, the reader perceives the fourth line coming and is made uncomfort-

able by its absence in the final stanza. Manson encouraged people to keep listening as they respond to the poems.

Following these responses to the initial question, Eberwein tossed out additional questions and invited anyone present to advance the conversation on each as far as possible in no more than five minutes. First among these questions was: “If Dickinson diverged from Calvinism, then in what direction did she move?” Sandra McChesney discerned a Unitarian departure from Trinitarian orthodoxy, while Susan Kerr perceived the search as more important than the ending; she argued that Dickinson drew on all traditions she knew. Emily Seelbinder identified Dickinson’s God as the living Word rather than



Photo by Jim Fraser

an embodied divinity or father figure; in that way Dickinson struck her as Calvinistic despite her avoidance of the denominational limits reflected in church-going. Cynthia Hallen offered an illuminating set of contrasts: to the Trinitarian, Christ is divine, but there is no personal revelation; to the Unitarian, Christ is man, and there is revelation; for the unbeliever, neither is true; for Dickinson, both Christ and personal revelation mattered.

The next question was “What did Dickinson gain from her Puritan-Calvinistic heritage?” Virginia Dupuy thought she was trying out scriptural revelation, yet had trouble living out a religion that interpreted the Bible in a way that didn’t work for her. Kerr thought she gained from Calvinism’s individual approach to scripture. Shira Wolosky, on the other hand, asserted that Dickinson hated God, that she was furious with him. Noble partly agreed with that position but recurred to Gudrun Grabher’s discussion of Zen *koans* in an earlier workshop, arguing that Dickinson knew with great clarity her anger with

God, but also her transcendently joyous spiritual experience. Seelbinder agreed with the perception of Dickinson’s railing at God as an un-Calvinist approach, but pointed out that Calvin, like Dickinson, perceived a tremendous distance between God and “such a worm as I.” Calvin, too, offered scripture as a bridge between the soul and God. For Dickinson, problems of interpretation made transit across that bridge perilous.

Last came the question “Where did Emily Dickinson look for God?” Virginia Capps countered with another question: “Where do *you* look? Where does anyone look for God: in churches or someplace else?” Anger with God, she noted, had to be held within the self in Dickinson’s

environment. Within the self, however, was where Kerr suggested one would first look for God. McChesney suggested that literature became a safe place of discovery for Dickinson. Betty Bernhard pointed out that there was a growing, if still minor, movement toward questioning even in Dickinson’s Amherst, niggling doubt among people there even in the supposedly orthodox college. Eleanor Heginbotham observed how

Harriet Beecher Stowe and other woman writers reacted against limitations of clerics and churches. She wondered what people made of the generalization that Dickinson was angry with God the Father but identified with the suffering Jesus. Seelbinder agreed that the idea of Word made flesh, embodied God, stimulated a different kind of prayer and personal relationship.

On that uplifting note, Eberwein declared time elapsed. She thanked all participants for contributions to an energetic and entertaining discussion.

---

*Jane Donahue Eberwein, author of Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation and editor of An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia, studies New England Puritan writers along with Emily Dickinson.*

# MEMBERS' NEWS

## Emily Dickinson Is Alive!

EDIS is launching a new project, "Dickinson Alive," that we expect will be international in scope. To recognize the lasting impact on our lives of Dickinson and her poetry, the Society plans a weeklong celebration the week of April 14-21, 2002. April is National Poetry Month in the United States, and Dickinson's famous letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, asking him whether her verse was "alive," was dated April 15, 1862.

During this eight-day period, EDIS members and other Dickinson fans are

encouraged, individually or in groups, to sponsor poetry readings and other Dickinson-related events, to teach special classes on Dickinson, to donate a book to a local library in the poet's honor, or to contribute to a project under way at the Homestead or the Evergreens. Members may even want to cooperate with a local bookstore or library to plan an event. The possibilities for commemorating the poet are endless, and those who choose to participate should feel free to be as creative as they wish in what they do.

