

# Bulletin

Volume 28, Number 1

May/June 2016

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



Paris could not lay the fold

**International Conference 2016**

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*France was less keen to adopt Dickinson than some other countries, perhaps because a national penchant for abstraction, for the uncanny, for deep connections among a range of symbolic images gave readers an instinctive recognition that her arrival among them would be important. This issue of the Bulletin, in anticipation of the upcoming EDIS conference in Paris, includes three French responses to Dickinson by a writer of fiction, a critic, and a painter. The first is a short dream-fantasy, a riff on the poet's "It was not Death" (Fr355), by Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau. In the next article, "From One Reading to Another," by Marjorie Micucci, a French scholar interprets images created by New York visual artist Roni Horn, adaptations and interpretations of poems by Dickinson. In the third, in the centerfold of this issue, artist Claire Illouz discusses her own visualizations of Dickinson in Art Books. All of these reflections explore Dickinson in a tone, a quality of thought and expression, quite different from what is usually heard in the Anglophone world. The Bulletin is grateful to the three authors for their contributions.*

*Finally, special thanks are due to Antoine Cazé, of the University of Paris VII, who coordinated (and in one case translated) the three French pieces, all while organizing this summer's international conference.*

*Front Cover: L'Escalier de l'Opéra Garnier, Louis Bérour, 1877*

*Back Cover: Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, Neil Soderstrom, 2013*

*The Assistant Editor for this issue was Elle Enander*

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## Experimental Dickinson

### EDIS 2016 International Conference, June 24-26, Paris, France

Experience is the Angled Road  
Preferred against the Mind  
By – Paradox – the Mind itself – (Fr899)

Take an Angled Road to join the next EDIS International Conference, to be held next month in Paris! There, in the beautiful setting of the Cité Internationale Universitaire, over 100 scholars from all over the world will gather to look, from all angles, at one of Dickinson's most striking poetic features – her partiality for the experimental.

Dickinson couched her often radical ideas in compressed and highly demanding short lyrical forms, and in doing so placed a premium on experimenting with (in) language, not only breaking new ground, or inventing new forms, but willfully rendering the determinants of her art uncertain, or “precarious.” In her unusual views on broad topics – Nature, life and death, God, love – and in her daring use of speech figures, imagery, and metrics, Dickinson's experimentations with language are repeatedly on display as she boldly and tirelessly explored “the ‘Undiscovered Continent,’” “the Mind.”

Gathered thematically in 23 panels, papers will explore the varied dimensions of this experimentalism: flirting with philosophical issues, experimenting with time, probing the infinite possibilities of manuscript and correspondence, diving into the depths of landscapes, opening up to foreign spaces and imagination, or taking “The Angled Road to Literary Fame,” just to give a sample.

On Friday afternoon, French Dickinson scholar Christine Savinel will deliver a keynote lecture on “Dickinson's ‘Instincts for Dance,’ or the Gesture Towards Unlikeness.” On Sunday, Claire Malroux, one of the most prominent translators of Dickinson into French, will close the conference in a dialogue with French composer Edith Canat de Chizy, who has created several scores, both vocal and instrumental, inspired by Dickinson's poetry: together, they will discuss the issue of “Translations,” in all senses of the word.

A rich program of artistic events will allow participants to witness how Dickinson's oeuvre can stimulate creativity and artistic experimentation today. On Friday evening, the Students' Drama



Christine Savinel

Workshop of the Department of English and American Studies at Université Paris Diderot will give an original performance based on a selection of poems. Under the guidance of Sophie Vasset, this group of students has worked since last fall to prepare this show just for EDIS! On Saturday afternoon, two sessions will feature a reading of their respective poetry by Tom Gardner and Katherine Hazzard; the performance of “A Dickinson Bestiary: A Choreograph,” by Elisabeth Frost, Cynthia Hogue, and Dianne Kornberg; and the music workshop-cum-performance led by pianist Nicole Panizza, with fellow musicians Sally Bayley, Suzie Hanna, and Hannah Sanders, who will perform Panizza's “In Other Motes, In Other Myths.” That same evening, the world-acclaimed soprano Linda Mabbs, who teaches voice at the University of Maryland, will grace the conference with a recital of melodies, “The Poet & the Muse: Dickinson in Song.” From over 1,600 songs in her personal library, she has selected for us settings by various composers of the same poems, such as “Will there really be a morning” or “Heart we will forget him,” and a few others.

