

THE EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Bulletin

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

An Active Society



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Marathons, public readings, class projects, research institutes, symposia, works of art in every medium imaginable – these are only a few of the ways in which readers engage Emily Dickinson's work and attempt to give form to the responses it has stirred in them. If, given the material form of Dickinson's work, there is "no ideal way to reproduce them," as Gabrielle Dean has remarked, there are an infinite number of ways of reproducing one's reading of what she wrote. This issue celebrates the animated reader response of an active society.

*The Editorial Assistant and artist for this issue was **Sara Loy**.*

*Special thanks are due to **Michael Medeiros**, public relations coordinator for the Emily Dickinson Museum. He took all of the Annual Meeting photographs, as well as those from the public reading of her work that was part of the Amherst Poetry Festival, on the front cover of this issue.*

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Annual Meeting Report

Dickinson and New England Writers: Kindred Spirits Meet in Amherst

The topic of the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Emily Dickinson International society was Dickinson and New England Writers, and the assembled members were able to explore it in a striking number of different ways, through scholarly presentations, conversations about personal research, and literary tourism, as well as formal and informal conversations about a variety of authors.

The meeting opened with an address by Karen Kilcup, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, entitled "Dickinson's New English and the Critics." Focusing especially on commentaries on poetry appearing in the *North American Review*, Kilcup described how certain public intellectuals took upon themselves the lonely task of making sure that poetry adhered to prescriptive codes of morality, accessibility, and originality – the latter referring to a departure from European models to help establish a distinctively

American idiom. The *North American Review* critics of the 1840s and their followers lambasted certain poets as drunkards and profligates, suggesting that such degeneracies led to deplorable innovations in meter and to excessive expression of emotion. Without going quite so far as to claim that Dickinson could have read such admonitions and decided to keep her innovations to herself, Kilcup suggested that the critical climate may have helped to shape her concept of her vocation.



Karen Kilcup reviews materials for her presentation about nineteenth-century criticism.

By the 1860s, there had appeared numerous countermotions to soften the excessively restrictive critical proposals of the 1840s, marked by the publication of three anthologies of poetry by women and by the publication in such influential periodicals as *The Atlantic* of innovative authors such as Rose Terry Cooke. Nevertheless, there remained an insistence that poets, particularly women poets, needed to exercise humility and

morality, and that their productions should appear “natural” – that is, not products of individualistic creative power. Where the privately publishing, economically independent Dickinson was free to heed a maverick like Thomas Wentworth Higginson, authors like Harriet Spofford and Lucy Larcom relied on their writing for their income, and had to devise ways of expressing themselves freely while staying within the bounds of what was seen as critically admissible.

After Dickinson's death, the 1890s saw the emergence of new critical norms. Lucy Larcom, who apparently just couldn't win, was now disparaged for the very sweetness and refinement and eschewal of stimulating aesthetic effects that had been imposed upon her by an earlier generation of editors. These new aesthetic standards, while still far from suited to a full appreciation of Dickinson's work, may have prepared a climate for her positive reception and striking popularity.

Kilcup's lecture prepared the participants for Friday afternoon's Dickinson Institute, including five roundtable discussions of works-in-progress, all addressing Dickinson and New England writers. The following descriptions of conversations, provided by workshop chairs, can only begin to suggest the breadth of the conversations, all of which lasted well over two hours.

Of the group on “Dickinson and her Female Contemporaries,” Meredith McGill writes,

Discussing a number of contemporary women authors, some clearly known to Dickinson, but others possibly unknown, we focused not only on what sustained

comparison with these writers could tell us about Dickinson, but also on how our assumptions about the radical, innovative nature of Dickinson's corpus might illuminate nineteenth-century women's writing, which is too often seen as sentimental, apolitical, or lacking in ambition. Our wide-ranging discussion touched on many issues: how nineteenth-century women found ways of writing about the trauma of sexual violence; Italy as a synecdoche for both radical democracy and sexual desire; reclaiming the radical nature of imagining heaven as a site for individual recognition; the complexity of championing artisanal and craft labor at a time of mass industrialization, and parallels between Dickinson's relation to New England Calvinism and Mormonism as a dissenting form of Christianity.

The group chaired by Alexandra Socarides included the work of three scholars who are currently thinking about the resonances between contemporary poets and Emily Dickinson, Ruth Stone, Jane Kenyon, and John Hennessey:

In putting these poets up next to Dickinson, the scholars grappled with how to

account for the different historical and cultural moments of the poets under consideration as well as with the pros and cons of being able to turn to the poet's own words about Dickinson's influence. Each paper drew out stunning similarities between Dickinson and these later poets, be it in the poetry's images or forms. Interesting connections were also made between Dickinson's archive and the archives we are already collecting of poets who are living or recently passed.

Elizabeth Petrino's group on "Dickinson and Emerson/Thoreau/Melville" generated likewise far-ranging conversations:

We explored the various ways these authors responded to the social and natural world of their native New England. While the papers investigated how they shared with Dickinson an engagement with religion, ethics, the Civil War, and nature writing, they also provided a corrective to familiar critical approaches to the Transcendentalists and revealed how our readings of these writers might benefit from renewed critical analysis. Our discussion was lively. We engaged topics from nature writing and nineteenth-century views

of "sustainability"; to an ethic of compassion and charity that reevaluates Emerson's and Dickinson's perceived detachment from social and political issues; to the ecstatic and sublime in Dickinson's and Thoreau's engagement with the natural world; to the influence of print culture on Dickinson



Institute moderators like Elizabeth Petrino made sure discussions remained focused and productive.

and Melville's response to the cataclysmic events of the Civil War.

Finally, Martha Nell Smith reports on her session, "Emily Dickinson and Her Friends," "These papers made me think of Faulkner's advice for writers – read, read, read, read everything, EVERYthing." Writing about Dickinson's correspondence with Helen Hunt Jackson, Midori Asahina discussed the poet's sensuous engagement with the world as a way to ask, "How does Dickinson see her poems?" Michelle Kohler's paper took Higginson's introduction of the poems in 1890 as an entrance into the question of what presence as a poet Dickinson had before her death. Jennifer Leader, in looking at "Thanksgiving Day Sermons of Charles Wadsworth and Emily Dickinson," asked about ways in which sermons were recycled and whether Dickinson may have heard Wadsworth's sermon, "God's Culture." Finally, Joan Wry, writing on the Hitchcocks, considered Amherst's scientific culture – Dickinson's "Granitic Base" (Fr740).



Conversations during the Institute Workshops were deeply engaging and frequently passionate. Here Páraic Finnerty defends a position.

While Institute participants were discussing their outsetting scholarly projects, others attended critical workshops, one of which, led by San Antonio Local Chapter leaders Nancy and William Pridgen, addressed Dickinson and Thoreau and the other, led by the Amherst Chapter's Lois Kackley and Greg Mattingly, considered Dickinson in the light of the fictions of Maine author Elizabeth Strout. Of the latter, a correspondent, marveling at the rapid-fire repartee, writes,

Discussion of Dickinson's assertion, "I see – New Englandly" took off in free-wheeling directions with a dispute over the very boundaries of that historic region. Does it include the Hudson Valley area of New York? Exclude Connecticut? How much does it matter that Strout's characters come from Maine and return there frequently? Are their issues really different from those of small-town Americans from other regions? How meaningful are their occasional references to a "Puritan" past? Is a New England transformed by waves of immigration still congruent



Jim Stapleton and Diana Bigelow interpret an encounter between Concord and Amherst.

with Dickinson's Amherst? Inevitably, the conversation became most lively, humorous, bewildering, and enlightening when the focus turned to various Dickinson poems. How serious or ironic was Dickinson in identifying her perspective with one region? Is it the mountain-born Yan-

kee or the seafarer's son who most keenly feels the exultation of putting out on the sea that figures immortality? Some of the most memorable moments in this discussion were those in which participants read aloud in disparate voices, especially when Kate Dunning, Suzanne Juhasz, Emily Seelbinder, and Barbara Dana successively spoke their way toward "And I sneered – softly – 'small'!"

Following the heady conversations over the fine foods provided by Amherst College at the evening banquet in Valentine Hall, many Annual Meeting participants attended the play *Henry and Emily: the Muses in Massachusetts*, in which they had the opportunity to consider what might have happened if Thoreau had lived on into the 1870s and, as a mellow man of advancing age, had taken the prompting of his friend Waldo to befriend a fiercely creative poetess who dwelt in the west of the state.

Saturday was a day to learn about the town of Amherst. First, Emily Dickinson Museum Director Jane Wald presented "Precincts of Freedom," a fascinating address that considered the space of Dickinson's room at the Homestead as a "mighty" space (Fr1785 – see her update on the house on page 33 of this issue), a space from which she could survey the world in imagination, and from which the conventional boundaries that define experience become unstable. That ideal of perceptual and poetic freedom is what was soon to undergird the rise, of all things, of liter-

ary tourism, the visiting of the homes of literary people in order to share in the freedom that the precinct once provided. Dickinson herself, whose house and room have long since become a destination for those seeking vicarious experience of a precinct of freedom, showed her own appreciation



Jim Wald helped members explore Amherst's past through the arches of a bus window.

of literary pilgrimage in imagining a visit to the home of the Brontës, in "I went to thank Her –" (Fr637).

In the afternoon, EDIS members who had not recently visited the Homestead and the Evergreens were invited to explore the poet's precincts of freedom, while others were treated by Jane's husband Jim Wald, professor of history at Hampshire College, to a wider tour of literary Amherst, discovering such sites as the octagonal gallery that once held natural specimens belonging to Edward Hitchcock, the childhood home of Helen Fiske, who became the author Helen Hunt Jackson, and the house where Robert Frost lived during his first tour of duty as an English professor at the college.

While some early risers on Sunday morning joined Ellen Louise Hart in sharing their current research (a sampling appears in the box on the following page), everyone who was not pressed into an early departure was on hand for the final session, an address by Paul Crumbley, Professor of English at Utah State and author, most

RESEARCH CIRCLE TOPICS

- Kate Dunning
Dissertation on Emily Dickinson/Merwin/ecocriticism
- Laurie McCants
A recording of Thornton Wilder speaking at Amherst
- Saskia Bultman
Dickinson's reaction to the onset of modernity and changes in society
- Susan VanZanten
Dickinson's connection to religious tradition and knowledge of contemporary events
- Grace Chen
The sublime and ecological concerns in Dickinson's writing
- Páraic Finnerty
Emily Dickinson and British contemporaries
- Kaname Yoshida
Dickinson and agriculture
- Lois Kackley
How to empower non-scholars
- Nancy Pridden
Emily Dickinson and Thoreau – nature poems
- Ellen Louis Hart
Teaching climate change; tracing prosodic strategies in fascicles
- Emily Seelbinder
The use of the Bible and music in Dickinson's poetry
- Jane Eberwein
How Dickinson was perceived following her death
- Georgiana Strickland
Creating a discography on ED musical settings
- Rence Bergland
Emily Dickinson's sense of the planetary



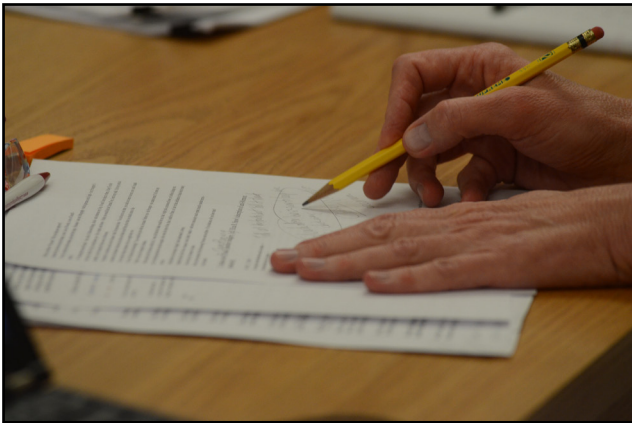
recently, of *Winds of Will: Emily Dickinson and the Sovereignty of Democratic Thought*. The lecture leapt from insight to insight with such brilliant rapidity and such unexpected shifts of direction that it defied easy summary, but it centered on the notion (developed at length in *Winds of Will*) of revolution, which was, ironically, becoming a canonical concept in the country's emerging sense of itself in the later part of the nineteenth century. Can a nation continue to be a revolutionary project if "revolution" becomes an accepted canon of its identity? Or does it inevitably "revolve," returning upon itself to where it has already been? Such speculations, which the poet suggested in poems like "Revolution is the Pod" (Fr1044), simultaneously signified dilemmas for Dickinson as her work was beginning to appear in public. Do signs of public acceptance, a token of success, mean that the artist has "arrived"? or do they simply mark a position to which one need not return? Revolution means

overturning, not returning – it means persistent effort, strenuous, gymnastic effort. The past is not something to revisit, but may be retroactively reinvented in the very process of revolt, gaining new meaning in the same way a new poem on an old theme may endow the old concept with new layers of suggestiveness.

That the Annual Meeting is scheduled to return again to Amherst in 2015 can hardly disappoint anyone fascinated by Dickinson and her world, especially those intrigued to explore the history, architecture, geology, and bio-diversity of an area full of "Solitary Fields / That Science cannot overtake / But Human Nature feels." (Fr962)

More images from the Annual Meeting appear on the following pages, including candid shots of Lois Kackley, poet Susan Snively, and one editor appealing to the Society for contributions to the Bulletin.





Series Editor, Jonnie Guerra

“Almost – a loneliness”: Hailey Leithauser on Poetry, Writing in Isolation, and Emily Dickinson

By Teri Ellen Cross Davis

I am pleased to introduce EDIS Bulletin readers to featured poet, Hailey Leithauser. Leithauser’s poetry has appeared in journals such as the Gettysburg Review and Poetry and in the Best American Poetry and Best New Poets anthologies. She has received numerous awards, including a Discovery / The Nation Award and an Individual Artist Award from the Maryland State Arts Council. A special thanks to Teri Ellen Cross Davis, poetry coordinator at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C. and herself a poet, for offering Dickinsonians an appreciative account of the Leithauser-Dickinson connection in the essay that follows.

