

THE EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

# Bulletin

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

## The Oxford Conference in Retrospect



# EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

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Georgie Strickland

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## Beneath a British Sky

By Jane Eberwein

“Touch Shakespeare for me,” Emily Dickinson commanded the traveling Mabel Loomis Todd (L1004). When other friends visited England, she gave them similar instructions: “Should anybody where you go, talk of Mrs. Browning, you must hear for us” (L266); “perhaps you have spoken with George Eliot. Will you ‘tell me about it?’” (L553). When she imagined visiting England, its chief attractions were literary ones because of the intensely personal attachments she had formed to living and dead authors. Yet her command to Mrs. Todd appears in a letter abounding in descriptions of the New England summer as she herself observed it and as Emerson had celebrated it. This passion for British literature combined with Yankee pride inspired the choice of “Were I Britain born” as theme for the Emily Dickinson Oxford International Conference.

From August 6 through 8, 2010, 119 registered conferees and numerous friends and family members shared in a wide range of scholarly, artistic, and festive activities at various sites in Oxford, England—a college town even older and more storied than Amherst. This was the eighth international conference sponsored by the Emily Dickinson International Society and, with twenty-four countries represented, it was the most diverse. Participants came from the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and India, as well as Australia, and countries in eastern and western Europe, Canada, and the United States. Graduate students shared their findings from dissertation research with scholars whose books have contributed to these projects, and there were lively interchanges between Dickinson specialists and those chiefly devoted to study of authors from other literary traditions.

Beneath a mild British sky, the program began in the courtyard of the Rothermere American Institute on Friday morning. EDIS president Paul Crumb-



ley welcomed the many participants. He spoke of the suitability of Oxford to the work on which all would engage over the following three days, as well as the university’s role in his own familial and scholarly life. Cristanne Miller (past president of EDIS and, with Crumbley, chief organizer of these events) announced upcoming events and made suggestions for smooth transitions between closely timed sessions. Nigel Bowles, Director of the Rothermere, and Ron Bush, Drue Heinz Professor of American Literature at Oxford, extended additional welcomes. After one of many brief interludes for coffee and typically British refreshments, conferees proceeded to the first three of twenty-seven sessions held in meeting rooms of the Rothermere and of Mansfield College across a broad lawn from the Institute.

Papers delivered at these sessions reflected the conference theme in various ways, with many presenters focusing attention on Emily Dickinson’s complex responses to British authors. There were panels on her responses to the established masters such as Shakespeare and Milton; to the Romantics, including Blake, Wordsworth, DeQuincey, and Keats; and to her contemporaries, including Dickens, the Brontës, the Brownings, and George Eliot. Attention was also directed to points of comparison between the New England poet and later writers such as Hopkins,

Joyce, and Woolf whose writings offer instructive parallels. Speakers examined episodes from novels that may have influenced Dickinson’s poems but also explored her adaptations of literary forms such as the sonnet, dramatic monologue, hymn, and various types of lyric that she would have known largely through British models. Her interest in literary careers (especially those of poets and women novelists) engaged attention in multiple panels, sometimes with reference to pen names and Dickinson’s personae.

American authors and historical contexts drew extensive analysis as well, with speakers finding new insights into her attachments to American authors and historical figures—Betsy Ross as well as the Transcendentalists. The poet’s often complex and uncertain responses to the class and gender expectations of her time brought enlightening insights—whether Dickinson was said to have experienced those social constraints through interactions with household servants or through identification with fictional characters. Numerous papers dealt with the influence on Dickinson of the cultural and intellectual upheavals of her era, including geological discoveries about deep time, Darwin’s theory of biological evolution, or potentially disturbing developments in scriptural scholarship. Broadening the range of inquiry still further were papers on Dickinson’s reception in Poland, Germany, and France as well as approaches to her work that reflected Asian cultural insights. Historical developments likely to have influenced this poet ranged from the Civil War to Commodore Perry’s forcible opening of Japan to the West. Many speakers addressed thematic issues such as self, suffering, and fame that are central to Dickinson scholarship, and there were lively presentations on issues related to distribution and reception of her poems through attention to manuscript issues, gift culture, and audience. The

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ongoing work of translating material evidence about Dickinson's environment and writing became the focus of a panel on archival resources newly catalogued or otherwise brought to the attention of scholars at the Dickinson Museum, Harvard's Houghton Library, and Amherst College.

Translation of Dickinson's poetry across cultures and into diverse artistic forms also drew attention. There was a paper on Paul Celan's translation of her poems into German by way of French; on parallels between Dickinson's love of nature and seclusion and the work of Tao Qian more than a millennium before her time, and recitation of a Dickinson poem newly translated into Chinese. Conferees enjoyed presentations on illustrated books, song cycles, and dramatic works. True to expectations of Dickinson scholars, some of the most stimulating papers cut across categories announced by panel titles, as was the case when a paper on Blake focused significantly on his reception in the nineteenth-century United States.

After lunch on Friday with its tasty array of artful sandwiches, the first plenary panel featured talks on Dickinson's reception in Ireland and Norway and on a transatlantic dream the poet recorded in a letter. In the first of two plenary sessions on Saturday morning, Paul Giles offered illuminating reflections on the New England poet's transoceanic geographical imagination and awareness of developments in nineteenth-century sciences. As his talk and the lively discussion that followed extended between Oxford and Sydney by way of electronic communication, the event also called attention to twenty-first-century capabilities for transoceanic imaginative stimuli facilitated by scientific advances. The second Saturday plenary offered sometimes surprising linkages between Dickinson and British or Anglicized American writers Erasmus Darwin, Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, and Virginia Woolf. Summaries of all these sessions appear elsewhere in this *Bulletin*.

Rounding out these sessions with

their lively exchanges of insights and interpretation, several special events mixed entertainment with a fuller experience of Oxford. Concurrent with the conference but at another venue in Oxford were several performances of Edie Campbell's one-woman play, *Emily Dickinson & I: The Journey of a Portrayal*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.



The best attended such event proved to be the Friday evening banquet at Oriel College, preceded by a champagne reception sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University Press. The grand dining hall, graced by portraits of the College's founder, King Edward II, and worthies from a broad span of centuries since Oriel's founding in 1326, provided a grand setting for 135 EDIS members and friends to gather for conversation, a lecture, and a festive meal. Other conferees arrived after the meal to watch and listen from the balcony as Lyndall Gordon of St. Hilda's College, Oxford, presented her plenary address on "The World Within: Emily Dickinson and the Brontës." In keeping with the conference theme, Gordon focused on Emily and Susan Dickinson's passionate responses to writings by Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë. Paying special attention to affinities between Dickinson's highly literary "Master" letters and *Wuthering Heights*, Gordon cited "I tie my Hat – I crease my Shawl" (Fr522)

for its expression of the conflict intelligent homebound women of the poet's generation experienced between domestic duty and their interior lives. She concluded with focus on Dickinson's visionary response to "gigantic" Emily Brontë as a model in fortifying herself to meet the divine "Guest."

Although there was no time available for questions immediately following this presentation, Gordon attended subsequent conference events so that people had opportunities to converse with her about ideas in her book and talk. There was special interest in her talk because her new book, *Lives Like Loaded Guns*, had been attracting great attention on both sides of the Atlantic, largely for its theory about epilepsy in the Dickinson family. This controversial topic brought overflow attendance the next afternoon for two speakers who challenged Gordon's conclusions.

Throughout Saturday afternoon a short animated film by Suzie Hanna and Sally Bayley played in room 3 of the Rothermere. Vibrant and sweeping in its imagery, *Letter to the World* immersed viewers in both large-scale and microscopic depictions of the poet and her natural milieu. That evening conference participants gathered upstairs at Blackwell's Bookshop on Broad Street for another champagne reception. Attendees discussed their current research projects while surrounded by a feast of reading matter on display: editions of Dickinson's writings, current and long-familiar critical studies, and biographical works.

Keble College, where most conferees lodged, provided a fit setting for imbibing the Oxford experience. Dating to 1870, it was designed by William Butterfield in English Gothic style executed in polychromatic brick. From the moment one arrived at the porters' lodge to check in and receive keys to both one's room and the massive wooden door to the College's main gate, one sensed both collegiate camaraderie and seriousness of intellectual purpose. Although student rooms proved spare, conferees enjoyed the

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spacious courtyard gardens and gathered for breakfast at the largest of Oxford University’s dining halls. Seated on benches at long wooden tables furnished with reading lamps to enjoy a full English breakfast, one might think of oneself as suddenly transported to Hogwarts or perhaps to the main reading room of a grand old public library. The Keble College chapel attracted visitors during the conference, some of whom ventured into a side room to admire Holman Hunt’s painting “The Light of the World” (1853), which is familiar to Dickinsonians because Judith Farr featured a version of it in *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*. A wedding party Saturday afternoon and evening reinforced the sense of the College as a setting for life’s momentous events.

Before, during, and after the conference, lovers of Dickinson imbibed the Oxford ambience and the sense of continuity in time that came of visiting England while thinking of its impact on the poet’s imagination. While strolling along cobblestoned streets to explore local sites, most armed themselves with conference souvenirs—umbrellas for protection against occasional quick showers on otherwise warm, dry summer days, and tote bags for collection of conference materials and books (all embellished with Emily Dickinson’s image as rendered by Ayiannis Koutsavakis). Narrow walkways crowded during the day with tour groups turned out to be quiet later as participants headed out for afternoon tea or late-night pub visits to join friends and extend the stimulating conversations that began at conference sessions. The Bodleian Library, Ashmolean Museum, Museum of the History of Science, and other scholarly institutions attracted visitors, as did various eating establishments from fine restaurants to street-side pasty stands. People explored other colleges, admired street mimes, and enjoyed the city’s charms: parks, pubs, and punting along the river. Many continued these explorations after the conference by traveling to other sites



in the United Kingdom, including London, Bath, Yorkshire, the Lake District, Stratford-upon-Avon, Wales, and Scotland—some perhaps venturing into the villages identified by Cynthia Hallen as points of origin for branches of the Dickinson and Norcross families.

The final official event of the conference was the annual members’ meeting, which featured a report on the conference’s success, announcement of plans for upcoming events, and introduction of EDIS officers. Members were happy to hear that EDIS remains solvent, active in support of Dickinson-related scholarship, and blessed with active membership from around the world, even as it continues efforts to build membership through its website and promotion of local chapters. Warm thanks were extended to the two chief planners of this conference, Paul Crumbley and Cristanne Miller; to Jim Fraser for his detailed financial oversight; and to the talented and helpful people at Oxford whose efforts brought long planning to fruition—notably Nigel Bowles, Laura Harvey, and Jane Rowson of the Rothermere American Institute, Alta H. Anthony of the Johns Hopkins University Press, Ronald Bush of St. John’s College, Oxford, and Alexandra Manglis, a graduate student at Linacre College. Another graduate student, Rebecca Mooney of the University of Maryland, was saluted for maintaining a conference blog for the enjoyment of EDIS members not able to attend and for taking abundant photographs to document the proceedings.

Georgie Strickland announced plans for this conference issue of the *Bulletin*, and Cristanne Miller encouraged conference participants to develop their papers into articles for submission to the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. Jane Wald accepted checks from the Society as its annual gifts to the Emily Dickinson Museum and Jones Library in Amherst. Martha Ackmann, as incoming president, thanked her predecessor, Paul Crumbley, for his leadership and presented him with a decorative object for his office that was constructed of electrical pieces discovered at the Homestead during recent renovations. Members attending this meeting extended additional thanks for gratifying experiences before adjourning for lunch and a last chance to visit with old and new friends before post-conference travels.

The experience of sharing fresh insights into Emily Dickinson’s poems and letters as they are now interpreted in far-flung but electronically linked parts of our twenty-first century world proved so stimulating that three days passed all too quickly. Meeting in Britain fostered reflection on the Yankee poet’s adaptations of English linguistic practices, metaphors, and literary traditions, even while highlighting new areas of research being pursued in today’s United Kingdom. Overall, those of us privileged to reflect on the possibilities inherent in the conference theme of “Were I Britain born” came away with deepened understanding of what is “new” as well as what is “English” in Emily Dickinson’s distinctively brilliant gift for seeing “New Englandly.”

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# THE EDIS OXFORD CONFERENCE, 2010

## British Connections I: Dickinson, Shakespeare and Milton

Chair: Martha Ackmann, Mount Holyoke College, USA; panelists: Cindy MacKenzie, University of Regina, Canada; Elizabeth Petrino, Fairfield University, USA; Anne Ramirez, Neuman College, USA

By Martha Ackmann

The first session of EDIS 2010 situated Emily Dickinson within the context of two British writers who profoundly influenced her: William Shakespeare and John Milton.

Cindy MacKenzie began the session with her paper "Essential Oils are wrung': Dickinson's Poetics and the Shakespearean Sonnets." Charles Knight's edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare*, including the sonnets, was among the books in the Dickinson family library. Although the poet did not write a conventional sonnet, MacKenzie reminded the audience that she nonetheless was influenced by them. MacKenzie considered Dickinson's response to the sonnet tradition and especially to Shakespeare's Sonnet #54, "O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem," as well as sonnets #5 and #6. These three sonnets were examined alongside two poems central to understanding Dickinson's poetics, "Essential Oils are wrung" (Fr772) and "This was a Poet" (Fr446). MacKenzie noted the parallels in imagery and drew attention to the theme of distillation, an essential element in understanding Dickinson's poetics, as it allowed her to "repeat" what she admired in Shakespeare and relate her concerns about

readership and literary immortality.

Elizabeth Petrino next spoke on "Forbidden Fruit: Dickinson's Echoes of Milton's Eve." Inspired by the horrific and vituperative responses to Milton among her female literary contemporaries, Dickinson drew from their



works and directly from Milton's Eve in articulating her own authorial transgressions. Drawing on the markings in the 1819 copy of *Paradise Lost* from the Dickinson family's library, Petrino focused on Dickinson's portrayal of sensual and embodied Eden, a characterization that arose as a logical derivative of Milton's deep association of Eve with flowers and her apprehension of the world through her senses. In poems

such as "Sic transit gloria mundi" (Fr2), "Forbidden Fruit a flavor has" (Fr1482), and "Better - than Music!" (Fr378), Dickinson adapts Milton's style in "creative, generative ways," Petrino argued, and questions the legacy of female submission embodied in Eve.

Anne Ramirez offered the final paper, "The Hardest Miracle': Images of Death and Resurrection in Shakespeare and Dickinson." One affinity between the two writers that has received little critical attention, Ramirez observed, is Dickinson's recurrent image of the woman who dies but lives to speak. That image may have been influenced by several Shakespearean heroines who suffer unjust rejection by the men they love and who appear to die. All but Desdemona, Ramirez noted, survive and extend forgiveness to remorseful males. Dickinson's descriptions of the experience and aftermath of death reflect her imaginative responses to these dying and returning heroines whose love transcends their apparent or actual death. Approximately a dozen Dickinson poems are apt glosses of *A Winter's Tale*, expressing experiences and emotional states resembling those of Shakespeare's female characters.

## British Connections II: Keats

Chair: Ellen Louise Hart, University of California at Santa Cruz (Emerita), USA; panelists: Edith Wylder, Southwest Minnesota University, USA; Yuji Kato, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan; Martin Greenup, Harvard University, USA

By Ellen Louise Hart

This rich, diverse, well integrated set of papers began with "Keats's Awakened Psyche and Dickinson's Rose," by Edith Wylder, an essay artfully delivered by her friend and former colleague Anne Howard, University of Nevada, Reno (Emerita). Wylder argues that by Keats's time sexual immaturity was becoming a serious underlying cultural "illness" in need of a poet's cure, which

Keats and then Dickinson felt destined to find. "As both poets were acutely aware, the illness's origin lay principally in the lack of any modern, sufficiently mature feminine ideal to supplant the still reigning but sexually unaccommodating Virgin Mother, a once-powerful, stabilizing domestic ideal that had gradually regressed to a sexually untouchable 'angel in the house'" and

then to "angel or whore." As Wylder sees it, the earlier Keats of "Endymion" "takes the task of creating a redemptive spiritual image designed to prepare for a future appropriately 'whole' ideal of woman as 'Wife' to succeed the medieval Mother." Keats's later and final transitional creation took the form of a Pagan soul image, an appropriately modernized, "awaken'd" Psyche whose

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redemptive tasks Dickinson, as her country’s unacknowledged poet, would later imitate with her “Rose persona” representing the “individuating spiritual journey” of the American soul. This drama, according to Wylder, Dickinson narrates through the poems of the forty bound fascicles.

In the second paper, “Readings on the Margin: Emily Dickinson’s Posthumous Poetics and the English Romantics,” Yuji Kato made the claim that “Dickinson’s ‘death poems’ present subversive visions of history congenial to contemporary postmodernists and poststructuralists.” “The dichotomy of the self and other, or life and death” is representative of traditional romantic metaphysics, yet Dickinson’s “death poems” point to a different approach, Kato explains. “While her contemporary American romantics, such as Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, posit the self as the origin of personal expres-

sions, Dickinson starts with the impersonality and disappearance of the self and life,” and she is radically different from English romantic poets such as Keats, whose “Ode on a Grecian Urn” she alludes to and subverts in “I died for Beauty” (Fr448). Kato concluded that Keats’s “Grecian Urn” “traces the process in which the narrator’s voice is fused with that of the personified urn to complete a closure that presents the narrator, the urn, and history as presence.” In contrast, “Dickinson’s ‘I died for Beauty’ traces the process of the self’s dissolution to total absence,” and this is accomplished “through the fusion of two impersonal voiceless voices that speak ‘Until the Moss had reached our lips – / And covered up – Our names,’ that is, until a nonspecific point in history that is not spoken or written at all.”

Martin Greenup focused on “I died for Beauty” and “My life closed twice

before it’s close” (Fr1773) in his talk “For Poets – I have Keats’: Dickinson and Allusion.” Greenup argued that “in the second of these poems Dickinson responds to and revises not only Keats but also her own earlier poem,” that “in taking the last line-and-a-half of ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ (‘that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know’), breaking it down and creatively rearranging it as the last two lines of her own poem (‘Parting is all we know of heaven, / And all we need of hell’), she transforms Keats’s meaning.” Greenup concluded that what Dickinson has done in her allusion is “something in between direct quotation and echo (the very loose idea of allusion, as defined by John Hollander) and is therefore intentional.”

Each of these three innovative explorations and the session as a whole make way for continued study of the Dickinson-Keats connection.

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## British Connections III: Dickinson and the Brontës

*Chair:* James Guthrie, Wright State University, USA; *panelists:* Gary Lee Stonum, Case Western Reserve University, USA; Nancy Mayer, Northwest Missouri State University, USA

By James Guthrie

Professors Gary Lee Stonum and Nancy Mayer discussed how reading the Brontës may have affected Dickinson’s notion of identity—and of how identities in general are formed. Both Stonum and Mayer partially attributed Dickinson’s concept of self to overall attitudes about identity formation adopted by the Romantics.

