

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

**EMILY DICKINSON IN SONG:  
REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING**

*By Jane Donahue Eberwein*

The 2002 Annual Meeting of the Emily Dickinson International Society, held in Amherst from July 26-28, had a distinctive character because of its focus on musical performance of Dickinson's poems and letters. Among the approximately one hundred participants were composers and singers as well as the varied friends of the poet who typically gather for these annual events.

For many, the return to Amherst and reunion with Dickinsonian friends brought a welcome sense of continuity; for some, this was a first experience of EDIS hospitality in an environment that drew them close to the poet; for all, it proved a rewarding and ear-opening experience. An ambitious program of performances and discussions resulted from Georgiana Strickland's imaginative and painstaking preparations, demonstrating that her talents extend beyond editing to conference planning.

As meeting participants arrived Friday afternoon, they registered at the Amherst College Alumni House before exploring the town, taking guided tours of the Homestead and Evergreens, visit-



*Photo by James Fraser*

ing the Jones Library to enjoy its special exhibit of music scores, viewing Mabel Loomis Todd's paintings at the Amherst History Museum, and heading to the Jeffery Amherst Bookshop for a book signing before gathering at the two Dickinson houses for an open-house reception. The new kitchen welcoming area in the Homestead drew admiring responses as did three restored paintings in the Evergreens. Electrical improvements in the Evergreens were less visible than the scaffolding that proclaimed progress on the new roof for the poet's home next door.

The first day's events culminated in a banquet at the Alumni House. Jonnie Guerra extended a welcome as president of EDIS as did Georgiana Strickland as meeting coordinator. After-dinner entertainment began with the speaking voice and proceeded to song. Doris Abramson recited poems with her characteristic clarity, warmth, and perception. Judy Jo Small presented a gracious and humorous keynote address, "'A Music Numerous as Space': The Musical Appeal of Dickinson's Poetry," in which she called attention to the ways musical performance and literary analysis complement each other.

Virginia Dupuy then introduced the Mirror Visions Ensemble made up of Tobé Malawista, soprano, Scott Murphree, tenor, Richard Lalli, baritone, and Alan Darling, pianist, who performed Tom Cipullo's *A Visit with Emily*. This song cycle rendered passages from Dickinson's and Higginson's letters interspersed with a variety of poems—sometimes in one voice, sometimes two or even three (as in the witty "Catch" play on "Women talk: men are



*Photo by James Fraser*

silent: that is why I dread women"). After the audience expressed its enthusiastic gratitude to the composer as well as performers, the evening concluded with a sing-along that gave everyone the opportunity to sing "Because I could not stop for Death" to the tune of "Amazing Grace" and "To fight aloud, is very brave—to that of "Yankee Doodle" and nothing at all to "The Yellow Rose of Texas."

Saturday morning's events included two sets of small-group sessions. The first offerings included a session called "Cycles and Circumference" focused on songs of Leo Smit as performed by soprano Rosalind Rees and introduced in the classroom by Emily Seelbinder; another called "Rhythmic Rumors" in which Dan Lombardo and James Burger displayed their percussion talents to illustrate Dickinson's poetic rhythms as sounded by African drums and other instruments; and "Two by Two by Dickinson," in which professors Virginia Dupuy (music) and Margaret Freeman (English/linguistics) joined with composers William Jordan and Sean Vernon to provide comparative experiences of several composers' settings of Dickinson

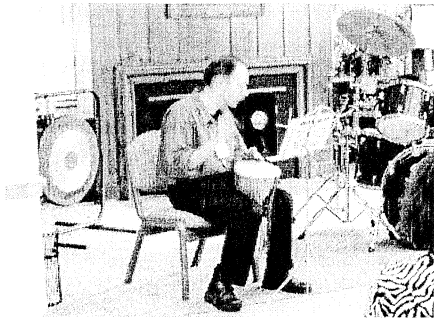


Photo by James Fraser

poems.

The second group of sessions featured three choices: "Word Painting in the Songs of Ernst Bacon," introduced by Eleanor Heginbotham, in which Ellen Bacon spoke animatedly about her husband and his artistic responses to Dickinson while soprano Janet Brown and pianist Sar-Shalom Strong illustrated her points in performance; "Live From Amherst: Contemporary Women Composers and Emily Dickinson," a session convened by

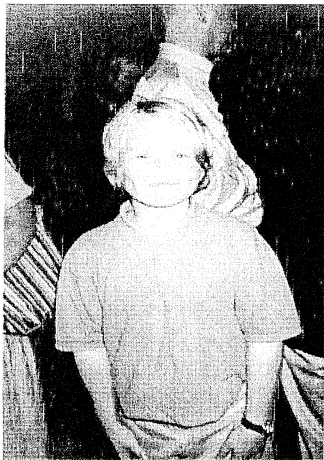


Photo by Eleanor Heginbotham

Suzanne Juhasz and Paulina Stark, that featured works by Lori Laitman and Libby Larsen; and "From Fascicle to CD: A 'Non-Classical' Composer Sets Dickinson," for which Sean Vernon, an Amherst composer, presented his own

popular settings of Dickinson poems and discussed what is entailed in bringing such work to commercial release.

Having spent the morning in small groups, meeting participants gathered in the afternoon for a master class in the Jones Library, which turned out to be one of the highlights of the annual meeting. Vocal coach Martin Katz and Professor Cristanne Miller demonstrated their teaching skills in inspiring interactions with six women singers chosen by audition to perform works by Copland, Bacon, and other composers. In each case, Miller read the poem aloud before the singer performed; then Katz engaged the singer, Miller, and occasionally the audience in conversation about the poem, its speaker's emotional situation, and the implications of the composer's scoring to heighten awareness of the choices available (or not available) to the singer while confronting the ambiguities of Dickinson's texts.

After the master class, people had opportunity to saunter to the Amherst College campus to enjoy a reception and exhibit at the Robert Frost Library. Afterward, while many people gathered at area restaurants for dinner, others proceeded to the Keefe Campus Center for a special showing of Jim Wolpaw's new film, *Loaded Gun: Life, and Death, and Dickinson*, which drew admiring comments for its humor, perspicuity, and classroom potential.

Residents of the Amherst area swelled the crowd that evening to fill Grace Episcopal Church for a concert sponsored in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Ernst Bacon Society, the Leo Smit Fund, and the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, along with EDIS. Despite hot

conditions inside the church until after the intermission (when doors and windows could be opened once a rock music event on the Common concluded), we were treated to a rich array of musical entertainment for which the day's sessions had prepared an eager audience.

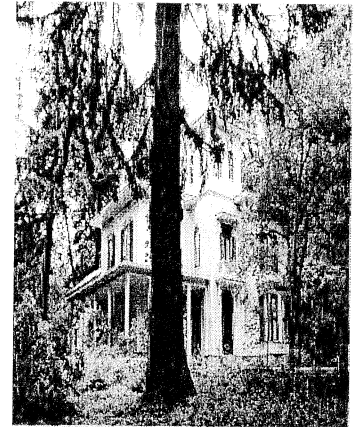


Photo by James Fraser

Janet Brown sang a group of Ernst Bacon's "Songs from Emily Dickinson" (pianist Sar-Shalom Strong), followed by Rosalind Rees with selections from Arthur Farwell's "Opus 105" (pianist Nils Vigeland), Melinda Spratlan performing some of Aaron Copland's "12 Poems of Emily Dickinson" (pianist Gary Steigerwalt), Virginia Dupuy singing a group of settings by Etta Parker, Robert Baksa, John Duke, Gerald Ginsburg, and Lee Hoiby (pianist Amy Greer), Paulina



Photo by James Fraser

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Stark with “Five Summer Songs” by Ronald Perera (pianist Clifton J. Noble Jr.), and Rosalind Rees singing four songs from Leo Smit’s “The Ecstatic Pilgrimage” (pianist Nils Vigeland).

After intermission, Kristi Kelly sang four of Lori Laitman’s settings (pianist Lori Laitman), Melinda Spratlan performed songs by Peter Child (pianist Gary Steigerwalt), Rosalind Rees offered a group of four “New Songs for a New Century” by Gregg Smith, Martha Sullivan, Nils Vigeland, and Scott Wheeler (pianist Nils Vigeland), and Virginia Dupuy followed with five songs by Martha Sullivan, Jake Heggie, Simon Sargon, and William Jordan (pianists Amy Greer and William Jordan).