When Hailey Leithauser’s collection *Swoop* was awarded the Poetry Foundation’s 2012 Emily Dickinson First Book Award, the world was introduced to a poet who deftly integrates playful palindromes into her work. The poetry in *Swoop* shimmies and saunters with assonance and consonance, dancing to its own linguistic rhythms. Dickinson’s inventive and durable spirit surfaces in what Stephen Young of The Poetry Foundation called Leithauser’s “dazzling inventions.”

The Poetry Foundation presents the Emily Dickinson Award to a poet of at least 40 who has yet to publish a first collection. How long was Leithauser working on her award-winning debut? “*Swoop* wrote [itself] pretty quickly,” she says. “[I wrote] the majority of the poems in two years. I believe, on average, a first, blocked out draft, would take a day, about eight to ten hours of concentrated work. Then another six to twelve hours over the next few days, and then minor edits, an hour here and there spread out over a month or so. I know I made last minute revisions up until publication.”



Photo Credit: Sandra Beasley

Poetry has always been part of the Maryland resident’s life – she took poetry workshops while an undergraduate at the University of Maryland – but after graduating she stopped writing for almost 20 years while she pursued a variety of interests. After working as a salad chef, bookstore clerk, and more, she most recently served as senior reference librarian at the Department of Energy in Washington, D.C. According to the biographical sketch of Leithauser on the *Poetry Out Loud* website, the experience of standing in front of a van Gogh painting at the National Gallery of Art provided the creative spark that spurred her return to the craft of poetry.

“Oh yes, poetry was always there, big time,” Leithauser says. “I realize now it must have been odd, but I always defined myself as a poet even during all those long years I wasn’t writing. I never for a moment stopped thinking I was a writer, maybe because I was still reading and thinking about poetry. It’s been my identity since I can remember.”

When it comes to Dickinson, Leithauser admits her copy of the Amherst-native’s collection is rather dog-eared. “My ab-

POET TO POET

solite favorite is ‘A Narrow Fellow in the Grass’ (Fr1096), but [also among my favorites is] one of her shortest poems”:

To Whom the Mornings stand for Nights,
What must the midnights – be!
(Fr1055)

Yet another Dickinson poem that inspires Leithauser’s admiration is Fr80:

I hide myself – within my flower,
That fading from your Vase –
You – unsuspecting – feel for me –
Almost – a loneliness –

“I love that last line,” Leithauser observes. “‘Almost a loneliness’ has such a subtle tension to it.” Of revisiting Dickinson’s work for this interview she says, “I’m realizing . . . that what particularly speaks to me is her almost pleasantly painful sense of loneliness, the inevitable incipient loss, living by the graveyard and all that. It’s similar in ways to the Buddhist concept of ‘Mono No Aware’ that I wrote about in *Swoop*.”

It’s the early Anglo-Saxon poets, however, that Leithauser feels influenced her the most. She speaks of studying Old English as an undergraduate and using her own version of stich and hemistich lines in many of her poems: “I like to play with lines of one breath and in those breaths repeating two sounds, although in *Beowulf* the poet(s) relied more heavily on two alliterations per line, while I like to mix up repetitions of assonance and consonance. I often use a vowel rhyme as the first sound, and then the second sound is a consonant rhyme.”

Leithauser’s favorite palindrome poem, “Sex Alfresco,” is reprinted at right.

“I had no idea as to the title or what the poem was going to be about or what form it would take when I typed that first line, but it ended up as a curtal sonnet, a form invented by Gerard Manley Hopkins,” Leithauser said in a chat on the Enoch Pratt Free Library blog. “I enjoyed writing it so much I went on to write five more curtals, with titles such as ‘Sex Fiasco,’ ‘Sex Rubenesque,’ ‘Sex Circumspect,’ etc., and they are some of my favorites from the book.”

In this interview Leithauser calls attention to her trademark play with assonance and consonance. “For example, in ‘Sex Alfresco,’ ‘In an ample, moony bramble, briar-bitten’ the soft A rhymes several times: ‘an,’ ‘ample’ and ‘bramble’ striking off the Ms and the Bs. [Similarly,] in reverse, in ‘Sex Circumspect,’ [there is the line] ‘dusting dirt from a silk-lined skirt.’ The D consonance followed by [the] ‘ir’ rhyme in ‘dirt’ and ‘skirt.’” When asked about more contemporary poets, Leithauser responds, “As far as more modern writers, I’m drawn to those who use[d] a similar aesthetic. [Marianne] Moore, of course, I always cite as my favorite poet, but also people like Yeats and Heaney and Auden. I keep a copy of Auden’s version of the Old English *The Wanderer* on the front of my work binder. It’s one of my favorite poems of all time, [with its] kennings and alliteration. [In the line] ‘Waving from window, spread of welcome,’ the alliterative Ws and followed and combined with the assonance of ‘spread’ and ‘welcome.’”

Leithauser is currently at work on a new collection, *The Cannibal’s Song*, which she says is forcing her to a new syntax. While Leithauser is a poet who knows her own voice, one last Dickinson connection seems fitting: the bard of Amherst once famously wrote “This is my letter to the World/That never wrote to me” (Fr 519); after spending years writing in isolation, Leithauser says winning the Dickinson award and accumulating more publication credits make her feel as if she is being answered by the world.

Sex Alfresco

Never one-volt love, nor even
lightning bolt’s severe and clearer candle;
nor tact of mooncalf’s cautious pawing
with feathered chaise and bed to cleave in;
nor ease of maid and master’s backstair scandal,
its closeting of coddled mauling,

but ever brisk, and bare, and rarely softened,
a shrouding bower finds us nabbed and handled;
in an ample, moony bramble, briar-bitten;
at a doorway, pinned and hidden; behind a shading stable,
leather-sored, and lather-ridden.

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Merton and Sister Power

By John P. Collins

A little over two years ago, I found a reference by Thomas Merton to Emily Dickinson in one of his journals, *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and Writer* (288). The reference was about a book entitled *In the Name of the Bee: The Significance of Emily Dickinson*, written by Sister Mary James Power, who was an educator and a member of The School Sisters of Notre Dame. Thomas Merton had just published his famed autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and had sent Sister Power another recent publication entitled *Seeds of Contemplation*, apparently in exchange for Power's earlier book, *Poets at Prayer*.¹

In this brief essay, I will present excerpts from *In the Name of the Bee*, which will hopefully explicate Sister Power's attempt to capture Emily Dickinson's poetic imagery and align it with the Catholic tradition and faith. Since the book was published before the standard editions by Thomas H. Johnson and Ralph W. Franklin, Power did not use the Dickinson capitalization and dashes. I have presented the poetry according to the Franklin's edition. Further, my purpose is not to critique the Power thesis through modern Dickinson scholarship, but simply to present the Catholicity theme as articulated in Power's book.

Since Thomas Merton had apparently read the book, I will also reference him through commentaries primarily related to Dickinson's alleged mysticism within the Carmelite tradition of St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thérèse Lisieux and St. John of the Cross. While many if not all Dickinson scholars would now disagree with Sister Power's thesis, it is worth noting

that of the eleven book reviews published in 1944, ten of them supported Sister Power's interpretation of Emily Dickinson's latent Catholicity. In the foreword of the book, Alfred Barrett, S.J., states that Sister Power "has proved her point" by placing her "in the main stream of Catholic poetry" (Power x).

Sister Power declares that Dickinson was imbued with "a purely Catholic spirit" when she wrote these lines:

Our Lord - thought no
Extravagance
To pay - a Cross - (Fr538)

As Power asserts,

One in heart with the spirit of 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism,' she spoke of Christ as 'Our Lord.' What joy of soul would have been hers could she have assisted at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; had she heard those transforming words, 'This is My Body; This is My Blood' in the daily renewal of the drama of Golgotha; had she been privileged to share in the merits of each Holy Mass. With what illumination she would have exulted in a poem on the subject! (30).

Sister Power references the sacraments as symbols of the Catholic faith in her descriptions of Dickinson's poetry as exemplified in the following lines taken from poems Fr122 and Fr374. The merging of summer and fall during an unseasonal October is an occasion for Power to articulate the climatic event as the "sacrament of summer days" in poem



Sister Mary James Power, SSND

(Fr122). Although not fully quoted by Power, the final quatrain of (Fr374) is also suggestive of a sacramental symbol:

Till Summer folds her miracle-
As Women - do - their Gown-
Or Priests - adjust the Symbols -
When Sacrament - is done -

Power explains,

Emily looked upon significantly as the "sacrament of summer days," outward signs reminding her of the Sacrament of Love of which she would eagerly partake: the consecrated bread and the immortal wine. In the folding of a

gown, in the passing of summer glory she found analogy with the priest's arranging of the symbols, "When Sacrament – is done –" (31)

During the early 1940s, when Sister Power wrote her book, *The Baltimore Catechism of the Catholic Church* defined a Sacrament as "an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace" (*Catechism* 27). Therefore the above statement by Power about the "sacrament of summer days" as outward signs is significant in her further explanation of the Eucharist and wine integral to the Catholic faith. Other Sacraments mentioned by Power in the same context of the two poems included Matrimony, Baptism, and Penance (31).

Sister Power calls upon the Fathers and Doctors of the Catholic Church and their articulation of the power of grace as a means of resisting temptation. Then Power turns to 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for thee" which is a segue to Fr1043. According to Power, Dickinson's final quatrain in the poem describes the flowing of grace:

A pittance at a time
Until to Her surprise
The Soul with strict economy
Subsist till Paradise

Power explains that the just man receives grace in proportion to the strength of the temptation (33).

Predictably, Sister Power made reference to Thomas à Kempis and *The Imitation of Christ* on several occasions in her book. She maintains that Dickinson, as a disciple of Kempis, was allied to the mystical order of Divine life (49). Likewise the Catholic mystics St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Teresa of Avila are introduced in relation to Dickinson's alleged prayer life:

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, identified prayer as a simple glance toward Heaven. . . .

St. Teresa of Avila . . . emphasized the importance of comfort in disposing one for prayer. Very few of the saints made use of the prayer book. . . . Emily thought of prayer as a little instrument, a mouthpiece, through which she could send her voice into the ear of God. But when speech failed her . . . then prayer was an act of desire endorsed from within (52-53).

The mystical tradition suggests that contemplative prayer prefaced by acts of meditation is integral to the Carmelite Order within the Catholic Church. The popular characterization of Dickinson as a "New England Nun" supports Power's assertion that the poet "should have been a Carmelite [as] . . . Contemplation . . . was Emily's chosen kingdom. And the key to her kingdom was Love" (57). Power claims that as a Carmelite, Dickinson would have found complete satisfaction because "[s]he shunned the mediocre in spirit. . . . No price could have exceeded the value of her sacrifice. 'The price – is / Even as the Grace –' (Fr538), she wrote about the reward and the joy of suffering. And she added as a final cadence that for the highest grace Christ paid the highest price – a Cross" (58) This final declaration by Power is a paraphrase of the last quatrain of the poem:

Our Lord – thought no
Extravagance
To pay – a Cross –

Indeed, in the later pages of the book Sister Power invokes the poetry of St. John of the Cross, which once again supported her claim that Emily Dickinson would have embraced the Carmelite tradition had she been a Catholic.

As Thomas Merton read the book by Sister Power, what was his analysis of Emily Dickinson as a latent Catholic and perhaps a contemplative mystic in the Carmelite tradition? Merton considered

Emily Dickinson one of five American writers who influenced him the most, and in a 1959 correspondence with his friend Bob Lax he confided, "I am having a mystical flirtation with Emily Dickinson" (Biddle 183).

At that time Merton was working on his book, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, which was a revision of an earlier book and is considered the monk's best volume on contemplative prayer. There is evidence that Merton read close to twenty-five of Dickinson's poems in the same general time period. It is evident that Merton was a bit comical with Bob Lax, but then again, perhaps, very serious about the possible mystical influence that Dickinson had upon him at the time. Further, the Carmelite influences of the Dickinson book by Sister Power may have still remained with him when he mentioned his "mystical flirtation."

In a later correspondence to a Catholic religious, Thomas Merton dismissed the notion that Emily Dickinson was a mystic, but he admitted, like Sister Power, the possibility, through her temperament and circumstances of her life, that the poet may have had a disposition for an interior spiritual life quite apart, of course, from institutional religion.

I will close with quotations from one of the book reviews mentioned above. Although the quotes are from a Catholic journal, it is the most objective critique of the book by Sister Power. The other ten reviews, including *The Yale Quarterly*, supported without question the Power thesis of Dickinson's Catholic leanings. The book editor of *The Sign* states the following:

There are certain characteristics of Miss Dickinson's life and poetry that point in the direction of Catholicism

Continued on page 30

The preceding article and the following essay by Sharon Hamilton both address ways of connecting with Emily Dickinson through questions of religious faith. As John Collins acknowledges, few critics nowadays would assent to the image of Dickinson as having a “purely Catholic spirit,” but many readers have met her on the ground in which Thomas Merton encountered her. Likewise, many contemporary readers of Dickinson, with or without Woody Allen as a trigger (remember *Without Feathers?*), are likely to respond to the poems for their exploration of, as Sharon Hamilton puts it, “those enchanting, affecting things that we do not and cannot fully understand” – needing even, or especially, in an age when everything in the natural world seems to have been mastered, their “Magic” – their “element / Like Deity” (Fr627).

Emily Dickinson meets Woody Allen?

By Sharon Hamilton

On a recent rainy summer evening, my husband and I headed to a local theater for the final showing of Woody Allen’s new movie *Magic in the Moonlight*. As things turned out, the close proximity with which I saw this movie and attended this year’s Emily Dickinson Institute in Amherst caused me to notice something as I watched this film that seemed initially strange, but was soon, I realized, quite wonderful. However inadvertently, this film captures a kind of virtual meeting (in spirit) between the minds of Emily Dickinson and Woody Allen, because the main themes in this movie very closely resemble those in a famous Dickinson poem. It would seem that even across a span of almost 150 years, this great twenty-first century filmmaker and this great nineteenth century poet share extremely similar interests.