Stonum, in “Emily’s Heathcliff,” suggested that Emily Brontë’s only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, may have provided a basis for Emily Dickinson’s equation of love with a realization of identity, as well as with the self’s potential destruction. In depicting an essentially eternal love between Catherine and Heathcliff, Stonum said, “Brontë’s resolutely anti-sentimental” novel gave Dickinson a schema to follow in thinking about how love determines identity. First, the lovers complete or fulfill each other, so that neither is fully himself or herself

while the other is absent; second, the removal of either lover, usually through death, threatens psychic destruction to the survivor; third, a projected reunion of the lovers—and thus a second merging of the composite self—may be accomplished in heaven. Stonum also proposed that the lovers are re-figured in these romantic narratives as children, so that the heaven in which they are reunited resembles an edenic state of eternal childhood.

Emily Brontë’s and Emily Dickinson’s portrayals of love in “hyperbolic” terms jointly represent, Stonum suggested, a kind of apostasy. The supreme love of the Romantic couple overpowers and replaces orthodox religion, both while the lovers remain alive and after their projected reunion in heaven. Stonum theorized that Brontë’s and Dickinson’s interpretation of romantic love as a means of achieving identity for-

mation is, ultimately, metaphysical: by re-imagining love in “extreme” and “hyperbolic” terms, both writers assert romantic love’s value as a viable spiritual alternative to conventional religious belief.

Complementing Stonum’s paper, Nancy Mayer, in “Passionate Reticence: Emily Dickinson and Brontë’s Lucy Snowe,” suggested that reading the Brontës’ writings helped Dickinson engage in the larger Victorian cultural conversation about “the nature of selfhood.” Mayer, however, turned her attention to Charlotte Brontë, specifically to *Villette* and its narrating heroine, Lucy Snowe. That novel’s narrative style, Mayer proposed, may have influenced the development of Dickinson’s own narrative stance toward her reader. Mayer sees the self of Dickinson’s poems as confronting “the conditions of subjectivity...in a world crowded



with others.” While the narrating self in the poems is not necessarily “communal,” Mayer said, that voice “always finds itself accompanied” by the presence of others.

But the narrating self’s connection with others—who may be other characters, as in Brontë’s novel, or the reader—is tentative and problematic. Mayer interpreted the two writers’ depictions of the self confronting its need

for others as an existential approach to the problem of loneliness. The narrating self is willing to speak to others, yet at the same time, Mayer proposed, the self chooses which information it wishes to divulge to or conceal from them. Self-consciousness itself, according to Mayer, may be an internalization of the presence of others. The narrating Romantic self alternately craves privacy from and engagement with these oth-

ers, generating a tension from which it cannot escape. Mayer concluded with a point that usefully echoed, while departing from, Stonum’s interpretation: “The excess that is at the heart of the Romantic sublime is found not by transcending the awkward fact of individual identity but [by being] embedded uncomfortably within it.”

## Global Connections I

### Dickinson In and Out of Japan, China, and France

*Chair:* Cristanne Miller, University at Buffalo, USA; *panelists:* Hiroko Uno, Kobe College, Japan; Ningkang Jiang, Nanjing University, P.R. China; Antoine Cazé, University of Paris 7, France

By Logan Esdale, Chapman University, USA

The presenters in this panel approached Dickinson from the perspective of their home countries, but while Cazé reported on the issue of reception in France, Uno and Jiang discussed how Japanese and Chinese readers could relate to Dickinson’s reclusive lifestyle.

Uno’s “Emily Dickinson and the Opening of Japan” compared Japanese foreign policy with Dickinson’s emerging domestic policy in the 1850s. While in 1854 Japan was forced by Commodore Matthew Perry to open its borders, the inverse was happening in Dickinson’s life, as she began limiting access to her country. Because the press in New England closely followed Perry’s expedition, and because her father was in Congress at the time, Dickinson would have known the Japanese rationale for regulated seclusion—to prohibit Christian missionaries, protect its unique culture, and develop its internal resources. And just as Japan had used its exclusive commerce with Dutch traders to keep abreast of Western news, Dickinson was coming to rely on a select group of epistolary traders. In short, even though Japanese resistance was finally overthrown, Dickinson would “have been encouraged by

the determined attitude of [this] small, secluded country.”

Jiang’s “Birds, Nature, and Dao” viewed Dickinson in an Amherst *Tao-hua yuan*, an “imagined reclusive community.” Like Tao Qian (372-427 AD), who wrote “I wish not wealth or honors; / And heavenly abodes are beyond my reach, / Let me but embrace every fair day, walking alone,” and “Among the busy haunts of men I build my hut,” Dickinson “cherishes the tranquil moment of rapture.” She was not directly influenced by Chinese poetry; rather, the two poets established lives “in seclusion” that determined their relation to nature—to experience eternity, they mingled with its perpetual wither-and-bloom cycle—and poetic creation. To express the abstract and to stimulate contemplation in their readers, they “often used blanks or breaks” between or within lines. By projecting themselves into birds, both poets transcended secular constraints. Where Dickinson wrote “Because I grow - where Robins do,” Qian had written “Their nests conform to natural dreams.”

Cazé’s “‘Paris could not lay the fold’: Dickinson’s (Critical) Absence in France?” called for a more informed

understanding of Dickinson. He identified a “split image” that has dominated French understanding: Dickinson is either a modern Joan of Arc or an early Mallarmé. Both images rely too much on her apparent personality, favoring “the mysterious, the mystical and the romantic” poet known as “La Recluse d’Amherst.” Epitomizing the one side is Christian Bobin’s *La Dame Blanche* (2007), which calls her an “asthmatic angel” and rests on misleading paraphrases of her poems. On the other side is Claire Malroux, the “most important French translator to date.” (In 2009, Françoise Delphy translated the complete poems.) Malroux’s selected poems in 1989 truly launched French interest in Dickinson, and although she has discussed the fascicles and other publication issues special to Dickinson, said Cazé, she makes the poet suit French modernity in “too pat a way.”

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## Dickinson, Gender, and the Woman Writer

*Chair:* Stephanie A. Tingley, Youngstown State University, USA; *panelists:* Kelly Lynch, Independent Scholar, Palo Alto, California, USA; Ursula Caci, University of Basel, Switzerland

**By Stephanie Tingley**

Both presentations in this lively and well-attended session blended skillful close reading, personal responses to the poetry, and theoretical frameworks for thinking about Emily Dickinson and gender.

First to present was Kelly Lynch, an independent scholar and psychologist. In her paper titled “A Bright Capacity for Wings’: Dickinson’s Metamorphosis as a Woman Poet,” she spoke about what she described as three “alchemical touchstones” in Dickinson’s psyche and the way in which each is anchored by a key concept: dwell, distill, disseminate. Lynch used these three touchstones to explicate three poems, Fr401,

“Dare you see a Soul at the ‘White Heat,’” Fr446, “This was a Poet –,” and Fr887, “Severer Service of myself.” In the process, Lynch combined close readings of the poems’ texts with her own evocative and often provocative meditations on each.

Ursula Caci’s presentation, titled “Interchanging Relationships of Power and Gender: The Moon and the Sea,” had two parts. First she introduced her dissertation project, “Locating Gender in Space: Emily Dickinson’s Conception of Gender,” which focuses on how Dickinson not only exaggerates and over-emphasizes the norms as expected of a woman and thus exploits and empha-

sizes them, but also reshapes the space ascribed to women and even goes beyond, locating female identity in a new, often paradoxical territory. Caci then focused on her analysis of Fr387, “The Moon is distant from the Sea –” and Fr837, “I make His Crescent fill or lack –” to show how Dickinson designs an understanding of power relationships and gender roles as dynamic, mutual, and interchangeable, and reveals them as role play. Both poems depict a controller and a controlled as poetry for Dickinson becomes a playful tool for the reversion of conventions that serves to reinterpret, challenge, and claim power.

## British Connections IV: Dickinson and Emily Brontë

*Chair:* Marianne Noble, American University, USA; *panelists:* Makhdooma Saadat, Babu Banarasi Das Group of Educational Institutes, India; Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University, USA

**By Marianne Noble**



The panel on Dickinson and Emily Brontë took place on the sunny opening morning of the conference, and the weather turned out to be relevant: a fire alarm forced the panel to convene

outside. Inundated by bright sunshine, chair Marianne Noble read the paper for the first panelist, Makhdooma Saadat, who was at the last minute unable to attend. In “Emily Dickinson and Brontë: Renunciation and the Discovery of the True Self,” Saadat explored the connections between the two Emilys. Both were restricted by nineteenth-century conventions barring women from writing, and both responded in similar ways. As Saadat pointed out, both lived retired lives, Brontë screening herself from public view through a pen name, and Dickinson doing so through choosing not to publish altogether. This form of renunciation was coupled with others: both renounced the pleasures and rewards of conventional social life for women and the rewards that widespread readership might have afforded. Both purchased through renunciation the satisfactions of artistry.

The group of roughly twenty-five participants trooped back inside for

the other paper, Brad Ricca’s “Some new equation given’: Emily Dickinson, Emily Brontë, and Deep Time.” Ricca had prepared a lovely slide show illustrating his exploration of geological notions of deep time in Dickinson and Brontë. Both authors, he showed, lived in areas and eras when geological discoveries were shaking preconceptions about man’s role in the cosmos. Brontë was probably aware of archaeological digs taking place in locations like Yorkshire, and Dickinson likewise was thoroughly informed on the research of geologist and Amherst College president Edward Hitchcock.

Both authors were centrally engaged with questions of God as presented in Christianity, and both found their faith rocked by notions of deep time. This concept, Ricca explained, “argues that the earth was formed slowly, in discrete, meandering layers, over an almost unimaginable span of time by the exact same forces observable in nature today, making the present the

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key to understanding the past. Such a view—also called uniformitarianism—clashed with the idea of a world born of biblical cataclysm and authority, and raised serious questions about the age of the earth, the centrality of Man, and the truth of the Flood.”

Ricca interpreted Heathcliff’s (note

the geological nature of his name) engagement in a “dig” in the scene in which he exhumes Cathy’s body. Heathcliff privileges a corporeal, earthly form of presence over the more spiritual immortality promised by Christianity. As geology had insisted, the earth is infinite. To lie near Cathy in the

earth was a different—and prized—form of immortality. Ricca went on to interpret Dickinson’s searing poem “I reason – /Earth is short” (Fr403) in the context of *Wuthering Heights*. We may gain immortality in heaven, she observes, “But – *What of that!*”

## Plenary Panel 1

*Moderator:* Cristanne Miller, University at Buffalo, USA; *panelists:* Maria Stuart, University College Dublin, Ireland; Paraic Finnerty, Portsmouth University, UK; Domhnall Mitchell, University of Trondheim, Norway

**By Martin Greenup, Harvard University, USA**

Following an opening morning of exciting talks in different parts of the Rothermere American Institute, all attendees of the conference gathered after lunch in anticipation of the first plenary panel. The mood in the packed room was ebullient as scholars continued their lively lunchtime conversations ahead of the three talks. The panel was chaired with aplomb by Cristanne Miller. The fact that all three were Irish, she pointed out, was merely a coincidence, but a fitting one given the transatlantic slant of their respective approaches to Dickinson.

First up was Maria Stuart, whose paper was titled “Pursuing you in your transitions’: Dickinson in Ireland.” With poise and authority, Stuart traced out a fascinating series of interactions between Dickinson and a number of Irish poets since the 1960s, including John Hewitt, Michael Longley, Tom Paulin, Seamus Heaney, and Paul Muldoon. Focusing on Paulin, Stuart revealed how Dickinson, in the context of the nineteenth-century ideological clash between American English and British English, came to be seen by these twentieth-century poets as a crucial linguistic champion, resisting through her innovative use of English the imposed authority of a colonial tongue. Regarded thus as an emancipatory model, Dickinson enabled these poets

to find a space for the Irish use of the English language.

Next up was Paraic Finnerty who, in “Dreamed of your meeting Tennyson in Ticknor and Fields’: A Transatlantic Encounter with England’s Poet Laureate,” presented a richly suggestive reading of one of Dickinson’s letters (L320), which addresses Susan, her sister-in-law and most intimate friend, and refers to Tennyson, then regarded as the greatest Victorian poet. By also mentioning the Boston publishing firm Ticknor and Fields, Finnerty speculated that Dickinson was able to deflect onto Susan some of her fears over publication. Also, Finnerty suggested that Tennyson was important to both women because he celebrated same-sex love in his elegy, *In Memoriam*. Drawing on Tennysonian motifs, Dickinson was able to spiritualize Susan and remind her of the rarity of their love.

Last but not least was Domhnall Mitchell, whose wittily delivered paper, “Aspects of Dickinson’s Reception in Norway,” considered some of the cultural, historical, and linguistic mediators that have helped to familiarize the poet’s work to Norwegian readers. Interestingly, the image of Dickinson as a recluse, long after it was questioned by scholars, proved useful to Norwegians trying to relate to her verse. As Mitchell pointed out, Norwegians are somewhat

reclusive themselves on account of the long dark winters. Perhaps surprisingly, Cold War politics also played a part in furthering Dickinson’s fame in Norway. After the Second World War



a reciprocal relationship developed whereby America wanted to extend its overseas cultural influence and Norway wanted to improve its facilities for American studies. In consequence, Rockefeller funds were used to purchase American books for Norwegian universities. Mitchell, with amusement, imagined copies of Dickinson’s poems being dropped on Norway by parachute under the Marshall Plan!

The audience responded enthusiastically to such an engaging trio of talks with an animated set of questions. Cut short owing to time constraints after twenty minutes, the discussion continued in the lobby over tea and biscuits.

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## Dickinson, Nature and God

*Chair:* Jane Eberwein, Oakland University, USA; *panelists:* Connie Ann Kirk, Writer, USA; Li-hsin Hsu, University of Edinburgh, UK; Richard Brantley, University of Florida, USA

By Jane Eberwein

Connie Ann Kirk launched this panel, with its awesomely comprehensive theme, by presenting her paper entitled “Nature is what We know – / But have no Art to say –’: Meadows and Moors as Creative Inspiration in Dickinson and the Brontës.” By comparing these two natural environments as imaginative influences on poems by the two Emilys, Kirk showed that nature may have more effect on writers than even they realize. A biographical parallel Kirk discussed entailed discovery of nature’s threatening power as experienced by two-year-old Dickinson caught in a thunderstorm and six-year-old Brontë experiencing the “Eruption of Crow Hill Bog.” Among complicating factors Kirk addressed were those of literary generation, national characteristics, and natural terrain. In general, Dickinson’s representation of meadows expressed imaginative freedom associated with the birds and insects that alighted there and then soared away, while Brontë embraced the bleak and rugged moors themselves and expressed a fixed sense of place—a contrast illustrated by “Could I but ride indefinite” (Fr1056) and “A Day Dream.” Li-hsin Hsu’s paper, “Asia, Animals, and Apocalypse: The Narcotic Imagery in Emily Dickinson and Thomas De Quincey,” examined “how De Quincey’s



aesthetic theories, entangled with his narcotic visions of race, nation, and empire, are borrowed, mediated, and transfigured into Dickinson’s geo-poetic relocation of humanity within the physical environment.” Situating De Quincey’s sublimely gothic imagination within the context of British colonialism in Asia, Hsu argued that his writing “not only reflects his psychological anxiety, but also fights against the colonial hierarchy that he tries to work with.” Two versions of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers” (Fr124) reveal Dickinson’s imaginative affinities with the English author: “Incorporating De Quincey’s concept of compound experiences, Dickinson registers the disc of the brain as a palimpsest to record and rewrite, expand and contract, blaze and freeze at the same time.”

In “Dickinson’s Empirical Voice: ‘... almost as omniscient as God,’” Richard

Brantley took an enlighteningly expansive view of the poet’s “intellectual store of transatlantic ‘givens’” with special attention to the tradition of British empiricism stemming from John Locke and mediated to her through Emerson, Carlyle, Wesley, Wordsworth, and Wadsworth.

Brantley paid particular attention to nineteenth-century technology, highlighted by his memorable performance of “her twelve-word paean to all kinds of steam power;” “Banish Air from Air” (Fr963), in relation to a Wadsworth sermon. A comparison of Wordsworth’s “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” with “She went as quiet as the dew” (Fr159) linked poems of grief to astronomical knowledge and “rational respect for empiricism.” Brantley paid special attention to “Experiment escorts us last” (Fr1181) as “the signature lyric of Dickinson’s empirical voice,” brilliantly distilling her debt to the heritage of British empirical philosophy.

Although time ran out long before interest did, the audience raised a number of questions for consideration at the session and afterward. These included questions about Dickinson’s playfulness in approaching her topics, her tendency to engender nature, and aspects of the “divine” in Romantic treatments of nature.

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## Dickinson and Class

*Chair:* Suzanne Juhasz, University of Colorado (Emerita), USA; *panelists:* Aife Murray, Independent Scholar, USA; H. Jordan Landry, University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh, USA; Mary Loeffelholz, Northeastern University, USA.

By Suzanne Juhasz

Each of these fine papers examined class from a different perspective, and they interacted with one another in provocative ways. As a group they raised complex issues regarding the interface of class with gender and sexuality. They evoked many comments and questions, and the discussion was so lively that it

reached a new level just at the moment when time was up—always the mark of an excellent panel.

Aife Murray, in “Peony noses, red as Sammie Matthews’: Literary Rituals of (Class) Recognition,” explored how Dickinson figures class position in her writing. Using as background her

historical study of Dickinson and her servants, along with readings of the poems, Murray described Dickinson’s use of “literary rituals of recognition,” a trope by which the poet signals class to her reader by referring to servants and laborers in anomalous ways to state something more dramatically or to ad-

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vance the plot. As illustration, Murray used Dickinson's changing references to the family of "Britain-born" laborer Dick Matthews—a family with which the poet was associated over three or more decades—and relationships involving a high degree of dependency and closeness that challenged class hierarchy as much as they were based upon it. Dickinson's linguistic reinforcement of class boundaries exhibits both comfort and fear, resulting in politics and poetics that were "both conservative—and not."

H. Jordan Landry extended the discourse of class to its relation to gender and sexuality in a paper entitled "'Whip a crown - Imperial': Representing Class and Gender in Dickens and Dickinson." Studying Dickinson's "hijacking" of Dickens's character David Copperfield, she showed that for Dickinson, lesbian desire precipitated the unrav-

eling of other identity categories such as class and sex. In her letters to Sue, Dickinson identified both Sue and herself with David. Sue and David were both orphans consigned to the working classes who aspired to the middle class. But her love often propelled Dickinson to invert class positions between herself and Sue, showing Sue possessing wealth, while she in her neediness was poor. At the same time, Dickinson associated herself with David's working-class masculinity in his adoration for women above his class. Blurring class and gender boundaries between herself and Sue enabled Dickinson to write Austin out of the erotic triangle of her brother, Sue, and herself.