Throughout the conference, participants will have the possibility to view American artist Clark Lunberry's window installation of transparent words inspired by Dickinson's “I heard a fly buzz” (see Lunberry's article about his work in the Fall 2015 issue of the *Bulletin*), and visit French painter Isabel Michel's exhibition of 21 original gouaches for 21 Dickinson poems. The artwork will be on display at the Fondation des Etats-Unis, one of the main venues for the conference. In a daring and truly experimental addition, Clark's “writing on air” piece will be echoed by a “writing on water” installation on the pond of the Parc Montsouris, a public park just opposite the Cité Internationale – thus allowing Dickinson to be actually “in town”!

On Sunday, the EDIS Members' Meeting will be followed by the traditional “Dickinson Scholarship Circle” led by Eleanor Heginbotham. After the final keynote, participants who want to will have the opportunity to take a guided tour of the Cité Internationale, with its many architectural buildings and its park (on registration).

Finally, as we publish this, we are still hoping to be able to organize a special showing of Terence Davies' film, *A Quiet Passion*, as the final event of the Paris Conference. “Paris could not lay the fold,” Dickinson averred (Fr96); this time, it could well make the cut!

Paris sera toujours Paris! While in the French capital, you will have the opportunity to take part in the vibrant cultural life and experience the no less vibrant cuisine. A long-standing friend of EDIS, LeeAnn Gorthey is also a dedicated Francophile: she has proposed to share her Paris Travel Tips with conference participants, so check her two blogs before leaving: [leeannshere@blogspot.com](mailto:leeannshere@blogspot.com) and [leeannsreturn@blogspot.com](mailto:leeannsreturn@blogspot.com). But here is a tip: at the time of the conference, Paris will be in the middle of hosting the Euro 2016 Football Cup, so be prepared for crowds wherever you go!

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

Series Editor, Marianne Noble

## Teaching Emily Dickinson Remotely: The Endangered Place of Poetry

By Marta Werner

In 2014, after sixteen years of teaching at D'Youville, a small Catholic college in Buffalo, NY, I moved from the classroom to on-line classes. At first, the conditions struck me as untenable. I had always delighted in the vitality of the classroom and imagined that the successes – to say nothing of the pleasures – of teaching and learning depended upon the near simultaneity of exchanges in a common space and time. What could it mean to teach or learn “asynchronously”? How would I know my students, and how would they know me, and one another, if we never met or even heard the sounds of our different voices? And who would register for a class on 19th-century American literature taught entirely online? In the last two decades, the number of students majoring in English at the College had first steadily, then radically declined as unstable economic conditions drove so many young people to choose fields with allegedly clearer prospects of employment. Would the course run at all?

“A great Hope fell” (Fr1187)

To my surprise, students did sign up, and somehow we made it through the term. The great majority of them even passed the class with solid grades. Yet when it was all over, I felt that I had perhaps failed them. First, and unaccountably, I had neglected to apply in my teaching what has been a recurring theme in my scholarship, the relationship between medium and message. I had simply transferred the materials and methods of the land-based class to the online class. Second, I had the sense that I had deprived my students of what they needed most from poetry: an intuition that it might still speak to their own condition, or at least still sound the questions of our time. In their brief personal testimonies posted at the opening of the semester, many had expressed a hope that the lyric might give evidence

of the persistence of an inner life – however haunted and intermittently accessible such a life inevitably is – and that they might be the secret sharers in the lyric speaker's *agon*. As I reviewed the pages of their work at the end of the term, I came face to face with a blank competency that seemed to be proof that their hope had not been met. They knew something of Dickinson's grammar, something of her century, and even something of her significance, but they had become more rote interpreters of the works than fellow travellers. Their stakes in poetry barely registered.