The Dickinson poem that (I assume completely by chance) so closely parallels Allen’s film is “Those – dying then,” (Fr1581). The poem goes:

Those – dying then,
Knew where they went –
They went to God’s Right Hand –
That Hand is amputated now
And God cannot be found –

The abdication of Belief
Makes the Behavior small –
Better an ignis fatuus
Than no illumine at all –

Critics have often pointed to this poem as being a strong expression of Emily Dick-

inson’s position on matters of faith – as, in short, a declaration of her atheism. And, to a certain extent, that reading makes absolute sense. The first stanza, with its reference to the hand of God having been cut off, does seem to support the idea that God is dead, and it was certainly the case that in the 19th century atheism was a position being more widely adopted, as was famously exemplified by the British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley’s expulsion from Oxford in 1811 over his published assertions of non-belief. If Dickinson’s poem had ended after the first stanza, this particular reading of the poem would be the most logical interpretation, but the second stanza complicates things, and suggests that something else is going on. The poem does clearly point to some sort of answer. The question is, to what?

The theory that this poem is not just about atheism (answering the question “is there a God or not?”) but is taking part in a different, more expansive debate is supported by Woody Allen’s film, which follows thematic patterns very similar to those in Dickinson’s poem. Allen’s film, like Dickinson’s poem, begins by setting out the idea that God may not exist (his hand may be cut off) – in Allen’s case through a rowdy debate about Nietzsche around a drink-filled table in a 1920s jazz club.

The content of Dickinson’s second stanza, like the rest of Allen’s film, suggests that both artists are most interested in investigating another question altogether: not “Is God dead?” but, instead, a far more intellectually

complex issue. “Even if we posit that God may be dead,” both film and poem suggest, “could it be that, even under those conditions, it might still make sense to choose a believing life?” We can be fairly certain that this was the animating question that prompted both Dickinson’s poem and Allen’s film because both artists not only answer this particular question, they answer it twice.

In both movie and poem we begin with the idea that “God cannot be found,” but soon move on to shared questions about the possible effects of a growing atheism on society. When people stop practicing religious habits – such as prayer, respect for God and neighbor, and attempting to live what was once deemed a “godly life” – and embrace rationalism instead, what happens? The answer to this question, in both movie and poem, is the same: “The abdication of Belief” Dickinson writes, “Makes the Behavior small.” This observation is made just as forcefully in Allen’s film, in which the character who most strongly embraces non-belief (played by Colin Firth) is also, unambiguously, a jerk.

Allen explores the concept that traditional religious practices may still have value (whether or not there is a God) through their positive effects on human behavior – making that behavior not “small” – through his depiction of a minor character who is both a man of science and who still engages in religious actions. This minor character is a psychiatrist who has fully embraced Freudian theories, and who is able to explain (correct-

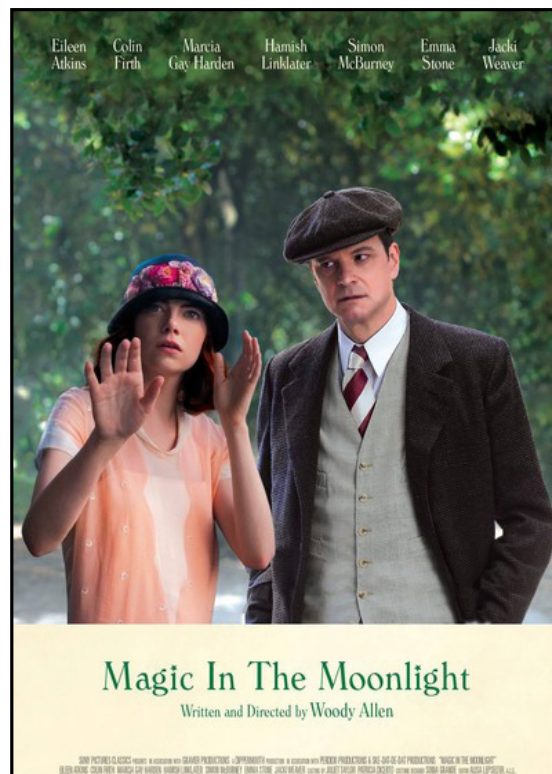
ly) the source of other characters' behavior based on his accurate scientific understanding. Nonetheless, we learn in an aside late in the film, when one character finds herself in serious distress, that this man of science had prayed for her. We are touched by that. The film thus suggests that while there may be no God to pray to, there may be still be a place in society for those traditional religious habits that encourage us to think about, to care about, and ultimately to be deeply concerned with and connected to, the lives of others – a connection that may (both film and poem suggest) be diminished if self-interested rationalism should fully replace religious belief.

Dickinson and Allen agree, as well, in their second answer to the implied question, “even if God is dead could it still make sense to choose a believing life?” Both explore the idea that faith in the supernatural – even if it turns out to be an illusion, an “ignis fatuus” – can enrich our lives. Dickinson’s poem explains that a false belief may still, in some sense, be “Better” than no belief at all. How is that possible? Dickinson’s edition of Webster’s dictionary links “illumination” (or “illumine,” in its shortened poetic form) to light, and also to an understanding of “how to live.” Appropriately, her poem, and Allen’s film, both suggest that the things that light our way in life are not always rational, but can also (if we are open to such experiences) come to us in flashes of emotional insight. “I’ve known a Heaven, like a Tent” (Fr257), Dickinson begins a much-loved poem about being moved to an irrational degree by beauty in the natural world.

This is an idea Allen also explores through his representation of an über-rational man (Firth) who is, yet, extremely bitter, and who only begins to grow in his personal happiness when he allows himself to accept that perhaps there are some elements of the

universe beyond human rational understanding: that irrational things, including things of the heart, can be both wonderful and, in their own way, however false (according to the terms of reason), also, paradoxically, true.

These startling thematic similarities between Dickinson’s poem and Allen’s film can likely best be explained by looking at



their probable common source: the plays of Shakespeare. It is well-established that Dickinson’s fondness for Shakespeare informed her poetry, and Allen makes his reverence equally evident in this film, in which Shakespeare is frequently quoted. Behind both poem and film, therefore, likely lurk the words of Hamlet: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” Shakespeare, like Dickinson and Allen, lived in a time of rich scientific ferment, and he was well-versed in the latest scien-

tific discoveries (as Dan Falk, especially, shows in his new book *The Science of Shakespeare*). Nevertheless, the plays still ultimately side with Prospero, with the irrational and inexplicable – as Dickinson’s poem, and Allen’s movie, do too.

The message from all three artists is that however rational our societies may become, we still need to be open to magic in the moonlight. Without this human reaching beyond reason (beyond “philosophy,” as Hamlet puts it) toward those enchanting, affecting things that we do not and cannot fully understand (like love, like faith, like art), life is somehow the poorer. Our personal experiences become colder and smaller, these artists suggest, if we strain only towards those things that make rational sense. Reason, yes, they explain, but truly living means also embracing such stuff – like poetry, plays, and movies – as dreams are made on. In the end, perhaps it is not entirely unexpected that artists (whose work, after all, is designed to move us in ways that we cannot completely comprehend) tend to fall on the same side in the debate between rationality and spirituality. “Better an ignis fatuus” – better a false belief, but still the openness to believe – as Dickinson states so strikingly in this poem, “Than no illumine at all.”

Sharon Hamilton is a writer and researcher who divides her time between Ottawa, Ontario and Spring Brook, Prince Edward Island. Her work includes international lectures on American literature delivered in the U.S., France, Austria, and Italy, and numerous publications including, most recently, “Teaching Hemingway’s Modernism in Cultural Context” in Teaching Hemingway and Modernism Ed. Joseph Fruscione. Kent State University Press, forthcoming 2015.

This is the last in a series of articles by collectors of books, letters, and other objects related to the poet. Any others who would like to discuss their experiences as collectors or to boast of treasures acquired are encouraged to contact the editor of the Bulletin.

Collecting Emily With Emily

By Jo Ann Orr

I first heard the name Emily Dickinson when I was in college during the Sixties. She was dismissed in a Nineteenth-Century American Literature course as a minor New England poet, and it was suggested that students read her poetry at their leisure as she would not be included in the course syllabus. Nor was she mentioned in graduate school.

It was not until years later, when Julie Harris was starring in *The Belle of Amherst*, that I heard the name Emily Dickinson again and was intrigued enough to buy a book of poetry. Once I read “To know just how He suffered – would be dear –” which ends with the beautiful, hopeful desire, “Till Love that was – and Love too best to be – / Meet – and the Junction be Eternity” (Fr688), I knew that I would eventually read everything! This stunning poem totally and tenderly describes my feelings on the unexpected death of my husband at 32. The poetry continued to dazzle and puzzle me, but I read it only intermittently as I got on with my career.

Along the way, I acquired an English springer spaniel puppy. Suddenly, an adorable, lively creature was part of my life. Inquisitive brown eyes, auburn ringlets on her back and ears, and an interesting array of freckles on her white chest, legs and nose – “Emily” seemed the perfect choice. When I realized how easily and quickly she responded to language, remembering numerous names of people and toys and other objects, understanding phrases and sentences, and listening to conversations, I just knew that my Emily was a genius!

Since I am a graphic arts designer with pencils and scraps of paper strewn about, one of Emily’s favorite activities was snatching these

and running off to hide. As she matured she became quite the enigmatic character with the usual lively, playful nature of a springer spaniel, astounding people with her keen intelligence and memory. When I was asked why such a high-spirited spaniel was named Emily instead of Sparky, I knew it was time to read more of her namesake.

When I discovered that this incredible poet was a dog person, mentioning Carlo many times in poems and letters (“The Dog is the noblest work of Art, sir. I may safely say the noblest” (L34), I embarked on a literary journey that has lasted to this day. Memorizing poems and lines and collecting first editions and other rare ancillary books and materials are fun and serious pursuits.

I first started looking for first editions in the local bookstores here in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was lucky because the first books that I found were Martha Dickinson Bianchi’s poetry in several editions and in fairly good condition. Much later I learned that perhaps they came from the Gilbert mansions, which are, amazingly, still standing and in fairly good shape. Martha’s uncles – Susan’s brothers – Thomas and Francis, were incredible forces in the formation of this town. The city corner where Martha’s uncle Francis had an eight-story office building is still there. The brothers’ fortunes and charities came from banking, lumbering, electricity, education, formation of hospitals and universities and cemeteries – and politics. The Civil War Monument was built through Thomas’ efforts. Their wives were very involved in civic projects also.

After such good luck in my hometown, I began calling some of the New York City bookstores



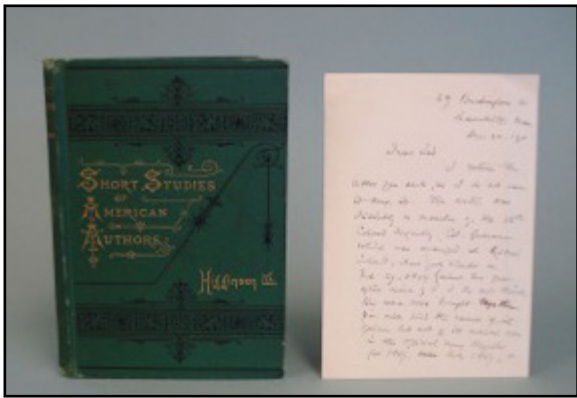
A statue of Susan Dickinson’s brother, Thomas D. Gilbert, still stands in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

in 1989 and the early Nineties. I was fortunate because Emily still wasn’t as well-known as she is now, and I was able to get almost all of her first editions.

Through the years I was able to get Mabel Loomis Todd’s book titled *Corona and Coronet* and all of her daughter’s books on Emily as well. I bought just about anything I could find and there were numerous books available in early editions. I was amazed at what good luck I was having – but it was at a time when Emily was known in the universities, but not yet collected.

One of my best finds in addition to Emily’s first editions was the booklet titled *Guests in Eden*, which is a series of essays dedicated to Martha Dickinson Bianchi. It was privately published in 1946, and, since there must be very few in existence, I am privileged to have a copy, which is signed by Laura Benet after her essay on Martha.

Feeling a bit smug, I called another New York City bookstore and asked if they had



Top, the author's Martha Dickinson Bianchi Collection. Bottom, *Short Studies of American Authors* and a 190? letter to someone inquiring about a member of the 26th Colored Infantry. Higginson replies that his was an earlier regiment.

any early editions of Emily Dickinson. They said that none were available but there were two books by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, if I didn't mind that there was writing on the first pages. They were first editions of *Face to Face* and *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*. I do like dates and signatures; I grabbed them. To my utter amazement, the books were signed by Martha herself along with a sweet note and signature and dates (which are older than I am).

Thinking that New York City was not the only place to get first editions, I started looking in all the antique stores I could find between Michigan and Ohio. Through the years I found several copies of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*. Barbara Dana – I am happy to

say – is using one of these copies in her performance of *The Belle of Amherst*.

I did not expect to find any books in the small town of Waterville, Ohio, where I was born, but experience has taught me never turn away from checking all the books on the shelf. I could not believe my eyes when I found *Short Studies of American Authors* (1880), by Thomas Wentworth Higginson! I later learned that Jean Gould had returned to the area, where she was born, after a successful writing career in New York City. Her *Miss Emily* is one of my favorites. It, too, was on the shelf, signed and dated 1946. I suspect that these books were from her library or her family's.

Another item that I cherish is a postcard signed by Higginson answering a request to find someone who was in his regiment. The note is in his handwriting and dated December 24, 1900. I was extremely happy to find a first edition of Emily's letters, for each letter is a testimony of her human-

ity and sweet, loving nature. I have almost all of the books by Donald Mitchell (Ik Marvel) and the wonderful books by Emily's second cousin, Kate Dickinson Sweetser, who wrote books for children. Another book came to me from my cousin, who bought James Whitcomb Riley's book *A Child's World*. I treasure it because someone, an unknown early fan, had copied Emily's "There is no frigate like a book . . ." on the title page which has the handwritten date of Jan 2, 1903.

Another of my best "finds" was a copy of Hugh Conway's *Called Back*, one of the last books she ever read, lying on the floor in an antique shop along with other "unwanted" books. I found it an interesting tale of intrigue, and I believe Emily did also, even though her

biographer Richard Sewall could not understand why she liked it. She must have liked it as her last letter – sadly – to her cousins reads, "Called back."

The final book I added to my collection was one I found two years ago in an antique shop just waiting for me to discover it. It is Jay Leyda's *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*. With that addition I felt my collection was complete!

When I first read the line "... my heart close as the Spaniel to its friends" (L196) I could not help but feel – and still do after all these years – a wonderful connection not of my making. "Dare I touch the coincidence?" (L1028).