The concert concluded with all the singers uniting for a joyous rendition of Clifton J. Noble Jr.’s setting of “Bring Me the Sunset in a Cup,” accompanied

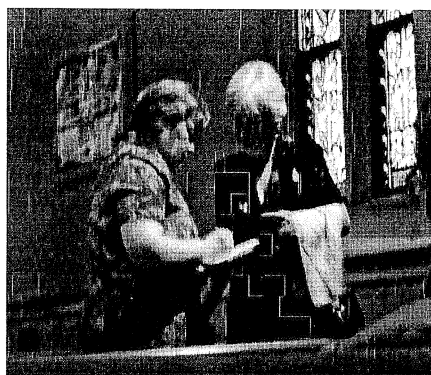


Photo by James Fraser

by Noble himself on the piano. Having so many of the composers present in the audience or even performing added to the excitement of a memorable concert, which drew the largest audience ever attracted for any event at an EDIS annual meeting.

Occasional rain on Sunday forced some changes in the afternoon pro-

gram, requiring use of the College’s Alumni House for all events rather than allowing meeting-goers to enjoy their picnic lunch on the Homestead Lawn and walk to the poet’s grave to read favorite poems. Morning events had already been planned for the indoor facility. These included an organizational meeting for the newly formed Emily Dickinson Music Society and the “Share your Research” informal conversation that has become a special part of these annual meetings. Ellen Louise Hart encouraged those who gathered in a big circle to introduce themselves and tell about what they are doing with Dickinson by way of teaching, scholarship, counseling, and creative responses.

After that came a “Composer’s Panel” moderated by Carolyn Cooley, who engaged Peter Child, William Jordan, Lori Laitman, Ron Perera, and Lewis Spratlan in spirited conversation with each other and the audience about the appeals and challenges of setting Dickinson’s words to music – including their acknowledgment of relative indifference to textual questions that engage critical attention these days. Box lunches (featuring samples of black cake prepared according to the poet’s famous recipe) appeared after this event, supplied by Nancy Jane’s Restaurant.

The meeting concluded with Jerome Liebling and Christopher Benfey shifting attention from music to visual art and biography in a conversation about photographs they used in *The Dickinsons of Amherst* to capture haunting images of the two houses.

Focusing this annual meeting so directly on music gave it a distinctive quality, somewhere between the informality of most EDIS annual meetings and the intensity of international conferences. It took an unusual degree of planning to bring together so many singers and composers and find appropriate performance venues, and the Society is greatly indebted to Georgiana Strickland, Emily Seelbinder, Virginia Dupuy, and, of course, Jonnie Guerra for orchestrating so complexly rewarding an event.

Like other EDIS meetings, it was a

great opportunity to experience the pleasures of Dickinson’s poetry, but it was also an occasion for enhancing or (for the more tin-eared among us) developing appreciation for the twentieth- and twenty-first-century American art song.

Most participants were teachers in some way, and there was real delight in experiencing superb teaching in all venues, with performing artists and composers articulately conveying the ways in which their art enhances our experience of poetry. “Musicians wrestle[d] everywhere,” in Amherst that weekend, and “transport” truly broke “open the town.”



Photo by James Fraser

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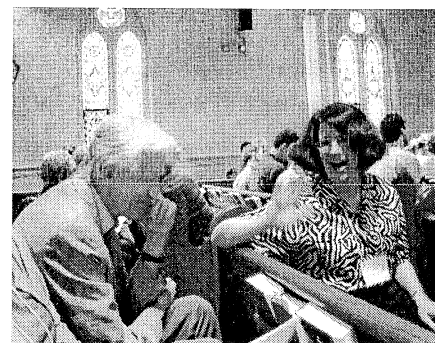


Photo by James Fraser

## FROM THE PRAIRIE TO THE WORLD: PATRICIA HAMPL AND EMILY DICKINSON

By Erika Scheurer

Participants in the 1999 annual meeting at Concordia University in Saint Paul will recall that Patricia Hampl was one of three featured Minnesota poets who treated us to a poetry reading during the Saturday evening banquet. I was enthusiastic about Hampl's poetry then, and I am delighted that Erika Scheurer agreed to investigate Hampl's connection to Dickinson in the following essay for the *Bulletin's* "Poet to Poet" series.

Jonnie Guerra, *Series Editor*

I visited award-winning poet, memoirist, and fiction writer Patricia Hampl at her St. Paul brownstone on a rainy summer day. Making my way to her door, it occurred to me that an opening question for our interview might be, "Does the rain today look like ballerinas?"

I had just finished reading her second book of poetry, *Resort and Other Poems*, and in an often-cited passage of "Resort" (a monumental poem comprising half of the collection), she asks her father, "Doesn't the rain look just like ballerinas, Dad?" Her father replies to her exuberant metaphor with "The true word, patient integrity of eyesight:/ No, you say, it doesn't look like ballerinas. / Not bothering to argue, just saying / No, the most fatherly of words, saying No / So that it can be dark and raining—just raining, / So that somebody around here is telling the truth."

I don't think I ever did ask my question. However, on reflecting upon the interview that followed, as well as on my reading of Hampl's multi-genred published works (see Selected Bibliography), I have concluded that her subtle layering of slant truths, her juxtaposition of these truths with the cool "no" of yet another version of truth, and her intimate, present-tense conveyance of these truths to her reader—these qualities of her writing are downright Dickinsonian.

According to Hampl, certain writers evoke sounds of loving recognition

("mews") when you mention their names to people. She offers Chekov and Dickinson as primary examples: "Their greatness consists of a one-to-one intimacy. They come to each reader alone, which results in a great sense of intimacy across the ages."

While the test of time is yet to come, I would venture that Hampl's work has a similar quality. Her books of poetry and memoir, all critically acclaimed, take readers on intimate tours of the writer's



Photo by Alec Soth

mind and heart—whether they are set in her native St. Paul, Minnesota, in the Italian countryside, or on the streets of Prague. The nature of Hampl's writing is open and questioning, qualities she admires in Dickinson's work, which she describes as "the expression of a truly unmediated mind. . . as transparent and clear as cool water."

Hampl draws on Dickinson for the epigraph to *Virgin Time*, her memoir exploring Catholicism and the contemplative life: "Wonder is not precisely Knowing/ And not precisely Knowing not— . . ." (J1331). This wonder-ful, liminal space between the known and unknown fuels Hampl's art as well as Dickinson's (and, like the poet, Hampl never strays far from spiritual searching). Commenting on

Dickinson, she notes in her introduction to her anthology of sacred poetry, *Burning Bright*, "The loss of faith, the nostalgia for or fury against religion, are all part of the sacred. Not-knowing is at the heart of monotheism's encounter with the holy."

That *Burning Bright* contains only two poems by Dickinson belies the fact that Hampl was steeped in the *Collected Poems* as she prepared the book. She typed each "contender" for publication into her computer. "How often do you copy down a poem?" she asks, reflecting on how much more deeply one gets to know a poem through the act of copying it. She continues, "When I got to Emily Dickinson, I just read and read. I was typing in a huge percentage of the collected poems. I had dozens and dozens. . . more than any other poet."

Eventually, she cut the group down to six or seven, and then her editors had her pare them down to two: J564 ("My period had come for Prayer—") and J623 ("It was too late for Man—"). Those poems, according to Hampl, reflect Dickinson's lifelong sense of faith as being "absolutely wedded to doubt or uncertainty. . . Her spiritual life was the first place where she was wounded, afflicted, going against the grain."

Faith remains a generative subject for Hampl as well. While Dickinson called faith "the thing with feathers— . . ." (J254), Hampl comments in *Virgin Time*, "Maybe that's faith: the smart little laugh that holds the world up" (7). For both writers, faith maintains an ephemeral quality, tenuous in its intimate connection to doubt.

This marriage of faith and doubt serves as a wellspring of art for both writers. According to Hampl, the decision to remain a "no-hoper" at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary was for Dickinson "the defining moment. . . the beginning of her relationship to poetry: *not* claiming something, *not* standing up." As for herself, she comments in an *Alaska Quarterly*

Review interview that the certainty and complacency of the “paradise closed system” that characterized her Catholic upbringing in St. Paul, “when it proves after all not to be true to the world, is dislocating enough to keep you busy for the rest of your life” (12).

Hampl notes that Dickinson “was always there” in her life as a reader and writer. However, in her youth she thought of her merely as “the custodian of sentiment.” It was not until after graduate school that Hampl read Dickinson and “found her very different from the one I thought.”