Mary Loeffelholz complicated the class dimension of writer and "service" in "Master Shakespeare, Mrs. Browning, Miss Dickinson, and the Servants." She examined Dickinson in relationship

to Shakespeare and Barrett Browning in terms of the historical conditions of servitude in three cultures. Dickinson, in a culture under the sway of market relations alongside an ideology of free labor, showed aspects of the other writers in her interest in the eroticized poet-master relationship developed by Shakespeare, including its cross-dressing components, but also in her concern for gender hierarchy, central to Barrett Browning. Dickinson's poems reveal the failure of recognition for Dickinson's servant-lover; despite attempts by way of cross-dressing to erase the servitude associated with female gender. Although Dickinson in her life experienced intimacy with a female servant, à la Barrett Browning, it is finally the male servant in whom she sees the fantasy of free market labor in "How happy is the little stone" (Fr1570).

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## Global Connections II: Dickinson in German and Polish Authors

*Chair:* Antoine Cazé, University of Paris Diderot—Paris 7, France; *panelists:* Therese Kaiser, Aachen University, Germany; Gloria Coates, Independent Musician, USA; Adam Czerniawski, Independent Scholar, UK

By Antoine Cazé

This panel convened three papers providing original insights into Dickinson's connections with Continental Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the perspectives of translation (Kaiser), music settings (Coates), and poetic influence (Czerniawski).

Speaking first, Therese Kaiser synthesized the research she is currently doing for her PhD dissertation on Celan's translations of Dickinson into German, which occupied him from 1959 to 1967. Through a careful study of Celan's typescripts and books, Kaiser has been able to chart the development of the German poet's sustained relationship with his American counterpart and assess how deeply Dickinson influenced his own poetic processes, sometimes to the point that his "reading mirrors his mental constitution more than a professional interest of the translator." For Kaiser, Celan's translations of Dickinson are a personal dialogue of the translator with the original poem.

Kaiser showed how Dickinson's poetics of concentration, as well as some of her major themes, such as death, religious doubt, and heresy, bear a strong resemblance to Celan's own poetic preoccupations, particularly as evidenced in *Die Niemandrose* (1963).

Kaiser also examined the triangular culture-crossing at play, since Celan—who lived in France at the time—relied on French as well as several American versions of Dickinson to produce his German Dickinson. Together with other, more textual detours, this illustrates to what extent Dickinson proved to be a fertilizing ground for Celan's poetry: "Dickinson's journey into the German language becomes a creative adventure because the linguistic gap is bridged by activating the potential of a third language, in this case French." Even as early as the 1960s, Celan proved to be quite aware of the editorial issues at stake for Dickinson's poetry. In conclusion, Kaiser showed slides of her own

model for a hypertextual, digital edition of Celan's Dickinson translations, contending that "the editorial discussion of Dickinson's poems finds an equivalent in the question of editing Celan's translations of her works"—thus offering a glimpse into an extremely promising "transatlantic connection."

Gloria Coates's presentation unravelled the German thread further back by exploring the links between Dickinson and the early Romantic circles of the Athenaeum—Novalis and the Schelling Brothers in particular. For Coates, the connection was made specifically through her profession as a composer, since after setting Dickinson's poems to music over a period of years (leading to a cycle of fifteen songs in 2002), she was commissioned to compose on poems by Novalis and found herself experiencing them as "Emily Dickinson, but in another form." This led Coates to a broader awareness of the Romantic dimension of Dickinson's poetry and

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how this could be expressed in musical forms. “I had intuitively composed music for the Dickinson poems which brought out elements of Novalis’s philosophy,” Coates suggests—Death romanticized as a part of Life, a pantheistic conception of Nature, the shading of initial happiness into a meditation upon mortality and “salvation in the eternal night.” Illustrating her talk with a recording of her Dickinson songs, Coates highlighted some technical aspects of her compositional procedure, in particular the use of triads as a musical translation of the Romantic literary “triad” of happiness, pain and suffering, and salvation.

In conclusion to this panel, Adam Czerniawski took us further East and proposed a speculative comparison between Emily Dickinson and the Polish poet Cyprian Norwid, an almost exact contemporary of his American coun-

terpart (1821-1883). Although there is no evidence that either poet knew the other’s work, there are undeniable and troubling similarities of tone, theme, and formal characteristics, which Czerniawski demonstrated by reading many examples of the Polish author in his own English translations. For instance, the “awareness of the innovative and therefore difficult nature of their work leads them inevitably to reflect further about posthumous fame”—and indeed, both poets were “rediscovered” in later years to be daring innovators in their respective countries and languages. Both were “sensitive to the hypocrisies of the social circles in which they participate[d]” and shared a skeptical attitude toward religion. Death and all things macabre are a constant preoccupation. Czerniawski, however, highlighted one point of aesthetic divergence: while Dickinson’s daring

treatment of the body—and more particularly the body in pain—brings her potentially close to the symbolism of Baudelaire, no such signs of a fin-de-siècle aesthetics are to be found in the Parisian-based Norwid. But beyond the fact that both Dickinson and Norwid were “misunderstood and neglected in their lifetimes [and became] the leaders of modernism in their countries,” the congruence between their poetic oeuvres seems to be a case of scholarly reconstruction. We are left with the rather mysterious and unsatisfactory explanation of a Zeitgeist that does not explain anything. Still, at least in Poland, Dickinson and Norwid are now commonly associated, letting us marvel at the “miraculous invisible thread that links Emily Dickinson across the Atlantic with a Polish poet.”



## British Connections V: George Eliot, Vol. I

*Chair:* Emily Seelbinder, Queens University of Charlotte, USA; *panelists:* Barbara Mossberg, California State University, Monterey Bay, USA; Margaret Freeman, Myrfield Institute for Cognition and the Arts, USA; Kristin Sanner, Mansfield University, USA

By Emily Seelbinder

The first of two lively sessions exploring connections between Dickinson and George Eliot proved to be a delightful parade of purposeful and playful personae, some (including two of the panelists) sporting purple shoes.

Barbara Mossberg, in a paper entitled “Through the Transatlantic Lens: Emily Dickinson’s Transatlantic Soul,” got us off to a high-kicking start by applying an approach she described as “a reading of Dickinson’s poems as an

autochthonous expression” to provide an interpretation of “We like March” (Fr1194). Dickinson’s identification of March as a man, “albeit Versace-ish, perhaps a fashionista: ‘his shoes are purple’”—presents an interestingly gendered complement to the purple-hoarding “winded lady wearing a hat” who is invited “right up stairs” with the speaker of “Dear March - Come in” (Fr1320). Inversions of syntax lead us to “linger over” the line “News is he of

all the others,” only to be stunned by the next line, “Bold it were to die.” “How did death get into this,” Mossberg asked, “with the Blue Birds [of happiness?] exercising on his British sky”? And why British? Around the time Dickinson sent the first known version of this poem to Sue, those two avid readers would likely have been following with keen interest the serialization of *Middlemarch*. The March of “We like” may therefore be not a month but a place,

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a “middle ground” on which Dickinson might “assume a kinship [and] linguistically insert herself as a partner in consciousness with Eliot,” sharing “communion with a sister writer.”

Middlemarch became a place of “play and possibility” when Margaret Freeman stood up to consider “what Eliot would have made of Dickinson’s poems had she read them.” Though “Dickinson’s gnomic writing stands in stark contrast to Eliot’s expansive narratives,” Freeman introduced the two as “kindred spirits,” not only as women but also as writers. Using theory developed by James P. Carse in his book *Finite and Infinite Games*, Freeman demonstrated how both writers “introduce us to the possibility that even within our finite worlds, we nevertheless can become infinite players....Both considered the difficulties of being an infinite player within the confines of finite society; they describe the falling short that almost inevitably occurs when the boundaries of conventional attitudes block the horizon of creative vision.” In *Middlemarch*, for example, Eliot’s narrator “follows the characters...as they

fail or succeed to become infinite players within [the] finite boundaries” of their community. Dickinson found in this narrative support for declaring that Eliot was a “‘mortal’ who had already ‘put on immortality.’” Would Eliot have found similar qualities in her admirer’s work? “Although Dickinson’s writings are marked rather by the infinite horizons of nature,” Freeman argued that Eliot, “acutely aware of the distinction between boundary and horizon,” would have been better equipped than most to understand and appreciate “the force of Dickinson’s lyric voice as it moves [in poem after poem] unceasingly toward new horizons.”

Kristin Sanner turned our attention to the infinite play of other voices in “I am afraid to own a Body –’: Corporeal Independence in the Letters of Emily Dickinson and George Eliot,” a discussion of the carefully constructed personae Eliot and Dickinson presented in their correspondence. “Eliot’s self-fashioning,” Sanner suggested, was “more successful than Dickinson’s, from a social and professional perspective, [but] less successful in terms of libera-

tion from gender norms....Rather than tapping into the textual corporeality that the French feminists would eventually name *l’écriture féminine*, Eliot’s letters show an author busily at work finding ways to create rich and engaging characters that would lead to her literary successes. Like her decision to adopt a masculine pen name, however, the letters show a writer whose keen awareness of the limitations placed on women writers led her to find ways to circumvent the system.” Dickinson, on the other hand, turned letters into a form of publication. In these letters, which are full of “repeated references to corporeality,” Dickinson developed “an autobiographical form that allowed her not only to cast an independent, controlled representation of the self, but also, through the letters’ reflection of the body, to transcend the physical and creative limitations imposed on women in the nineteenth century.” By insisting in her letters on an “inextricable connection between...her physical body and her body of work,” Sanner concluded, Dickinson “not only writes, sends, and is inspired by poetry, she *is* poetry.”

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## Manuscripts I: Dickinson’s Manuscript Books

*Chair:* Alexandra Socarides, University of Missouri, USA; *panelists:* Ellen Louise Hart, University of California at Santa Cruz (Emerita), USA; Trisha Kannan, University of Florida, USA; Kristen Kreider, University of London, UK

By Alexandra Socarides

This panel featured three papers stemming from diverse experiences with, and representing various approaches to, Dickinson’s manuscripts.

Ellen Louise Hart, in “Speaking of Pippa Passes’: Alliteration, Rhetorical Emphasis, Dickinson’s Visual Strategies of Manuscript, and Browning’s Dramatic Verse,” began by discussing the “visual prosaic strategies” and “complex oral art” present in the manuscripts—features of Dickinson’s poetry to which readers of her printed texts do not have access. Hart argued that certain features of her manuscripts—varying amounts of space between words in a line, dashes of different lengths and angles and positions within a line—are visual strategies that allowed Dickin-

son to control the pace of the verse, to protect the integrity of each syllable’s sound, to draw attention to particular words and phrases, and to set out diverse rhythms. By focusing specifically on punctuation and spacing, Hart suggested that Dickinson’s pauses are acoustic and interpretive extrametrical stresses. She read and discussed the version of “Safe in their Alabaster / chambers” (Fr124E) included in Fascicle 10, accentuating the nuanced use of sound repetition and expressive emphasis.

In the second part of the paper, Hart observed that while scholars have paid great attention to Dickinson’s relationship to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, they have all but ignored that to Robert

Browning (a topic, interestingly, that emerged at several different moments in the conference). Hart argued that Dickinson’s preoccupation with alliteration, assonance, and consonance—on organizing sounds and establishing rhythm—was shared by Browning. To that end, she discussed the opening lines of “Pippa Passes” as they rhythmically unfold, as well as a section of Browning’s long narrative poem on the life of the poet, “Sordello.” Finally, she pointed out that among the literary bonds between Emily Dickinson and Susan Dickinson, Robert Browning’s work is central, as is evident in the allusions to Browning in Susan’s obituary for Emily.

Trisha Kannan delivered the second

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paper, “The ‘prison of flesh and bone’: John Keats within Emily Dickinson’s Fascicle 30.” Despite prior claims dismissing a relation between Dickinson and Keats, Kannan argued that this fascicle can be read in fruitful relation to Keats’s works, particularly “To Autumn,” *Endymion*, “Sleep and Poetry,” and “I Stood Tip-Toe Upon a Little Hill.” According to Kannan’s reading, Fascicle 30 investigates nature and dreaming as particular sources of inspiration and examines several themes that concerned Keats—the ideal versus the real; the role of the poet; the self versus others, and human experience versus the potential for poetry to transcend the mortal sphere. Reading Fascicle 30

through Keats’s investigation of sleep, dreaming, and poetry, Kannan showed that both poets yearned for beauty and poetry to transcend human experience. Additionally, the poems of this fascicle reveal that neither Keats nor Dickinson, despite their commitment to the power and possibilities offered by beauty and poetry, failed to recognize the inability of poetry to transport poet and reader completely beyond the human sphere.

Lastly, Kristen Kreider, a practicing poet, artist, and lecturer in creative writing, spoke on “Lyric Encounters: The Material Poetics of Dickinson’s Later Manuscript Pages.” Kreider asked how the spatial and material qualities of Dickinson’s manuscript pages gen-

erate meaning through what she calls “a material poetics.” To this end she looked closely at the details of manuscript A449. By calling attention to the crease in the manuscript itself, Kreider produced new ways of understanding the words that Dickinson wrote on this scrap of paper (Fr1323).

After the papers there were a number of questions from audience members, some asking the skeptical yet important question of how much emphasis we can really put on these manuscripts. This panel reflected a nice array of approaches currently taken by Dickinson scholars. The second panel on manuscripts (held the next day) picked up on several of these issues.

### Traveling Feet: Dickinson’s Meter and the Lyric

*Chair:* Jed Deppman, Oberlin College, USA; *panelists:* Michael Manson, American University, USA; Cristanne Miller, University at Buffalo, USA

By Jed Deppman

It was standing room only at the *Traveling Feet* panel, a testimony to the ongoing interest of Dickinsonians in genre, form, and meter.

Michael Manson went first with “Reading Dickinson’s Lyrics.” Against Virginia Jackson’s argument that “there is no lyric, only lyric reading,” and against the common conception of genre as “rule-making and taxonomic,” Manson argued that genre is the means by which cultures “articulate meaning” and “explain their hopes and fears.” Citing Thomas Leitch, Manson argued that, while most creative works draw on many genres, they do so “not in a mixed or hybrid way but in a nested or hierarchical fashion.” Thus, where Jackson categorizes a Dickinson poem such as “This Chasm, Sweet” (Fr1061) as simply “a sentimental lyric,” Manson sees it as emerging from several conventional areas.

Agreeing with Jackson in the abstract—that sentimental lyrics encourage vicarious identification with the lyric subject—Manson distinguished the purposes of the sentimental lyric from those of other genres, such as narrative or argument, by drawing

upon Mary Louise Kete’s characterization of sentimentality as a utopian form expressing promises “of nonviolated communities, restored losses, and healed wounds.” Manson concluded that to understand the ways readers are summoned to and by the poems, we may not have to “get outside lyric reading” so much as “get inside more poems, more genres,” to see both how “insight and experience rely on genre” and how genre expresses “our private thoughts and our public needs.”

Next was Cristanne Miller with “The Ballad ‘Wild’ and Dickinson’s Transatlantic Lyric Form.” Miller drew from her book in progress, *Lyric Strains: Reading Dickinson in the Nineteenth Century*, to speak about the origins of Dickinson’s forms in English ballads. Miller argued that Dickinson’s stanzaic and metrical forms arose “from the intersection of elite and popular, printed and sung, religious and secular, American and European short-lined forms prevalent in the 1840s and 1850s.” Ballads influenced her experimentation with loosened meter and shifts in stanzaic form mid-poem. According to Miller, Dickinson’s myriad forms participated in

an “antebellum vogue” for hybridizing meters and verses. Her particular variety of stanzaic forms seems to enable “individual thought” as well as “expression through communally shared or popular forms.”

Noting that stanzaic rhythms in particular “function as the compositional foundation for her poems,” Miller speculates that Dickinson’s poems “typically developed” as ideas and phrases that “manifested themselves in a stanzaic pattern, or a unit of rhythmic completion”; her thought did not “slavishly adhere” to a pattern but found in stanzas a structure that gave force and shape to her thinking through their combinations of rhythm and syntax. If Dickinson had composed by line or phrase, it would be “unlikely” that her “shifts away” from initial patterns would *themselves* take stanzaic form, as they frequently do. Building on this, Miller elucidated a longstanding paradox: Why did Dickinson assert that “she could not drop the Bells” of meter while also acknowledging Higginson’s criticism that her verse was “uncontrolled” (LL268, 271)? For Dickinson, says Miller, “metrical rhythms



[jingling] seem to facilitate the movement of thought in language," while "that movement of thought may in turn impel ['uncontrolled'] shifts away

from the initiating stanzaic structure." Ultimately, Dickinson recognized "the possibilities for an ambitious, complex, and powerfully expressive" poetry

"in the short-lined verse being published on both sides of the Atlantic."

## Plenary Speaker. Evolutionary Enigmas and Colonial Equations Dickinson's Transoceanic Geography

*Introduction:* Paraic Finnerty, Portsmouth University, UK;

*Speaker:* Paul Giles, Oxford University, UK, and University of Sydney, Australia

By Paraic Finnerty

Paul Giles offered the conference's second plenary address, speaking from the University of Sydney via videoconferencing. Giles began by noting the potential narrowness of scholarship and academic conferences that focus on one author, but also the benefit of having such in-depth, scholarly concentration as a corrective to abstract theorizing. Although Giles spoke against the biographical criticism that has tended to domesticate and sentimentalize Dickinson—a poet whom many scholars, including Giles, regard as a disturbing, forbidding, and ambivalent writer—he acknowledged the important role biographical research has in properly historicizing Dickinson. His talk examined her use of scientific discourses such as geology, evolution, and astronomy in her exploration of breakdowns in personal identity, cognition, and language. In particular, Giles uncovered what he termed Dickinson's "antipodality": her use of tropes of cultural and geographical difference, in particular those associated with the southern hemisphere, to indicate personal displacement, distance, and estrangement.

The audience was reminded that at Amherst Academy Dickinson studied scientific subjects, including geology, botany, algebra, geometry, and astronomy; that scientific terminology was "part of the general public discourse of this era" and not the sole domain of specialists or highly trained technicians; and that in this period there was not such a disciplinary dissociation be-

tween science and other fields of enquiry. In this context, Giles demonstrated Dickinson's use of geological theories about the Earth's expanded time-scale and the formation of landscape through eruption and erosion in her representation of human subjectivity and perspective as disruptive, fractured, chaotic experiences (Fr143), which implied an "interface between anthropocentric and geocentric perspective." Similarly, Dickinson followed contemporary marine biologists in presenting the sea as the origin of all earthly life (Fr349, 1295), and Darwin in her depiction of the natural world as site of struggle (Fr359). In other poems in which she mentions optical instruments, however, she recasts astronomy as a form of internal gazing that records the uneasy and shifting nature of perspective (Fr437, 442, 803, 957). Likewise, in her poems that depict the rotating earth, seasonal cycles and change, and migration (Fr633, 900, 1104, 1198) Giles uncovered her reconfiguration of the relationship between the spiritual and the material—a continual concern of Puritanism and Transcendentalism—in geophysical terms and remapping of human consciousness within global geography.