Postscript: My dog Emily was "called back" in 1992. My present dog is a Yellow Lab named Carly. She is not literary in any way, for her true love is chasing balls. I only named her Carly because Carly Simon was singing on my car radio. It was not until much later that I realized that I surely had unconsciously named her for Emily's Carlo: Is this not another example of "daring to touch the coincidence?"



Jo Ann Orr's most recent contribution to the Bulletin was a story inspired by a baseball card of the poet, appearing in the Fall 2011 issue. Widely believed to be the first person to put messages on kitchen magnets, Orr has created several magnet designs for the Emily Dickinson Museum.

In-Progress Artwork Inspired by Emily Dickinson

By Anne Mondro

Anne Mondro is the 2013 Scholar in Amherst. She completed her M.F.A. at Kent State University in 2002 and immediately moved from there to the School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan, where she currently holds the rank of associate professor. Professor Mondro has mounted eight solo exhibits since 2008 at galleries and universities across this country and in São Paulo, Brazil.

A little over a year ago I visited Amherst with the intent to create a series of artwork directly inspired by the writing of Emily Dickinson. My visit started off with photographing objects in the Dickinson homestead and sifting through images in the Jones Library special collection room. As the week progressed, I found myself more inclined to visit the Dickinson grounds. I started to imagine her writing in the garden, baking in the kitchen, or having witty conversation at dinner parties hosted by her sister-in-law. That was when I felt I connected to her as a person. Since that visit, I have been processing Dickinson's writing in many formats. Merging her words with my imagery has been more challenging than I originally envisioned.

First iteration: Enamels

My initial thought was to create a series of digital images directly inspired by artifacts from her homestead. Yet soon I felt it was too literal, so I decided to create something more intimate and precious. Using enameling, a process of layering tiny granules of glass on metal, I created a shallow relief of "Hope is the thing with feathers." The piece incorporates an image of lungs and shells in the foreground and an etched image of a feather in the background. The shape of the piece is inspired by Islamic design, which utilizes symmetry and repetition. This particular shape mimics an Islamic prayer rug, and was inspired by Emily Dickinson's love of nature and spirituality.

Second Iteration: Tiny Letters

After creating the enamel piece, I realized it wasn't capturing the emotion expressed in Dickinson's writing style. Continuing to contemplate her identity beyond a poet, as a daughter, sister, and friend, I began to cor-

respond with Emily. The Dear Emily letters reflect the awe I feel for the poet as well as envy of the time and space she had to be creative. I then transcribed the Dear Emily letters into the smallest possible font using thin pencil lead that I shaved down to a fine point to preserve their intimacy.

Excerpts from Dear Emily letters:

I have to confess I often find myself thinking how envious I am of you. The stress of money and work are always on my shoulder. I guess I got what I always wanted, to be independent. Really it just means I am responsible for everything, none of the work is shared, and none of it is someone else's responsibility. It's just me. At the same time, I understand the struggles and sadness you have seen. If I lived during your time, I wouldn't have my mom here with me. Her disease would of taken her life years ago, so I shouldn't complain.

I admire your commitment to faith. Your belief in god, heaven, and the soul soothes me. I once was committed to faith and believed in its power. Then came a day when doubt entered my mind. What if there isn't a soul? What if when you die the body does nothing more than just stop? These thoughts sadden me, but I can't shake them. I miss being faithful.

I wonder if I have a way with images similar to your way with words? Images are easy for me. They pop into my head. Sometimes completed art works are right there in my mind. They always come to me when I least expect it. Driving home after a long day, walking the aisles of the grocery store, folding laundry. Sometimes they come very slow, one part of a puzzle at a time. How do your words come to you?

Third Iteration: Hearts

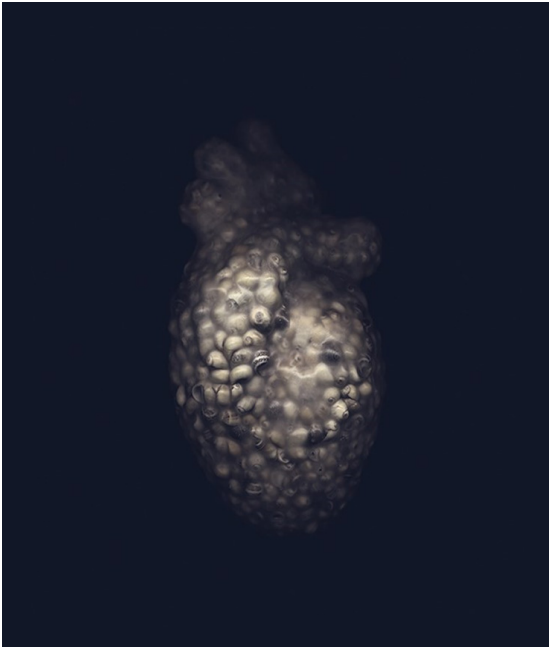
Reflecting on the imagery in the poems, I returned to my original intent of creating digital images to depict the emotions and metaphors expressed in Dickinson's poems. Avoiding literal translations of the poems' imagery, I referenced anatomy to portray senses and emotions expressed in the poetry, creating images with a more enigmatic sense. I have relied on anatomical imagery in the past for its dual connections to medicine and theology, as seen in Christian reliquaries and votives. So it seemed like a natural starting point and led me to fabricate several heart forms. The heart representations, which I fabricated from felt, became interior support structures for me to build over.

Referencing the individual poems, I identified natural objects that are depicted in the poems and that I identified with, objects that connected Dickinson's writing with my own experiences. Using layers of hot beeswax, I then started to adhere the objects all over the felt heart forms. I then digitally scanned and processed the objects to create the final images.

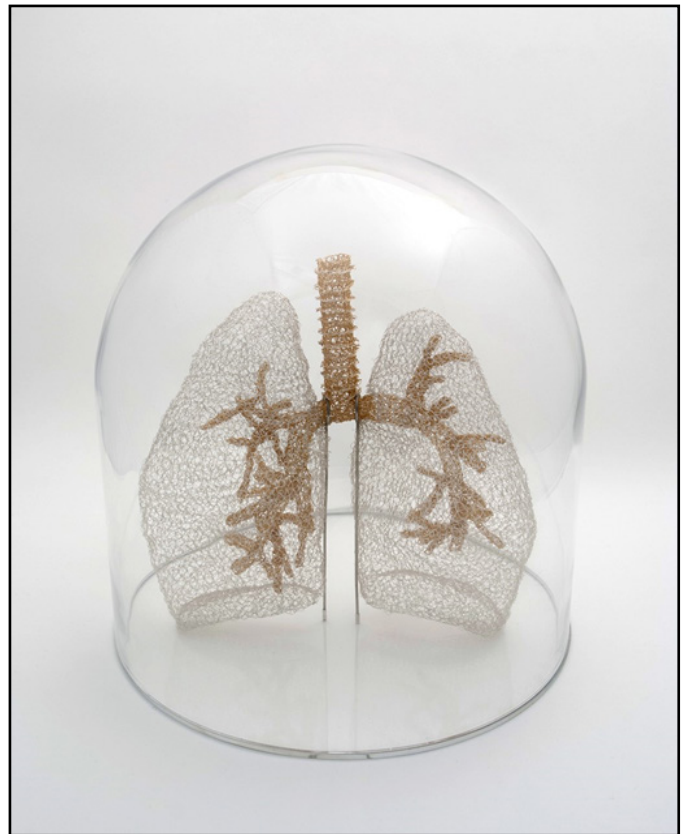
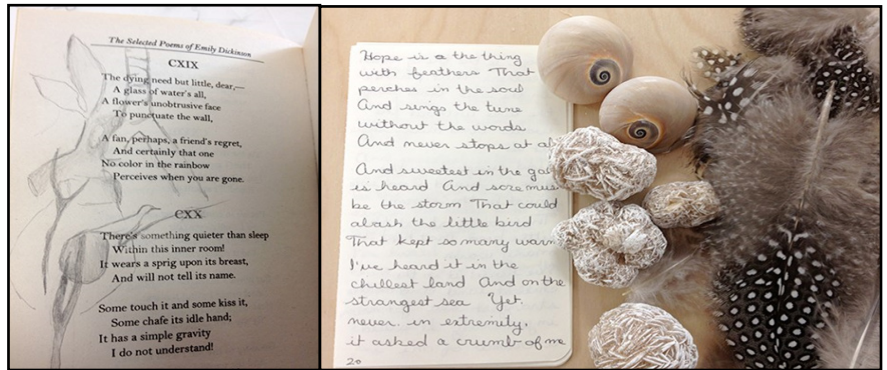
New work: Lungs

Further comparing my own experiences with that of Dickinson's poems, I am drawn to "The last Night that She lived" (Fr1100). Experiencing a loss recently, my grandmother's death and my ensuing grief are elegantly captured in this poem. This led me to create a pair of woven lungs out of silver and gold-plated wire to capture the strength and delicacy of our breath.

Continuing to influence my work, Emily Dickinson's poems inspire me to explore the human condition on a deeper level.



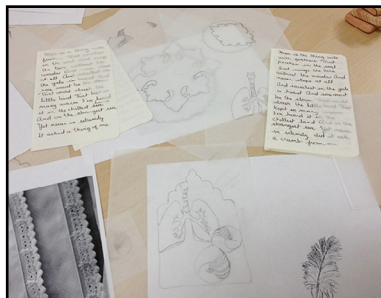
I many times thought peace had come
 Digital archival print, 11"x14", 2014



The last Night that She lived
 Silver and gold-plated wire, acrylic, glass, nickel
 10" dia. X 10" h, 2014



"Hope" is the thing with feathers
 Tiny granules of glass on metal
 The shape mimics an Islamic prayer rug.



Joseph Cornell and Emily Dickinson: Kindred Spirits

By Lee Mamunes

Lee Mamunes, member of EDIS and herself a pen-and-ink and collage artist, has a natural interest in Joseph Cornell's engagement with Emily Dickinson, two artists whom she sees as "kindred spirits." She is a former trustee of the Edward Hopper House in Nyack, and author of the Edward Hopper Encyclopedia (McFarland 2011). This essay appeared in the Spring/Summer 2014 newsletter of the Historical Society of the Nyacks. On the following page appear two of Cornell's boxes,

Nowadays we are urged to do more "thinking outside the box." A half-century ago, Joseph Cornell (1903 – 1973) did just that, although he also spent 35 years "thinking inside the box." Cornell was a true eccentric, and completely self-taught. He was not a sculptor or painter. He was a collector: in his late 20s he began to assemble fragments of everyday life, including memories of his happy childhood in Nyack, placing them in glass-fronted shadow boxes resembling tiny stage sets.

John Ashbery, who won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1976, observed that "the genius of Cornell is that he sees and enables us to see with the eyes of childhood, before our vision got clouded by experience, when objects like a rubber ball or a pocket mirror seemed charged with meaning, and a marble rolling across a wooden floor could be as portentous as a passing comet."

John Ashbery is a great poet, not an art critic. It may be that poets understand Joseph Cornell in ways that elude art critics. This makes sense: painting and poetry are often called the "sister arts." In fact, Cornell's art seems to come into better focus when it is placed alongside his favorite poet, Emily Dickinson. Cornell was in his early twenties when he first read of Emily Dickinson in Marsden Hartley's *Adventures in the Arts*. In that book, Hartley described Dickinson and her poems as vague, mystical, impertinent, and playful – the very hallmarks of Cornell's art.

Cornell's interest in Dickinson was active across several decades and lasted until the final years of his life. He became friends with

Jay Leyda, a Dickinson scholar, and Leyda supplied him with lists of images Dickinson had cut and pasted down through the years, many her own doodles, and others including a boy beating off dogs with sticks and a broom, children blowing bubbles, a dead king, and a toy sailboat. Cornell eventually owned four separate volumes of Dickinson poems and seven works of Dickinson biography and literary criticism. He kept her works by his bedside and probably knew many poems by heart, and especially the one that begins

It might be lonelier
Without the Loneliness –
I'm so accustomed to my Fate –

And ends with

It might be easier
To fail – with Land in Sight –
Than gain – my Blue Peninsula –
And perish – of Delight – (Fr535)

In 1953, Cornell assembled a shadow box that he titled *Toward the Blue Peninsula (For Emily Dickinson)*, one of a dozen shadow boxes referencing the poet. It shows a white room with a small window looking out on a blue sky. As you look at the box, you realize that it's also a birdcage, with wire mesh. There's a little perch at the bottom of the box, but the perch is empty. The absent bird is Emily Dickinson. Is she now in delight, or even more lonely?

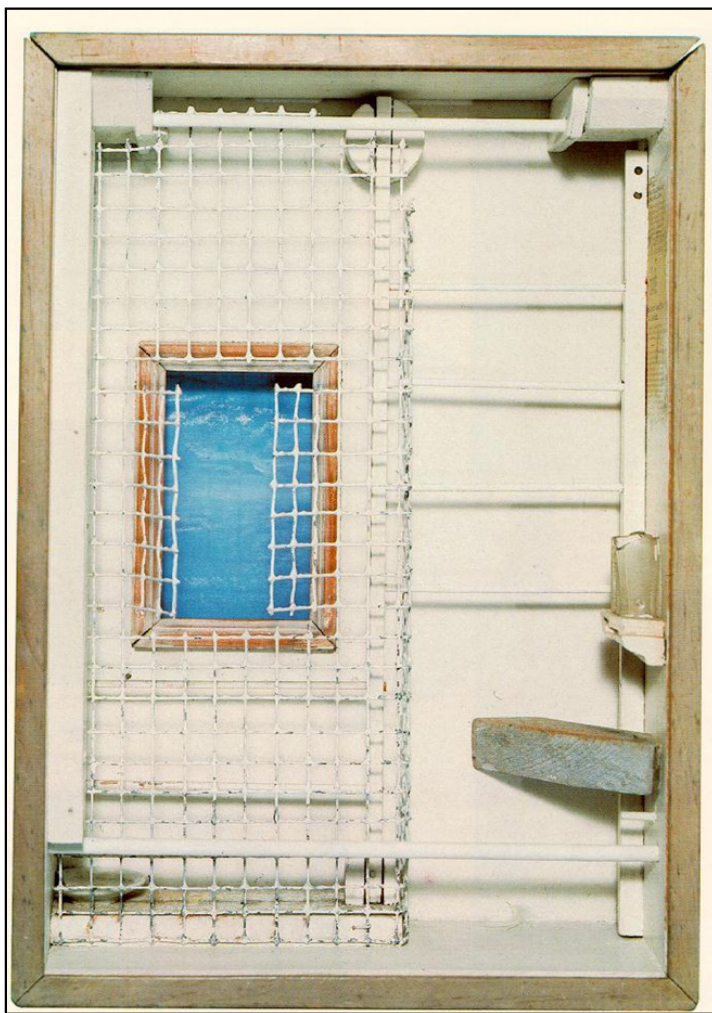
Cornell shared with Dickinson a love of nature. He was a bird watcher, a feeder of squirrels, a lover of the flight of pigeons, an observer of the seasons, and an admirer of trees.