Who is this “different” Dickinson? No less than a model for what it means to be a writer. When she read “This is my letter to the World” (J441), Hampl thought, “Yes, that’s what it is. It’s to be alone in a house writing to the world . . . the world being all of human history.” Hampl looks at Dickinson’s *Collected Poems* “literally the way people look at scripture,” opening the volumes at random to see what she will discover. She compares Dickinson to Whitman—“together they are the Mom and Pop of American poetry”—observing that both saw themselves as writing their lives, not a book; they were attentive to individual experience while also writing to and for the world. “Like Whitman,” remarks Hampl, “Dickinson really understood herself as not writing into a desk drawer, but into the world. . . . When she wrote, ‘This is my Letter to the World’ she meant it!”

While some writers believe in choosing a genre and sticking with it, Hampl describes herself as belonging to the “it all comes out of the same hopper” school of writing. She describes poetry as her “taproot,” branching out from it to memoir, travel writing, history, and fiction. She is particularly interested in the connections between poetry and the memoir. “The impulse behind poetry and memoir is much more akin than the novel and memoir,” she observes. For both poetry and memoir, the voice (“the ‘open sesame’ for everything”) remains primary, with action and plot secondary. She describes an authoritative literary voice as belonging to a writer with “the capacity to write in language that is a facsimile of human presence. You lose the sense of language

"The Moment"  
Patricia Hampl

*Standing by the parking-ramp elevator  
a week ago, sunk, stupid with sadness.  
Black slush puddled on the cement floor,  
the place painted a killer-pastel  
as in an asylum.  
A numeral 1, big as a person,  
was stencilled on the cinder block:  
Remember your level.  
The toneless bell sounded.  
Doors opened, nobody inside.  
Then, who knows why, a rod of light  
at the base of my skull flashed  
to every outpost of my far-flung body—  
I’ve got my life back.  
It was nothing, just the present moment  
occurring for the first time in months.  
My head translated light,  
my eyes spiked with tears.  
The awful green walls, I could have stroked  
them.  
The dirt, the moving cube I stepped into—  
it was all beautiful,  
everything that took me up.*

*The New Yorker*

and gain a sense of a perceiving presence in your midst.”

I believe her poem “The Moment” conveys this sense of a palpable, present voice, one writing at once to the world and to each individual reader. In the first half of the poem she suggests depression with almost clinical accuracy, describing how she perceives the floor and walls of the parking ramp, the sound of the elevator bell. It reminds me of several Dickinson poems that achieve this in-the-moment effect (e.g., J280 “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” or J341 “After great pain, a formal feeling comes—”). And then, at the mid-point of the poem, her perception radically shifts—“*I’ve got my life back*”—and all that was ugly and depressing suddenly looks beautiful. What causes the shift is revealing: “It was nothing, just the present moment/occurring for the first time in months.”

For Trish Hampl—and, I would argue, for Emily Dickinson—to “have a life” is to live in the present moment, and to convey the truth of that present moment

to “the world” in an intimate way. . . .that is poetry.

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# "IF I CAN STOP ONE HEART FROM BREAKING": AN ANSWER TO A RIDDLE

By Jonathan Morse

I  
In the spring 2002 issue of the *Bulletin* I reprinted an anonymous piece of rhyming prose obviously related to "If I can stop one heart from breaking" (Fr982) and asked readers an optimistic question: what if this text was not an imitation of Dickinson's poem but a source? My query was prompted by an ulterior motive. Like many readers, notably including Adrienne Rich, I have been taken aback by this poem. Its author wants us to watch her fetch the smelling salts and the ladder? Its author is *Emily Dickinson*? Somehow, those two propositions are hard to reconcile. So I was hoping we could absolve Dickinson of the responsibility for "If I can stop one heart from breaking." Unfortunately, it appears that we can't.

The first pieces of the puzzle were put together by Norbert Hirschhorn, who pointed out by e-mail that "If I can stop one heart from breaking" seems to bear a generic similarity to Kipling's "If." Picking up from that clue, I searched the Web for texts combining the phrases "if I can" and "in vain," and in websites devoted to inspiration, exhortation, and emotional support I found—literally, not figuratively—tens of thousands. Most of these were reprints of Dickinson's poem itself. But there were also many imitations—for instance, these two by Anonymous.

If I can help somebody as I pass along,  
If I can cheer somebody with a word  
or song,  
If I can show somebody that he's  
traveling wrong,  
Then my living shall not be in vain.  
—  
If I can throw a single ray of light  
Across the darkened pathway of  
another;  
If I can aid some soul to clearer sight  
Of life or duty, and thus bless my  
brother;  
If I can wipe from any human cheek a  
tear,  
I shall not have lived my life in vain

while here.

There are many others in exactly the same vein, by (for instance) Bernie Howe, Richard Brian Drake, and Hosezell Blash. In fact, my most recent Google search for the string

+“if i can” +“in vain” –dickinson  
–dickenson  
yielded 34,000 hits.<sup>1</sup>

And aside from those, the trope "If I can . . . not in vain" also appears in at least two essays that Dickinson could have read in her school days: Addison's *Spectator* 1 ("If I can in any way contribute to the Diversion or Improvement of the Country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret Satisfaction of thinking that I have not Lived in vain") and Washington Irving's "The Christmas Dinner" ("If . . . I can by any lucky chance, in these days of evil, rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heavy heart of one moment of sorrow; if I can now and then penetrate through the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make my reader more in good humor with his fellow beings and himself, surely, surely, I shall not then have written entirely in vain").<sup>2</sup>

Dickinson would also have known Psalm 127 ("Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it") and I Corinthians 15.58 ("Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"). And of course she copied "If I can stop one heart from breaking" into Set 7 just two years after Abraham Lincoln assured America at Gettysburg, "These honored dead shall not have died in vain." As of 1865, the trope was a part of the everyday language of educated Amherst.

In other words, we probably must acknowledge that "If I can stop one heart from breaking" was composed by Emily Dickinson. As her great period of creativity came to an end, the poet who wrote "I . . . never consciously touch a paint, mixed by another person" (L271) seems to have

painted a poem by the numbers she found in conventional rhetoric.

II  
But the Web tells another story as well. It is this: "If I can stop one heart from breaking," apparently one of the most popular poems from Todd and Higginson's 1890 selection, remains one of the most popular today. Of course, the present academic canon of Dickinson's verse was established during the Modernist revolution of the 1920s—so long ago by now that it may seem permanent. But alongside the academic canon, it appears, there runs another canon: a canon that was in place during Dickinson's lifetime and lives on in the shade of the established one.

So Adrienne Rich may have overlooked something historical when she complained, in her 1975 essay "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson," that the continuing popularity of "If I can stop one heart from breaking" is "extremely strange." It is extremely strange only if we forget that the dialogue between Emily Dickinson and Martha Dickinson Bianchi was a dialogue, mutually understood and affording mutual happiness. At any rate, a part of the literary culture of the English language does seem to remember that the messages from Aunt Emily which Martha chose to immortalize in her flutteriest prose ("perhaps three tiny frosted, heart-shaped cakes, or some of her chocolate caramels—with a flower on top, heliotrope, a red lily, or cape jasmine—and underneath always a note or poem for our mother") were communications in a language not yet dead.<sup>3</sup> Dressed in white and speaking the Language of Flowers, it seems to be robustly alive in the community whose lingua franca is the disembodied speech of the Internet.

So is it time for us Dickinsonians to read "If I can stop one heart from breaking" as an exercise in retranslation back into the language of the original? I'm afraid the answer may be Yes.

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# TEVIS KIMBALL:

## HONORING THE LEGACY, EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE

By Wendy Kohler

Dickinson is the poet whose signature, on occasion, was the name of the town in which she lived for nearly all her days: *Amherst*. Tevis Kimball, Curator of Special Collections at the Jones Library in Amherst since March of 2001, recognizes the unique place that the Amherst town library with its rich Dickinson collection holds both for Dickinson scholarship and for general public interest. Indeed, she refers to the collection at the Jones as “a national treasure,” readily acknowledging the enormous contributions of previous curators, including Charles Green (who first identified the critical role of the Jones in Dickinson acquisition and preservation) and Dan Lombardo (who lifted the collection and its related exhibits to even greater significance and stature). There is a legacy that calls for new initiatives. Kimball regards her tenure at the Jones as a time of new opportunity, a critical juncture in the evolution of the collection and its function as parcel of the larger landscape of Dickinson resources. She hopes to engage others in the exploration of new possibilities in which (dare we say?) to “dwell.”