The Society plans to publicize and document the week's activities in a future issue of the *Bulletin*. Anyone interested in taking part should contact either Jim Fraser, EDIS membership chair, at [jcfraser@att.net](mailto:jcfraser@att.net), or Jonnie Guerra, president, at [jguerra@cabrini.edu](mailto:jguerra@cabrini.edu), in advance with information about their contribution to the project. The Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens are planning an event in conjunction with the week, so look for more information to come.

## Academic Meetings

The **Modern Language Association** meeting, to be held in New Orleans, December 27-30, will include two sessions sponsored by EDIS. The first, "Mourning Dickinson," will be chaired by Shirley Samuels of Cornell University. Panelists will be Ellen Louise Hart, University of California at Santa Cruz, speaking on "Dickinson's Literature of Consolation and Condolence: Editing the Letters"; Monika Cassel, University of Michigan, on "The 'Silver Principle': Dickinson's Memorials of Elizabeth Barrett Browning"; and Vivian Pollak, Washington University, on "Dickinson, Moore, Bishop, and the Arts of Losing."

The second session, titled "Remembering Dickinson," chaired by Mary Loeffelholz of Northeastern University, will include papers by Marianne Noble, American University, on "Dickinson's *écriture féminine* and the Problem of Desire"; Jim von der Heydt, Harvard University, on "Dickinson's Shoreline Emersonianism"; and Erika Scheurer, University of St. Thomas, on "Balking the Professors: Dickinson Teaching Us How to Teach (Dickinson)." Timothy Morris of the University of Texas at Arlington will offer a coda entitled "Dickinson and Memory."

Two additional MLA sessions will include Dickinson-related papers. In the panel "Archival Research and New Technologies," sponsored by the Nineteenth-Century American Literature Section, Lara Vetter of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), University of Maryland, will speak on "*The Dickinson Electronic Archives: Tech-*

nologies and Textualities." For the panel sponsored by the MLA Publications Committee, Martha Nell Smith, also of MITH, will discuss "*The Dickinson Electronic Archives* Projects: Evolutions of a Dynamic Edition(s).

For the **2002 MLA meeting**, EDIS will again sponsor two sessions. For the first, titled "Seeing Dickinson, Sounding Dickinson," papers are solicited on any aspect of Dickinson's visual and/or aural poetics, on visual and/or aural representations of or responses to Dickinson's writing, and on Dickinson's place in literary-historical shifts between aural and visual conceptions of poetry. The topic for the second panel is open. For more information or to submit an abstract, contact Mary Loeffelholz, Department of English, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115-5000 USA, or [m.loeffelholz@neu.edu](mailto:m.loeffelholz@neu.edu). The deadline for abstracts is March 15, 2002.

At the annual meeting of the **American Literature Association** to be held May 30-June 2 in Long Beach, California, EDIS will again sponsor two panels, which will have broad topics: "Dickinson and Politics" and "Dickinson as Precursor." For the first panel we invite papers that examine the full range of political implications, alliances, and declarations visible in the Dickinson corpus. For the second, we welcome submissions that explore Dickinson's influence on other writers. The deadline for abstracts is January 5, 2002.

These sessions are being coordinated by Robert M. Smith and Paul Crumbley. Please send submissions to Paul Crumb-

ley at Department of English, Utah State University, 3200 University Blvd., Logan, UT 84322-3200 USA or at [pcrumbly@english.usu.edu](mailto:pcrumbly@english.usu.edu).

## Notes & Queries

The "three E's" of the Minnesota EDIS chapter—Eleanor Heginbotham, Erika Scheurer, and Elizabeth Dickinson—while preparing a program for presentation at Minneapolis's Central Library last spring (see Chapter Notes, page 32), discovered there a cache of **Emily Dickinson letter manuscripts** that are listed as missing in the Johnson edition. Given to the library by benefactor Harold Kittelson, they are drafts of L778, dated November 14, 1882; L932, dated approximately 1884; and L958, dated Christmas 1884. All are brief notes to Mrs. Henry F. Hills, a neighbor of the Dickinsons, written in the large sprawling print-script of Dickinson's last years. They form part of a larger collection that includes two poems by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and articles related to James Fenimore Cooper, Richard Henry Dana, and Edward Waldo Emerson (son of Ralph Waldo Emerson).