They both enjoyed the company of children: Cornell often sent postcards to the children of his acquaintances with pictures of animals; Dickinson played with the neighborhood children, often lowering baskets of cookies down to them from her bedroom window.

Cornell and Dickinson had many other things in common. Each lived a life rooted in the family home, and both had a close and loving lifelong relationship with a sibling in that home. Both felt compelled to honor family commitments over their own personal needs; critics have suggested that his shadow boxes and her poems both express unfulfilled romantic longings. Both kept clear of face-to-face contact with outsiders (Dickinson preferred writing letters, while Cornell was fond of long phone conversations). Both were pack rats, collectors of bits and pieces, ephemera they treasured and then turned into art. Cornell surely knew what Dickinson meant when she wrote that "Nature is a Haunted House – but Art – a House that tries to be haunted."

Charles Simic, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1990, understands the connection between Emily Dickinson and Joseph Cornell: "If her poems are like his boxes, a place where secrets are kept, his boxes are like her poems, the place of unlikely things coming together . . . To read her poems, to look at his boxes, is to begin to think in a new way about American literature and art."

In 1959 Joseph Cornell put together a box – on the spot! – at an Antique Fair at Madison Square in New York City. His note with the box reads "As tho made by E.D."



According to Christopher Benfey,* Joseph Cornell grew interested in Emily Dickinson as early as 1944 and began reading about her in 1952. He was especially fascinated, Benfey quotes David Porter as saying, by her “penchant for cutting and pasting clippings and her own drawings and doodles” and by her secret love for Kate Scott, which he had read about in Rebecca Patterson’s *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson* (1951). Cornell compared images of escape in her poems to what he felt “in books on sunny mornings on Fourth Avenue. . . . Is there a similar clue here in [my] own feeling for the endless ecstatic ‘voyaging’ through endless encounters with old engravings, photographs, books, Baedekers, varia, etc.?” These two images suggest two dimensions of Cornell’s engagement with the poet.

*Quotations are from the chapter “Toward the Blue Peninsula” in Benfey’s *A Summer of Hummingbirds* (2008).



Above: *Toward the Blue Peninsula (For Emily Dickinson)*, c. 1953 – Collage construction: 14.5 x 10.25 x 5.5 in. (36.8 x 14 cm) Private collection. Photo: Pace Gallery

Right: *For Emily Dickinson*, c. 1965 – Collaged reproduction, Masonite, Plexiglass, Wood, Brass Screws: 16.25 x 13.25 x 1.875 in.

Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
Gift of The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, 1993

Art © The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation/
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Robert Ernst Marx' *Requiem*

By Maryanne Garbowsky

Requiem, a print portfolio of etchings and quotations, stirring evokes the madness of war: its violence, bloodshed, unnaturalness. The title comes from the Latin word for rest – *requies*, the first word of the Roman Catholic mass for the dead. It also refers to the music played at such a service. By extension, it can refer to any composition – musical, literary, or artistic – that honors the deceased. As we remember and mourn the dead through the ages, the reader wonders, as does the artist, when grief will end.

Trained as a painter and printmaker, Robert Ernst Marx taught at many universities before retiring in 1990. In *Requiem*, as well as in the later *Considering the Voluntary Absence of God*, he challenges his audience, engaging them in a dialogue about “the arrogance of power” and “conventions” that “we impose on ourselves” and that bring us pain. At 88, Marx still draws on a daily basis, creating his own “visual language,” images of people and symbols who “personify the human condition. They are the people around us,” the ordinary people we know and see every day.

Printmaking offered Marx options that painting did not. As he describes it, when working with prints, there are “gifts.” These are the unknowns, the serendipity, “a scratch, a blotch, . . . a beautiful line” that shows up “after you roll the plate through the press.” These “gifts” provided him with “one of the many reasons” he was attracted to the art of printmaking.

In both image and word, Marx speaks out strongly and clearly against the senselessness of war. To accompany his five etchings, Marx selected quotations, which he hand-set, that range through time – from as early as the mid-second millennium BC to the twentieth century – a comment on war’s long history, a legacy that has been with us from the human

race’s early beginnings and that may always be with us.

On the cover page, the title appears in large capital letters with an epigraph by Herodotus, who asks the question that looms large throughout the portfolio’s pages: “Shall I speake my mynd or hold my peace and say nothing?” Marx chooses the first: he will not stand idly by and say nothing. Instead he chooses some of the finest words from poets Emily Dickinson, Stephen Crane, Walt Whitman, and Edna St. Vincent Millay, among others, to appear alongside his images, reinforcing and emphasizing their impact.

The opening image, a human face peering out from the surrounding darkness, is a witness to human cruelty. Below the image, Marx chooses as his portfolio’s opening poem Emily Dickinson’s “Much Madness is Divinest Sense.” It stands as a dramatic example of what happens to someone who disagrees with the *vox populi* and instead offers an alternative view.

Much Madness is divinest Sense –
To a discerning Eye –
Much Sense – the starkest Madness –
‘Tis the Majority
In this, as all, prevail –
Assent – and you are sane –
Demur – you’re straightway dangerous –
And handled with a Chain – (Fr620)

The first idea of the poem – Madness – leaps off the page, causing the viewer to wonder, “Who is it that is mad?” Dickinson’s speaker expresses the risk that comes with speaking out against the majority. Certainly if one does, one is considered “dangerous – and handled with a Chain – .” Familiar with the poetry of Dickinson before he chose this particular poem, Marx created his etching first and then



The bleak etching of “Much Madness” has been digitally altered to render it more visible.

selected the poem to accompany it. The image, which is reminiscent of Expressionist art, appears haunted and haunting, the face staring out at the viewer almost accusingly. Marx’s work has been compared to other Expressionist artists such as Grunewald, Bosch, and Bruegel. More recent artists to whom he has been compared are Francis Bacon and Leonard Baskin.

Marx follows Dickinson with a poem of her nineteenth-century contemporary, Walt Whitman, “I Sit and Look Out.” The placement of this poem after Dickinson’s emphasizes the importance of speaking out. In Whitman’s poignant lines, the narrator sees and feels “all the sorrows of the world”; he hears the “sobs of young men . . . remorseful after deeds done”; he sees women abused by children and spouses, as well as “the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny.” Each line parallels another, beginning with variations of “I sit,” “I hear,” “I see,” and “I observe.” “All these – all the meanness and agony without end,” yet instead of saying no to these atrocities, the narrator remains “silent.”

Requiem's final page has an image superimposed on Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Epitaph for the Race of Man," the fourth in a series of eighteen sonnets that predict "Man's disappearance" from the earth. It is a fitting coda to the destructive potential of mankind. The etched image that peers out from amidst the words of the poem speaks with minimal, cross-hatched lines; it may be the poem's narrator who as "scribe and confessor" of mankind seems to ask what is the cost of war.

Although completed in 1968, *Requiem* speaks to us today with remarkable freshness. Wars rage in the Ukraine and in Palestine. The United States is still engaged in military conflicts, and the world at large clashes with internal turmoil. When Marx selected the words that he used, the poets' voices were already silent. Yet through Marx' compelling work, they speak out again, urging us to stop this "madness," or life as we know it will cease to exist.

Maryanne Garbowsky, Professor of English at the County College of Morris, in Randolph, New Jersey, is the author of two books on Dickinson. Her contributions to the Bulletin include such topics as poems inspired by Dickinson (Spring 2013) and *The Little White House Project* (Fall 2013), about the 2013 installation at the Museum.

Marathon in Minnesota

By Erika Scheurer

On April 25, 2014, we hosted a marathon reading of all of Emily Dickinson's poems at the University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul. Around 200 people filtered in and out between Fr1 at 8am and Fr1 789 at 9:30pm.

As people arrived, they were greeted by my graduate Dickinson seminar students, who pointed them to the exhibits they had created: Dickinson Pinterest or Twitter accounts, Dickinson and the Civil War, her education, as well as interactive displays such as creating Dickinson "Mad Libs," sketching illustrations of poems, and composing a "new" poem out of cut-up lines from Dickinson. And of course there were refreshments, including Dickinson's black cake and gingerbread.

Once inside the reading room, however, the mood transformed from festive to contemplative. Participants sat in a circle in a lovely room of our library – leather seats, stained-glass windows – and read in turn. It was stunning to hear poems in such a variety of voices: a biology professor followed by a first-year student followed by a neighbor, a middle-schooler, our university president, a senior citizen, a dean, a priest, a TV reporter, yet another student. The vast array of people included Elizabeth Dickinson (local activist and actress with a significant name) and our own Eleanor Heginbotham, all the way from D.C.

The response of those who attended was overwhelmingly positive. People repeatedly noted that they had arrived intending to stay only for 10 or 15 minutes, but ended up staying for hours.

For me, the marathon is a reminder that Dickinson's poetry (all literature, in fact) is at a deep level about pleasure – the pleasure of Dickinson's language "translated" into all of those various voices rising one at a time past the

stained-glass windows and up into silence. It is about the pleasure of sharing language communally: chuckling together at tipsy bees, nodding knowingly together at references to long winters and slow-arriving springs, the collective intake of breath on "Zero at the bone." Since reading aloud is a form of interpretation, we also shared the pleasure of revising long-solidified interpretations of poems after hearing them read by someone else.

We cannot prepare for the poem that will come around to us. Even for a Dickinson scholar, the poem that lands in my place may be one I haven't looked at in decades. True, there is a missed enjambment here, a mispronounced word there, and a misplaced emphasis over there; and when reading poems one after another, there is no time to diligently unpack them. We inhale what words and images we can, resigning the rest to mystery. If nothing else, the Dickinson marathon is an invitation to dwell in mystery, which is also an invitation – yes – to dwell in Possibility.

Erika Scheurer teaches at the University of St. Thomas and directs the Writing Across the Curriculum program. She reports the following Craig's list personal: "Posted 2014-04-25 10:50 p.m. o'shaughnessy-frey library dickinson marathon-- m4w. We read for hours, then passed each other on the Cleveland ave. sidewalk, you on a bike."



Credit for this and for other images from the marathon goes to Mike Ekern.

Renée Bergland, Book Review Editor

Dickinson and Big Books

Michael D. Snediker

Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 273 pp. Paperback, ISBN 978-0-8166-5000, \$25.

Colleen Glenney Boggs

Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 303 pp. Paperback, ISBN 978-0-231-16123-7, \$29.50.

Elisa New

New England Beyond Criticism: In Defense of America's First Literature. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2014. 322 pp. Paperback, ISBN 978-1-118-85454-9, \$34.95.

Michelle Kohler

Miles of Stare: Transcendentalism and the Problem of Literary Vision in Nineteenth-Century America. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014. 227 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-8173-1835-2, \$54.95.

This summer, a friend of mine who works for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* asked a representative of a top university press why there weren't any books by women featured prominently in the fall catalog. The representative blithely responded that women didn't seem to be writing any big books. Women's books were smaller somehow, worthy of publication perhaps, but not of the full-page splash.

Big Books. What a concept. I'd characterize *Queer Optimism*, *Animalia Americana*, *New England Beyond Criticism* and *Miles of Stare* as very big indeed: these are books that offer significant new readings of nineteenth-century American literature while also challenging major paradigms in Queer Theory, American Cultural Studies, Literary Studies, and Visual Culture. Three of them are by women. But more significantly for us, all of them build their paradigm-shifting arguments around Dickinson.

In *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions*, Michael D. Snediker offers a corrective to the endemic pessimism that he notices in queer theory as developed by Sedgwick, Bersani, Butler, Tomkins, Berlant, Warner, and Edelman. The springboard for Snediker's optimism is poetry: His first premise is "the utility of poetry as an archive" (31) and his book discusses Hart Crane, Emily Dickinson, Jack Spicer and Elizabeth Bishop. The Dickinson chapter responds to many scholars, most notably Sharon Cameron and Marianne Noble. In it, he argues that "the queerness of Dickinsonian pain" (89) shows the poet's "queer grace" (124). Building on Noble, Snediker argues forcefully that Dickinson's work develops an "aesthetics of optimism" (124) in which, basically, the dark feels beautiful. From that queer and painful beauty, Snediker theorizes what he calls "lyric personhood." The book is a *tour de force*.

Colleen Glenney Boggs also looks to Dickinson to redefine personhood. In *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity*, Boggs

demonstrates "how Dickinson might advance our understanding of liberal subjectivity beyond its current parameters" (37). Boggs explains that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only a few wealthy white men were granted full personhood within the broad cultural imaginary, while biopolitical discourses figured most of the others as bestial. Within a few decades, almost all of the "others," including slaves, laborers, women, and many people of subordinate races and ethnicities could lay claim to subjectivity and citizenship of some sort. But what sort? As biopolitical discourses rapidly moved the boundaries between the human and the bestial, actual animals became sites of profound ambiguity. Boggs examines Emily Dickinson's animals – the birds, reptiles, bugs, and hounds whom Dickinson takes on as poetic personae. She argues that looking at Dickinson's animals "gives us a different account of the subject – as relational and contingent" (154). Boggs draws on posthumanist theory, animal rights, animal studies, poststructuralist affect theory, and – surprisingly – Dickinson Studies in this hugely ambitious work.