“I was touched by Amherst and certainly very inspired by Amherst and the land,” Tevis said, early in our interview. Kimball received her bachelor’s degree at the University of Massachusetts. After graduation, she worked at the Jones Library for a time, including a stint in the Children’s Room. “I’ve always been drawn to the library,” she commented. Those EDIS readers who’ve shared the delight in visiting the Amherst town facility will surely understand Tevis’ attraction to the physical space and to the riches within. Tevis next earned her master’s degree in library science from the University of Rhode Island, and then served as catalogue librarian at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library in Providence. She later worked at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth library, but it was her work at the repository for the history of Rhode Island that especially

prepared Tevis for her role as curator of special collections at the Jones.

A stint in the corporate world, however, was next for Tevis. “I decided to take my library skills and make a journey through corporate America trying to sell the notion of managing information and providing access to that information... notions that are still not fully understood in corporate America.” Tevis tackled the business world at Fleet Bank in Providence and at



Photo Courtesy of the Daily Hampshire Gazette

Northeast Utilities in Hartford, Connecticut, before deciding “it was the time in my life to try something new.” What was “new” was a return to Amherst and to its library. “So many people have been touched by this place,” Tevis says, “I know it has done that in my life.”

The position of curator of special collections at the Jones presents a number of daunting challenges. The Dickinson collection is arguably most distinguished by its record of the story of Dickinson’s Amherst, including town, church, school, and Amherst Academy records. It has a strong collection of biography and literary criticism, as well as a growing repository of works by artists inspired by Dickinson, artists using a variety of media for their expressions of this inspiration, from textiles to watercolor to song. The

Jones also owns one of the finest collections of Robert Frost, including all of the editions of his work as well as journal articles. Frost worked in the Jones, and left manuscripts and proofs. The Jones also can boast of a fine photo collection, one soon to be enhanced by Tevis’s acquisition of a special photograph of Frost at the White House. Beyond the Dickinson and Frost collections, the Jones attracts visitors for its resources on local poet Robert Francis and author David Grayson (Ray Stannard Baker), its materials on the history of the Pioneer Valley (including Shays Rebellion), its excellent genealogy collection, and the papers of author and educator Julius Lester as well as other distinguished local writers.

Still, the unique place of Amherst in the life of its own poet is surely the source of greatest possibility and, perhaps, purpose for the Jones Library Special Collections. Sitting with Tevis in the warmth of her office, one can’t help but feel the impulse to join with her in creating a brighter, larger vision for the future. Tevis asks, “How do we bring the Amherst poet alive to more people? For me here at the Jones, how do I make her work accessible?” Like the rest of us, Tevis appreciates the increased vitality and richness of interpretation at both the Homestead and the Evergreens. She understands that the Jones is a place for information, not necessarily interpretation. On the other hand, she sees her role as curator as more than one who preserves and protects, but also one who can take the collection in new and expanded directions. Readers must be reminded, however, that the town of Amherst and the “Friends” of its public library can dedicate only limited resources to support such efforts. What Tevis is hoping for and needs is collaboration, a partnership with other agencies and funding sources. “So many people come here who want to be able to touch Dickinson,” Tevis says. “I would like to bring this collection and access to this collection to a new level, to share with people some time

*continued on page 11*

## FAIRER HOUSES

By Jane Wald, Director of the Evergreens, and Cindy Dickinson, Curator of the Homestead

On a brisk November day, on Main Street in Amherst, you might spot Kevin Sweeney, Professor of History and American Studies at Amherst College, standing in front of the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens, surrounded by a small group of undergraduates, pen and notebook in hand, eyes shifting from one house to the other. Their attention is focused, not on the poet's fading lantern light at the second floor window, but on a comparison of the cupola perched atop the federal-style Homestead and the Italianate tower rising above The Evergreens.

Sweeney has brought students to the Homestead and to The Evergreens for architectural tours or for exhaustive "top-to-bottom" examinations for the past ten years. For his courses in material culture and American history, Sweeney finds that close observation of architecture and objects from the past not only illustrates larger points about social and cultural change but also develops critical thinking skills. Several of his students have completed substantial research projects or theses on topics related to the Homestead or The Evergreens, and a few have gone on to graduate work and careers in museums.

Professor Sweeney is one of a number of five-college faculty (Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, and Smith Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst) who have used one or both of the Dickinson houses in their teaching, not merely for guided tours, but as settings for and focuses of study in themselves. In the past five years, the houses have become sites for semester-long academic courses as well as subjects of intensive student research, serving academic goals and benefiting the historic sites at the same time.

Poetry, of course, may be the most natural subject to contemplate at the Homestead. In the spring of 2001, Karen Sanchez-Eppler, Professor of English Literature at Amherst College, used the Dickinson Homestead as a classroom for her course "Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Emily

Dickinson." Her experience as a member, then chair of the Homestead Advisory Committee spurred a pedagogical interest in holding classes at the Homestead and exploring ways that poetry could be presented to the public. For Sanchez-Eppler, studying Emily Dickinson and her work at the Homestead is a uniquely apt metaphor for examining the relationship between poetic culture and material culture.

"Besides the manuscripts," she explains, "the material object that has most dominated our thinking about Dickinson is the Homestead itself. She lived her adult writing life almost exclusively within its spaces. The unusually house-bound nature of her biography and the prominence of domestic and architectural imagery in her poems" encourage us to seek the historical and material contexts for her work. On the other hand, Dickinson's metaphorical references to houses, windows, and doors clearly transcend the confines of the Homestead. Nevertheless, studying Dickinson within the walls of the Homestead not only gives Professor Sanchez-Eppler's students a physical connection to the creation of the poetry, but also gives physicality to the images in the poetry being studied.

A central goal of the course was the creation of exhibits and interpretive aids that help the casual Homestead visitor gain fresh perspective on literature or understand something new about Dickinson's poetry. Students produced an illustrated, chronological outline of Dickinson's life in a large cloth-bound volume; a scrapbook of works by women writers who were contemporaries of Dickinson; an interactive exhibit that explored Dickinson's variant wordings and how these alternatives affect the meaning of poems; an exhibit that interrogated one of Dickinson's linguistic innovations, the relation between abstract and physical terms in her poems; and an exhibit of books that Dickinson discusses in her correspondence. The students' thoughtful and comprehensive approach to these projects not only enhanced their own understanding of Dickinson's poetry but

also demonstrated the variety of ways that poetry, history, and the museum experience can vividly intersect.

Such intersections are also at the heart of Professor Martha Ackmann's "Emily Dickinson in Her Times," which she has offered through the Mount Holyoke College Women's Studies Program for four of the last five years. This course, developed in 1998, was the first undergraduate course taught at the Dickinson Homestead.

As director of Mount Holyoke College's Community-Based Learning program (in addition to her faculty position in the Women's Studies Program), Ackmann feels strongly that there is great benefit to getting out of the classroom and into the community—particularly to interact with organizations that are serving public needs. A program of the College's Weissman Center for Leadership, community-based learning brings together students, faculty, and community organizations in courses that combine analysis and action. Coursework and projects provide intellectually rich experiences for students. Community organizations benefit, too, as students apply theoretical knowledge to concrete problems and offer solutions.

In the case of Professor Ackmann's course, there is a clear and sharp focus on the literal and specific historical context of Emily Dickinson's life and work—one that makes holding class meetings at the Dickinson Homestead a natural and powerful link. In the Homestead environment, students become acquainted with the poet's biography and her milieu—her family and friends, her schooling and reading habits, her gradual seclusion, her creative work and struggle with the notion of publication. Throughout the course, Ackmann encourages students to challenge their own assumptions and perceptions, and dig into the "familial, cultural, gendered, and historical context that allows for a better understanding of Dickinson's work."