Robert Hass, professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, will deliver the **Emily Dickinson Lecture in American Poetry** at Pennsylvania State University on March 18, 2002. Hass was Poet Laureate of the United States from 1995 to 1997. The lectureship is an annual event supported by an endowment from George and Barbara Kelly.

*Continued on page 32*

## Future EDIS Meetings Set

The EDIS Board, at its meeting in Trondheim in August, approved a schedule of future Society gatherings. The 2002 annual meeting will return, for the fourth time, to Emily Dickinson's hometown, Amherst, Massachusetts, the weekend of July 26-28. The theme for the meeting will be "Emily Dickinson in Song." We'll be focusing on some of the nearly 2,000 musical settings of her poems. There will be several short sessions bringing together musicians and Dickinson admirers, a master class led by one of America's leading vocal coaches, and a gala concert. An open house at the Homestead and the Evergreens, tours of the two historic houses, a banquet, a picnic lunch, and a

reception and exhibit at Amherst College's Frost Library will round out the weekend. Put the dates on your calendar and plan to join us as we explore an art form on which Dickinson has had a profound influence for more than a century.

In 2003, EDIS will gather in Philadelphia, a city Dickinson visited in 1855, with "Dickinson and Other Writers" as its theme. Exact dates have not yet been set.

Most exciting are plans for a fifth international conference to be held at the University of Hawaii at Hilo from July 30 to August 1, 2004. Watch for further information on all these events in future issues of the *Bulletin*.

---

## Bulletin Editorship Open

After editing the *Bulletin* for eleven years, Georgiana Strickland has decided that the time has come for someone else to take over this demanding but very rewarding task. The basic qualifications are that the candidate be a member of EDIS in good standing and a resident of the United States (to facilitate mailing). The editor must also have excellent writing skills, be familiar with Dickinson's biography and

work, and be reasonably current with Dickinson scholarship. The position is unpaid, but all normal expenses are reimbursed. The position carries with it membership on the EDIS Board of Directors.

To apply, please send a resume and a letter of interest to Georgiana Strickland at 133 Lackawanna Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. She will be happy to answer inquiries at [georgiestr@aol.com](mailto:georgiestr@aol.com).

---

## Chapter Notes

Perhaps in the afterglow of last summer's EDIS annual meeting in St. Paul, the **Minnesota chapter** has enjoyed several exciting Dickinson-related events in the past year—additional dramatic readings of Emily Dickinson's letters by actress Elizabeth Dickinson, a series of programs at the Twin Cities' public libraries, including workshops on Dickinson led by chapter co-chairs Eleanor Heginbotham and Erika Scheurer, and discovery of previously missing manuscripts of three Dickinson letters (see page 31). Of related interest were an opera, *Barnum's Bird*, based on the life of Jenny Lind and composed by Minnesotan Libby Larsen, which played in Minneapolis in April, and a display of Lind memorabilia at the American Swedish Institute.

The chapter's activities for the year will culminate in a Dickinson birthday party, titled "Emily Dickinson 2001: Reflections on War and Immortality," on December 9 at the University of St. Thomas. Elizabeth

Dickinson will again do a reading of Emily Dickinson's letters, Erika Scheurer will speak on Dickinson's letters and poetry on war, Eleanor Heginbotham will report on the Trondheim conference, and the meeting will close with readings of favorite Dickinson poems and letters. Those interested in attending the birthday party or other chapter events should contact Erika Scheurer at 651-962-5669 ([ecscheurer@stthomas.edu](mailto:ecscheurer@stthomas.edu)) or Eleanor Heginbotham at 651-641-8267 ([heginbotham@csp.edu](mailto:heginbotham@csp.edu)).

At its most recent meeting, the **Saskatchewan chapter** enjoyed a lecture by Paul Crumbley, of Utah State University, entitled "Dickinson and the Reader's Choice: Gift-Based Circulation and the Non-Conforming Writer." His talk dealt with the correspondence exchanged between Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson. Following the lecture, the audience had the opportunity to meet and talk with Crumbley at a reception and dinner.