Giles explained that in this period the theory of evolution was associated with the southern hemisphere, where Charles Darwin had done much of his research. Evoking such an association, according to Giles, Dickinson used scientific discourse to turn New England

social and religious certainties and complacencies upside down, to find the "established world's antipodean dimensions." Her poems use imagery from the southern hemisphere to signify reversal and movement away from certainty and to connote inversion, extremity, transgression, and fracture in human knowledge (Fr356, 757). Giles positions Dickinson's term "circumference" in this terrestrial and geographical framework, where it refers to an intellectual and physical boundary, but also to the mind's circumnavigations, its antipodean journeys to the other side of the world. Dickinson's antipodality is typical of her love of polarity and antithesis: her surreal conjoining of disparate ideas, concepts, or objects: domestic and global, minuscule and cosmic, mind and matter.

Giles made a convincing case for Dickinson's strategic use of scientific discourses and her imbrication of their alternative ways of conceptualizing the origin and nature of humanity and the physical world. Rather than domestic Dickinson and her poetry, Giles challenged scholars to explore her continual mapping of local and domestic phenomena within a global circuit in which "the rotation of the Earth renders all vantage points equally refractory."

# “Were I Britain born”

## Plenary Panel 2

Chair: Paul Crumbley, Utah State University, USA; panelists: Joan Kirkby, Macquarie University, Australia; Vivian Pollak, Washington University, USA; Jed Deppman, Oberlin College, USA

By Paul Crumbley

As with the first plenary panel, this one took place in the largest room at the Rothermere American Institute and was extremely well attended.

Joan Kirkby’s paper, “Darwinizing with Emily Dickinson and Erasmus Darwin,” extended the analysis she had initiated in her essay “[W]e thought Darwin had thrown ‘the Redeemer’ away’: Darwinizing with Emily Dickinson,” which appeared in a recent issue of the *Emily Dickinson Journal* (14.1). There she argued that Dickinson exhibited a Darwinian sensibility prior to publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859). The present paper focused on the “larger than life figure of Erasmus Darwin” (grandfather of Charles), whom Kirkby identified as the foremost scientist and physician of his day. Kirkby described Dickinson’s “darwinizing” as a positive feature of her writing even though Coleridge had coined the term to disparage what he viewed as the tendency, provoked by Erasmus Darwin, to launch wild and fanciful speculations about nature and the origin of humanity. According to Kirkby, Dickinson’s darwinizing in her nature poems participated in a larger reconceptualization of the natural world that had begun in the eighteenth century and was current throughout her formative years. Poems such as “The Frost of Death was on the Pane” (Fr1130), “Did the Harebell loose her girdle” (Fr134), and “The Rose received his Visit” (from Fr1351) reflect an understanding of nature that Kirkby linked to Erasmus Darwin’s works. Kirkby concluded that Dickinson shared Erasmus Darwin’s view of the natural world as perpetually changing, as “both fecund and unpredictable, but above all alive, sensate even.”

Vivian Pollak’s presentation opened with a fairytale overview of Sylvia Plath’s life, replete with an evil king who generated controversy through

his treatment of the dead queen’s papers. This approach enabled Pollak to analyze Ted Hughes’s published assessments of Dickinson and Sylvia Plath as a self-serving critical narrative grounded in psychological realism but also containing its own fairytale elements. Most specifically, Hughes’s characterization of Dickinson as a mystic precursor for Plath enabled him to avoid confronting his own personal foibles by situating his life with Plath in the context of a search for meaning that led to Plath’s highest poetic achievement. “Hughes’s Dickinson,” Pollak argued, “was a diversion from and a defense against the tragic particulars of personal history.” Pollak also pointed out, however, that through his 1963 review of Charles R. Anderson’s *Stairway of Surprise* (1960) and the introduction to his 1968 selection of 100 Dickinson poems, *A Choice of Emily Dickinson’s Verse*, Hughes did much to elevate Dickinson’s stature in Anglo-American letters, even inviting comparison with Shakespeare. Nonetheless, his writing about Dickinson formed a transatlantic drama in which Hughes communicated with his dead wife and cast himself as “bystander in a tragedy that had been preordained from the start.”

Jed Deppman’s paper “But, but...Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf,” concentrated on the disruptive force of the co-

ordinating conjunction “but” in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and Dickinson’s poem “The Robin’s my Criterion for Tune – ” (Fr 256), the poem that unites “but” with the phrase used in the conference title: “But, were I Britain born.” Deppman employed George Steiner’s concept of “hermeneutic violence” to explain the way Woolf’s and Dickinson’s incorporations of “but” inject existential uncertainty into the thought processes of individuals. Woolf’s Mrs. Ramsay hears herself stating “We are in the hands of the Lord” and is instantly annoyed that she should have uttered such an observation. Doing so serves Woolf’s aim of demonstrating “the unexpected power of one’s culture to interrupt, translate, and freeze one’s thought.” In Dickinson’s poem, the multiple insertions of “but” undermine the speaker’s seemingly self-satisfied assertions of personal identity as harmonically grounded in nature. When the speaker imagines that a British self might “spurn” the “Daisies” of New England, she suddenly perceives that an alternatively formed natural self could reject the identity that she has sought to affirm. In this way Dickinson’s speaker and Mrs. Ramsay both “think themselves to the point of self-disintegration” when unresolved cultural conflicts enter their private thoughts.



## British Connections VII: Repellant Settings, Best Gems George Eliot and Emily Dickinson

Chair: Margaret Freeman, Myrfield Institute for Cognition and the Arts, USA; panelists: Jane Eberwein, Oakland University, USA; Emily Seelbinder, Queens University of Charlotte, USA; Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University, USA

By Margaret Freeman

Taking as their theme Emily Dickinson's comment on the portrait of George Eliot, "God chooses repellant settings, dont he, for his best Gems?" (L692), the panelists challenged the presupposed identity between authorial and narrative voice by exploring what Dickinson knew of George Eliot's life and writings as she developed her own poetic stance. The speakers presented nineteenth-century ideas concerning religion, gender, and morality that Eliot and Dickinson overturned in both their lives and their writings.

Jane Eberwein's "Dangerous fruit of the tree of knowledge": Dickinson, Marian Evans, and Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*," discussed Eliot's role in unsettling Christian belief by translating David Friedrich Strauss's rigorous examination of New Testament textual reliability that was "repellant" to nineteenth-century assumptions. Eberwein suggested that Casaubon's character in *Middlemarch* was predicated partly on Eliot's knowledge of Strauss and her relationship to him as translator of his work. Although Dickinson was unversed in the "Higher Criticism" of the Oxford Movement, her response to the ministers she knew in personal, rather than religious, terms resonated with Eliot's focus on humanistic rather

than doctrinal aspects of Christianity, beginning with *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Eberwein thus set the framework for the session by placing Dickinson's well documented attitudes toward her Puritan heritage within the context of a literary rather than a doctrinaire reading of biblical texts.

When Emily Seelbinder (in "Supposed [Male] Persons: Narrative Cross-Dressing in Eliot and Dickinson") rose to boom out "A narrow fellow in the grass," the room jumped to attention, and a loud knock was heard on the adjoining wall. (We were surprised that Rothermere's conference facilities lacked soundproofing.) The poem's barefoot boy upsets the notion that narrative voices reflect authorial character. Focusing on the success of *Adam Bede* before the supposed male clergyman "George Eliot" was "outed" as a woman, Seelbinder showed how Victorian critics were astonished and dismayed that such an accomplished author could be not just a woman but one with dubious morals, translating Strauss's work and living as Mrs. Lewes outside the bounds of marriage. The use of male narrators, she observed, is but one of many ways in which Eliot and Dickinson undermined gender determinations, enabling readers to

consider a broader, more inclusive understanding of authorial behavior and attitudes than were allowed in traditional Victorian biographical studies of author narratives.

Eleanor Heginbotham's "Now, my George Eliot: Emily Dickinson and 'Glory'" focused on what Dickinson might have meant by her comment in L389, "What do I think of *Middlemarch*? What do I think of glory?" Read closely, Dickinson's "glory" letter follows the various tones of the novel from its comic opening to serious theological discussion. Eliot's respect for the complex lives of her often frustrated, disappointed, and (in the case of Bulstrode) evil characters reveals a deep psychological understanding of human character that may have triggered Dickinson's fascination with Eliot's unorthodox life as revealed in biographies by John Cross and Mathilde Blind. Heginbotham's presentation reinforced Dickinson's comment on Eliot's portrait that authorial traits ("repellant settings") are disconnected from literary value ("best gems").

The presenters thus explored and clarified the ironic overtones of Dickinson's comment on Eliot's portrait. Both writers responded to the prejudices of their times by bravely refusing to accommodate their lifestyles or their writing practices to contemporary standards of womanly behavior. The lively discussion that followed started with a question about Dickinson's spiritual life and awareness of other mythologies of death and rebirth (Osiris in particular), thus provoking a free-ranging exchange among the audience and panel members that reflected the timely and currently "hot" topic of Dickinson's relation to nineteenth-century religious concerns and the Higher Criticism of Anglican theology.



Photo by LeeAnn Gorthey

# “Were I Britain born”

## Manuscripts II: Dickinson in Pieces

Chair: Geoffrey Saunders Schramm, National Cathedral School, USA; panelists: Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, USA; Alexandra Socarides, University of Missouri, USA; Eliza Richards, University of North Carolina, USA; Marilee Lindemann, University of Maryland, USA

By Geoffrey Schramm

Dickinson left a collection of miscellaneous works that critics have ever since tried to put together into a coherent body; this panel suggests that we might do better to leave her work in pieces and learn to read them and their literary legacies that way.

In “Read Me’: Emily Dickinson in the Drawing Room,” Martha Nell Smith observed that for most of Dickinson’s life as An Author, spatters of blood, sweat, tears, and the detritus of drawing room circulation (wine, coffee, tea stains) on her poems have been sealed away from view. Her poems have been printed and professionalized, removed far from the manuscript conditions in which she placed them. Twenty-first-century technologies now enable opportunities to examine physical traces of nineteenth-century handlings, and to much larger and more diverse constituencies than when access to view her manuscripts was limited to library special collections. Digital surrogates in the *Dickinson Electronic Archives*, *Radical Scatters*, and *Emily Dickinson’s Correspondences: A Born-Digital Textual Inquiry* enable us to reimagine “How to read a nineteenth-century poem.” They make possible the showing, as well as the telling, of the biographies of her writings as they were read privately and in the publics of the sociocultural exchanges of drawing rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, and dining rooms. Read until now anachronistically in print publication, as if they had been imagined as prepared for the elegant nineteenth-century letterpress page, the writings many know so well can now more easily be resituated into even more capacious critical narratives. Those critical stories are self-consciously anachronistic in reading the traces—stains, torn paper—of everyday life that surround Dickinson’s own record of her poems, and suggest new and generative ways

of taking pleasure in the abundant, lively joys, sorrows, fears, and hopes with which they were engaged. After all, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, poetry was, as Susan wrote, their “Sermon...Hope...Solace...Life.”



In “Why We Resist Understanding Dickinson’s Late Fragments, as Fragmentary as that Understanding May Be,” Alexandra Socarides attempted to disentangle the critical blind spot regarding Dickinson’s late poetics, arguing that past critical approaches either overattribute intention or do away with intention entirely. The poem that Dickinson sent to Elizabeth Holland after the death of her husband (L733, Fr1564)—a poem originally drafted on the back of the recipe for Mrs. Carmichael’s coconut cake (A445)—illustrates how readers can factor in intention without overplaying it. The contours of the paper and the interruption the recipe performs in the composition of the poem, as Socarides insisted, certainly informed the way Dickinson wrote the poem. This fragment reveals that Dickinson’s choice of materials was intricately tied to the struggles she was having with the movements, choices, and endings of her poems. Household scraps, as Socarides explained, supported and intensified such struggles by creating more opportunity for interruption, digression, and rethinking. While this paper gestures at the larger question of the relationship

between Dickinson’s different materials and her shifting poetics, it proposes, in concrete terms, that if we are going to attempt to read Dickinson’s late poems, we need to place them in relation to her decision to write on household paper, and we need to find a way to talk about that paper.

In “Acres of Joints/Acres of Seams: Fragmentation and Reconstruction in Dickinson’s Civil War Poems,” Eliza Richards located Dickinson’s “It sifts from Leaden Sieves” (Fr291) in a poetic tradition in which winter’s weather serves as a trope for war. The consistent association over time of the lethal capacities of snow with war suggests that in its annihilating force, war resists history. But the change in these figurations also shows that the interdependent technologies of both communication and killing radically transform the way writers think of snow, war, and the functions and possibilities of poetry. Viewing war at a distance, Dickinson draws upon the weather to materialize—or maybe atomize—the news of the battlefield.

Blogging is a twenty-first-century writing practice with deep, varied roots in literary and cultural history. Marilee Lindemann’s “How Public, Like a B(l)og: Emily Dickinson and a Feminist Prehistory of the Blogosphere” examined part of that history by situating Dickinson as an important precursor to women, especially academics, who blog pseudonymously or anonymously, positioning her as foremother to a composite figure Lindemann has named the Madwoman with a Laptop. Dickinson’s fondness for anonymity sheds light on both the psychology and the politics of feminist blogs, many of which are produced by scholars and writers who have published extensively under their “real” names. Further, Dickinson’s unique textual strategies and perfor-

mances can elucidate techniques that are widely used on blogs. Dickinson was a pioneer in creating mixed-media texts that demand both verbal and visual attention. Blogs work similarly and, thanks to technological advances, on even more levels to engage different kinds of readerly attention. Finally, Dickinson, with her homemade books and the hundreds of poems circulated to an audience of intimates, enters into

this pre-history as an enabling example of self-publication. Dickinson's careful insistence to Thomas Higginson on the distinction between "print" and "publish" has new resonance in the post-print era that brought self-edited and self-published blogs into being. Dickinson's cultivation of an intimate audience that is a complex mixture of public and private is helpful as a way of thinking about how blogs imagine

and construct their communities of readers. Dickinson's stance as simultaneously diminutive yet large and diva-esque has parallels in the figure of the solo blogger toiling away in obscurity but fueled by powerful world-making aspirations. A small blog may, like a "small" life, swell like horizons in one's breast, and the blogger knows well that snarky Dickinsonian desire to "sneer – softly – 'small!'" (Fr307).

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## Sacrifice and Drama in Dickinson

*Chair:* Eleanor Heginbotham, Concordia University (Emerita), USA; *panelists:* Paula Bennett, Southern Illinois University (Emerita), USA; Dan Manheim, Centre College, USA; Lin Yupeng, Hefei University of Technology, P.R. China

**By Eleanor Heginbotham**

Appropriate to a session titled "Sacrifice and Drama in Dickinson," music from a farther room rose and the lights dimmed. Paula Bennett, author of foundational studies of Dickinson and other women poets, found a place in the dim light for a penetrating and moving presentation of "From Browning to the American Civil War: Dickinson and the American Dramatic Monologue." Opening with an analysis of the prologue to Robert Browning's 1889 "fact laden, reality-oriented" *Asolando: Fancies and Facts*, Bennett probed the historic distinctions between "the poet as seer" and "the poet as maker," asking, "What happened to the would-be poet of romantic vision when confronted with a subject so horrifying, so filled with brutality, that any attempt to wrap it in 'fancy's-haze' or...attribute divine purpose to it was an affront not just to those who suffered but to the truth-speaking nature of poetry itself?"

Dickinson's answer to this Civil War-based question was the "dramatic lyric," a term Bennett distinguished from "dramatic monologue." An "extraordinarily flexible genre," it was appropriate, pointed out Bennett, for a number of poems in Fascicle 16 in which the speaker cannot bear to look directly at the carnage. After a close reading of several examples, Bennett concluded that the poems of Fascicle 16 wrestle

with "the single issue that seems to have troubled Dickinson most," the choice a soldier made for "death over life." Rounding out her discussion with a return to Browning, Bennett looked both back to his early use of the dramatic monologue and forward toward a twentieth-century response to a tragedy beyond the scope of commonly accepted literary forms. and toward an "American Dramatic Lyric."

From Bennett's focus on the poetic form for containing and exploring the sacrifices of war in experimental prosody, the session moved toward a focus on less grave but equally symbolic gifts as Dan Manheim spoke on "Emily Dickinson and the Enigma of Gift and Sacrifice." Manheim, co-editor of a recent special *EDJ* issue, placed many of Dickinson's poems in the context of mid-nineteenth century New England gift culture. In his discussion of the significance of a flower, a poem, or an anthology, Manheim offered his own gifts: thoughts on gift giving from the Gospel of John ("a gift was a way of perpetuating a circuit of heavenly love"); from Emerson's "Gifts" ("any gift is a portion of thyself"); from twentieth-century Marcel Mauss (the "potlatch [gift] was a way of defining or adjusting power relations within communities"); Lewis Hyde, and others. Manheim directed such resources to Dickinson's "Without

this – there is naught" (Fr464). His play with almost every word of the poem showed how the circuit her gift makes around the world "gives wholeness and form to the separate entities who receive it. Her seams include them all."

One way of showing how "her seams include them all" is to consider how Dickinson deploys drama in her poetry. That was the subject of Lin Yupeng, translator of poetry and of such novels as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into Chinese. His comprehensive paper, "Drama in Emily Dickinson's Poetry and Its Possible Causes," was on one level a virtual course in dramatic techniques: conflict (frost beheading flowers), characters (Bees, Butterflies, Swans), melodrama (assassins in apartments, bodies borrowing revolvers), comedy of manners (this was particularly delightful: "Over the fence – Strawberries grow"), dialogue (conversations between "Truth" and "Beauty"), meta-drama, and more.

As the brief but lively discussion period proved, the route from individual elements of the dramatist to the "dramatic lyric" of Bennett's selections and the making of all those dramatic elements into the "gifts" of Manheim's talk fell into new patterns for the thirty-some Dickinson readers gathered in the temporarily darkened room, the soundtrack of the next door film shedding still more "drama."

# “Were I Britain born”

## Dickinson and the Self

*Chair:* Brad Ricca, Case Western Reserve University, USA; *panelists:* Cuihua Xu, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, P.R. China; Cynthia Hallen, Brigham Young University, USA; Polly Longworth, Independent Scholar, USA; Norbert Hirschhorn, Physician, USA

By Brad Ricca

This panel showcased a breadth of speakers and topics. First, conference newcomer Cuihua Xu delivered “As if a Kingdom – cared’: Emily Dickinson’s Heroic Thinking on Self-Management.” Xu, who also translates Dickinson poems into Chinese, explored the ways in which Dickinson’s poetry works within a self-managed mechanism designed to best maximize the effect of both image and language. Xu argued that Dickinson, in poems such as Fr356, “demonstrates her businesslike shrewdness in weighing the attitudes toward working for time or for immortality.” Xu cited lines such as “My business is, to find!” (from Fr175), “My business were so dear!” (from Fr176), and “My business is to love” (from L269) as indicative of this sort of economical thinking about expansive subjects. She also made interesting parallels to the translation of Dickinson’s poems into Chinese, whose “business” of ideographical language allows for closely focused attention to metaphorical language.