New England Beyond Criticism styles itself a manifesto. Here, Elisa New argues that New England has been shouldered out of scholars' critical discourse about early America, but it has not lost its grip on the classroom or on popular discourse. New loves canonical New England writers, and she argues forcefully against the critical strain that denies their importance. At times it seems she's arguing against a bit of a straw man. I am not convinced that ef-

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.
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Email: renee.bergland@simmons.edu

forts to open up the canon are necessarily opposed to studying New England writers: To the contrary, most of the best canon-busters seem to me to give full weight to the prestige, status, and central importance of the literary communities of New England and New York. (Jane Tompkins, for example, or Caroline Levander or Augusta Rohrbach.) But New is right that it may be a bit out of fashion to admit to passionately loving the New England writers whom so many of us do adore. And she's also right about the fundamental irony that a whiff of privilege, an aura of stuffiness and conservatism clings to the New England writers whose works push so hard against convention. Dickinson is central to New's arguments. Two chapters focus on Dickinson (and another celebrates Susan Howe), but more importantly, the whole *raison d'être* for her manifesto is based on Dickinson – the New England canon, New says, is the stuff that “simply took the top of my head off” (10). Like it or not, this is a very big book. One thing I like about it is that Dickinson is its cornerstone.

Miles of Stare: Transcendentalism and the Problem of Literary Vision in Nineteenth-Century America is by Michelle Kohler. Because of the title, which quotes a Dickinson poem, some readers might expect this to be a Dickinson book, rather than one of the Big Books. But although Dickinson is central to Kohler's argument, this is not merely a work of Dickinson scholarship. Instead, Kohler offers a nuanced argument about literary vision in the nineteenth century that relies on Dickinson to “skewer” Emerson's transparent eyeball (136). Like the scholars discussed above, Kohler is hunting big ideas. She presents careful close readings of Dickinson poems, and Dickinson provides many of her best points. Over and over, she sticks those sharp points into the Emersonian (imperialist, romantic) American visionary, arguing that Dickinson, along with Douglass, Hawthorne, Jewett, Howells, and Melville, gives readers a “sense of possibility, agency, reciprocity, and multiplicity [that] reduces

the stature of the transparent gaze. . . . The transparent eye is one among many” (179). With this original and significant conclusion, Kohler directly addresses not only Emerson, but also Elisa New, whose earlier book *The Line's Eye*, also treated American literary vision. Kohler builds on New, but challenges her binarized paradigm for literary vision (either imperial or alternative). Instead, Kohler argues, “vision is central to American thought as a provisional, malleable, ongoing means to work through the problems of [the American] seer” (8). In this extraordinary monograph, as in the others discussed here, Dickinson launches us into the headiest realms of contemporary literary scholarship.

It is dizzying to read books so ambitious and so different from each other. It is also crazy fun. And it is delightful that these very big books all build their arguments on Dickinson, whose work proves capacious as the sea.

Dickinson in Novels

It can be amusing to read novels, stories, or poems that feature Emily Dickinson as a character: the “supposed person” in her irresistible white gown. It's a greater pleasure to come across Dickinson's verse – not her persona, but her poetry – in novels. Reading through the long list of Man Booker Prize nominees, we've been startled and delighted by Dickinson's poems popping up unexpectedly in three novels: *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* by Karen Joy Fowler, *The Blazing World*, by Siri Hustvedt, and *History of the Rain* by Niall Williams. Perhaps there are more Dickinson poems to be discovered in the other Booker nominees still stacked precariously near the bed.

Ruthie Swain narrates *History of the Rain*. She's a bedridden teenager in the poorest, wettest corner of Ireland who loves to read and hopes to write. She doesn't dwell on

the historical Dickinson much, though she does comment on the photo on the back of her *Collected Poems*: “Her face, two prunes in a porridge” (122). The novel offers a delightfully unexpected glimpse of Dickinson from the viewpoint of a sassy, sickly, extremely Irish teenager with great ambitions as a reader and a writer. She's read all of Emily Dickinson, she reports, “and afterwards felt I had been inside her life in a way I couldn't if I had lived next door and known her” (250). Ruthie's own goal is to get readers completely inside her life, and from Dickinson she takes courage, funky capitalization, playful syntax, and searing, slanting honesty.

Harriet Burden, the protagonist of *The Blazing World*, is an even more ambitious figure. She's a conceptual artist in New York who has used male artists as her public personae in a complicated hoax meant to challenge the sexist art world establishment. She's dead, as is the man who won the greatest acclaim presenting her works as his own. The novel leaps among narrative personae, wrestles with fame, genius, posterity, privacy, and gender, and loves to play dead – or at least to imagine a posthumous perspective. So it should come as no surprise that Emily Dickinson's poetry is its touchstone. In a Coda, Harry Burden's journal tells us that “Tonight I luxuriated in an empty house, ate pasta with heaps of vegetables, and read Emily Dickinson. She blazes” (231). Then she quotes “Mine – by the Right of the White Election!” (Fr411), putting Dickinson's White Election at the bright white heart of artistic expression in this blazing novel.

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves by Karen Joy Fowler won the PEN/Faulkner Award for 2014, and it is the only one of these three to have been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. It is a little more direct than the others: less bookish than Williams, less grandiose than Hustvedt. It is also hard to summarize without spoiling. So without discussing the premise or the

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plot, let's skip to the poetry, the Dickinson poem that provides a significant pivot point for the narrative, when the narrator notices that one of her father's favorite poems was Dickinson's "Bee! I'm expecting you!" (Fr983). With the Dickinson poem, the entire novel's structure of empathy between human and animal crystallizes. After reading it, the narrator reflects on her own time: "On the global level, Dämmerung of the dinosaurs. Final Act: Revenge on the upstart mammals. Here is the scene where they cook us in our own stupidity. If stupid were fuel, we'd never run out. . . . My own life, though, is pretty good. Can't complain" (293). We notice that Dickinson's Bee, Frogs, Bird, and Fly somehow manage to lead our narrator from personal despair and planetary destruction to a small haven of possibility and connection. In Fowler's novel, Dickinson's poetry offers the narrator and her complicated family, as well as her readers, the chance to get "completely beside ourselves." It's nice to have the company.

The following books were mentioned in this column:

Karen Joy Fowler

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel. New York: Putnam, 2013. 320 pp. Cloth, ISBN 9780399162091, \$26.95.

Siri Hustvedt

The Blazing World. New York: Simons and Schuster, 2014. 357 pp. Cloth, 9781476747231, \$26.

Niall Williams

The History of the Rain: A Novel. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014. 358 pp. Cloth, 9781620406472, \$26.

RE-RELEASED

Judith Farr

The Gardens of Emily Dickinson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014 (2004). 368 pp. Digital, ASIN BOO2JCFSA, \$25.

Judith Farr

I Never Came to You in White: A Novel. New York: Argo-Navis, 2014 (1996). 238 pp. Digital, ASIN BOOHP5EZQ8, \$9.99. Paper, ISBN 0786755806, \$21.95.

Reviewed by Nellie Lambert

Two books by Judith Farr are now available as eBooks. *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* won the Rose Mary Crashaw Award of The British Academy for the "Best Book Written in English by a Woman on a Literary Topic" in 2004. A final chapter by horticulturalist Louise Carter explains methods of cultivating Dickinson's flowers. In *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, Madeleine Minson concluded that "[Farr]'s book, which is full of close readings, is likely to become the standard work on the subject," while Carol Stocker, writing for *The Boston Globe*, calls it "a serious and engrossing biography with deep analysis of the floral themes in the poems." The book is also still available from Harvard University Press in both hardcover and paperback.

Farr's epistolary novel, *I Never Came to You in White*, chosen by the poet Peter Davison to be published by Houghton Mifflin in 1996, imagines the growth of the adolescent genius who became Emily Dickinson. Critic Richard Eder, in the *Los Angeles Times*, called it "an inspired intuition of what it could have felt like to be Emily and what it could have felt like to encounter her." *The New Yorker* reviewed the novel as a "compelling, incandescent" vision of the developing poet and how – in Richard Wilbur's words for the book jacket – she might be "seen or mis-seen by conventional girls, by an envious and puritanical teacher, by a high-minded literary clergyman, [and] by would-be literary women." This book has been re-released in paperback and digital formats.

Nelly Lambert teaches at Trinity Washington University, an all women's college in northeast Washington, D.C., and serves as secretary of EDIS's D.C. chapter. She writes about humor in Emily Dickinson's poetry.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Maxine Silverman

Transport of the Aim: a garland of poems on the lives of Emily Dickinson, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Celia Thaxter. Introduction by Judith Farr. Madison: Parallel Press, 2013. 55 pp. Paper, ISBN 978-1-934795-51-4, \$10.

In her introduction to this chapbook, Judith Farr describes it as "thrilling" (9). The poems are threaded through with surprising allusions, reversals, and intricate connections – "Her White Dress" for example, turns out to be about Thaxter's muslin summer dresses, glitteringly painted by Childe Hassam. If readers expect "a garland of poems" to be insignificant or dull, their expectations will be confounded here. This stuff is exciting.

Linda Wagner-Martin

Emily Dickinson: A Literary Life. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 202 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-71486-7, \$90.

A brief, reliable biography of Dickinson by a distinguished scholar would fill a real need. This one does not live up to its promise, however. Wagner-Martin writes well, condenses boldly, and builds upon an extensive bibliography of works scholarly and popular. But this life falls down with a thump between Lyndall Gordon's (which is much more exciting and imaginative) and Alfred Habegger's (which is much more sound).

Paul Crumbley and Eleanor Elson Heginbotham, Editors

Dickinson's Fascicles: A Spectrum of Possibilities. Columbus: the Ohio State University Press, 2014. 279 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8142-1259-X, \$69.95.

This pitch-perfect essay collection was published in August 2014 and launched at the Amherst meeting of the Emily Dickinson International Society. It includes an introduction and ten essays by notable Dickinson scholars. The book will prove to be

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significant. A full review will appear in the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

Reprints

Joanne Fiet Diehl

Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination. Princeton: Princeton Legacy Library 2014 (1982). 206 pp. Paper, print-on-demand ISBN 9780691614670, \$29.95.

Margaret Homans

Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson. Princeton: Princeton Legacy Library 2014 (1987). 272 pp. Paper, print-on-demand ISBN 978069160985, \$34

Noteworthy

Aife Murray

“Emily Dickinson's Poems Reflect Specter of Slavery,” Feb. 28, 2014, *Bay State Banner* baystatebanner.com/news/2014/feb/28/emily-dickinsons-poems-reflect-specter-slavery/

Correction

A crucial passage from Marty Rhodes Figley's review of Burleigh Mutén's young adult novel, *Miss Emily*, was negligently omitted from the Spring 2014 issue. After recounting Mutén's description of how

the poet leads Ned and Mattie Dickinson, a neighbor child, and the dog Carlo on an expedition to a circus, Figley added the following paragraph:

Although the wonders of the circus are witnessed, the night doesn't end well. But, no need to despair. The story, with its twists and turns, concludes on a high note with a grand finale in the form of a homegrown circus performed by the “gypsies” that will satisfy all. Mattie Dickinson wrote that her aunt “lent a contraband thrill to the slightest pretext.” After reading *Miss Emily* young readers will wish that the delightfully splendid Emily Dickinson lived in their neighborhood.

Calling All Artists

The Committee on the Arts invites EDIS members to submit information about creative work, exhibitions, and performances related to Emily Dickinson's life and poetry. The Committee will prepare a short report on the information received for each issue of the *Bulletin* and will post notices of upcoming events on the Society's website. Additionally, the Committee annually posts a selected bibliography of Dickinson-related works in the arts and theatre on its website. Information should be submitted to the Committee's chair, Jonnie Guerra, at juerrajnn@aol.com.

In our first *Bulletin* report we are pleased to bring to your attention information about Dickinson-related fiction, visual art, and music.

Amin Ahmad's short story “After Great Pain a Formal Feeling Comes” appeared in *The Missouri Review*, 34.2 (2011) and alludes to Dickinson's poem to evoke the sense of cultural displacement experienced by the Indian American protagonist.

Nuala Ní Chonchúir, an Irish writer who attended the 2014 annual meeting (her first!), has announced the forthcoming publication of her novel *Miss Emily*, about Dickinson and her Irish maid, by Penguin in the USA and Canada in July 2015 and by Sandstone Press in Britain and Ireland in August 2015. Element Pictures already has optioned the book for film.

Two art exhibitions related to Dickinson took place in New York City during the past year. “Janet Malcolm: The Emily Dickinson Series,” was held at Lori Bookstein Fine Art from January 9 to February 8, 2014, and featured 26 of Malcolm's signature collages. “Dickinson/Walser: Pencil Sketches” was held at the Drawing Center from November 15, 2013 to January 12, 2014 and presented samples of the manuscript art of Dickinson and Robert Walser, a writer born close to the time of the poet's death. See Christopher Benfey's insightful commentary at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/feb/20/art-janet-malcolm-emily-dickinson/>.

Composer and pianist Jack Heggie was commissioned by the Ravinia Festival (Chicago) to create a new work to celebrate the 70th birthday of Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The resulting song cycle, *Newer Every Day*, is made up of musical settings of five Dickinson poems. Its world premiere at the Ravinia Festival on August 12, 2014, featured soprano Te Kanawa, accompanied by Heggie.

Emily Dickinson's Editor Reviews

The Education of Henry Adams

By George Monteiro

Mabel Loomis Todd (1856-1932) is now best remembered for her efforts as one of Emily Dickinson's earliest champions. Along with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, she edited Dickinson's Poems (1890) and Poems, Second Series (1891), and (alone) Poems, Third Series (1896). She also edited two volumes of the poet's letters in 1894. In her own time, however, the literary wife of David Todd, an astronomer on the Amherst College faculty, was known as the author of a few publications based on her travels in Asia and Africa, as well as a speaker familiar to book clubs and women's societies, especially in Amherst and throughout New England. Yet there was nothing about her career, it would seem, that would have made her a likely reviewer of The Education of Henry Adams when it was published in 1918, except, perhaps, for the fact that she had been raised in Washington, D.C. But review Adams's book she did, for the Miami Herald on March 11, 1919 (page 7). The review is signed in all-caps: MABEL LOOMIS TODD.

Well do I recall my father, Prof. Loomis [Eben Jenks Loomis, 1826-1932], taking his only daughter, a girl of eleven or twelve, to see Henry Adams at his residence opposite the White House, little dreaming that I should be asked a generation later to review his autobiography; at once the most brilliant and incisive book I have ever read.