## Bulletins at Bargain Prices!

If you find yourself missing some back issues of the *Bulletin*, now is the time to buy, while they can be had for half the regular price (\$2.50 rather than \$5.00). Please use the order form on page 35. Note that a complete run (24 issues) is available with no shipping charge to U.S. addresses. The sale runs through June 30, 2002.

---

## News from the Dickinson Houses

While EDIS convened across the waters in Norway, the Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens carried on with their efforts to welcome the poet's admirers at home in Amherst. This past summer at the Homestead, work was completed on the Kitchen Tour Center. Next door at the Evergreens, more than 1,000 visitors crossed the threshold during the first season of regularly scheduled tours.

On Saturday, October 20, the two houses hosted an open house in conjunction with Amherst College Homecoming and with a booksigning for *The Dickinsons of Amherst*, a new publication featuring photographs of the houses by Jerome Liebling, with text by Polly Longworth, Christopher Benfey, and Barton St. Armand. The beauty of the day and the excitement of the events drew more than 260 visitors.

The Evergreens concludes its season October 31. The Homestead will continue its schedule of tours through Saturday, December 8, when it hosts the sixth annual open house in honor of Emily Dickinson's birthday. Both houses will be open for the occasion. Both will reopen for the 2002 season on March 2. For further information, call 413-542-8161 or 413-253-5272, or visit the Homestead's newly designed website at [www.dickinsonhomestead.org](http://www.dickinsonhomestead.org).

---

*Notes & Queries (continued from page 31)*

Cynthia Hallen reports that the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon* will go to the publisher (Greenwood) this fall. Hallen, editor of the volume, is anxious to include acknowledgment of all who worked on this huge project, which has been in progress since 1992. So far 450 contributors are listed on the EDL's new website: <http://humanities.byu.edu/EDLexicon/EDLpage.html>. If your name should be added to that list or if a correction is needed, please contact Hallen at [clh8@email.byu.edu](mailto:clh8@email.byu.edu).



# NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor*

**Elbert, Monika M., ed.** *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930*. Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Univ. of Alabama Press, 2000. 307 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8173-1036-3, \$39.95.

Fourteen critics discuss the ways in which the "separate spheres" of male and female experience intersect and converge in American literature. Exploring a variety of familiar and lesser known authors and texts, the critics emphasize shifting boundaries and similarities rather than differences between the separate spheres, and suggest a similar emphasis in classroom teaching. In "Astra Castra: Emily Dickinson, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Harriet Prescott Spofford," Katharine Rodier discusses the subtle connections between these three writers, portraying Higginson as an avuncular intermediary who enthusiastically promoted Spofford's writing. Spofford published over 300 poems in more than thirty-five magazines, including the *Atlantic Monthly*, between 1860 and 1921; her collected poems were published four years before Dickinson's death. Rodier presents some intriguing examples of intertextuality, drawing on the work of Barton Levi St. Armand, Van Wyck Brooks, and other critics. She concludes that "Spofford clearly shared affinities with Higginson's 'only Kangaroo.'" Of general interest, these essays should particularly appeal to literary critics, historicists, and teachers wishing to revitalize the literary canon.

**Grabher, Gudrun M., and Martina Antretter, eds.** *Emily Dickinson at Home: Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Emily Dickinson International Society in South Hadley, Mount Holyoke College, 12-15 August 1999*. Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001. 294 pp. Paper, ISBN 3-88476-473-X, 28,00 euros or 54,50 deutschemarks (approximately \$25.00).

Among the scholars who presented their work at the third EDIS conference, nineteen contribute to this collection: Rolf

Amsler, Chanthana Chaichit, Jane D. Eberwein, Richard S. Ellis, Margaret H. Freeman, Thomas Gardner, Cynthia L. Hallen, Eleanor Heginbotham, Nancy Johnston, John McDermott, Sylvia N. Mikkelsen, Carolyn S. Moran, Brad Ricca, Susanne Shapiro, Helen Shoobridge, Daniel H. Strait, Masako Takeda, Daneen Wardrop, and Shira Wolosky. Their broad spectrum of interests related to Dickinson includes feminism, slavery, astronomy, aging, domesticity, the Hebrew Bible, and Calvinist preaching, as well as the poet's popularity in Japan, her critique of American identity, her influence on contemporary American writers, her erotic language, her rhetorical figures, and her fascicles. Also offered are an analysis of her handwriting and a computerized word analysis of the Master Letters. These essays supplement other 1999 conference presentations found in *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 9.2 (2000).