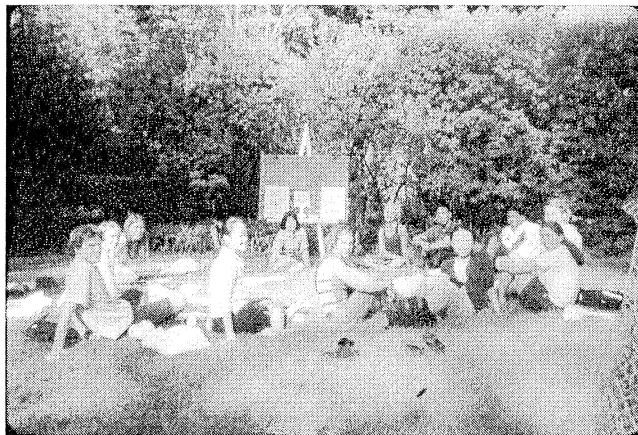
Martha Ackmann's students take their educational experience beyond history and literature. Public service projects



undertaken as part of the course design have returned “value” to the Homestead and The Evergreens in numerous ways. Students have produced an exhibit, still installed, about Dickinson’s education at Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary; mounted another exhibit about the publication of Dickinson poems in the *Springfield Republican*; and offered presentations to the guiding staff on the theme of Dickinson and politics. Siobhan Eaton, class of ’99, turned her community-based learning experience in Professor Ackmann’s Emily Dickinson course into a substantial research project and then an internship at The Evergreens. Her paper on Susan Dickinson’s redecoration of The Evergreens’ dining room combined issues of women’s roles and autonomy in the late nineteenth century with aesthetic and cultural trends of the period. For her Women’s Studies major, Eaton then served a semester-long internship at The Evergreens developing public education programs that emphasized the roles and experiences of the three women who gave identity to and preserved the site—Susan Huntington Dickinson, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, and Mary Hampson. As with Sanchez-Eppler’s course, Ackmann’s students undertook projects that deepened the interpretation of both the Homestead and The Evergreens, furthering the educational and public service missions of the two institutions.

The newest course to use the resources of both the Homestead and The Evergreens expands the emphasis on community service learning and public engagement even further. “Mining the Museum: Adventures in Museum Theory and Prac-

tice” offers undergraduate students the opportunity to go behind the scenes at area historic sites to explore every aspect of how museums work. Co-hosted this fall by The Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens, the course was conceived and is taught by Marla Miller, an American history professor at the University of Massachusetts and Director of its Public History Program. “With over 2 million people visiting the country’s 16,000 historic sites on any given day, museum-going is one of the most important venues for the cultivation of historical understanding in the United States,” says Miller. Whether her students remain “consumers” of history-telling institutions or decide to enter the field as professionals,



Karen Sanchez-Eppler's class with their projects on a May afternoon at the Homestead.  
Photo by Karen Sanchez-Eppler

Miller aims to broaden and deepen their understanding of how museums function in American society by examining the range of issues and challenges currently facing such institutions.

A central feature of the course is a grant-funded Community Service Learning component. Teams of students col-

laborate on one of four projects that contribute a useful work product to the co-host institutions. This year’s projects involve the production of education materials and merchandising proposals for the Homestead and public program planning and collections documentation for The Evergreens. Professor Miller says that “the projects are designed to help students draw connections between the ideas we read and talk about in class and on-the-ground conditions found in museum work. They test abstract ideas in real-world contexts and, just as important, they give students an opportunity to serve their adopted community [Amherst] in a meaningful way.”

Although the class meets weekly at the Dickinson Homestead, students travel the world of Massachusetts historic house museums, visiting a different site each week during the semester. The behind-the-scenes nature of these experiences helps students to gain a clear understanding of concepts and issues commonly encountered in museum work and to evaluate the effectiveness of interpretive strategies used by various historic sites. Professor Miller expects that by the end of the course many in the class will have the insights and hands-on experience to determine whether they would want to pursue a career in the museum field.

From serving as comparative examples of changing architectural style, to venues for learning about and educating the public about poetry, to providing a laboratory for the exploration of what it means to be a museum, the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens in these course settings

*continued on page 13*

## LATE-BREAKING NEWS

*The Dickinsons of Amherst* by Jerome Liebling, photographer, and Christopher Benfey, Polly Longworth, and Barton Levi St. Armand, has been selected as the winner of the 2002 Umhoefer Prize for Achievement in the Humanities presented by the Arts and Humanities Foundation. The photographer and authors will be receiving a medallion and a cash prize.

The Foundation will be announcing

the award with an advertisement in the late December double issue of *The New Yorker* magazine.

Previous winners include *John Singer Sargent*, edited by Elaine Kilmurry and Richard Ormond, published by Princeton University Press, and *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by R. W. Franklin, published by Harvard University Press.

The Arts and Humanities Foundation

selected this year's winner for its outstanding contribution to the arts and the humanities, its ability to blend the visual and the textual, and its success in bringing an understanding of Dickinson's life and its effect on her work to scholars and the general public.

# MEMBERS' NEWS

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## EDIS GOES TO PHILADELPHIA

The next gathering of the Emily Dickinson International Society will be held in Philadelphia, on the campus of Cabrini College, from June 27 to 29, 2003. The focus of the weekend program will be "Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore," and highlights will include talks on Dickinson and Moore as well as Dickinson and Philadelphia, workshop discussions of Dickinson and Moore poems and letters, a special exhibition of

Dickinson and Moore materials at the Rosenbach Museum & Library, and the annual business meeting. The weekend will begin with a banquet on Friday evening. Several housing options will be available, including rooms in a residence hall on the Cabrini College campus. Look for more details in a special winter mailing and in the Spring *Bulletin*. Questions and inquiries should be directed to Jonnie Guerra,

EDIS President, at email address [jguerra@cabrini.edu](mailto:jguerra@cabrini.edu) or the following snail mail address: Office of Academic Affairs, Cabrini College, 610 King of Prussia Road, Radnor, PA 19087.

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## MEMBER-AT-LARGE ELECTION

One seat on the Emily Dickinson International Society Board of Directors is designated to represent the membership at large, and election of the person who serves as the representative of the general membership occurs once every three years. The term of the current Member-at-Large, Mary Elizabeth Kromer Bernhard, will expire in the summer of 2003. Society members are invited to present themselves as candidates for the anticipated vacancy.

The Board ordinarily meets once a year in conjunction with the Society's annual meeting (generally in the summer), and the Member-at-Large is expected to attend the annual meetings. The Society does not fund board attendance, so candidates should expect to fund annual meeting attendance either on their own or with institutional assistance. In addition,

board members work during the year on Society projects and frequently communicate via email, regular mail, or telephone at their own expense.

If you are interested in providing leadership for the Emily Dickinson International Society and supporting its mission of promoting interest in Dickinson and her poetry, you are invited to submit your name for consideration for the position of Member-at-Large. All members in good standing are eligible, without regard for geography or profession. Nominations of eligible members who meet these criteria also are welcome. By March, the Nominating Committee, headed by Ellen Louise Hart, will identify a slate of candidates to present to the general membership for selection of the new Member-at-Large.

Anyone wishing to become a candi-

date should contact Jonnie Guerra, EDIS President, by January 31, 2003, at [jguerra@cabrini.edu](mailto:jguerra@cabrini.edu) or Office of Academic Affairs, Cabrini College, 610 King of Prussia Road, Radnor, PA 19087. Be sure to include a brief statement of goals and qualifications pertinent to your candidacy. If you wish to nominate a candidate, please ensure that the person is willing to run and ask him or her to forward the aforementioned statement to Jonnie Guerra. There will be a mail election in late February or March, with the winner announced in the spring *Bulletin*.

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## NEWS FROM ABROAD

Anna Chesnokova writes from the Kyiv National Linguistic University, in the Ukraine, that Dickinson studies are not widespread there but are quite vital. Lack of books and limited finances are part of the reason for the relatively sparse interest; another, writes Chesnokova, is that "Dickinson's worldview, her comprehension of existential matters, and her poetic credo are pretty much alien to the Ukrainian culture." With assistance and encouragement from Professor Galik Artemchuk, this scholar spent several years "comparing different aspects of Emily's verse (tropes, metaphor in par-

ticular, prosody, thematic range, etc.) with those of the most famous though totally unknown in the West Ukrainian romantic poet Lesya Ukrainka." More recently, as a means of making Dickinson more accessible to Ukrainians, Chesnokova has undertaken a "conceptual metaphor analysis" of the poet's work.

Chesnokova has also encouraged two of her students to involve themselves with Dickinson's work: Natalya Bezrevraya, working on semantic features of Dickinson's poems, and Natalya Pyatak, studying gender peculiarities of Dickinson's verses about nature in juxtaposition with those of Robert Frost.

According to her mentor, Pyatak "hopes to find out how masculine and feminine dominants affect the poetic vision of two great poets—pretty close chronologically, geographically, etc, though remarkably different in their artistic heritage."