We do not often speak of the sadness of teaching, of teaching as dolor. But I felt it acutely then, and the feeling stayed with me. And so in the fall of 2015, when I had the chance to teach the course again, I knew I had to reimagine it and to wonder how teaching Dickinson online might speak to something in her experience even as it reaches out to something in ours.

My new students came from unlikely places, and I take a moment to identify them here because they are too often among the forgotten or disregarded. Many strayed in from distant programs – IT, Business, Nursing – carrying with them a barely articulate desire for respite from the endless stream of quantitative data they encountered in their required courses. Some, especially the Sisters who had been sent to attend the College by far-flung orders in Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Vietnam, and elsewhere, registered imagining that the course would help them fulfill their directive to bring a knowledge of English back to their home countries. A few chose the class because a physical or emotional disability – e.g., a deficit in hearing, an anxiety disorder – made an online class appealing. One student, serving in the military in an unidentified country in the Middle East, was taking the class to forget for a few moments the horror of war. And at least



one student came from the secret space of the “undocumented,” perhaps because the online format provided continued cover. There was not an English major among them.

What did we – a small band of essentially solitary, disparate, and scattered readers sending out signals to one another at different hours of the days and nights of the 21st century – have to discover in Dickinson's writings? And could our remoteness – from poetry, from each other, from ourselves – give us an unexpected entryway into the remoteness (distance, estrangement, isolation, vastness) revealed in some of Dickinson's most powerful works? How might our difficulty contacting her, a hermeneutic difficulty of the first order, invite a larger meditation on the problem of accessing other minds, or, more broadly, on the challenges of communication in the modern world? And how might we begin to ground an ethics based on our remote connectedness?

“A Vastness, as a Neighbor, came –” (Fr1104)

It was late November, the light going down, when we at last turned to Dickinson. In the anthropocene, the weather conditions are more extreme than any we have ever known: From Bloomington to Buffalo, the world was snow- and ice-bound. In winter's acoustic zone, the stilling of the ambient noise of spring and summer – of birdsong (“Of numerous Humming Birds at once” [Fr621]), the

whirr of crickets (“The Crickets sang / And set the Sun” [Fr1104]), the “reeling” bees (“So drunken reel her Bees –” [Fr82]) – clears a space for the uncanny sounds of the geophany to come forward. Above the frozen ground, the susurrations of the winds among the bare branches of the trees are heard again; below it, the quiet shifting of the earth's tectonic places and the deeper reverberations of gravity waves traveling along old fault lines are almost audible. Here in the cold, newly aware of what Wallace Stevens named the “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is,”<sup>1</sup> we almost seem to hear a memory of the sound of the world before our appearance on it, or a premonition of the sound of the same world following our inevitable yet unimaginable vanishing.

Might this also be a fortunate time-space in which to listen to poetry again – or for a first time? Might what remains most piercing in the lyric persevere at the very horizon of “the world without us”? And in the vastness of this new scale, might the lyric vibrate in a new frequency, summoning an amplified listening to the smallest things?

“As if some little Arctic flower  
Opon the polar hem –  
Went wandering down the Latitudes” (Fr177)

It was not information about Dickinson or even poetry my students thirsted after, not the data that allegedly increases understanding by decreasing uncertainty. Rather, they seemed to seek in poetry a way to bring wonder into focus without reducing its scope or abridging the strangeness it stirred within them. In the end, what they seemed to ask of poetry was that it divest them of the *arche* on which they had formerly and securely grounded their world by revealing another world of origins – an earth, perhaps – whose permanence is not more certain than its vulnerability, whose beauty is linked to its risk. This, then, must be our point of departure.