Next, Cynthia Hallen shared with the warm, crowded room some brilliant slides concerning Emily Dickinson’s previously-unmapped English heritage in “‘Britain Born’: Emily Dickinson’s Orthogenetic Paternal and Maternal Lines.” With her usual passion, Hallen presented her primary research tracing the poet’s direct paternal ancestors to Billingborough in Lincolnshire—the

“little John” country of Fr408 (“Like Some Old fashioned Miracle”). She showed also that Dickinson’s direct maternal ancestors were from Shaftesbury in Dorset, just south of Stonehenge, the country of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, and she displayed original slides and documents from her own pre-conference trip to these sites to prove that Dickinson was indeed “Britain Born.”

The final two panelists delivered separate papers on a shared topic: “Was It Epilepsy?: Diagnosing Emily Dickinson’s Health.” First, Dr. Norbert Hirschhorn, a public health physician with a background in medical history, was passionate in his rebuttal of Lyndall Gordon’s controversial claim in *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family’s Feuds* (2010) that Dickinson suffered from epilepsy. Hirschhorn presented information on how epilepsy was—and was not—treated during Dickinson’s lifetime, focusing on Gordon’s “pharmacological error” in believing that glycerine would have been prescribed for epilepsy. Citing original medical manuals and offering several pages of references as support, Hirschhorn persuasively argued that, while Dickinson was prescribed glycerine, it was decidedly not for epilepsy but instead for a chronic cough.

Polly Longworth added more to this conversation about epilepsy by looking

at Dickinson’s cousin Zebina Montague, whom Gordon points to in her book as a sad epileptic to support her claim that epilepsy ran in the family. Longworth not only refuted this claim of inheritability, but revealed through primary historical documents that Montague suffered from a stroke, not epilepsy, and she unfolded the rich story of his life as a beloved member of the community. Longworth concluded her talk by passing around photos of Montague with his cane, surrounded by friends.

Discussion was spirited, especially about the claim of epilepsy. Some audience members wondered if Hirschhorn’s and Longworth’s valuable work did not completely nullify Gordon’s book. Others disagreed. Martha Nell Smith agreed that any mistakes are unfortunate but wondered if we were judging the book too harshly, because all biographies have errors, including Sewall’s and Habegger’s. Longworth agreed, noting that portions of the Gordon book were very good. As a whole, audience members seemed to lament that it was the epilepsy portion that had brought Dickinson back into the media spotlight. In the end, with the room feeling a bit exhausted, Longworth suggested that Cuihua Xu read a Dickinson poem she had translated into Chinese. This helped to end the session on a congenial note.

## Dickinson and the Arts I: Imagination’s Muse

### Emily Dickinson as Creative Inspiration

*Chair:* Georgiana Strickland, Independent Scholar, USA; *panelists:* Maryanne Garbowsky, County College of Morris, USA; Nicole Panizza, Royal College of Music, UK; Suzie Hanna, Norwich University UK; Sally Bayley, Balliol College of Oxford University, UK

By Georgiana Strickland

Dickinson’s influence on artists in many fields has been profound and widespread throughout the past century. This panel, organized by the EDIS

Fine Arts Committee, approached the poet through the lens of visual art, music, and filmmaking.

Maryanne Garbowsky opened the

session with a discussion of two visual artists, American Will Barnet and Canadian Isabelle Arsenault, both of whom have produced books illustrating a se-

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lection of Dickinson's poems. Barnet's *The World in a Frame* (1989, reprinted 2006) offers twenty-four poems and is aimed at adults, while Arsenault's *My Letter to the World* (2008) presents seven poems chosen for an audience age ten and up. Garbowsky noted striking differences between the work of the two artists. Barnet used a carbon pencil on vellum, producing somewhat somber black and white illustrations that he felt best reflected "the solitude of [Dickinson's] life." Arsenault chose mixed media, including acrylic, but limited her palette to dark colors "with sparks of light, and colors here and there," reflecting the poet's "creativity amid a world of dark dresses." Arsenault also produced collages employing old handwritten notes on paper to represent the poet's "pieced-together manuscript books." Garbowsky projected illustrations from the two books, allowing viewers to compare two very different but equally inspired responses to Dickinson's iconic poems.

Nicole Panizza, in "Titanic Operas: English Song Settings of Emily Dickinson and Elizabeth Barrett Browning," presented a lecture/demonstration focusing on two songs by English composer Andrew Downes (b. 1950): Dick-

inson's "One Blessing had I than the rest" (Fr767) and Barrett Browning's "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways" from her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Playing recorded performances of the songs by soprano Jane Sheldon (with herself at the piano), Panizza analyzed the two scores and spoke of the many considerations a composer must face in translating a poem into music. Equally important, explained Panizza, are the considerations of the singer and pianist in choosing how to perform the work to be true to the intention of both the composer and the poet. These include choice of tempo, dynamic and articulative variance, issues of balance and phrasing, and aspects of textual representation (such as word painting and innovative use of consonants and vowels) to accentuate hidden vessels of meaning and emotional contour within the original poem. Thus the combined inspiration of the poet, the composer, and the performers results in new musical experiences that both highlight and define the similarities and differences between the two poets.

This varied session closed with the screening of a new eight-minute animated film, *Letter to the World*, directed and animated by Suzie Hanna in con-

sultation with Sally Bayley, sound design by Tom Simmons. In their presentation, the filmmakers discussed the source of their inspiration: Dickinson's "experiments with hybridity and dual identities," by which the poet creates "a vast imaginary landscape with an extraordinary microscopic perception of Nature." The film itself was produced from animated silhouettes of the American actress Elisabeth Gray integrated with stop-motion object and shadow theatre, and it includes a rich supply of contemporary artistic and cultural influences referenced in Dickinson's poetry and letters. The film alludes to daguerreotypes, magic lanterns and other nineteenth-century lens technology designed "to enhance the sense of scale and location." Bayley and Hanna argued that the reduction and enlargement of territories and spheres of influence lie "at the heart of Dickinson's imagination, a kind of poetic egotism that permits her to shrink her enemies, including God."

This lively session ended with many questions and continued into an adjoining room, where the film was shown repeatedly throughout the afternoon.

## Dickinson and the Arts II Dickinson on Stage—A Roundtable Discussion

*Organizer and moderator:* Jonnie Guerra, Cabrini College (Retired), USA; *participants:* Edie Campbell, LynchPin Productions, UK; Tom Daley, Boston Center for Adult Education, USA; Barbara Dana, Independent Scholar and Artist, USA; Jim Fraser, Utah State University, USA; Jack Lynch, LynchPin Productions, USA; Barbara Mossberg, California State University, Monterey Bay, USA

By Jonnie Guerra

This lively roundtable focused on three plays—each representing a unique approach to the challenge of Emily Dickinson as a dramatic subject.

Jim Fraser and Barbara Dana led off with a conversation about Barbara's revival of William Luce's 1976 one-woman play, *The Belle of Amherst*—undoubtedly the most famous drama about Dickinson's life and work. Jim expressed his admiration for Barbara's masterful performance of the poet, which he had seen at the Kirby The-

ater at Amherst College in March. In response to Fraser's probing questions about how she prepared herself to portray Dickinson, Dana attributed her success to extensive reading and writing about the poet. In her words, "How do you play someone so complex and magnificent without living with her for many years?" To maintain the intensity of emotion throughout the play, particularly in the second act, she needed "to get on a wave and let it carry her." The audience was especially enter-

tained by Dana's reminiscences about memorable performances of *Belle*—in Amherst the night Julie Harris, Dana's idol, was present in the audience, and at the New York Botanical Garden in May when severe windy weather conditions found her reciting "Because I could not stop for Death" (Fr479) while holding on for dear life to the pole of the performance tent.

Next Edie Campbell and Jack Lynch shared the background story of their co-creation of *Emily Dickinson and I:*

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*The Journey of a Portrayal*, which premiered in 1999 and was performed as a featured event of the conference. When Campbell sought Lynch’s advice about how to proceed with her play about Dickinson, he eventually convinced her to focus on the struggle of the creative process. The strategy of mixing autobiographical elements from Campbell’s own personal history with facts from Dickinson’s biography took weeks of improvisational work, and Campbell confessed that it was “terrifying” to create on her feet. She explained how the play’s main stage business, which revolves around sewing and ironing Dickinson’s white dress, allowed her to share difficult personal memories without always making direct eye contact with the audience. Performing the play for Dickinson scholars and lovers proved not as frightening as Campbell had first imagined, and she expressed her gratitude for the generosity with which her performance was received.

Jonnie Guerra then introduced Tom Daley’s play, “*Every Broom and Bridget*”: *A Play about Emily Dickinson and*

*Her Servants*, which has earned a positive reception in each of its several community theater productions. The play was inspired by Jay Leyda’s “Miss Emily’s Maggie” and Aife Murray’s scholarship, and privileges the perspective of Tom Kelley, the Irish-born servant of the Dickinson family whom Emily chose as her chief pallbearer and with whom, the playwright speculates, the poet had a platonic relationship. Daley described how the play evolved from a multi-character play to a one-man drama set in the aftermath of Dickinson’s funeral and burial. In the revision, Kelley channels the voices of the other characters. A highlight of the roundtable was Daley’s performance of Tom Kelley’s elegiac address to the deceased poet as he gazes up at her bedroom window. Whether by Daley’s poetic gifts, his persuasive delivery, or a combination of the two, the audience was powerfully moved—some to tears.

Barbara Mossberg responded to the roundtable with her characteristic ebullience. She shared her own experience of portraying Dickinson’s life and

work on stage in a theater piece titled *Flying with Dickinson*, which she performs annually. Hailing Dickinson as the ultimate “drama queen,” Mossberg suggested why the poet has such broad appeal through an inspiring reading of “Drama’s Vitallest Expression is the Common Day” (Fr776). Dickinson’s poems, and performers like Barbara Dana, Edie Campbell, and Tom Daley who bring them to life, offer us, their listeners, new understandings of “the Human Heart.” Mossberg concluded with the important observation on the value of the roundtable in opening “a discussion among scholars of Dickinson about what is known and can be known through creative responses that cannot be known or expressed in scholarship—or perhaps that opens up insights into Dickinson that scholarship then can develop further.”

All in attendance concurred that sessions on the arts that integrate scholarship and creative response make fruitful contributions to EDIS conferences and should be continued.

### ***Emily Dickinson & I: The Journey of a Portrayal***

Conceived by Jack Lynch, written by Edie Campbell and Jack Lynch, directed by Jack Lynch, performed by Edie Campbell at the Burton Taylor Studio, Oxford, UK, August 4-8, 2010

**Reviewed by Tom Daley, Boston Center for Adult Education, USA**

Articulating the ambition of countless playwrights and actors who have found inspiration in Emily Dickinson, Edie, the narrator of *Emily Dickinson & I*, explains, near the beginning of the play, “What I want / is to be Emily’s mouth-piece.” She goes on to ask the question that most of her fellow interpreters forget to ask: “But how do I perform that / without getting in her way?” With wit and brio, Edie narrates the dissolution of a plan to write a play in which the script was to be wholly derived from Dickinson’s words. Edie Campbell, under the skillful direction of her co-author, Jack Lynch, played herself brilliantly in their production at the Burton Taylor Studio in Oxford. In an intermissionless hour and a quar-



ter, she never faltered, never failed to enliven the story of how Emily Dickinson had inspired and confounded her struggle to create a successful stage presentation of the poet’s work.

The script is grounded in well-chosen poems and excerpts from Dickinson, and in amusing and poignant anecdotes from Campbell’s family life and from her career as actress and would-be playwright. In a touch worthy of Dickinson’s brooding over death, Edie relates her father’s tale about his sister, brought to mind by the story of the death of Dickinson’s nephew, Gilbert, at age seven: “When little Edith died, / the ground was too frozen to bury her. / So my grandparents kept her in her coffin / on the porch / and oiled her



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little body / everyday / until the spring thaw.”

One might ask for more of that imaginative retrospective, and for less of the bland characterizations, hardly worthy of Edie’s passion (or Dickinson’s) that nudge their way into the script, such as “Emily remained true to herself and her convictions, / no small accomplishment.” That being said, the comedic spirit of Dickinson is often honored by Edie’s quips, even when bluntly unpoetic, such as this rebuke of the addressee of *The Master Letters*: “Well,

whoever he was, / he was a jerk.”

Campbell is one of the truly great interpreters of Dickinson. Her Emily is robust but unaffected. The actress waxes wise, tender, or brazen without the mawkishness or stentorian abrasiveness infecting thespians less keenly attuned to the nuance of the poet’s words. This play about trying to construct a play using only Dickinson letters and poems makes a sprightly springboard for Campbell’s artistry. Dickinson’s words are not hemmed in by some rickety garden wall which the interpreter

assails on stilts—they seem to rise out of Edie’s narrative with a natural, easy-going, and yeasty graciousness. We are lifted along with them.

The script, although a deeply affecting personal statement, may not possess all the necessary polish to inspire an interpretation of equally stunning power from an actress less intimately connected to the narrative. But Campbell’s execution scored a deep impression, one that even the savagely selective Emily Dickinson might have found worthy of including in her society.

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## Archival Resources: “Over the fence — I could climb” Primary Sources for Dickinson Scholarship

*Chair:* Aife Murray, Independent Scholar and Artist, USA; *panelists:* Leslie A. Morris, Curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts, Houghton Library, Harvard University, USA; Jane Wald, Executive Director, Emily Dickinson Museum, USA; Michael Kelly, Head of Archives and Special Collections, Frost Library, Amherst College, USA

**By Aife Murray**

This session on archival resources was top notch. The audience heard about advances made in preservation and were pointed to rich resources that may yield new understanding of Dickinson for scholars.

The Houghton Library’s Leslie Morris had much good news to impart. To help researchers navigate the online catalog for a dozen small collections that comprise Harvard’s Dickinson Collection, Morris has mounted a new “portal” to all things Dickinson, which she unveiled for the EDIS 2010 audience. Morris followed with a progress report on the more peripheral areas of the collections—new areas for research that have received particular attention over the last five years. These include objects that came to Harvard in 1950 through Gilbert Montague’s gift but have not been on display. Morris has systematically searched cupboards and closets to catalog and digitize all of these objects, which are primarily material from the Evergreens “Emily Room” for which there is still insufficient documentation.

Dickinson family materials, Morris noted, have now been sorted and

a numbered list created. This material comprises the papers of Emily’s parents, of Susan and Austin Dickinson and their children, and of Lavinia Dickinson, as well as some Root family papers. The Houghton holds some of Martha Dickinson Bianchi’s own poetry and essays, but principally her papers are related to her efforts to get her aunt’s publications into print. Work continues at the Houghton on the Dickinson family library collection in response to demand for the Dickinson books. Given the inherently fragile conditions of these books, Morris commissioned a condition survey, and in July the Houghton began repair and stabilization of the family books with the goal of digitizing them all. This process turned up 23 titles that had never been incorporated into the family collection. The first three books have been digitized to include page images and searchable text.

Jane Wald of the Emily Dickinson Museum gave a lively talk about recent advances and discoveries made at the Dickinson homes and grounds, including one that arose from the collapse of the Homestead parlor ceiling

last October, a potential catastrophe that provided unexpected opportunities to examine previously unknown decorative finishes, wallpapers, and structural framing. The Museum directors learned that there are at least four different decorative periods in almost every room of the house, with wide swings in style, providing evidence that Emily Dickinson’s aesthetic environment was not as static as previously believed, nor as bland as the current twentieth-century house decor.

Wald reported that a Historic Structure Report (HSR) and a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) on the grounds have been undertaken to reveal more about the history of the environment and the lives of the inhabitants. These have already solved various puzzles and provided guidance for the recent exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden and restoration of the hemlock hedge and stunning new fence fronting Main Street.

Wald pointed out that the Museum has a rich collection of approximately 8,000 items, the material legacy primarily of the Austin Dickinson family, but including also furnishings and per-

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sonal items from the Dickinson family’s years at the Homestead, including a lot of “stuff” that in another household might have been thrown away. The Museum has prepared a Furnishings and Exhibit plan with much detail about the two homes, their furnishings, and the family’s lifestyle. These reports taken together provide the Museum with a blueprint for recreating the settings and rooms as the Dickinson family would have known them.

Mike Kelly of Amherst College’s

Frost Library concluded the session by describing that library’s collection of Dickinson manuscripts as the “scraps”—a subject of increasing scholarly focus. He encouraged the audience to make full use of the collection’s college and alumni material as a source for Dickinson study. The Frost collections have the potential to yield new understanding of the connection between the poet and the college, such as her immersion in cutting edge sciences being researched and taught at the college

and the rise of collegiate sports. College magazines and satires, such as *The Indicator* and *Amherst Collegiate Magazine*, were also vehicles for student self-expression. Austin Dickinson and his friends were active participants, Kelly noted, and this writing scene was part of Emily Dickinson’s youthful, formative milieu.

Kelly’s stimulating talk was followed by a series of questions, primarily for Morris, about access, copyright, intellectual property, and ephemerality.

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## British Connections VIII: Solitude and Suffering

*Chair:* Cindy MacKenzie, University of Regina, Canada; *panelists:* Mita Bose, University of Delhi, India; Shih-Yuan (Ann) Chou, National Chengchi University, Taiwan; Hyesook Son, Sungkyunkwan University, Korea

**By Cindy MacKenzie**

With a persistent rain falling on the lush green gardens outside, an appropriately melancholy backdrop was set for a panel of papers on the theme of solitude and suffering in Dickinson’s poetry. Panelists from three different countries presented feminist and Christian perspectives on Dickinson’s own experience and treatment of the subject.

In “The Victorian New England Sappho: The Volcanic Genius of Emily Dickinson,” Mita Bose discussed the difference between the suffering experienced by British women authors and the American poet as Dickinson expresses it in Fr256, “The Robin’s my Criterion for Tune.” Referring to the contrasts in references to landscape, Bose pointed out the polarities between “Robin” and “Cuckoo,” “Buttercups” and “Daisies,” “orchard sprung” and “Britain born.” By turning inward to her private world, Bose asserted, Dickinson created a reverberating internal energy, a “counter-force” that produced her formidable power. Later, Bose defended the feminist approach to a question regarding the particular suffering of women in a patriarchal society.

In “The Dog as Dickinson’s Ordinary Subjectivity: The Case of ‘I started Early

– Took my Dog –,” master’s student Ann Chou interpreted Dickinson’s reference to a dog in three poems: Fr656 (“I started Early...”), 237 (“What shall I do – it whimpers so”), and 274 (“Again – his voice is at the door –”). In the context of the images evoked in Fr255, “The Drop that wrestles in the Sea,” Chou found a pattern in each “dog” poem that appears to be part of a larger narrative. She argued that to read them in isolation from each other is to lose a significant part of their meaning. In all four poems, Chou explained, the speaker experiences different levels of danger that threaten her sense of subjectivity. When confronted by a “man” she is willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of the beloved, but she still needs to maintain a sense of her autonomy. Chou posited that the dog may be a symbol of this much-cherished position or may represent the speaker’s attachment to her independent way of life. The dog can be seen as the speaker’s bodyguard, her source of courage, or a symbol of rationality.