Last but not least, Chesnokova tries to keep the global community informed of the state of Dickinson studies in the Ukraine by presenting papers at meetings of the Poetics and Linguistics Association. Chesnokova comments on this effort and others: "I sincerely wish people in other countries to realize that we, though

facing numerous difficulties, are not idle in Ukraine at all." Dickinson scholars and others with an interest in Chesnokova's work are welcome to contact her via e-mail at [chesnokov@profit.net.ua](mailto:chesnokov@profit.net.ua).

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## ACADEMIC MEETINGS

### Call for Emily Dickinson Papers for the American Literature Association Annual Conference, May 22-25, 2003

The Emily Dickinson International Society will be sponsoring two panels at the 2003 American Literature Association Annual Conference in Cambridge, MA. One panel is entitled "Dickinson and Eco-Criticism." The other panel topic is open. We invite papers and abstracts that examine Dickinson's relation to the natural world and explore connections between her literary text and physical environment. We also welcome submissions that seek to explore Dickinson in other interdisciplinary contexts. The deadline for submissions is January 5, 2003.

Sessions are being coordinated by Paul Crumbley and Rob Smith. Please send abstracts to Rob Smith, Department of English, K-16, Knox College, Galesburg, IL 61401

### EDIS will sponsor two panels for the SSAW (Society for the Study of American Writers) Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, September 24-27, 2003

Session I: "Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters." Submit proposal of 500 words to Eleanor Heginbotham, English Department, Concordia University St. Paul. Address to 172 E. Sixth Street #605-J; Saint Paul, MN 55101 or [heginbotham@csp.edu](mailto:heginbotham@csp.edu). Papers may include the correspondents of Dickinson in her own day or those who currently "read her letter to the world" in the manuscript form.

Session II: "Emily Dickinson as a Nineteenth Century 'Authoress.'" Submit proposal of 500 words to Jane Eberwein, Department of English, Oakland Univer-

sity, Rochester, MN 48309; [jberwein@oakland.edu](mailto:jberwein@oakland.edu). Notions of "authoress" in Nineteenth Century America and ways that Dickinson subverted or filled those notions may be among topics for papers for this panel.

Deadline for submission to both panels is January 5, 2003. For further information on SSAWW and the conference see <http://www.unl.edu/legacy/SSAWWconf.html>.

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## Susan Howe to Speak

Susan Howe, professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo, will deliver the Emily Dickinson Lecture in Poetry at the Pennsylvania State University on April 24, 2003. Howe is the author of several books of poems, her most recent being *The Europe of Trusts* (2002) and two volumes of criticism: *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (1993)--reviewed in the *Bulletin* 8.1: 11 (1996) and 6.2: 12 (1994)--and *My Emily Dickinson* (1985). Howe was also a plenary speaker at the fourth international conference sponsored by EDIS in Trondheim, Norway, in 2001. The lectureship, an annual event supported by an endowment from George and Barbara Kelly, is free and open to the public.

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## Shirts Available!

A few "Emily Dickinson in Song" t-shirts are still available in sizes L, XL, and we are printing more sizes S and M, which sold out at our 2002 meeting. The price for all sizes is \$15.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping. Please send orders to Georgie Strickland, 133 Lackawanna Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. Allow three weeks for delivery.

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## Chapter Notes

The Minnesota Chapter of EDIS is busy again. Erika Scheuer (University of Saint Thomas) and Eleanor Heginbotham (Concordia University-St. Paul) participated in a conversation with "The Belle of Amherst" in the person of Linda Kelsey. Kelsey is interpreting Dickinson at the Park Square Theater; the discussion, held in the richly refurbished central library, took place October 19.

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*"Tevis Kimball: Honoring the Legacy, Embracing the Challenge" continued from page 7*

of reflection and a sense of this town and her poet."

No one speaks to her readers so directly, so intimately, and yet is as impenetrable as Dickinson. Perhaps that is why so many make the pilgrimage to Amherst -- they want to stand where she stood, read papers that she read, smell the scents of her Amherst seasons. Visitors ask Tevis Kimball an endless array of questions. "What kind of Civil War music did Emily Dickinson listen to?" "What were the names of all the cats in the household?" "Who were the hired help and where did they live?" The decisions about what and how to add to the Dickinson collection are awesome ones, but Tevis Kimball is clearly capable of meeting the challenges and energized by the possibilities. (She conceives, for example, of a special website with access to children that would call on scholars to tell their pieces of the story.) It is our good fortune that Tevis combines a depth of insight with talent and imagination. She recognizes the importance of place for Dickinson as we all look to Amherst as a destination in our individual and collective exploration of her life and work.

What is -- "Paradise" --  
Who live there --  
Are they "Farmers" --  
Do they "Hoe" --  
Do they know that this is "Amherst" --  
And that I -- am coming -- too --  
(Fr 241, l. 1-6)

*Wendy Kohler is the Executive Director of Secondary Curriculum for the Amherst Regional Schools. She has participated in a variety of Dickinson-related projects, most recently as Humanities Consultant to the documentary Loaded Gun--Life, Death, and Emily Dickinson.*

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor*

**Worrall, Simon.** *The Poet and the Murderer: A True Story of Literary Crime and the Art of Forgery.* New York: Dutton, 2002. 270 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-525-94596-2, \$23.95.

*Reviewed by David Garnes*

Although readers might reasonably approach *The Poet and the Murderer: A True Story of Literary Crime and the Art of Forgery* with an expectation that it focuses on Emily Dickinson (the poet) and Mark Hofmann (the murderer), such is not the case. The Dickinson forgery, around which the book is ostensibly structured, is but one of several crimes committed by Hofmann, and it is his entire bizarre and compelling career, culminating in a double homicide, that is herein recounted by journalist Simon Worrall.

By the time the supposed Dickinson poem went on the Sotheby auction block in 1997 and enjoyed its fifteen minutes of literary fame, Mark Hofmann, its true creator, had already served several years in the Utah State Correctional Facility for two murders and numerous forgeries, mostly involving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Himself a lapsed Mormon, Hoffman—brilliant, canny, extraordinarily talented—managed to pawn off as authentic hundreds of forgeries of items ranging from key Mormon artifacts to letters and autographs of historical figures as disparate as Abraham Lincoln, Jack London, Daniel Boone, Mark Twain, Butch Cassidy—and Emily Dickinson.

The Dickinson episode involved a short poem, purportedly written around 1871, expressing the narrator's ambivalence about the existence of God. Though hardly an effort likely to enhance the poet's reputation, the document seemed authentic in terms of the paper used, the sentiments expressed, and, notably, the handwriting, which was identical to Dickinson's during this period. It was signed "Aunt Emily" on the verso.

In three early chapters in his book, Worrall takes us through the intensely

dramatic tale of the poem's short history: its initial appearance in a Sotheby catalog, its subsequent purchase by the Jones Library in Amherst, and its eventual return to the auction house a few months later as an acknowledged forged document, thanks primarily to the efforts of Daniel Lombardo, then Curator of Special Collections at the Jones. (Note: For Lombardo's recounting of the entire story, the reader is referred to his article "Entertaining Plated Wares" in the November/December 1997 *EDIS Bulletin*.)

As he does throughout the book, Worrall tells the Dickinson tale in the style of the "non-fiction" novel, detailing inner thoughts of both Lombardo and Ralph Franklin, at that time working on his landmark edition of Dickinson's poems. While this device may or may not reflect what was related to Worrall by those interviewed (Worrall did speak to both Lombardo and Franklin), such musings are much more problematic when they involve Mark Hofmann, with whom Worrall was unsuccessful in communicating. Describing Hofmann's contemplating his just-completed Dickinson forgery, for example, Worrall writes, "It was no great work of art, he thought. But it would do."

It is this kind of impressionistic, quasi-journalistic presentation that is most likely to put off the "serious reader" of *The Poet and the Murderer*. Additionally, a later chapter about Dickinson entitled "The Myth of Amherst" does little to add to one's knowledge of the poet and in fact promulgates an image that muddies rather than enlightens ("She spent most of her time in the second-floor bedroom where she wrote her poetry.") Clearly intrigued by Dickinson, Worrall also offers his own cursory speculation as to the identity of the "Master" (he thinks it's Samuel Bowles) in a short, somewhat unrelated epilogue.

Lacking an index, bibliography and endnotes, *The Poet and the Murderer* should not be judged as a scholarly study in the traditional academic sense. But it is a good read, telling a page-turning tale of obfuscation, outright deception, greed and

murder in a variety of seemingly unlikely venues—the Mormon Church, Sotheby's, and the world of the rare book dealer.