**Leonard, Philip, ed.** *Trajectories of Mysticism in Theory and Literature*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 245 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-312-22492-3, \$55.00.

Ten essays examine the relationship of language and theology in the Christian and Jewish mystical traditions and the ways in which literary, critical, and cultural theory can lead to varying conclusions about mysticism. This erudite book covers a wide range of material, including biblical texts; autobiographical, confessional, and fictional writing from the sixteenth to the twentieth century; ideas of divinity in English, German, Spanish, and French traditions; and work on God and metaphysics by Schelling, Weil, Levinas, Derrida, deMan, Irigaray, Cixous, Celan, and Dickinson. In "The Metaphysics of Language in Emily Dickinson (As Translated by Paul Celan)," Shira Wolosky presents Celan's German translations of three Dickinson poems (J1065, 1084, 1732), demonstrating how Celan shares with Dickinson "the terrains of mystical discourse... and language." His translations present

Dickinson as "a poet within a tradition of metaphysical discourse, for whom questions of language are inextricable from theological concerns and are profoundly shaped by them."

**Liebling, Jerome, photographer.** *The Dickinsons of Amherst*. Essays by **Christopher Benfey, Polly Longworth, and Barton Levi St. Armand**. Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 2001. 209 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-58465-068-0, \$55.00.

This oversized coffee table book combines the visual artistry of Jerome Liebling's one hundred and thirty-seven documentary photographs with essays by three Dickinson scholars. In his introduction, Benfey describes Liebling's work as "the richest visual record we are ever likely to have of the chambers and windows and doors of Emily Dickinson's existence." Liebling's respect and sensitivity for the inanimate objects he photographs are everywhere evident, his visual compositions documenting both the beauty and the dilapidation he found at the Homestead and the Evergreens. Evocative and haunting, the stark beauty of the images recalls Dickinson's world and illustrates her words "Absence is condensed presence" (L587). Benfey says that "the book began with the photographs" and "the three essays are extended captions, taking their prompting and provocation from the images," but the essays are compelling in their own right. Longworth's biographical approach includes her recent research into Dickinson's psychological frame of mind; St. Armand's first person account describes his friendship with Mary Hampson, the last resident of the Evergreens, and her efforts to save the house from destruction; and Benfey's essay on Liebling's photographs confirms that there is much more here than meets the eye, sending the reader back to the images time and again for further study. This volume is one of rare artistry, affection, and excellence, a delight for anyone interested in the Dickinsons of Amherst.

*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.*

**McDermott, John F., M.D.** "Emily Dickinson Revisited: A Study of Periodicity in Her Work." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 158.5 (May 2001): 686-90.

Using biographical information gleaned from Dickinson's letters and Franklin's dating of the poems, McDermott offers a quantitative analysis and graphical representation of Dickinson's most productive years, 1858-1865, suggesting that her eight-year productive period "is not inconsistent with the symptom profile of bipolar II affective disorder." He observes that not only were there quantitative changes in her work but also qualitative changes in her mood and behavior apparently related to seasonal changes. The author recognizes the limitations of his study, stating that "diagnostic impression without examination is conjecture at best," but the purpose of his study is "to discover new information about Emily Dickinson rather than to explain her." McDermott's clearly written and well documented essay elicited responses from critics and the popular press: see *U.S. News & World Report* (May 21, 2001) and the *Washington Post* (May 14 and 19, 2001).

**Miller, Ruth.** *The Myth of Amherst*. Electronic publication. WriteOnLine, 2001. 222 pp. Available at [www.write-on-line.co.uk](http://www.write-on-line.co.uk). £3.00 (\$4.20).