To say that *The Education of Henry Adams* has within a few months passed to its tenth printing expresses some notion of the demand for it; even here, on the tip end of Florida, I see it on library tables wherever I go; and any one who has dipped into this rare book reads it through with sheer delight, if possible at a single sitting. So poetic, so humorous, so sparkling, so dramatic, its pages conduct the enchanted reader into the heart of a unique personality. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, as editor, writes the introduction to the present volume (identical with the privately printed edition of one hundred copies of 1906), the Massachusetts Historical Society being the publisher; and nothing better could befall the youth of this country for all future time than to be educated in schools and colleges modified from our present unsatisfactory type into such form as might be worked out from implied suggestions of Mr. Adams.

Descendant of two presidents of the United States, as well as the redoubtable Abigail of emphatic New England memory, the best Brahmin blood of early, undegenerate Boston flowed in his veins; and although he graduated at Harvard College and had supposedly completed his education, to his own mind the real education of Henry Adams had not even then begun. His father, Charles Francis Adams, was appointed minister to the court of St. James, and the young Henry profited strikingly from seven years of London life as his father's private secretary. While admiring his father with due filial respect, he is amusingly just in his estimates. Of his love of art the son remarks, "The minister*** carried a sort of aesthetic rag-bag

of his own, which he regarded as amusement, and never called art." (p213). But at sixty Henry was still passionately seeking education. The intermediate years are a simple thread of life that charms us all the way from his ancestry in the "Silurian Age" down to the latest years, 1900-1905; the most fascinating literary journey that ever author conducted his readers along.

He encountered the powers at Washington in a singularly impersonal spirit: "A single word with Grant," he says, "satisfied him that, for his own good, the fewer words he risked, the better.** The type was pre-intellectual, archaic, and would have seemed so even to the cave-dwellers. Adam, according to legend, was such a man." (P. 265).

I have space for few quotations, but of 1867 he says that "for the first time in history, the American felt himself almost as strong as an Englishman. He had thirty years to wait before he should feel himself stronger. Meanwhile even a private secretary could afford to be happy. His old education was finished; his new one was not begun." (P. 235). Yes, I must risk another, and take a chance of Colonel Stoneman's bluepencil: "One never expected from a congressman more than good intentions and public spirit. Newspaper men as a rule had no great respect for the lower house; senators had less; and cabinet officers had none at all. Indeed, one day when Adams was pleading with a cabinet officer for any tact in dealing with representatives, the secretary impatiently broke out: 'You can't use tact with a congressman! A congressman is a hog! You must take a stick and hit him in the snout!' Adams knew far too little, compared with the secretary, to contradict him, though he thought the phrase somewhat harsh even as applied to the average congressman of 1869 – he saw little or nothing of later ones – but he knew a shorter way of silencing criticism. He had but to ask: 'If a congressman is a hog, what is a senator?' This innocent question, put in a candid spirit, petrified any executive officer that ever sat a week in his office. Even Adams admitted that senators passed belief. The comic side of their egotism partly disguised its extravagance, but faction had gone so far under Andrew Johnson that at

times the whole senate seemed to catch hysterics of nervous bucking without apparent reason. Great leaders like Sumner and Conkling could not be burlesqued; they were more grotesque than ridicule could make them; even Grant, who rarely sparkled in epigram, became witty on their account; but their egotism and factiousness were no laughing matter. They did permanent and terrible mischief, as Garfield and Blaine and even McKinley and John Hay were to feel. The most troublesome task of a reform president was that of bringing the senate back to decency. Therefore no one, and Henry Adams less than most, felt hope that any president chosen from the ranks of politics or politicians would raise the character of government." (p261).

In what does 1919 differ from 1869? And I cannot resist this farther venture, relating to a visit with Augustus Saint Gaudens, the great sculptor, to Amiens with a party of Frenchmen to see the marvelous cathedral (what would Adams have written could he have known how near it came to hunsollern destruction?): "In mind and person Saint Gaudens was a survival of the 1500; he bore the stamp of the Renaissance and should have carried an image of the Virgin around his neck, or stuck in his hat, like Louis XI. In mere time he was a lost soul that had strayed by chance into the twentieth century, and forgot-

ten where it came from. He writhed and cursed at his ignorance, much as Adams did at his own, but in the opposite sense. Saint Gaudens was a child of Benvenuto Cellini, smothered in an American cradle. Adams was a quintessence of Boston, devoured by curiosity to think like Benvenuto. Saint Gaudens' art was starved from birth and Adams' instinct was blighted from babyhood. Each had but half of a nature, and when they came together before the Virgin of Amiens they ought both to have felt in her the force that made them one; but it was not so. To Adams she became more than ever a channel of force; to Saint Gaudens she remained as before a channel of taste." (P. 387).

If I were to quote any more it would be entire chapters, as "Chicago (1893)," "The Dynamo and the Virgin (1900)," "The Height of Knowledge," and "The Abyss of Ignorance (1902)." But my space is more than filled: I can only add, *The Education of Henry Adams* is the book of the week, the month, the year not only, but of all time.

George Monteiro is Professor Emeritus of English and Adjunct Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University. He is the author of many studies of US, Brazilian, and Portuguese literature, including, most recently, a translation of the Iberian Poems of Miguel Torga (2005). His last essay in the Bulletin was "Accumulating Dickinson, Not Collecting," in Spring 2013.

Museum Update

"This is a timid [Mighty] room"

By Jane Wald

Would you believe it? "Mighty" and "timid" are the variants Dickinson chose for this poem (Fr 1785) about a resting place, a final resting place. This implied contradiction has carried over to the Emily Dickinson Museum's efforts to restore the poet's most personal, creative space.

The documentary record of Emily Dickinson's bedroom is disappointingly thin, but, combined with physical evidence, an authentic restoration of the room is indeed within the realm of "possibility."

Of course, Emily Dickinson exercised limitless possibilities in her own space.

"Her love of being alone up in her room," her niece Martha wrote, "was associated with her feeling for a key, which signified freedom from interruption and the social prevention that beset her downstairs. She would stand looking down, one hand raised, thumb and forefinger closed on an imaginary key, and say, with a quick turn of her wrist, 'It's just a turn – and freedom ...!'"

As the Emily Dickinson Museum works to restore the space that meant "freedom" to the poet, we rely on both the physical evidence left behind and eye-witness accounts such as Martha Dickinson Bianchi's de-

scription of the room in 1899, thirteen years after Emily's death.

Among other details, Bianchi placed the bureau between the two south windows, "and in the corner, by the 'window facing West' the little cherry writing table on which [the poems] had been written." Helpfully, for restoration work, Bianchi testified that "all was as she had left it."

Disassembly of the room over the summer of 2013 led to exciting finds as well as maddeningly elusive clues about the room's nineteenth-century appearance. Our first step was to remove twentieth-century ceil-

ing, wallpaper, and floorboards. We knew the south and west walls had been replastered during the extensive renovations of 1855, but we didn't expect to find the original doorway to this chamber patched up and surrounded by what appears to be its original bright yellow pigment. Similarly, we knew that the original floorboards lay beneath maple flooring probably installed in the 1920s. But finding clues to floor coverings and even furniture placement was as exciting as it was informative.

Wear marks on the floor confirmed that the Dickinsons followed standard nineteenth-century practice of covering the floor with long strips of straw matting. For greater comfort during the colder winter months, New Englanders covered the matting with wool carpets. Not only did we find the pattern of tack holes, but we also observed the pin-stripe pattern of the matting pressed into the floor by foot traffic through the room. These impressions in the wood allowed us to pin down the location of several items of furniture, including Dickinson's bed – the width of a single bed – and take note of worn-away finishes in places where her feet left the floor at night and hit the floor in the morning.

Another surprise lurked behind the baseboards. A fragment of floral and vine wallpaper had been discovered behind the ceiling in Dickinson's room in 1999, and was

thought to have dated to the 1880s. When the tall twentieth-century baseboards were removed, a four-inch width of striped wallpaper could be seen on three of the four walls. Could this paper have decorated the room during Emily Dickinson's prime writing years? After a painfully long period of detailed analysis, the verdict turned out to be that the striped paper was consistent with early twentieth-century styles. We're still hot on the trail of wallpaper similar to the floral and vine pattern found fifteen years ago.

Despite our wallpaper challenges, analysis of painted finishes on the doors, windows, frames, and sills shows two clear decorative campaigns. By 1855, when the Dickinson family returned to the Homestead and Emily had that "gone to Kansas" feeling, her room was trimmed in off-whites and pale yellows with a polychrome effect on the doors. Eventually, the grain-painted doors were covered with a solid glaze, but the paint scheme on frames and sills varied little until after Dickinson's death.

Forensic investigation in the bedroom also clarified the repositioning of closet, stairway, and passage doorways during Emily Dickinson's lifetime. The frugal Dickinsons and their successors re-used doors and doorframes in new locations rather than acquiring new materials. The Museum plans



Wallpaper from the 1880s.

to restore these door openings to their mid-nineteenth century placements, including returning the doorway to the attic stairs to the main hall just outside the poet's room.

Physical changes to Emily Dickinson's bedroom will be complete by her December 10 birthday and final restoration measures will occur during our winter closing. We look forward to sharing the results of our research and restoration with you anytime you're able to visit, and most certainly at the summer EDIS meeting.

Sweet hours have perished here,
This is a timid [mighty] room –
Within it's precincts hopes have played
Now fallow in the tomb. (Fr1785)



Left: A close-up of the striped wallpaper. Coral dot-and-dash stripe on beige field. Right: Dickinson Bedroom east wall, showing original 1813 door opening (right) filled in and 1855/current door opening (left)

Jane Wald, a historian by training and a polymath by necessity, is the Executive Director of the Emily Dickinson Museum. A short account of her plenary session lecture on Literary House Tourism, "Precincts of Freedom," appears in the Annual Meeting article on page 6 of this issue.

Sister Power, Continued from Page 12

– the divine intoxication that makes all the world sing the praises of God, the desire to make a complete oblation of life, and the author’s detachment which raises her verse now and then to the level of vision. But when Sister Mary James Power goes beyond this and connects poem after poem with Catholic dogmas or liturgy, when she describes the poet’s withdrawal from life as similar to the vocation of a Carmelite, and her rebellion against the cold formalism of New England life and religion as a movement toward Catholicism, she is on shaky ground. In spite of this the book is valuable. . . . [T]he approach is original and interesting and the intuition sure.

John P. Collins has contributed articles to *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, and *The Merton Journal* among others. For the past eleven years, he has written a monthly *Thomas Merton* column for the *Catholic Free Press* in the *Worcester, Massachusetts Diocese*, and he is the director of the *International Thomas Merton Society Chapter at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution, Shirley, Massachusetts*.

Note

¹The correspondence between Thomas Merton and *Sister Power* is outside the scope of this paper and interested readers can find it fully chronicled in the journal, *The Merton Seasonal*, Winter 2013.

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While some make two- and three-dimensional artworks, and others host public readings of the poems; while poets feel her influence in their own voices and scholars follow her inspiration deep into the boxes and files of archives; while some devotees follow Dickinson through a guided tour of a literary museum and some use the poems and letters as a more inward guide in their search for faith or confrontation with doubt, there are others who salute the poet through literary parody – which may not in the end be the sincerest form of flattery, but which provokes a furtive pleasure. In this issue there appear works from two parodists, regular contributor Felicia Nimue Ackerman and newcomer Justin Allard.

The Guest Selects Her Own Indulgences

Because I Could Not Purr for Dobbs

Because I could not purr for Dobbs –
He kindly purred for me –
The sofa held but just ourselves –
And true tranquility.

But then you came upon the scene –
And cried, "Enough of that!
You simply have to make a choice –
Choose me or choose the cat."

I listened to the peaceful purrs
And to the strident voice –
And so, without the slightest qualm,
I made my fateful choice –

The guest selects her own indulgences –
Then – fills a plate –
With sweets whose sheer deliciousness –
Brooks no debate –

Unmoved – she notes the celery – waiting –
Then turns away –
Unmoved – until her eyes alight on
The pastry tray –

I've known her – from an ample table –
Choose four –
Then – set the force of her attention –
On more –

Other Choices, Other Fumes

I taste a liquor never brewed,
Borne from a bathtub still –
Not all of Amherst can produce
Such potent Alcohol!

Inebriate of air – am I –
Though “Father” disapproves
I beg stern – breezes – to impair
Sobriety – reproves –

While “Father” turns out drunken Birds
Cursing at Homestead’s door –
And Butterflies – expel their “drams” –
I guzzle all the more!

Seraphim suggest Rehab –
And Saints – to bedroom run –
To chide this little Tippler
Who’s had tremendous – Fun!

Above, two poems by regular contributor Felicia Nimue Ackerman, professor of philosophy at Brown. At right, a parody by Justin Allard, a scholar and poet living in Kentucky.



Members' News

DICKINSON VALENTINE'S FEST, NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY, Highland Heights, KY, February 12, 13, and 14, 2015

Host: Robert K. Wallace, Regents Professor of English, wallacer@nku.edu

All events in Eva G. Farris Reading Room, W. Frank Steely Library, NKU, unless otherwise indicated

- Thursday, February 12, 7:30 pm. CLAIRE ILLOUZ of Chérence, France, presents her new Dickinson artist book and KATHLEEN PIERCEFIELD of Dry Ridge, Kentucky, presents her new Dickinson prints.
- February 13 and 14, 9 am to 5 pm, MARATHON READING OF EMILY DICKINSON'S POEMS.
- February 13, 7:30 pm. RECITAL OF EMILY DICKINSON SONGS BY KIMBERLY GELBWASSER, soprano, and INGRID KELLER, piano, Greaves Concert Hall, NKU. Song cycles by Aaron Copland (1951) and Jake Heggie (2014).
- February 14, 6 pm. EMILY DICKINSON TEA PARTY.
- January – May 2015, Art Exhibition "I TOOK MY POWER IN MY HAND": EMILY DICKINSON ART BY STUDENTS AT NKU. Approximately 40 works by 39 student artists dating back to 1997. Co-curators Professor Robert K. Wallace and Emma Rose Thompson, BFA Candidate in Art History. Occasions will be provided for students to discuss their work.



Photo Credit:
Karen Almond, Dallas Opera

A full color catalog of the exhibition will be available for purchase in the exhibition space as the Marathon Reading takes place. Additional information available from Professor Wallace at wallacer@nku.edu.