In “The Rhetoric of Suffering in the Poetry of John Donne and Emily Dickinson,” Hyesook Son provided substantial contextual background for physical suffering as a source of mystical insight and self-transformation in the

Christian tradition, clearly defining the differences between Catholic and Protestant interpretations. Donne was intrigued by the tension between the notions of pain in these traditions, and, as a convert, Son explained, he cherished the metaphorical potentiality of suffering and attempted to maximize it to connect worldly signs with their spiritual significance, while also emphasizing the gap between the human and the divine. The rhetoric of suffering also held a profound fascination for Emily Dickinson, who repeatedly addresses the question of pain in a similarly ambivalent manner in her poetry. In “Read – Sweet – how others – Strove –” (Fr 323), Dickinson illustrates her belief that human salvation has nothing to do with bodily pain. However, she consistently chooses the rhetoric of suffering and relies heavily on the imagery of physical pain to express her religious ideas and metaphysical thoughts.

A lively discussion followed these three thought-provoking papers. Following this final panel of the day, we made our way to Blackwell’s reception to enjoy further conversation.

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## Dickinson in New England

*Chair:* Michael Manson, American University, USA; *panelists:* Jean McClure Mudge, Independent Artist, USA; Alexandra Manglis, Oxford University, UK; Robin Peel, University of Plymouth, UK

By Michael Manson

In a brisk, deceptively light narrative, Jean McClure Mudge, in a paper entitled “Emily Dickinson’s Idiosyncratic Tie to Ralph Waldo Emerson,” used her intimate knowledge of Dickinson’s house and life to reveal how Emerson offered Dickinson “a way of life,” enabling her to “epitomize ... his ideal: the scholar-poet at home.” While many have described Emerson’s influence, Mudge carefully revealed the stitchery that bound the two together. Organizing her talk chronologically, Mudge followed the course of near-misses that led to the extraordinary accident that two who lived so close and shared so much never met. But with each miss, Mudge demonstrated the tighter stitches connecting them. She examined the pencil marks Dickinson left on her copies of Emerson’s poems and essays; she found newspaper reports of Emerson’s activities reappearing in some form in Dickinson’s thought, poems, and letters; she found connections even in Susan Dickinson’s misquotations of Dickinson’s statements about Emerson and in Dickinson’s changing signature

in her letters to Thomas W. Higginson.

Alexandra Manglis, in a patient analysis entitled “Excavating Emily Dickinson and Henry David Thoreau in the Works of Susan Howe,” demonstrated that, even though Howe mentions Thoreau only four times in *My Emily Dickinson*, she in fact uses him to help her linguistically excavate Dickinson’s work. Inspired by Stanley Cavell’s description of Thoreau’s method of discovery as a phenomenological act of “placing ourselves in the world,” Manglis found Howe frequently *placing* Dickinson “in various relations” with authors such as Mary Rowlandson, Anne Hutchinson, Mary Dryer, and Jonathan Edwards. In an intriguing turn, Manglis then argued that Thoreau’s act of “impounding” the land around Walden Pond, turning the land into literature, is picked up by Howe, who not only makes Dickinson “my Emily Dickinson” but also shows that Dickinson impounded many texts ranging from Shakespeare to Edwards “within her own invisible borders of rhyme.” The result is that Howe liberates Dickinson “from the attic,” giving

her a “Thoreauvian seat.”

Finally, Robin Peel, in “Burglar! Banker – Father!’: Marx and Massachusetts in the Age of Edward Dickinson, Whig,” enlarged a conversation that has previously centered on the analysis of economic metaphors in Dickinson to examine her borrowings of a number of scientific strategies, including from economics, that “suggested there were laws and forces that took no heed of God.” While analyses focusing on imagery have usually seen Dickinson as satirizing economic commerce, Peel argued instead that Dickinson evinces “a more profound recognition of the unstoppable forces at play on earth.” Although he agreed that Dickinson was not familiar with abstract economic theory, he examined the work of Tocqueville, Darwin, Marx, and Engels to show how they shared a new perception of human possibility. As much as Puritans “never underestimated” the “forces of evil,” they believed God would prevail, while the new scientific ideas emphasized the “autonomy of the influences driving society” as well as their “implacability.”

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## British Connections IX: Dickinson’s Imagination and Words

*Chair:* Mary Loeffelholz, Northeastern University, USA; *panelists:* Karen Foster, Dickinson State University, USA; James Guthrie, Wayne State University, USA; Jorge Hernández Jiménez, Universidad Nacional Autónoma, Mexico

By Mary Loeffelholz

“British Connections IX” began in blood and ended with consideration of the Atlantic shore distantly binding James Joyce’s “Proteus” to Dickinson’s poems. Karen Foster spoke on “‘But cannot dance as well’: The Blood of Language in Select Emily Dickinson Poems.” Taking her interpretive point of departure from a late, aphoristic fragment—“The Blood is more showy than the Breath / But cannot dance as well –” (Fr1558), Foster explored Dickinson’s emergence in her poems of 1858. Citing “I spilt the dew” from Fr5 (“One Sister have I in the house”), Foster traced the spill-

age of blood and the passage of breath through Dickinson’s earliest collection of her poems, linking them to her relationship with Susan and her challenges to linguistic prescriptivism.

In “Mean Girls with Knives: Dickinson and Great Britain Have It Out,” James Guthrie, by contrast, presented a Dickinson who at least tentatively explored whether she could find some accommodation between her own demands of poetry and those of later nineteenth-century U.S. public culture. “My Country’s Wardrobe” (Fr1540), Guthrie argued, is Dickinson’s trans-

lation of the Betsy Ross legend that emerged in 1870; she had enough hope of its patriotic accessibility to present it to Higginson as a possible candidate for an Amherst charity bazaar. Behind the poem’s feminization of the conflict between Great Britain and America, Guthrie suggested, may lie Dickinson’s poetic identification with the artisanship of Betsy Ross—another female expert in measuring, cutting, and stabbing symbols together.

In “‘Signatures of all things’: Portrayals of the Interruption in Dickinson and Joyce,” Jorge Hernández Jiménez com-

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pared the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses* to Dickinson’s poetics. Assisted by Derida, Jiménez discerned in both writers the practice of what he called, in discussion, a kind of “fractal” infinity, characterized (like a seashore in fractal

mathematics) not by limitless outward extension but by the endless possibility of interruptions between signs.

Further discussion touched on methodological differences among the papers—the historical contexts pre-

sented by Guthrie, the autocontexts of Dickinson’s oeuvre explored by Foster, and the comparative perspective offered by Jiménez—before the panel’s very finite period interrupted us.

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## British Connections X: Romantic and Religious Visions

*Chair:* Richard Brantley, University of Florida, USA; *panelists:* Linda Freedman, Selwyn College of Cambridge University, UK; Alan Blackstock, Utah State University, USA

**By Richard E. Brantley**

Linda Freedman, author of a forthcoming book on Emily Dickinson’s religious imagination, spoke on what Christina Rossetti called Dickinson’s “wonderful Blakean gift.” That gift, in Rossetti’s words, was Dickinson’s “startling recklessness for poetic ways and means.” Rossetti, Freedman observed, echoed Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s preface to Dickinson’s *Poems* (1890); there, Higginson had used a comparison between Blake’s *Songs* and Dickinson’s poetry to excuse or at least explain the unconventionality of Dickinson’s poetic form. On the basis of Rossetti’s and Higginson’s views, Freedman argued that Dickinson bore comparison with Blake as a poet of “genius,” “insight,” and “extraordinary vividness of descriptive and imaginative power.” Freedman emphasized not only how Blake represented a triumph of visionary poetic essence over poetic form but also how his achievement contextualizes Dickinson’s originality. Freedman also stressed that Higginson formed his opinion of Blake within Emerson’s Transcendentalist and Lydia Maria Child’s abolitionist circles. Thus Blake’s American reception began before parallels between Dickinson and Walt

Whitman started to generate their own mythography. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, Higginson (who had little regard for Whitman) pushed a Blakean Dickinson. This Dickinson, in Freedman’s view, survives in British and American circles. Dickinson’s “wonderful Blakean gift,” as Freedman concluded, remains crucial to transatlantic meanings of Romanticism and religious vision.

Alan Blackstock, who has published on G. K. Chesterton’s view of Victorian literature and on nature writing of the American West, spoke, too, on religious affinities between Blake and Dickinson. Blackstock was interested not just in the two poets’ radical disruption of poetic language, their penchant for gnomic utterance, and their cryptic imagery that hints at a complex private mythology. Nor was he concerned with Blake and Dickinson as just mystics or poet-prophets with a message accessible only to initiates. Turning toward cultural milieu, Blackstock sketched the relationship between these two poets and Protestant hymn tradition exemplified by Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld. Scholars have examined ways in which

Blake and Dickinson individually appropriated this tradition only to subvert it. Blackstock, for his part, undertook a synoptic examination of works in which both writers perform this subversion. His presentation set texts by Blake and Dickinson alongside uncannily parallel works by Watts, Wesley, et al., and he established thereby that Blake and Dickinson challenged the theological, educational, and stylistic norms that hymn tradition had advanced.

Due to the unfortunate circumstance that Victoria N. Morgan was unable to attend the conference and present her paper on “Reading Dickinson through Wattsian Dissent,” there was plenty of time for discussion. It was lively. The vital lectures by Freedman and Blackstock assured a corresponding intensity from a wide range of panel participants. Several applauded Freedman for her respectful recognition of Higginson’s centrality to Dickinson studies. Several others lauded Blackstock for his refreshing lack of condescension toward the hymn tradition from which Dickinson took her bearings even when she wrote against it.

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## Dickinson, (Poetic) Identity, and Keats

*Chair:* Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, USA; *panelists:* Marianne Noble, American University, USA; Ryan Cull, New Mexico State University, USA; Michelle Kohler, Tulane University, USA

**By Martha Nell Smith**

Each of these papers explored various aspects of what Keats called “negative capabilities,” as readers/writers inhabit a capacity “of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable

reaching after fact & reason.”

In “The Presence of the Face: Dickinson’s Mirror Neurons,” Marianne Noble explored the meaning for Dickinson of “sympathy.” She argued that

sympathy—as Dickinson understood it—is central to her project precisely for its role in quelling the anxieties of skepticism. Noble observed that Dickinson uses the word variously: to

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express the empathic, or understanding of what another feels because one is or has felt the same way; to express concern and regret for the misfortune of others, above all for a death; to suggest a shared approach to the world that unites people in a select society. Her famous published Valentine beginning “Magnum bonum, ‘harum scarum” (L34) declares: “All choice spirits however distant are ours, ours theirs; there is a thrill of sympathy – a circulation of mutuality – cognationem inter nos!” Sympathy understood in this way unites “choice spirits” in a small circle of spiritual affinity and shared understanding, in a nuanced and thorough understanding of one another based upon a shared outlook. Candor, then, is a crucial component of Dickinson’s sympathy. The facades that society requires of us—such as those requiring Emily to love the poor—impose divisive veils of deceit and performance. The sympathy that unites scorns false connections, scorns the world of whining and pitying, reveling instead in a more Nietzschean affirmation of beauty and an aristocratic realm of authenticity beyond good and evil. But only the select few can understand and be trusted.

In “Interrogating the ‘Egotistical Sublime’: Dickinson’s and Keats’s Internal Critiques of Romanticism,” Ryan Cull argued that Dickinson and Keats worried that Romanticism promoted a self-centered sensibility that narrowed the scope of poetry and that made it the

conduit for projecting possessive impulses toward others and the world. Keats critiqued this “egotistical sublime” throughout much of his career, promoting instead an impersonal or “disinterested” aesthetic. However, his poignant final works find him unable to sustain this aesthetic and ethic under the pressures of both impending illness and love. Though Dickinson was a great admirer of Keats and shared his worries about egotism in the lyric, she never held out hope for a disinterested model of selfhood. “Like Eyes that looked on Wastes – “ (Fr693) engages the allure and power of the egotistical sublime, enabling her to conceptualize a more mutual mode of relation. “He was my host - he was my guest” (Fr1754) suggests that sociality must be grounded principally on ethical rather than epistemological grounds, that engaging otherness must be first and foremost a matter of obligation rather than understanding. In so doing, such a poem indicates perhaps still-untapped resources within the lyric genre for understanding positive, more generative forms of sociality.

Proposing a connection between Keats’s ode “To Autumn” and a cluster of poems about autumn that Dickinson wrote the same year she mentions Keats in a letter to Thomas W. Higginson, Michelle Kohler’s “Dickinson, Keats, and the Disease of Autumn” illuminated points of contact between Keats’s ode and Dickinson’s 1862 poems. As Alan Bewell has argued, Keats’s poem

depicts “the coming into being of English climatic space” out of its tropical alternatives in colonial regions; such emergence is effected through the combination of cooling and clearing, which function to “temper a space that would otherwise risk overabundance, disease, and decay.” Bewell’s analysis of the “detropicalization” of autumn likewise accounts for ways in which Dickinson’s poems similarly merge images of autumn with the discourse of disease and tropical imagery. But whereas Keats enacts the removal of any tropical excesses from autumn in order to invent a temperate national climate, Dickinson’s poems reverse this impulse and, in fact, take such reversal as their theme, for she casts placid fall imagery as either euphemistic or deceptive, and actively reinscribes autumn as diseased, excessive, and foreign or otherwise unfamiliar. While Keats’s poem is markedly unfeverish (in contrast to both the tropics and Keats’s other odes), Dickinson’s poems aggressively reassign pathology and strife to an autumnal discourse that has been de-pathologized. Dickinson’s reversal is perhaps best understood in the context of what was at stake for each poet in articulating a national landscape. If Keats’s mellow autumn is mired in England’s colonial politics, Dickinson’s bloody, over-ripened autumns posit an American landscape infected in part by a particularly violent year in the Civil War.

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## British Connections XI: Dickinson and the Brownings

*Chair:* Michael Yetman, Purdue University (Emeritus), USA; *panelists:* Vincent Dussol, University of Montpellier 3, France; J.D. Isip, California State University, Fullerton, USA

**By Mike Yetman**

We had two thought-provoking papers. Vincent Dussol’s “Auroran Widths” revisited the question of the influence of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s epic on Dickinson’s work in general. Dussol argued that Dickinson’s speakers’ frequently warlike stances and use of martial imagery run counter to the feminized epic of reconciliation put

forward in *Aurora Leigh*. The echoes of Revelation, in both *Aurora Leigh* and Dickinson’s work, led Dussol to assert that the closing book of the Christian Bible is the pivotal intertext for comparing the practice of the two poets. Revelation’s ambiguous message showing violence as a necessary part of Christ’s ultimate triumph and, at the

same time warning against its lethal consequences, is found in both poets. Dickinson’s frequent implied blending of Cavalry/Calvary encapsulates what Dussol called Dickinson’s “hesitation,” or ambivalence, toward traditional notions of the hero and the heroic. Accordingly, for Dickinson heroism can mean anonymity equally as much as re-

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nown. Dussol cited epic practices common to both poets: casting the role of the poet in the role of the epic hero (cf. Wordsworth’s “The Prelude”), interacting with the dead, emphasis on quest or pilgrimage, and finally an inclination to what he called “holistic, global apprehension.” Dussol ended with an eclectic discussion of Dickinson’s possible far-reaching influence—mostly by her example of broken grammar and disjunctive narratives—on writers as diverse as e. e. cummings, Susan Howe, Fanny Howe, Brenda Hillman, Bernadette Mayer, Sharon Olds, and Eleni Sikelianos.

J.D. Isip’s paper was titled “Emily Dickinson and Robert Browning: A Shared Heresy.” The “heresy” explored is the vitality of the equal status of faith and doubt, Christian belief and atheism, in the thinking of both writers. Isip has concluded that Dickinson and Browning were “forerunners...in creating language spaces that allow for...faith-based awe and doubt-based frustration.” Dickinson’s doubts on cre-

dal matters, her stance on the place of religion in human experience, and her thinking on the God question in general are well known. But Isip rightly reminded us of the ongoing value of chronic uncertainty in the poet’s engagements with these matters. Dickinson’s uncertainties cannot in all honesty, he argued, simply be dismissed in favor of neatly consigning her to either the atheist’s or the believer’s camp. The undecidability of such questions in the poet’s thinking enabled her fruitfully to revisit them in letters and poems with dramatically varying results throughout her life.

Though Dickinson warned against equating her poems’ speakers with herself, critics do it anyway, especially when there is corroborative evidence for what they take to be her “definitive” stand on a subject. This has always been true in the case of Robert Browning as well, who went out of his way to invent a universe of characters patently not himself. Isip argued for a compatibility of mind between Dick-

inson and Browning on the status and importance of faith and doubt in their thinking. He enlisted the testimony of Browning spokespersons as disparate in their thinking on the question of God, faith, and doubt as the narrator of “Pauline,” the “wandering speaker” of “Christmas-Eve and Easter Day,” and the dramatic speakers Bishop Blougram, Fra Lippo Lippi, Caliban, and David in “Saul” to demonstrate Browning’s nuanced, complex, and often contradictory stands on these matters. He concluded that “what is clear... throughout Browning’s body of work is not only that he doubted ‘blind faith’ but that he longed to understand what it was that attracted people to it. What is shown again and again in Browning, Isip implied, is that there is no such thing as an airtight case to be made for the ascendancy of either doubt or faith; hence, as with Dickinson, the need for a never-ending examination and reassessment of centrality of each in the poet’s exploration of human experience.

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## Dickinson and the Question of Fame

*Chair:* Elizabeth Petrino, Fairfield University, USA; *panelists:* Tom Mack, University of South Carolina, USA; Andrey Logutov, Moscow State University, Russia; Paul Crumbley, Utah State University, USA

**By Elizabeth Petrino**

This panel engaged several perennial questions in Dickinson studies: What was her view of fame? Why did she choose not to publish? How do we understand her view of poetic immortality and the literary tradition? Based on the audience’s vibrant and ongoing interest in the topic, it appears that the questions have not yet been completely answered. The three panelists presented intriguing readings of Dickinson’s attitude toward notoriety through the lens of other writers.

In “Emily Dickinson and Alice James: ‘How dreary – to be – Somebody,’” Tom Mack argued that Alice James read the Higginson/Todd edition of Dickinson’s poems as she was nearing the end of her British residency, 1884 to 1892. While in England, she scanned the newspapers to discover the British

reaction to her fellow countrywoman’s work and recorded in her diary her personal response to the poems and to the appraisal of British critics. Mack explored several parallels between the two writers’ intrusive treatment at the hands of editors and the thread of misogyny running through reviews of Dickinson’s poems. He concluded that both writers were alienated from their native land or social life in a way that may have deepened their thinking about these topics, as neatly conveyed in James’s memorable line: “Patriotism is a centrifugal emotion intensifying at the outskirts.”