This is the first electronic scholarly book on Dickinson, according to Miller. Stating that there are only three indisputable facts in Dickinson's life, Miller examines the many myths surrounding the poet and says that she "no longer countenance[s] the myth of the intellectual milieu, the myth of the lost lover, the alleged eye operation, the myth of her refusal to publish, or of the unparalleled success of the [poet's] reception," and she doubts "the certainty of an underlying fascicle structure." In her chapter "White Bodice Crime," Miller questions the authenticity of poems J1649 to J1775, "poems for which there are no manuscripts; poems that were placed in no Fascicle, in no Set, poems for which there are no clues to be found in the letters." Her chapters on Dickinson's mental health and on the family's attempt to protect Dickinson are informative and provocative, as is the chapter in which she differentiates between public letters and poems and private poems where Dickinson's secrets may be found. Several chap-

ters summarizing Dickinson's reception by literary critics and the general public offer a good historical perspective of the poet in the context of changing literary tastes. No index is provided, but this electronic book includes search capabilities as well as cutting, pasting, and highlighting capacities that greatly facilitate note-taking. Though reading from a computer screen can be tedious, both novice and experienced Dickinson scholars may find this book interesting. Well informed, Miller provides end notes and a bibliography and has a strong, jargon-free writing voice that invites response.

**Noble, Marianne.** *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000. viii+258 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-691-00936-8, \$57.50; paper, ISBN 0-691-00937-6, \$19.95. Also available in digital format (Adobe Reader or Microsoft Reader), \$16.95.

Noble places female masochism in the context of nineteenth-century sentimental literature and Calvinist ideology, focusing on Susan Warner's *Wide, Wide World* (1851), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and Dickinson's letters and poetry. In "The Revenge of Cato's Daughter: Emily Dickinson's Uses of Sentimental Masochism," Noble's close readings of Dickinson's poetry and letters demonstrate how the poet appropriates the discourse of sentimental masochism as a literary device for her own aesthetic purposes in three areas: in a relationship, the masochistic partner paradoxically assumes the power to control (selected letters and Fr149, 824, 1005); experiencing erotic pleasures creates tension between a longing for union and a need for autonomy (Fr161, 219C, 264, 656); and the pain of abandonment is so great that it is better to experience the pain than the abandonment itself (selected letters and Fr664, 706, 841). Noble's psycholinguistic analysis emphasizes the role of language as a means of gaining control. She concludes: "Dickinson's successful grasp of aesthetic power through the deliberate cultivation of suffering suggests that we should rethink our attitudes toward masochism." As a feminist whose voice reflects not only sophistication and a mastery of her topic but also moderation and readability, she advocates neither a

celebration nor a dismissal of the masochistic elements of sentimental literature, suggesting that this complex phenomenon enabled women to express themselves, wield power, and obtain autonomy within their existing culture.

---

## Book Review

**Messmer, Marietta.** *A Vice for Voices: Reading Emily Dickinson's Correspondence*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2001. 280 pp. cloth, ISBN 1-55849-306-9, \$34.95.

*Reviewed by Agnieszka Salska*

Arguing for the centrality of letters rather than poems as Dickinson's form of expression, Marietta Messmer's book brings the steadily growing interest in Dickinson's correspondence to a sharp turning point. By tracing the development of the poet's epistolary style from confession to self-fashioning performance, from adherence to conventions of epistolary writing to the blurring of borders between poems and letters, Messmer demonstrates the writer's cultivation of polyvocal dialogicity and shows how correspondence enables Dickinson both to use and to undermine the dominant assumptions of her culture and authority, gender roles, and literary canonicity.

Messmer's book is thoroughly researched, well grounded in theory, and exemplary in organization and clarity of argument. I found the contextualizing chapters, on "Nineteenth-Century Epistolary Conventions" and "Editing Dickinson's Correspondence," usefully informative, but it was the two chapters on the gendered correspondence with her female and male friends that made me want to sit down with the author for a good, long discussion. Messmer provides wonderfully suggestive observations concerning the roles Dickinson devises for herself and her partners, manipulating them into positions she can control. Susan Gilbert Dickinson, for example, becomes elevated, after the convention of courtly love, into the unattainable "lady of the heart" or even into a Godlike figure of worship. Yet the strategy of elevation works across gender divisions. Shouldn't, then, the politicized gender borders blur a little in confrontation with echoes (however transformed) of Dickinson's elevation of Sue as, in her later letters, she also

elevates both "Master" and Higginson? Chapter 5 analyzes Dickinson's "'work performed upon' her quotations from Higginson, the Bible, and Shakespeare" to demonstrate her "dialogue" with scriptural and literary authority, past and present. In "Conclusion" the argument is restated for correspondence as Dickinson's central, because "published," genre.