And where else in the Dickinson literature does one find life at the Evergreens summarized as a "nineteenth-century version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*" or Johnson's edition of Dickinson's poems described as having "plucked a shy girl from Massachusetts out of her self-chosen seclusion and turned her into the It girl of modern American poetry"?

*David Garnes, a former librarian at Columbia University and the University of Connecticut, is currently a guide at the Dickinson Homestead.*

**Berg, Stephen, ed.** *My Business Is Circumference: Poets on Influence and Mastery.* Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2001. 294 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-9664913-9-4, \$24.95.

Twenty-eight contemporary American poets responded to Stephen Berg's invitation to contribute one of their own poems, several poems that influenced their work, and an essay on influence and mastery. Emily Dickinson is the most frequently cited influence with six poets (Hayden Carruth, Gillian Conoley, Claudia Keelan, Michael Ryan, Ira Sadoff, and Karen Volkman) choosing ten diverse Dickinson poems; her closest rival is Walt Whitman with five poems. A wide range of influential poets is represented. Some contributors seem evasive and uncomfortable on the topic of influence and mastery; others are more forthcoming and specific; all bear witness to the mystery of the creative process.

Choosing three Dickinson poems – on pain (J549), blessing (J756), and shame (J1304) – Michael Ryan (197-207) has immersed himself in Dickinson's life and work and the most recent Dickinson scholarship. His own poem, "Reminder," is addressed to himself, a reminder that, as Dickinson said, "Forever is composed of nows." He admires her intense focus, her style based on the hymn stanza, her use of the "omitted center," and her use of a solid

rhetorical structure rather than narrative. He concludes, "Her mastery of grammar and rhetoric were so complete that her failed experiments with them constitute a failure of English to do what she asks of it, although it answered her more often than it didn't." Berg rightly recommends this book to "people who go to poetry because they believe it is a serious, almost miraculous activity, and who want to get as close as possible to the actual struggle of creating poetry."

**Delbanco, Andrew, ed.** *Writing New England: An Anthology from the Puritans to the Present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard Univ. Press, 2001. 463 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-674-00603-8, \$29.95.

Intended to provide general readers with the wide range and history of New England writing, this handsome volume gathers eighty well-known and lesser-known New England voices, bringing to life New England's religious, political, cultural, and literary traditions from its founding religious ideals to its evolution into a modern multi-ethnic, secular culture. The editor's introductory essay on the origins of New England and a sixteen-page chronology of New England events (1607-1993) precede eight thematic sections: "The Founding Idea," "God Speaks to the Rain," "The Examined Self," "A Gallery of Portraits," "Education," "Dissident Dreamers," "Strangers in the Promised Land," and "The Abiding Sense of Place." Selections, each with a brief contextual headnote, include not only works from New England's major writers but also a sampling of Theodore Parker's Puritan sermons, court records from the Salem witch trials, Felix Frankfurter's record of the Sacco and Vanzetti case, William Apess's eulogy for the Native American King Philip, autobiographical writings of W.E.B. Du Bois and Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy's address on civil rights, A. Bartlett Giamatti's memoir of a Red Sox fan, and comedian Fred Allen's humorous praise for his local paper, *The Cape Codder*. Emily Dickinson is represented in two sections with "Four Trees – upon a solitary Acre –" (J742) and "I should have been too glad, I see –" (J313). Delbanco says about Dickinson, "No poet surpassed

the precision and power with which she expressed . . . the nineteenth-century 'loss of faith.'" This volume captures the rich and varied spirit of writers who, like Dickinson, wrote from the "New England mind."

**Delli Carpini, John. Illustrated by Armanda Santos, FSP.** *Poetry as Prayer: Emily Dickinson*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2002. 146 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-8198-5935-4, \$9.95.

One need not be religious to appreciate this volume, slim enough at 5 1/2 by 6 1/2 inches to tuck into a backpack or purse and use as a guide to spiritual meditation. The author distinguishes between religion and spirituality, presenting Dickinson as spiritual in her lifelong quest for truth but not necessarily religious. He states that many of her poems are prayers, "a record of her ongoing dialogue with God," and that reading her poems is "eavesdropping on her holy conversation." An initial biographical chapter and chapters on God, nature, prayer, faith and doubt, and death draw upon a well-chosen selection of Dickinson's poems and letters to support and advance each discussion. Delli Carpini interweaves biographical facts into the text when appropriate, but he focuses primarily on over two dozen poems, citing "This World is not Conclusion" (J501) as Dickinson's credal statement, "an articulation of her belief in God and in God's promises." The author is uplifting, generous of spirit, and a graceful writer. His final chapters are "Six Steps to Reading Poetry in a Holy Way" and "Suggested Poems for Prayer," in which he recommends 37 poems from a wide range of 26 other poets. Contributing to the meditative tone of the book are 16 full-page illustrations: black and white nature photographs mounted on cut and torn paper collages. This volume is the latest in the Poetry as Prayer series that includes volumes on Francis Thompson, Thomas Merton, and Denise Levertov among others.

Note: Future issues will include a selected, annotated bibliography of publications on Emily Dickinson in addition to book reviews.

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*"From the Prairie to the World: Patricia Hampl and Emily Dickinson" continued from page 5*

Ballantine, 1993.

— *Woman Before an Aquarium*. (poetry) Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978.

*Erika Scheurer is associate professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. She is currently developing a book manuscript on Dickinson's rhetorical education.*

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*"If I can stop one Heart from breaking: An Answer to a Riddle" continued from page 6*

#### Notes

1. In English, the search command means: "Find texts containing both the phrase 'if I can' and the phrase 'in vain,' but don't display them if they contain either the word 'Dickinson' or its common misspelling, 'Dickenson.'"

2. Surely, surely, Washington Irving was paid by the word.

3. Martha Dickinson Bianchi, *Emily Dickinson Face to Face: Unpublished Letters with Notes and References* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932), 9.

*Jonathan Morse, Professor of English at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, writes about modernist literature but maintains an outpost in Amherst.*

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*"Fairer Houses," by Jane Wald and Cindy Dickinson, continued from page 9*

enlighten and engage students beyond the usual guided tour. Within and around the two sites, collaborations with the undergraduate institutions in the Five College area testify to the possibilities—those "fairer Houses," to play a bit on Dickinson—that lie at the heart of good education. After a decade of using the two sites as teaching tools, says Kevin Sweeney, "I feel as though I am only beginning to make full use of the possibilities in these dwellings."

# ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Submitted by Barbara Kelly, EDIS Secretary

EDIS Annual Business Meeting  
July 28, 2002  
Amherst Alumni House  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
Approximately 45 present

EDIS President Jonnie Guerra convened the meeting at 11:05 a.m., welcoming all and introducing the members of the EDIS Board of Directors.

Guerra began her President's report with the announcement that Ellie Heginbotham and Gary Stonum will be stepping down from the Board as their terms have expired; however, Stonum will have a seat on the Board as editor of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*.

Guerra also announced that after 11 years of service, Georgiana Strickland will be stepping down as editor of the *Bulletin*. Guerra commended Strickland for her work as the first "official" editor of the *Bulletin*, particularly for the series articles and for the conference issues that were Strickland's original ideas. The membership acknowledged Strickland's work with a standing ovation.

Guerra introduced Michael Kearns, the new editor of the *Bulletin*. Having been a named professor at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, he is the new Chair of the Department of English at the University of Southern Indiana and expects to be a new father soon.

Guerra acknowledged the wonderful Amherst weekend program, a project that developed over three years and has been for the last year the central focus of its organizer, Georgiana Strickland. Guerra presented Strickland with a gift (a Dickinson-inspired paperweight bearing the inscription: "I dwell in possibility") as a token of appreciation. Strickland thanked the Board members and the many individuals who helped her.

Guerra announced the next three EDIS conferences:

- the 2003 Annual Meeting will take place June 27-29 in Philadelphia and have as its theme "Dickinson and Marianne Moore";
- the fifth International Conference is

scheduled for July 30-August 1, 2004, in Hilo, Hawaii;

- the 2005 Annual Meeting will be in Amherst.