In “Emily Dickinson and Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Making of One’s Public,” Andrey Logutov explored the convergences between these poets’ strategies for constructing what could

be called a “private audience.” In both Dickinson’s and Hopkins’s view, a poem is very similar to natural phenomena that often “go unnoticed” (Hopkins) as they manifest themselves indiscriminately and anonymously. Poetic works should “happen” rather than impose themselves on the reader or produce direct meanings. Logutov contended that both poets used the metaphor of “breath” to describe the true essence of poetry. Branded with the poet’s name, however, their texts can no longer function as natural living phenomena and are doomed to enter the “auction of publication.”

Finally, in “Behold the Atom — I preferred —’: Emily Dickinson Reading Fame in Emily Brontë’s ‘No coward soul is mine,’” Paul Crumbley argued that Brontë’s poem communicates a

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version of fame that both poets may have shared and that may have been fundamental to Dickinson's understanding of her work as a poet and her relationship to future readers. Crumbly contended that "No coward soul is mine" anticipates the mediating force of print culture and represents the poet's rededication to the aims that sustained her as a private writer, even as her work entered the public sphere. In fact, Dickinson may have been particu-

larly taken by the poem's closing affirmation: "There is not room for Death, / Nor atom that his might could render void: / Thou - THOU art Being and Breath, / And what THOU art may never be destroyed." These lines resonate in a powerful way with Dickinson's words in "Of all the Souls that stand create -" (Fr279), where she describes the culmination of "this brief Drama in the flesh" as a time "When that which is - and that which was - / Apart - in-

trinsic - stand -."

These readings inspired the audience to consider further the implications of fame for Dickinson. Several questions arose regarding how to interpret editorial changes to the writers' works and their inflection in Dickinson's poems. The reaction of audience members, who continued to discuss these ideas after the panel ended, suggested that this topic will continue to interest future generations of her readers.

## Dickinson's Ethics and Poetics

*Chair:* Gary Lee Stonum, Case Western Reserve University, USA; *panelists:* Logan Esdale, Chapman University, USA; Merve Sarikaya, Baskent University, Turkey; Shira Wolosky, Hebrew University, Israel

By Gary Lee Stonum

As the very last panel of the conference, we found ourselves crowded for discussion time, despite the three interesting and varied papers. Logan Esdale's "Adornment Practice in Dickinson's Studio" linked the poet's references to adorning and adornment in letters and poems with her manuscript flourishes—underlining, quotation marks, and other such sigla. Esdale noted that these nonalphabetic flourishes were common to Dickinson's manuscripts in 1861 and early 1862 (Franklin numbers 195-289, especially 232-74) but rare before or afterward, and that the marks Dickinson included on the fascicle manuscripts generally did not appear when the poem or an excerpt was sent in a letter. Curiously, however, her letters otherwise abounded in such marks both at this time and at others. An obvious question is whether the italics and question marks represented a paratextual code—emphasis, irony, disavowed wording—but Esdale showed that this cannot be the case.

Dickinson simply does not use such marks in anything like a consistently meaningful way.

Merve Sarikaya's "A Kristevan Analysis of 'My Life had Stood a Loaded Gun' and 'One need not be a Chamber to be Haunted'" delivered exactly what her title promised, reading the two poems (Fr764 and 407) partly according to Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject and partly according to her distinction between the male symbolic order and the female semiotic that can intrude upon it in poetic language. Sarikaya linked abjection to the Gothic elements in both poems, especially the overtly Walpolean "One need not be a Chamber to be Haunted." She also showed how the unstable subjectivity speaking in each poem could be accounted for by Kristeva's theories.

In "Dickinson and Nietzsche: Poetics, Ethics, and the World of Becoming," Shira Wolosky first noted some biographical similarities between the American poet and the German phi-

losopher, who might otherwise seem an unlikely couple, and then proposed a series of parallel themes in their writings. Both testified to a metaphysical crisis whereby "what had seemed foundational had, as through a torn veil, suddenly shown empty." The result for both was a world of flux, of perpetual becoming rather than stable being. Both accordingly insist upon what Nietzsche calls perspectivism and Dickinson proclaimed in saying "We see - Comparatively" (Fr580). Both writers accorded a high place to the human will, Nietzsche most famously in his extension of Schopenhauer, and Dickinson in such poems as "To be alive is Power" (Fr876), for which Wolosky gave a detailed reading. Both also usually understood reality as constituted by representation or even by language as a representational mode, Wolosky argued, while acknowledging that Dickinson was less adamant about this proposition.



# NEW PUBLICATIONS

By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

**Chapman, Margaret, and Kathleen Welton, eds. Illustrated by Reuben Negrón. *Poetry for Beginners*.** Danbury, CT: For Beginners: Steerforth Press, Hanover, NH, 2010. 151 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-934389-46-1, \$14.99.

The editors have compiled a practical introduction to poetry in a concise and well-organized format that should appeal to young adults, their teachers, and others wanting to review the various forms of poetry and how to read, understand, and write poems. The editors aim “to share the joy of poetry and to make learning about poetry as meaningful and memorable as possible.” Highly imaginative, bold black ink drawings illustrate most pages. Beginning with Emily Dickinson’s definition of poetry, the book features poems Fr 340, 479, and 930. Chapter two, “Getting the Meaning of Poems,” introduces vocabulary that represents the look (stanzas and line breaks); the sound (rhyme, rhythm and meter); and the sense (imagery, word choice, connotation, figurative language, tone, and themes) of poetry; all bold-font terms are clearly defined. Chapter three, “Seeming Free but Fettered Fast,” provides a sampling of poetic forms: epics, odes, elegies, ballads, sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, limericks, Islamic ghazals, Malay pantoums, haiku, concrete (visual) poetry, prose poetry, and free verse. Chapter four, “Each Age a Lens,” focuses on more than 100 classic poets and poems from ancient times to the present. Chapter five helps readers write their own poems. An appendix provides an annotated “Timeline of 100+ Poets from the Last 3,000 Years”; “50+ Poets Writing Today,” divided into a dozen movements; and “Resources,” for further reading. A good value, this slim book contains a wealth of easily understood information.

**Crumbley, Paul. *Winds of Will: Emily Dickinson and the Sovereignty of Democratic Thought*.** Tuscaloosa, AL: University Press of Alabama, 2010. xv + 278 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8173-1703-4, \$53.00.

Taking his title from Dickinson’s “When the Winds of Will are stirred” (Fr 1044), Crumbley’s well-researched, scholarly, yet accessible study explores the political aspects of Dickinson’s writing with close readings of selected poems and letters. He says, “Dickinson contributes to an established tradition of democratic writing that affirms the primary significance of choice in democratic culture.” The choices Dickinson makes, her assertions of individual sovereignty, and her rhetorical flexibility when creating multiple and often contradictory meanings in her poems force readers to make interpretive choices. The poet’s multiple voices, Crumbley says, “can easily support the simultaneous perception of conformity and resistance,” her work balancing “the robin of predictability” with “the phoenix of re-birth.” He also examines nineteenth-century Spiritualism, “a religious movement that was distinctly democratic in origin,” and shows how Dickinson appropriates spiritualist language and concepts in her writing. The book contains an introduction and five chapters: “Assertions of Sovereignty”; “Democratic Rhetoric and the Gymnastic Self”; “Dickinson’s Uses of Spiritualism”; “A Version of Fame,” in which Dickinson’s correspondence with Helen Hunt Jackson, Susan Gilbert Dickinson, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson is examined as a form of collaborative gift exchange; and “Copyright, Circulation, and the Body,” where we learn why Dickinson opposed the copyright movement. Included are 45 pages of notes and works cited, a list of

poems with spiritualist implications, and three indexes. This instructive book offers a unique approach to Dickinson and her work.

**Federico, Annette R., ed. *Gilbert & Gubar’s The Madwoman in the Attic After Thirty Years*. Foreword by Sandra M. Gilbert.** Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2009. 272 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8262-1869-8, \$42.50.

Federico and thirteen fellow scholars chart “some of the different directions taken in feminist literary criticism and Victorian studies” since the 1979 publication of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s “*The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*,” considered a “threshold work” of feminist history and theory. Federico’s excellent introduction reviews Gilbert and Gubar’s ideas and the reception, influence, and legacy of their work. Intended to “recognize and honor” their “contributions to feminist criticism,” some essays respectfully question and challenge original stances taken by Gilbert and Gubar. Focusing on Louisa May Alcott, Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Emily Dickinson, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Toni Morrison, Mary Shelley, and others, the contributors also discuss feminist theory and pedagogy, Milton studies, genre studies, film, race, postcolonialism, and ecofeminism. In “Mimesis and Poesis: Reflections on Gilbert and Gubar’s Reading of Emily Dickinson” (237-55), Lucia Aiello challenges Gilbert and Gubar’s analyses of Dickinson’s poetry, suggesting that the authors underestimate her innovative work, interpreting her art “as a coping mechanism” resulting from psychic anxiety. Informed by Dickinson scholars, Aiello offers interpretations of eight Dickinson po-

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.  
Send information to Barbara Kelly, 444 Washington Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301, U.S.A.  
Email: [barbarakelly@psualum.com](mailto:barbarakelly@psualum.com)



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ems (J288/Fr260, J741/Fr776, J199/Fr225, J657/Fr466, J732/Fr857, J106/Fr161, J1123/Fr1187-88, and J488/Fr475), concluding with a discussion of Plato's parable of the cave. Offering provocative reassessments of Gilbert and Gubar, this book includes notes, biographical sketches of contributors, and an index.

**Gioseffi, Daniela.** *Wild Nights, Wild Nights: The Story of Emily Dickinson's "Master," Neighbor and Friend and Bridegroom.* Austin, TX: Plain View Press, 2010. 377 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-935514-44-2, \$22.95.

Gioseffi's page-turning tale imagines a bittersweet love affair (1857-1865) between Emily Dickinson and William Smith Clark. Thwarted by Edward Dickinson and the career ambitions of Clark, the lovers privately marry themselves in the Pelham Hills. Although Dickinson remains true, Clark, a young science professor at Amherst College, marries his mentor's daughter, and becomes a Civil War hero and the founder of what is now the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Emotionally invested in Clark, Dickinson, heartbroken, reconciles herself to spinsterhood. Gioseffi, a compelling storyteller, cleverly incorporates Dickinson's poems, capturing the intellectual, cultural, and political ideas and voices of the nineteenth century, from the stern Calvinist voices of Mary Lyon and Reverend Aaron Colton to the domestic Irish lilt of Margaret Maher. The author defends using the 1890s poems and rewrites the Master Letters, the originals copyrighted until 2030. She chooses an 1860 photograph of unproven provenance "because it represents the mature poet, and her own pronouncement that she had 'a gypsy face.'" Inspired by Ruth Owen Jones's "Neighbor - and friend - and Bridegroom -": William Smith Clark as Emily Dickinson's Master Figure" (*Emily Dickinson Journal* 11.2; 2002), Gioseffi helpfully advises Dickinson scholars to read her nonfiction afterword first. Despite distracting typos, the novel is so

alive with detail and heartfelt emotion that its mixture of fact and fiction could mislead novice Dickinson fans unfamiliar with established biographical facts. Gioseffi introduces a Dickinson most readers have not met before.

**Levy, Andrew.** *A Brain Wider Than The Sky: A Migraine Diary.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009. 289 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-4165-7250-3, \$15.00.

Motivated to understand his migraine headaches, Levy examines the folklore and history of migraines and the variety of symptoms, causes, and treatments from ancient times to the present; he profiles possible migraineurs Lewis Carroll, Darwin, Freud, Hildegard, Jefferson, Kipling, Nietzsche, Picasso, Elvis Presley, Van Gogh, and Woolf; explores the relationship of migraines to creativity or the absence of it; and provides personal insights about the reasons for migraines and the benefits of these "nerve-storms." About Dickinson, Levy is concise, knowledgeable, and suggestive. He says, "What a migraine induces remains a stunning testament to what Emily Dickinson meant when she wrote, 'The Brain - is wider than the Sky - ' (Fr 598), the poem that inspired his title. She details "so many different kinds of pounding inside the human head - a funeral inside the brain, the breaking of floors, the buzzing of flies, the driving of coffin nails - that a modern migrating reader sees a whole different level to her slant rhymes, and wants nothing more than to travel back in time and bring her a cup of hot darjeeling." He discusses "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (Fr 340) and concludes that Dickinson's genius is her ability to describe "assaults upon the human nervous system" as "a nearly universal experience." Readers need not have suffered from migraines to appreciate this informative book lucidly written from personal experience. Notes, a bibliography, and index are included.

**Lundin, Roger, ed.** *Invisible Conversations: Religion in the Literature of America.* Waco, TX: Baylor Univer-

sity Press, 2009. 224 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-60258-147-0, \$29.95.

Thirteen scholars of American literature, humanities, theology, history, and political science focus on "the intersection of religion and literature in the United States from Emerson to the present." Among the individuals and topics discussed are John Cotton, Emily Dickinson (about 20 pages throughout the book), Frederick Douglas, Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, Herman Melville, C. Wright Mills, Flannery O'Connor, Phillis Wheatley, Richard Wright, the African American experience, various major religions, and secularization. Contributors are Katherine Clay Bassard, Lawrence Buell, Andrew Delbanco, Denis Donoghue, Stanley Hauerwas, Roger Lundin, Elisa New, Mark A. Noll, Barbara Packer, Albert J. Raboteau, John Stauffer, Alan Wolfe, and Ralph Wood. The book evolved from Notre Dame University's Evangelical Scholarship Initiative, the Erasmus Institute, and the American Literature and Religion Seminar ("an experiment seeking to prove the compatibility of tolerance and passion"). The book's title is from Edwards, "the greatest theologian this culture has produced," offering a tribute to his wife, who "seems to have someone invisible always conversing with her," and from scholar Jenny Franchot, who described the "invisible domain" of religion in American literary studies. Lundin says these essays show that "polyphonic play has long marked the religious and cultural life of the United States, just as it continues to animate the conversation our literature carries on in the presence of the Invisible or in the shadows cast by its absence." Included are an introduction, notes, and index.

**Novak, Barbara.** *Voyages of the Self: Pairs, Parallels, and Patterns in American Art and Literature.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 217 pp., Paper, ISBN 0-19-538791-0, \$24.95. Examining the meaning of the self in

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American art and literature, art historian Novak pairs writers and artists: Jonathan Edwards with John Singleton Copley, Ralph Waldo Emerson with Fitz H. Lane, Henry David Thoreau with Native Americans, Walt Whitman with Frederic Edwin Church, William James with Winslow Homer, Emily Dickinson with Alfred Pinkham Ryder, and Charles Olson with Jackson Pollock, finding parallels and patterns between them and their works. Illustrated with 62 black and white photographs and 17 color plates, this erudite and clearly written book completes a trilogy: the other two titles are *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875* and *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience*. In "Dickinson and Ryder: Immortality, Eternity, and the Reclusive Self" (103-33), Novak describes both poet and artist as "shy, reclusive, eccentric New Englanders with eye problems." They were "profoundly spiritual religious mavericks," knew the Bible and Shakespeare, were drawn to Emersonian transcendentalism and Gothic romanticism, exhibited "strong androgynous elements," "fluctuate[d] between mystic serenity and 'metaphysical anxiety,'" and shared themes of immortality and eternity, drawn particularly to sea imagery. Both Dickinson's haiku-like poems and Ryder's paintings, "often no larger than four by eight inches," are "small in size" but "large in ambition," forerunners of "modernist existentialism." Supporting Novak's essay are dozens of Dickinson poems, concluding with "The Soul's Superior instants" (J306). Notes, a bibliography, and index are included.

**Schuman, Jo Miles, and Joanna Bailey Hodgman, eds.** *A Spicing of Birds: Poems by Emily Dickinson*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010. 88 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8195-7069-7, \$22.95. Emily Dickinson wrote, "One note

from one Bird / Is better than a million words" (Prose Fragment 97, *Letters* 3:926); nonetheless, she created 222 poems referring to birds. Schuman and Hodgman, trying to represent as many species as possible, select 37 bird poems "that show Dickinson's acute perception of the habits and qualities of the birds she knew." Including both Johnson and Franklin numbering, most poems are featured on one side of each two-page spread, juxtaposed with a stunning color illustration on the other side. The 28 illustrations are by early ornithologist artists: John James Audubon, Allan Brooks, Mark Catesby, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, John H. Hall, Thomas Nuttall, Robert Ridgway, Cordelia Stanwood, and Alexander Wilson. The book's title is "a phrase [Dickinson] used in describing the natural environment" (L193). The editors say, "Dickinson mentions 26 bird species in her poems," was so knowledgeable about birds, their habits and habitats, even their unique vocalizations that she is "in the class of skilled and experienced birders." The editors conclude, "Birds were an inseparable part of Dickinson's world. She brings them to us in her poetry, where we see and hear them through her eyes and ears. . . . Many readers familiar with the songs of birds but less so with the cadences of poetry may find unexpected beauty and pleasure in her words." Readers need not be ornithologists to appreciate this beautiful anthology, a lovely gift for anyone who loves art, nature, and poetry. Included are an introduction, notes, artist profiles, a bibliography, and two indexes.

**Spengemann, William C.** *Three American Poets: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Herman Melville*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010. xv + 226 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-268-04132-8, \$28.00.

In three erudite essays, one on each poet, Spengemann acknowledges Whitman, Dickinson, and Melville's

different styles but says that "all three wrote . . . for the same reason: in reaction to ever-mounting assaults – scientific, philosophical, historical, political – on Christian understandings of the origins and purpose of human existence. Virtually every word written by the three can be traced, more or less directly, to threatened belief." He advises readers to approach literary criticism skeptically: "To follow any poem, one must pay attention, first, not to what has been said about it but to what the poem itself says – the words it uses, the ways it uses them, and the ways in which it puts them together." He includes information readers need to independently examine a poem, demonstrating scansion and providing a helpful glossary of 91 technical terms. In "Sorting with Emily Dickinson" (63-152), the author describes the rhetorical, stylistic, prosodic, and thematic variety and difficulties that Dickinson's poems present, supplying Franklin poem numbers and sample lines to illustrate his points. He concludes, "Arising from a pervasive sense of loss or want, owing to time and change and resulting in feelings of bewilderment, loneliness, and instability, [Dickinson's ] poems explore, again and again, potential avenues of escape from these conditions into an absolute zone of knowledge, communion, and permanence." Included are a preface, afterword, and works cited, but no index.

**Vendler, Helen.** *Dickinson: Selected Poems and Commentaries*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press: Harvard University Press, 2010. xiv + 535 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-674-04867-6, \$35.00.