Having myself argued for the crucial importance of Dickinson's correspondence in the making of her poetics, I am not only appreciative of the excellence of Messmer's scholarship but also sympathetic to her argument. Still, I must confess myself unable to "suspend traditional notions of this writer as primarily a 'poet'" (p. 3) in favor of the view of her as first and foremost a writer of letters. My difficulty stems, I hope, not from an unduly conservative view of literary genres but from the recognition that Dickinson's correspondence itself conveys her sense of urgency to establish herself as a poet. Many of her letters to Susan Gilbert Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, as well as a good portion of her early letters to Austin, focus on this ambition. In fact, had she not considered herself a poet, she would

have had no reason to write Higginson. And historically, Dickinson's aspirations were shaped by a culture that still placed poetry at the top of the pyramid of literary genres (see, e.g., Poe's late essays). As she told Higginson (L265), the hope she cherished for fame was clearly linked to poetry.

Of course, despite her seclusion, Dickinson was more conscious of the profound cultural change under way during her lifetime than her scholars have for a long time been able to admit; she certainly tested the limits of the established contemporary view of literary expression. A progressive infusion of poetic style into the correspondence can be unambiguously observed, especially after her verse-making fever subsided in the years following the Civil War. Thus the permeability of generic borders between poems and letters seems a development signaling the experimental confidence of a mature artist. And if we accept the theory that the outburst of her poetic creativity in the early 1860s was a response to some personal crisis, such border-blur may also signal a post-traumatic reopening of communication with the world on new terms.

What Dickinson finally tried to protect for poetry, as Messmer beautifully shows in her concluding chapter, was intimacy with unique lives lived by particular persons, her readers. Moving poetry in the direction of epistolary writing promised to keep the poem functional as a personal message cultivating a communion of minds against the anonymity of the literary market. On the other hand, it also helped to rescue the art of letter writing from becoming a purely utilitarian, conventional form of social intercourse.

My reservations—though I am prepared to defend my recalcitrant position—are perhaps a matter of opinion. The fact remains that Messmer's book provides an important and excellent study of the poet's correspondence. It also throws new light on her poetry even as it corroborates some of the earlier findings concerning Dickinson's construction of poetic personae and her use of poetic voices.

*Agnieszka Salska is professor of American literature in the University of Łódź and author of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson: Poetry of the Central Consciousness.*

### Bulletin Back Issue Sale: Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone no.: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Issues ordered @ \$2.50 each (regular price is \$5.00 each):

Vol./no.: \* \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping: U.S. addresses: \$1.00 for first issue, \$.25 per additional issue

Non-U.S. addresses: \$2.00 for first issue, \$.50 per additional issue \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Complete run: Vol. 1\* through Vol. 13/1 (24 issues)

\$60.00 (including shipping, U.S.); \$70.00 (including shipping, non-U.S.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*Note: Vol. 1 had only one issue; all other volumes have two issues

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDERS MUST BE PREPAID. Prices good through June 30, 2002.**

Please pay by check drawn on a U.S. bank or an international money order, payable to:  
 Emily Dickinson International Society. Do not send cash. We regret that credit card orders cannot be accepted.

Send orders to: Georgiana Strickland, 133 Lackawanna Rd., Lexington, KY 40503 USA

## Emily Dickinson International Society

President: Jonnie Guerra

Vice-President: Suzanne Juhasz

Secretary: Barbara Kelly

Treasurer: Ellen Louise Hart

### Board Members:

Mary E.K. Bernhard Paul Crumbley

Cindy Dickinson Gudrun Grabher

Jonnie Guerra Ellen Louise Hart

Eleanor Heginbotham Suzanne Juhasz

Mary Loeffelholz Cristanne Miller

Vivian Pollak Martha Nell Smith

Gary Lee Stonum

Legal Counsel: Martha Sjogreen

Membership: James C. Fraser

Journal Editor: Gary Lee Stonum

Bulletin Editor: Georgiana Strickland

For more information, see the EDIS Website:  
<http://www.cwru.edu/affil/edis/edisindex.html>