Reviewing the events of the year, Guerra said that the "Dickinson Alive" project had had some success. She described an elementary school project in Wayne, Maine, and noted April 5-15 as the dates for the 2003 "Dickinson Alive" Week. She announced that Glenda King's design for an EDIS trademark (the EDIS name in type resembling Dickinson's handwriting) had received a copyright January 24, 2002, and is now an officially registered trademark. Concluding her remarks, Guerra announced that EDIS would give \$500 to the Jones Library in honor of Sylvia F. Rogosa, who funded in whole and in part the 2001 and 2002 Scholar in Amherst Awards; \$500 to the Homestead in honor of Suzanne Juhasz, the former editor of the *Journal*; and \$500 to the Evergreens in honor of Georgiana Strickland.

Guerra asked for and received provisional approval of the minutes from the 2001 Annual Meeting in Trondheim, stating that Gary Stonum will post them on the EDIS website.

Treasurer Ellen Louise Hart reported a balance of \$16,172.86 as of July 17, 2002. She listed various normal expenses, stating that our income is mainly through membership dues, managed for us by Johns Hopkins University Press, publisher of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*.

In Membership Chair James Fraser's absence, Guerra gave an abbreviated report. Presently there are 351 members, though the membership peaks on a regular basis at approximately 400. Membership represents approximately 24 countries.

Nominations Committee Chair Ellie Heginbotham expressed pleasure in serving with her fellow committee members. Nominated and elected were Jonnie Guerra, President; Suzanne Juhasz, Vice-president; Barbara Kelly, Secretary; Ellen Louise Hart, Treasurer; and James Fraser, Membership Chair. The Board elected two new members: Martha Ackmann and

Marianne Noble; and re-elected Vivian Pollak and Martha Nell Smith, whose terms expire this year, for another three-year term as directors.

Updating plans for the 2003 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, Guerra said that the meeting will focus on "Dickinson and Marianne Moore" and will include workshops, several talks, and an exhibit of Dickinson and Moore material at the Rosenbach Museum and Library. Anyone interested in participating should let Guerra know.

Suzanne Juhasz reported on the panels that EDIS has sponsored at the professional meetings.

- The 2001 Modern Language Association featured two panels on Dickinson: "Mourning Dickinson" and "Remembering Dickinson." Panels scheduled for 2002 are "Seeing Dickinson, Sounding Dickinson" and "Dickinson as Historical Guide." Projected panels for 2003 are "Dickinson and Sexuality" and an open session. Juhasz announced that the MLA recertified EDIS for another seven years.

- The 2002 American Literature Association featured two panels on Dickinson: "Dickinson and Politics" and "Dickinson as Precursor." Projected panels for 2003 are "Dickinson as Eco-Critic" and an open session. In Paul Crumbley's absence, Rob McClure Smith will organize the 2003 Dickinson panels.

- A conference topic for the 2003 Society for the Study of American Women Writers will be announced.

Guerra added that the academic associations encourage the open sessions.

Reporting on the EDIS International Conference in Hawaii, scheduled for July 30-August 1, 2004, Guerra said that the program has not been entirely formed yet, but the committee is considering a thematic approach to the plenary sessions and panels, and "Realms of Amplitude" has been suggested. More information will be available in the *Bulletin*, including a call for papers in the spring of 2003.

Reporting on the Scholar in Amherst Award, Guerra said that the inaugural award had been given this year to Paraic

Finnerty from Ireland. He was in Amherst April 9-30, 2002, researching Shakespeare's acceptance in Dickinson's Amherst. The Scholar in Amherst selection committee consists of Suzanne Juhasz, Vivian Pollak, Ellen Louise Hart, and (unofficially) Jonnie Guerra. Applications for the next Scholar in Amherst Award are due October 15, 2002.

*Emily Dickinson Journal* Editor Gary Stonum reported that the four-year terms of three members of the *Journal's* Editorial Board—Jane Eberwein, Cristanne Miller, and Vivian Pollak—have expired, but all three have agreed to another four-year term. The two *Journal* issues this year were a regular issue and one that contained conference papers from Trondheim; one more issue will be devoted to conference papers from Trondheim. Stonum intends to focus on more book reviews in future issues.

EDIS *Bulletin* Editor Georgiana Strickland had no formal report other than to hand on to Michael Kearns the editorship and the gift of a feathered quill

pen placed in a symbolic ink bottle. She also announced that the open mike session, scheduled for the afternoon at Alumni House, would not take place for lack of volunteer performers.

Curator of the Homestead, Cindy Dickinson, thanked the Board for its \$500 gift and expressed appreciation for its support, financial and otherwise. She announced that since her last report, the Homestead orientation center had been completed and that 8,000 visitors (an increase over last year) had been to the Homestead. The Homestead is currently having a new shingle roof installed, one that is in keeping with the Dickinson's nineteenth-century roof. The Homestead and the Evergreens have produced a new joint brochure, and both houses are collaborating on increased public programs. An example was the concert given April 21, in honor of National Poetry Month and "Dickinson Alive" Week. The concert featured the New World Chamber Ensemble from Hartford, Connecticut, performing Gwyneth Walker's *Letters to the*

*World*. The piece included parts for readers of Dickinson's poetry; Jonnie Guerra served as one of the readers.

Director of the Evergreens, Jane Wald, thanked the Board for past EDIS support and the present gift of \$500 in honor of Georgiana Strickland. She said that several events, as well as articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals during 2001, marked the opening of the Evergreens. In 2002, the Evergreens has tripled its open hours, parallel to the Homestead to some extent, and that 1,100 to 1,200 visitors have come through the house this year so far. Wald described a series of ongoing public events jointly sponsored by the Homestead and the Evergreens. Noting that the Evergreens has new wiring and refurbished light fixtures, she hopes to have the house open and more accessible to the public in the future.

Guerra acknowledged the recent deaths of Everett Emerson, Robert Lucas, and William Shurr. The meeting adjourned in time for the scheduled picnic lunch at 12:30 p.m.

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## DICKINSON ALIVE

*By Jonnie Guerra, EDIS President*

Last fall, the Emily Dickinson International Society announced a new project, *Dickinson Alive*, and invited members to plan Dickinson-related events during a weeklong celebration from April 14-21, 2002, to recognize the lasting impact of the poet and her verse on our lives. The celebration was planned to occur in April in order both to coincide with National Poetry Month in the United States and to commemorate April 15th, the anniversary of Dickinson's famous letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, asking him whether or not her verse was "alive."

In addition to the activities documented elsewhere in this issue of the *Bulletin*, several of our members sponsored poetry readings. EDIS member Susan Kerr arranged with the local library in her town (Tyler Library in Foster, Rhode Island) to do a one-hour reading of Dickinson's poetry and letters. The Saskatchewan chapter of EDIS, under the leadership of Cindy MacKenzie, organized a continuous reading of 100 Dickinson poems. Participants included not only chapter

members, but also other Dickinson fans, including the President of the University of Regina where Cindy teaches.

Other highlights of the *Dickinson Alive* week included events hosted in Amherst. The Frost Library of Amherst College sponsored a Dickinson lecture by visiting scholar Domhnall Mitchell. In addition, the Dickinson Homestead and the Evergreens collaborated to present the New World Chamber Ensemble from Hartford, Connecticut, in a performance of Gwyneth Walker's *Letters to the World: a Reflection on the Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Walker's work was made up of five short pieces for piano quartet (violin, viola, cello, and piano), and the Dickinson poem that inspired each was read aloud before the musical portrait was performed by the Ensemble. Readers were Doris Abramson, professor emerita, University of Massachusetts; Tom Gerety, Amherst College President; Jonnie Guerra, EDIS President; Norton Juster, local architect and author; and David Porter, professor, emeritus, University of Massa-

chusetts. The reception that followed the concert featured Dickinson's signature dessert—gingerbread.

The Society looks forward to building on the modest success the project enjoyed in its first year when the second *Dickinson Alive* celebration is mounted this coming spring, April 5-15, 2003. Once again, EDIS members are invited, individually or in groups, to participate in honoring Dickinson's legacy by sponsoring a poetry reading or other event, by teaching a special class on Dickinson, by donating a book to a local library's Dickinson collection, or by making a financial contribution to EDIS, the Homestead, the Evergreens, or another Amherst institution.

The Society looks forward to hearing about your plans to celebrate *Dickinson Alive!* Please email brief reports to Jim Fraser, Membership Chair, at [jcfraser@att.net](mailto:jcfraser@att.net) or to Jonnie Guerra, President, at [jguerra@cabrini.edu](mailto:jguerra@cabrini.edu).

## Emily Dickinson International Society

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Journal Editor: Gary Lee Stonum

Bulletin Editor: Michael Kearns

For more information, see the EDIS Website:

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

## 2002 CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

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

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## EDIS BULLETIN

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