Vendler selects, presents, and examines 150 Dickinson poems, both well known and less known, from the Franklin readers' edition, with Johnson numbers also provided. She "aims to bring readers to a deeper acquaintance with Dickinson the writer, the inventive reconceiver and linguis-

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tic shaper of her perennial themes: nature, death, religion, love, and the workings of the mind and of thought." Beyond thematic study, she focuses on Dickinson as "inventor of a new form of poetry on the page" and emphasizes the "imaginative and linguistic 'Screws' that Dickinson applied to emotional experience in order to extract and frame its essence." She says, "The more we read this poet, the more she fills up our atmosphere –

natural, intellectual, moral – with her abstractions crossed with her images, with her unexpectedly conversational tones, from grave to gay." Dickinson has an "unmatched capacity for concentrating, into a small poem, an unqualified passion, an intricate and often counterintuitive logic, a keen analytical penetration, and an unpredictable vision." Being "a poet of implication rather than of statement, she consistently provokes the reader's

intelligence into puzzled and active response," often leading "into a thicket of speculation." Addressing Dickinson's sentiments and strategies, Vendler's Socratic approach questions Dickinson and the reader while offering illuminating explications of the poems. Her book, intended as "a book to be browsed in," merits a place on any Dickinsonian's bookshelf. An introduction, works cited, and index of first lines are included.

## Book Reviews

**Charyn, Jerome.** *The Secret Life of Emily Dickinson.* New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. 348 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-393-06856-6, \$24.95.

**Reviewed by Maryanne Garbowsky**

Poet Billy Collins undressed her in his poem, and now Jerome Charyn exposes the seamier side of the iconic poetess. Why is it that authors delight in fantasizing about this other side of Dickinson as they imagine it to be? Could it be the voice of the poems, which like some siren entices them to the unseen and unknown?

To be sure, Charyn invents a "wild" side, and for authority quotes the poet's brother who referred to her as his "wild sister" (12). Whatever the reason, Charyn dives headlong, full-steam ahead into a tantalizing web of imagination. The book's short chapters allow the reader to speed along, getting quickly tangled in its sticky threads. Within the first chapter, we learn that the young Mount Holyoke coed has a "thing" for Tom the Handyman: "I am in love with Tom" (19) and admits to thinking obsessively about his tattoo, "a blue arrow and heart" (19).

Tom is an orphan brought to Mount Holyoke to work; neither educated nor mannered in social graces, he "reeks of sweat" (18), yet this does not prevent the nascent poetess from being smitten. In her imagination, he becomes her "Sultan," and she part of his "Harem" (17). She is "mouse" to his manhood (18); a Daisy under his

power, and he is her "Calvary" (18). "I'm ashamed to describe the electricity of my contact with his raw, red skin – my cheeks are ablaze with the delight of it" (38).

However significant Tom is to Dickinson – and her love for him continues throughout the course of her life – he is not the only reprobate with whom she falls in love – or should I say lust? A better candidate for a suitor might be Brainard Rowe, an Amherst tutor. However, he turns out to be a drunkard and a cardshark. But this is the excitement *this* Dickinson craves. He introduces her to rum when she goes to Tardy Tavern and thus he becomes "Domingo" to her "Curren Bell." Their encounters are related in graphic detail: Sitting on his lap, she experiences "Vesuvius . . . right under me" (110). Earlier on she had described "Brainard's manliness against my flanks, like some curious harpoon that swelled but did not sting" (102).

Need I go on? The poet as envisioned by Charyn is swept away by every man – or rather every low class man – ready to give up her social status and privilege to be with him. In one instance, she prepares to leave even her beloved dog Carlo for Rowe, who waits for her at the train station. He is her Egypt, she his Daisy (161), and she wants to be with him as his "mistress" since he "has not promised to marry me" (166).

Charyn leads us on a merry chase after Dickinson and her passionate escapades. He follows chronologi-

cally through her life beginning with her Holyoke days to her death. He includes real characters in her life – Mother, Father, Austin, Lavinia, Sue, her niece and nephews, Samuel Bowles, Judge Otis Lord, Mary Lyon – as well as invented characters like Zilpah Marsh and Rebecca Winslow, who both come to sad ends.

In the next to last chapter, Dickinson agrees to an interview with Carleton West who like Thomas Wentworth Higginson comes to visit (336). Although she does not permit him to see her, he does "peek through . . . the door" (338). At the end, the poet is reminded of Tom in the person of Dennis, the blue-eyed boy in the barn. In her imagination or delirium, she visits with him in the barn and recreates the famous "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" as she is en route to death finally wearing a bridal gown though she is uncertain "whose bride I am" (348).

The novel is built on a layer of selected truths, more falsehood and fabrication since it is a work of fiction. We cannot take it seriously since it was not meant to be. Read it, and smile at Charyn's cleverness as he retains Dickinson's words, images, ideas, even her random capitalization. What he has done is what many lovers of the poet have already done – imagined our own Dickinson. We fill in the gaps, the spaces in between with our own hypotheses, our own fantasies. Charyn, however, has done it at book length, more than 300

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pages. Regardless of his inventiveness, it is not meant to convince or teach us anything new about the poet. The unknowns in her life, inspired by the voice of the poems, will continue “to tease us out of thought,” and this is the way I like it. When it comes down to it, I prefer Emily Dickinson with the mysteries unsolved.

**Maryanne Garbowsky**, a professor of English at the County College of Morris, Randolph, New Jersey, has published two books on Dickinson, *The House Without the Door* and *Double Vision*.

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**Gordon, Lyndall.** *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2010. 489 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-670-02193-2, \$32.95

## Reviewed by George Gleason

British author Lyndall Gordon has written a fascinating account of Emily Dickinson, her family, and the inter-family feud initiated by her brother Austin's affair with Mabel Loomis Todd, the young Amherst College professor's wife who later became Dickinson's first editor. She takes hefty swipes at earlier biographers who she says “got lost in the byways of fancy,” and she claims her book is the first effort to tell the whole story. She is particularly critical of Richard Sewall, of whom she says future readers, presumably after reading her book, will see how he “succumbed to the vast treasure trove of Todd untruths.”

A recent article in the *New Yorker* magazine said of American biographer Stephen Ambrose that he suffered from *narrative panache*, a condition where a fondness for embellishment sacrifices fact to the narrative. Gordon's book comes very close to that type of panache. While it shows evidence of solid research, as expected from a senior research fellow at Oxford, historical records are too often reduced to selective one or two word quotes which obscure context and sometimes source; and

there are inexplicable errors, as well, like not knowing that on her visit to Washington, D.C., Dickinson stayed at the plush Willard Hotel, and not at “Mr. Cratchett's boarding house,” and that the “friend” that she visited in Philadelphia on her return trip was actually her cousin, Eliza Coleman.

Gordon's story centers on her claim that the poet appears to have suffered from epilepsy, a condition she believes much influenced her work, as particularly shown in the poem “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun.” The linchpin of her claim is that a Boston doctor gave Dickinson a prescription for glycerine, a medicine she believes was then prescribed for that condition. However, glycerine was the aspirin of nineteenth-century medicine, and a patient who consulted a physician for almost any undiagnosed symptom was likely to get it as one of the prescribed medicines. Epilepsy is thought to have a hereditary element, and Emily's nephew Ned may have had it, but the suggestion that Emily and a cousin did is just a guess, which Gordon herself concedes. Dickinson's symptoms, if accurately described, are equally consistent with any number of ailments, including certain types of migraine headaches, and the secondary effects of fever and other delirium-inducing illnesses. In fact, not long before her death, when Dickinson suffered a week's bout of headaches, vomiting, and periodic unconsciousness, she was again given glycerine (along with arsenic and strychnine). She said afterward that it was the first time in her life that she had fainted and lain unconscious, hardly a statement consistent with a lifelong condition of epilepsy.

Gordon believes the snubbing of Mabel by Austin's wife, Susan, laid the groundwork for the ill feelings that lingered into the next generation, and that it also infected Dickinson's biographers and archivists. Her tale is filled with literary and fantasy characters. Dickinson, secluded in her upstairs bedroom for fear of scandal if word of her epilepsy got around,

sends Mabel coded messages telling her to back off. Austin is the King and Mabel takes on the role of Lady Macbeth plotting Susan's death. Sister Lavinia is Joan of Arc seeking to destroy the Todds through fraudulent legal action. Village gossips spread false rumors and there is talk of “witch-like concoctions,” and Mabel sees a plot to destroy her health by a long dead Susan. We learn much about Mabel's menstrual cycle and the sexual frigidity of Mabel's daughter, Millicent, presumably caused by the Dickinson family's plotting. Thomas H. Johnson, to whom many are grateful for compiling Dickinson's papers, is described as “sweating” as he sits in the back of a taxi pleading with Millicent Todd Bingham to give him the manuscripts in her possession. Gordon points to sources she believes support these characterizations and it all makes for colorful reading. At least for this reader, however, it has a little too much of, shall I say, narrative panache.

Gordon is a serious scholar and author of biographies of several other literary figures, including a widely acclaimed study of Charlotte Brontë. She is a popular writer in England, and the book enjoyed a good run there before being released in the United States. It will likely find a wide audience here. However, those interested in learning more about Dickinson would do well to start with Richard Sewall's biography; and for more insight into the Austin and Mabel affair, to read Polly Longworth's *Austin and Mabel*, which not only puts it in context, but also provides the text of their correspondence so that readers can make up their own minds.

*George Gleason is a lawyer and independent scholar who is currently working on a comparative study of Emily Dickinson and the painter Georgia O'Keeffe.*

# MEMBERS' NEWS

## Nominations for Member-at-Large, 2011-2014

Several years ago the EDIS Board of Directors changed the Society's bylaws to expand the number of Member-at-Large seats from one to three. We have staggered their three-year terms, so that a Member-at-Large election occurs each year. The Nominations Committee welcomes nominations, including self-nominations, for candidates who wish to stand for election to serve a three-year term as a Board Member-at-Large to begin in the late summer of 2011 and to conclude in 2014. Currently, Nancy Pridgen holds this position.

The Members-at-Large have the same responsibilities and opportunities for service to the organization that all EDIS Board members have. These include the following: becoming familiar with the Society's bylaws; conducting Society business by serving on committees; reading the EDIS Bulletin and the Journal; following discussions on e-mail; attending annual meetings; checking the Society's web site for information and updates; staying current with Homestead and Museum activities; writing for the Bulletin; and, depending on location, sponsoring or participating in activities with a local chapter or your community generally. An ongoing issue for EDIS is increasing membership, and Members-at-Large are asked to contribute to this goal by having their ears tuned to members' preferences, interests, and concerns.

Please submit names to Jonnie Guerra, Chair of the Nominations Committee, at [jguerrajnn@aol.com](mailto:jguerrajnn@aol.com) or 1812 Garden Street, West Lafayette, IN 47906 USA, by February 1, 2011. Candidates for the position are asked to prepare a statement of their qualifications and interests to be distributed to all members of EDIS for consideration.

The Board of Directors is considering whether or not to conduct the spring election electronically. The Nominations Committee invites feedback from members about this new format and encourages members who would like



Dickinsonians gather for the last hurrah, the membership meeting. Photo by LeeAnn Gorthey

to receive hard copies of the ballot and candidate statements to contact Jonnie Guerra with their request.

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### Bulletin Editor Position Open

The EDIS Board of Directors is seeking an editor for the *Bulletin*. Candidates should be familiar with Emily Dickinson's life and work as well as current issues in Dickinson scholarship. The *Bulletin* editor also should have experience in writing, editing, and design and be able to write copy as well as solicit articles from the membership. Familiarity with InDesign or Publisher software is advised.

The *Bulletin* editor is a member of the EDIS Board of Directors. The *Bulletin* is currently published twice a year and, beginning with the Spring 2011 issue, the editor will work with the Society's website committee to migrate *Bulletin* copy to the EDIS website. In addition to editing experience, candidates should be detail oriented, committed to meeting deadlines and publishing the *Bulletin* on-budget. The editor position is unpaid, but expenses related to publishing the newsletter will be reimbursed. Mailing regulations require U.S. residence.

Interested candidates should send a cover letter, resume, and samples of their work to Martha Ackmann, EDIS President, Gender Studies Program, Mount Holyoke College 01075 or by email to [mackmann@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:mackmann@mtholyoke.edu). Deadline

for applications is January 15, 2011.

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### EDIS Awards for 2011

EDIS has for several years offered two awards annually to promising scholars working on projects focusing on Emily Dickinson. The Scholar-in-Amherst fellowship of \$2,000 is intended to fund research in the Amherst area. Preference is given to persons with completed PhDs who are in the early stages of their careers. Past winners are Paraic Finnerty (2002), Angela Sorby (2003), Magdalena Zapadowska (2004), Jed Deppman (2005), Alexandra Socarides (2006), Aife Murray (2007), Yanbin Kang (2009), and Renée Bergland (2010).

The Graduate Student Fellowship of \$1,000 is intended to support research expenses relative to a dissertation or other major project. Past winners are Aaron Shackelford (2006), Karen Anderson (2007), Jessica Beard (2008), Trisha Kannan (2009), and Beth Staley (2010).

Interested applicants for both awards should consult the EDIS website, [www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org). The deadline for applications for both awards is May 15, 2011.

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### Forthcoming EDIS Meetings

At its August meeting, the EDIS Board announced plans for meetings over

# MEMBERS' NEWS

the next three years. The 2011 annual meeting will be held on the campus of Amherst College on July 29-31. The theme will be Great Debates and the gathering will feature a series of panel discussions and conversations focusing on some of the most perplexing issues surrounding Dickinson's life and work, such as why she didn't publish, what literary characteristics make a Dickinson poem Dickinsonian, and why the poet became a recluse. Historians, Dickinson scholars, authors, and long-time readers will serve as panelists for a lively exchange of ideas. EDIS will be cooperating with the Emily Dickinson Museum in organizing the meeting. Check the EDIS website and the spring *Bulletin* for details.

Looking further ahead, the Board settled on Cleveland for the 2012 meeting, hosted by Case Western Reserve University. The theme will be "Emily Rocks," with an emphasis on Dickinson in and around the popular culture of her time and ours. Gary Stonum, Jed Deppman, Brad Ricca, Jim Farrelly, and Stephanie Tingley will be the meeting organizers.

And still further ahead, EDIS will hold its next international conference in the Washington, D.C. area in August 2013, hosted by the University of Maryland and American University, with the theme "Emily Dickinson, World Citizen." The conference will explore Dickinson's politics, her understanding of citizenship, and her engagements with international cultures and influences—the global reach of her mind and verse.

Martha Nell Smith and Marianne Noble are heading the organizing committee. Watch future *Bulletin* issues and the EDIS website for details.

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## News from EDIS Chapters

By Nancy List Pridgen  
EDIS Chapter Chair

EDIS Chapter growth has remained steady in the United States in recent years, while interest is growing internationally, with potential formation of groups in China, India, and France. Additionally, the EDIS board has shown strong support for both chapters and local Dickinson presentations through policy changes voted into effect at the board meeting in Oxford, August 5, 2010.

Three chapters remain active, in Massachusetts, Florida, and South Carolina, and their sponsors have sent progress reports. Their sponsors are Trisha Kannon, University of Florida; Ellen Beinhorn, Beaufort, South Carolina; and Lois Kackley, Amherst, Massachusetts. Tricia is planning the chapter's first fall meeting and is hoping to join with an undergraduate fine arts group. Ellen's group is eager to contact other EDIS groups to share ideas. The goal of Lois's group is to encourage beginning and experienced readers to respond to Dickinson's poems in a discussion group. In addition to these chapters, several EDIS members hold Dickinson presentations once or twice a year.

The board is discussing ways to encourage and foster chapters. One decision made this summer is to present each group with a copy of each *Emily Dickinson Journal* and *Bulletin*. To help defray costs for chapters or individual EDIS members who present Dickinson events, the board has voted a stipend of up to \$250.00, which presenters can apply for by sending a formal description of the event to be offered, details as to where and when it will be held, and expenses likely to be incurred.

We look forward to hearing progress reports about forthcoming groups in France, China, India, and elsewhere in the months to come. If you offer any type of presentation on Dickinson periodically, please tell us about it. My email is [possibility@satx.rr.com](mailto:possibility@satx.rr.com). I look forward to hearing from you!

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## Academic Meetings

### Modern Language Association

MLA's 2011 annual meeting will be held in Los Angeles from January 6 through 9. EDIS will sponsor two panels: On Thursday, January 6, at 12:00 noon, "Dickinson's Afterlife" will include papers by Julie R. Enzer, University of Maryland; Logan Esdale, Chapman University; and Seth Perlow, Cornell University; with Alexandra Socarides, University of Missouri, presiding. On Friday, January 7, at 12:00 noon, the second panel, "Dickinson Forming History," will feature papers by Jessica Garratt, University of Missouri; Joshua Jensen, Claremont Graduate University; and Phoebe Putnam, Harvard University, with Martha Nell Smith, University of Maryland, presiding. For further information, contact Alexandra Socarides at [socaridesa@missouri.edu](mailto:socaridesa@missouri.edu).

### American Literature Association

ALA will hold its twenty-second annual meeting at the Westin Copley Place in Boston, May 26-29, 2011. EDIS will sponsor two panels. The first will address "The Many Lives of Emily Dickinson." Papers are invited on biographies of Dickinson, recent or older, on fictional works based on her life, and on consideration of how these works affect our understanding of the poet's life or work. The second panel is open to papers on any aspect of Dickinson's life or literary work. Please send proposals and academic affiliation/bio information to Stephanie A. Tingley ([satingley@ysu.edu](mailto:satingley@ysu.edu)) by January 15, 2011.



Retiring president Paul Crumbley passes the torch to incoming president Martha Ackmann.

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## EDIS Membership Form

Membership in the Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS) enables you to participate in the Society's meetings and conferences, to receive both of the Society's publications (the *Bulletin* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*), and to help foster the goals of the Society.

Name, title & affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (office) \_\_\_\_\_ (fax) \_\_\_\_\_

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### Annual Membership Category:

Sustaining Member  \$200.00 Institutional Member  \$113.00

Contributing Member  \$100.00 Regular Member  \$50.00

Student Member  \$30.00

(All of the above Members receive both the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and the *Bulletin*)

Associate Member  \$20.00 (*Bulletin* only)

I have included an additional tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to support the Society's programs.

### Gift Memberships

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Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

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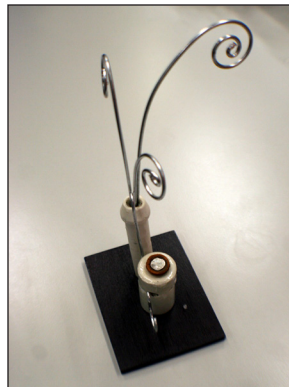
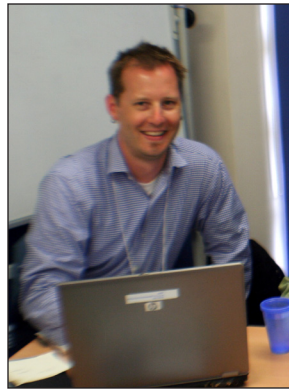
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