Jonathan Morse fell upon this undated daguerreotype of Edwards Amasa Park in the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004664035/>. Professor Park was long associated with Andover Theological Seminary, but Richard Salter Storrs (who published three of Dickinson's poems in *Drum Beat* in 1864) records that in 1836 an effort was made to name him professor of sacred rhetoric at Amherst College. Alas, "to his eyes, sunrise and sunset were nowhere else, not even at Amherst, so beautiful" as in Andover. (*Edwards Amasa Park, D.D., LL.D.*, Boston 1900, p40)

The poet saw him preach at the college in 1853 and recorded her impressions in a letter to Austin: "Oh Austin, you dont know how we all wished for you yesterday. We had such a splendid sermon from that Prof Park – I never heard anything like it, and dont expect to again, till we stand at the great white throne, and 'he reads from the book, the Lamb's book.' The students and chapel people all came, to our church, and it was very full, and still – so still, the buzzing of a fly would have boomed like a cannon. And when it was all over, and that wonderful man sat down, people stared at each other, and looked as wan and wild, as if they had seen a spirit, and wondered they had not died" (L142).

Members' News

CALL TO EDIS MEMBERS FOR SSAWW CONFERENCE

The Society for the Study of Women Writers, with whom EDIS has long been aligned, will hold its Triennial Conference November 4-8, 2015 in Philadelphia. EDIS members are invited to participate in one of two EDIS-sponsored programs relating to the conference theme, "Liminal Spaces, Hybrid Lives." Papers might address such topics as Dickinson's circumferential poetics, dramatic voices, biography, or connections with another woman writer. Please send individual proposals of no more than 250 words and brief bios to Jane Eberwein (jeberwei@oakland.edu) and Eleanor Heginbotham (heginbotham@csp.edu) no later than December 31, 2014. SSAWW at <http://ssawwnew.wordpress.com/2015-conference/ssawww-call-for-papers> offers further suggestions for the many possibilities inherent in the stated theme, information on arrangements at the Sheraton Society Hill, and contacts for individual proposals, which are also welcome.

Emily Dickinson International Society Scholar in Amherst Award, 2015

EDIS invites applications for the 2015 Scholar in Amherst Program that supports exciting new research on Dickinson. The award of \$2,000 may be used for expenses related to that research such as travel, accommodations, a rental car, or reproduction fees. Upon completion of their research, recipients will write a letter to the EDIS Board outlining what they achieved with EDIS support, and we appreciate acknowledgment in any resulting publications. We encourage recipients to consider a visit to Amherst, but residency is not a requirement. Preference will be given to persons with completed PhDs who are in the early stages of their careers. To apply for the 2014 Scholar in Amherst Award, please submit a cv, a letter of introduction (written by the applicant), a two-page project proposal including preliminary budget, and a brief bibliography, by January 15, 2015 to Paul Crumbley at paul.crumbley@usu.edu. Letters of recommendation are not accepted as part of the application packet. Applications will be acknowledged upon receipt and applicants notified of final decisions by March 1. For more information, see www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org

Emily Dickinson International Society Graduate Student Fellowship, 2015

EDIS announces a fellowship award of \$1,000 in support of graduate student scholarship on Emily Dickinson. The award may be used to fund travel to collections or conferences, to support book purchases, or for other research expenses (such as reproduction costs) necessary to the project. Preference will be given to applicants enrolled in doctoral programs and engaged in the writing of dissertations or other major projects directed toward publication. Applicants should be aware that a dissertation project need not be focused solely on Dickinson; however, a substantial part of the work should significantly engage Dickinson's work. To apply, please send a cv, a project description, the names and contact information of two references, and a dissertation prospectus or other relevant writing sample of no more than 25 pages to Paul Crumbley at paul.crumbley@usu.edu. Applications are due by January 15, 2015. Letters of recommendation are not accepted as part of the application packet. Applications will be acknowledged upon receipt and applicants notified of final decisions by March 1. For more information, see www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org

**EDIS Members are invited to endow a named award.
All it takes is a gift of \$1000 to the Society!**

Members' News

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) _____
Email _____
Please check if this is: new address ___ membership renewal ___

Annual Membership Categories:

Sustaining Member (added to joint or regular membership) _____ \$150 or more
Institutional Member _____ \$115
Contributing Member (added to joint or regular membership) _____ \$100
NEW: Joint EDIS/Dickinson Museum _____ \$110
Regular Member _____ \$60.00 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

Name, title & affiliation _____
Mailing address _____
Telephone (home) _____ (office) _____ (fax) _____
Email _____

Use additional page for further gift memberships.

Please make check or money order payable, in U.S. dollars, to EDIS, Inc., and send to:
EDIS; c/o Johns Hopkins University Press; P.O. Box 19966; Baltimore, MD 21211-0966
www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org

Undergraduate Research Award!

In 2015, the Emily Dickinson International Society is launching a prize for undergraduate research on Emily Dickinson. We seek critical essays by undergraduates from institutions of all kinds, focusing on Dickinson's poems or letters. Students at all levels are eligible to submit. Papers should be 15 pages maximum. The winning essay will be published on the EDIS website and the author will receive an award of \$250.

To submit an essay for the prize, send copies of articles as anonymous word attachments, plus a cover letter with contact information to the following address by May 1, 2015: epetrino@fairfield.edu. The essays will be distributed electronically to a panel of nationally recognized scholars for judging. All submissions will be acknowledged and receive a response within a month after the submission date.

Souls' Societies Multiply How Best to Connect Chapters, Salons, Performances to EDIS?

By Eleanor Heginbotham

Emily Dickinson's apparent eschewal of anything but "select" societies notwithstanding, many Dickinson readers find good company with each other in areas across the United States and across the globe. From the days of the first EDIS president, Margaret Freeman, the Board discussed how to encourage such groups. Over 300,000 items, many of them notices of performances, on one website testify to the potential for more. Making a conversation group or an artistic gathering into a "Chapter" has involved varying forms of relationships to EDIS itself. As the goal is "to promote, perpetuate, and advance" Dickinson studies, the Board reaches out to those not yet in this fold and, appropriate to our mutual subject, imposes few demands. The EDIS website offers advice on how to form a new "Chapter," and lists relevant emails for current groups.

Before a sweeping look at various chapters and the questions raised on the very nature of "Chapters," indulge this writer by allowing a barbaric yawp about one Chapter's link to the first-ever Dickinson marathon in the nation's capital. Dickinsonians in Washington, site of Dickinson's 1855 trip to visit her Congressman father, will offer a free all-day (December 8) "Dickinson Day" at the Library of Congress, followed by the annual Folger Birthday Party for Dickinson, featuring, this year, Rafael Campo. Of course, EDIS is not co-sponsoring the mammoth city-wide, celebrity-appearing festival, but a Board Member is active in planning it and the event will serve as a meeting time for the fledgling DC EDIS Chapter. Under the leadership of Nelly Lambert, with Judith Farr and Eleanor Heginbotham, the group has met in the city's art galleries and, once, a theater. The

Chapter plans a March event at the Phillips Gallery with Mary Jo Salter.

More commonly, chapters meet monthly for discussions of selected poems. The Amherst society, chaired by Lois Kackley, who selects the poems, is the oldest and most active Chapter; the newest, perhaps, is California's Petaluma Emily Dickinson Salon. Holly Springfield organizes Petaluma's monthly meetings around a topic: "Dickinson and Emerson," "Dickinson and Mysticism," or "Centre and Circumference," for example.

From coast to coast such groups already exist. On the west coast: Cathleen Gable and Barbara Mossberg, the city's Poet-in-Residence, meet in Pacific Grove's Library, where they convene once a month at the Little House in the Park to talk poetry and to plan a grand December Dickinson birthday celebration. In Claremont, David Jameison leads "Dickinson Conversations," and in Portland, Oregon, Ellen Hart and LeeAnn Gorthey have an active official "Chapter," the meetings of which inspired Donald Blanchard, MD, to lecture on "Emily Dickinson: Poet and Eye Patient" at Oregon Health & Science University.

Moving from the west coast are other versions of an EDIS Chapter: in San Antonio Nancy Pridgen leads a lively group, and in Saint Paul Erika Scheurer arranged a city-wide marathon reading of all the poems that brought some 200 people by the evening's last poem and was featured on the local evening television news. Back to the east coast and back to Margaret Freeman: she organizes and feeds a group that gathers at her own splendid Myrifiel, in Heath, Massachusetts, and the Emily Dickinson Museum sponsors a discussion group that meets monthly at the

Museum itself which, while not, of course, a chapter, offers parallel society.

Simply knowing that groups like this are forming in many communities – that composers like Hollis Thoms are writing original musical settings for Washington readers, that performers like Barbara Dana continue to interpret "The Belle" in New York, and Candace Ridington and Mimi Zannino perform their own shows in the Maryland D.C. suburbs, and many others – is cause for joy that, in spite of her penchant for solitude, Dickinson's letter has indeed gone around the world. As most members know – and deeply respect – the largest and oldest Dickinson gathering, one that predates EDIS, is that in Japan; in fact, "The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan" produces its own bi-lingual Newsletter and they – like groups in Innsbruck, Trondheim, and Hawaii – hosted memorable conferences, as will French Dickinsonians in 2016.

With this summary of only a few existing groups, we elicit news on other events that might become seeds for new chapters. We "light but lamps," hoping for mutual benefit between the parent group that plans meetings in Amherst and around the world and those who meet in smaller bands in homes, libraries, theaters, and gardens. EDIS will list key email contacts for such groups; in turn, the leader of the group can share EDIS publications and advance news of major events, including major meetings such as that in Dickinson's home town, where conversations with others who share respect for the "letter to the world" can visit and learn from each other. For further information contact Eleanor Heginbotham at heginbotham@csp.edu.

Parley's Magazine in the Edward Dickinson Household

By Krans Bloemaand

To succeed as a modern-day collector of Emily Dickinson material one must “dwell in possibility.” The art of collecting in general is, at times, a blend of frustration and exhilaration. A good example of collector’s bliss came my way with an opportunity to acquire two small bound volumes of a children’s magazine that Emily and her siblings had direct access

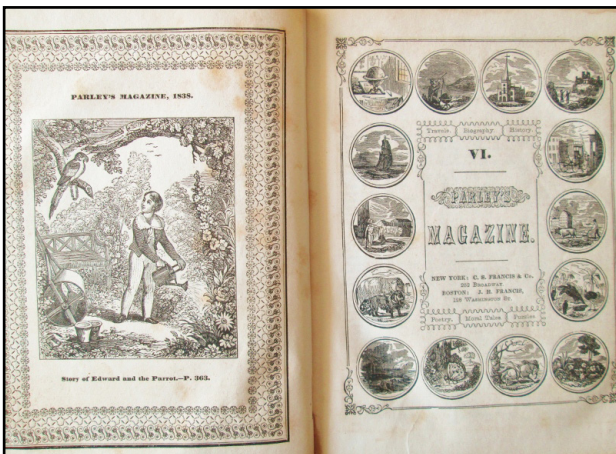
to, thanks to Edward Dickinson’s acumen and largess in subscribing—at the rate of \$1.00 per year, plus postage – to *Parley’s Magazine* in February, 1838. In his letter home on the 16th of that month informing his wife of the subscription, Edward stated in a note directed to his children that they would find the magazine’s stories “interesting.” His desire was that

they would be able to recite to him some of the stories that they had read upon his return from Boston. In other words, he probably hoped that they would read with a purpose, not simply read for the sake of reading. (see pp.44-5 of V.1 of *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*, by Jay Leyda.) Perhaps his deeper motive pivoted on his fears of illness if the children attended school in the middle of winter. With *Parley’s Magazine* on hand, perhaps, he might have thought, the children could indulge in some self-education in the safety and comfort of their home.

own approach to child rearing: obey your parents, don’t lie, cheat, or steal, be industrious, etc. It’s as if Edward and Sam Goodrich were wagging their fingers in unison. Note that by today’s standards, the reading level of the magazine was demanding. Using a Fry Graph applied, for instance, to several articles and stories selected at random, the typical reading level stood between our current 10th and 11th grades.

The impact of *Parley’s Magazine* on Emily’s budding imagination, and her pre-school reading in general, would be difficult if not impossible to ascertain. The fact, though, that she mentioned “Peter Parley” in two early poems (Fr2, 1852 and Fr164, 1860) suggests that the magazine did leave some faint, residual impressions. Fainter still is the possibility that a story titled “The Dog: New Anecdotes of the Dog” that appeared in the September, 1838 issue of *Parley’s* registered somewhere in the child Emily’s mind. The article gave ample examples of heroic deeds performed by the Newfoundland breed. One such Newfoundland, named “Carlo,” tracked down and captured a thief who had purloined a sleigh’s seat cushion (see *Parley’s Magazine*, September, 1838, pp. 280-6). The chord of memory between 1838 and 1850 (the year Emily first mentions Carlo in writing) is a fairly long one, but it is tantalizing to speculate, nonetheless, on the origin of the name of Emily’s own beloved “shaggy ally.”

Note: For further study of Parley’s Magazine and nineteenth-century children’s periodicals in general, consult www.merrycoz.org. Other useful references are American Writers for Children Before 1900, edited by Glenn E. Estes (Gale Research Company, ©1985) and Forgotten Books of the American Nursery: A History of the Development of the American Story-Book, by Rosalie V. Halsey (Charles E. Goodspeed & Co., 1911)



Title page and frontis illustration for volume VI of *Parley’s Magazine*, 1838



Illustration for an article titled “A Drop of Water Magnified,” *Parley’s Magazine*, August 1838

Parley’s Magazine, the brainchild of author and editor of children’s books Samuel Griswold Goodrich (“Peter Parley”), was the second of two known periodicals that Edward subscribed to specifically for his young children. The first was titled *The Sabbath School Visitor*, which he subscribed to the previous February. Also imbued with a high moral tone, *Parley’s Magazine* consisted largely of fact-based articles and stories, such as an 1839 non-fiction piece titled “Basaltic Rocks at Mount Holyoke, Mass.” It also included puzzles, music, drawing exercises, and poetry. The bulk of the material published consisted of reprints of articles for children that first appeared in England. The magazine’s patriarchal tone perhaps mirrored Edward’s

Work continues on the restoration of Emily Dickinson's bedroom. At the time of publication, visitors cannot yet enter the room, but they can "crouch within the door" to see the progress as the room returns as close as possible to how it looked when Dickinson lived there.



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