## 2001 CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

EDIS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial contributions of the following members in support of our programs:

Eugene G. Anderson	Eleanor Heginbotham
Paul Beckley	Special Collections,
Mary E. K. Bernhard	Jones Library
Roger G. Brezina	Ann H. Kline
Jerome H. Buff	Charlotte C. Lemann
Marilyn Berg	Polly Longworth
Callander	Cristanne Miller
Jane Donahue	Ruth Miller
Eberwein	JoAnn Orr
David H. Forsyth	Domenica Paterno
James C. Fraser	Vivian R. Pollak
Jane M. Grubb	Gary Lee Stonum
Jonnie G. Guerra	Georgiana Strickland

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Post-Conference Issue

- 1 Traveling to New Climates: The Trondheim Conference BY SUZANNE JUHASZ
- 3 The EDIS Distinguished Service Award BY JONNIE GUERRA
- 4 Cognitive Approaches to the Economy of Language BY CONNIE ANN KIRK
- 5 Slants of Dickinson among Late 20th- and 21st-Century Poets  
BY CYNTHIA HOGUE
- 7 Workshop A: *The Dickinson Electronic Archives* and Technologies of  
Distribution BY MARTHA NELL SMITH
- 8 First Plenary Session: Filling the Circle BY CRISTANNE MILLER
- 9 Dickinson's 19th-Century Community of Women BY BARBARA KELLY
- 10 Language Approaching Zero BY MARY LOEFFELHOLZ
- 11 Workshop B: The Fleeing of the Biographed BY POLLY LONGSWORTH
- 12 "Seeing" Dickinson in Her Time BY MARY ELIZABETH K. BERNHARD
- 13 Dickinson and the Moderns BY TAFFY MARTIN
- 14 Dickinson's Fluid Texts and Processes BY MARTHA NELL SMITH
- 15 Workshop C: "We Do Not Play on Graves"—or Do We? BY ELEANOR HEGINBOTHAM
- 17 Second Plenary Session: Neither Even nor Odd BY VIVIAN POLLAK
- 18 Dickinson and Late 20th-Century Literature BY PAUL CRUMBLEY
- 19 Remaking the Puritan Word BY JANE DONAHUE EBERWEIN
- 21 Dickinson and the Challenges of Race, Class, and Gender  
BY ELEANOR HEGINBOTHAM
- 22 Alterity, Interiority, and Ethics in Dickinson BY JAMES FRASER
- 23 Workshop D: Translating Dickinson's "I stepped from Plank to Plank"  
BY GUDRUN GRABHER
- 24 Dickinson and Language BY DANIEL FINEMAN
- 24 Workshop E: "The Soul has Bandaged Moments" BY JONNIE GUERRA
- 26 "Airs of Exile": A Musical Evening BY VIRGINIA DUPUY
- 27 The Politics of the Sublime BY GARY STONUM
- 28 Presenting Dickinson's Presentations BY GEORGIANA STRICKLAND
- 29 Workshop F: Dickinson and Calvin's God BY JANE DONAHUE EBERWEIN
- 31-32 Members' News
- 33-35 New Publications  
Reviews in Brief BY BARBARA KELLY  
Elbert; Grabher and Antretter; Leonard; Liebling; McDermott; Miller; Noble  
Book Review: Messmer, *A Vice for Voices* REVIEWED BY AGNIESZKA SALSKA
- 35 *Bulletin* Back Issue Order Form

Dickinson poems are reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from the following volumes: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition*, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998, 1999 by The President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Copyright © 1929, 1935 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, Copyright © renewed 1957, 1963 by Mary L. Hampson: Little, Brown and Co., Boston. Dickinson letters are reprinted by permission of the publisher from *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1958, 1986 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

## EDIS BULLETIN

Emily Dickinson International Society  
c/o Georgiana Strickland  
133 Lackawanna Road  
Lexington, KY 40503

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY  
PERMIT NUMBER 1042