“I did not deem that Planetary forces annulled  
– but suffered an Exchange of Territory, or  
World –” (L280)

The words “World” and “Earth,” along with their variants, occur more than three hundred times in Dickinson's extant poems and letters. In some cases, they appear as synonyms; yet in many others, there is a tension, even a struggle, between them: “World” seems to signify the sphere of the universal – of stars, planets, and solar systems – that we experience as exile, space without place, free fall into anonymous dispersion; “Earth” appears as the proper name of the sphere of our singular dwelling place, the elemental ark that shelters us from the infinite and that is in turn entrusted to us that we might cultivate and protect it for as long as we can. By helping us to measure the distance between “World” and “Earth,” Dickinson's work may illuminate the stakes involved in safeguarding our terrestrial paradise, while enabling us to move incrementally closer to one another.

With the concordances as my guides, I track the “World(s)” through Dickinson's poems and letters and offer the following small constellation to my students: “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” (Fr340), “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers –” (Fr124B), “I rose – because He sank –” (Fr454), “When I hoped, I recollect” (Fr493), “The Missing All, prevented Me” (Fr995B), “It was a quiet Way –” (Fr573), “These Strangers, in a foreign World” (Fr1432), and “I have no life to live” (Fr1432) as well as letters to Thomas Higginson (L280, L554), James Clark (L804), and Benjamin Kimball (L1003).

Initially I ask them to explore the poems and letters alone – each one for him- or herself – and to tell me what they see and hear deep down in these works where there is so much strangeness and so much to conjecture. The first reports they send back resemble expedition notes to a new world composed of strange continents, oceans, mountains, and zones of midnight. Their notes, often telegraphic, recount their sense of a poem's or letter's proximity to the invisible as well as their uncertainty about directions and boundaries in Dickinson's works. Almost all my disparate listeners recount the inhuman scale of those “Worlds” motions – “Worlds scoop their Arcs – / And Firmaments – row –” (Fr124C) – and

their enormous stillness: “Worlds were lying out to Sun –” (Fr493). And many reports document a very personal fear of falling – “And hit a World, at every plunge, / And Finished knowing – then –” (Fr340) – or of engulfment.

In *Sounds From Dangerous Places*<sup>2</sup>, as well as in many of his other works, the avant-garde musician Peter Cusack composes by collecting sounds from sites located at the very ends of human habitation. In “Dawn Chorus, Chernobyl Town,”<sup>3</sup> for example, he records birdsong of such intensity that the metallic sounds of Geiger counters measuring levels of radioactivity in the “exclusion zone” are momentarily drowned out, along with their warnings. In “Baikal Ice Flow,”<sup>4</sup> he captures the delicate, unearthly sounds of ice particles breaking up during the spring thaw in the deepest and oldest lake on the planet. Poetry – Dickinson reminds us – is also a dangerous place. Like the eerie beauty of Cusack's work that seems connected to the remoteness of the sites of his “soundings,” the beauty of Dickinson's writings comes partly from their evocation of an equally elemental space. These are poems – or letters – of witness, yet the Witness that speaks in them is no first-person “I” or a collective “We” but a witness from the realm of the nonhuman: “A something overtakes the mind – we do not hear it coming” (Letters, Prose Fragment 119).

“The Calyx is the Earth -” (Fr1261)

Although Dickinson did not know a post-Apollo Mission world, many of the poems we began with seem to look back at the planet from light years away. In reading them, we must often cross abysses before reaching firm ground again. Yet like the now iconic photographs known as *Earthrise* and *Blue Marble*, both taken from outside our planet's atmosphere, Dickinson's poems evoke a longing for the earth, a home-sickness for our terrestrial existence. Only by first going out beyond the limits of gravity or the grounding of subjectivity can we once again feel the pull of the habitable earth. Only by seeing our sole home from the distance or deep space of its loss can we wake again to the beauty of time



and weather. In those moments of unexpected return we wonder, “Which Earth are we in?” (L750). For Dickinson, the sense of the earth as a “Calyx,” the whorl that encloses the petals of a fragile flower, and forms a protective layer around the flower in bud, is accompanied by an exact imagination of the contingency, vulnerability, and beauty of our existence upon it. Around 1870 Dickinson wrote, “Of Strangers is the Earth the Inn” (Fr1190). Among the definitions for “Stranger” in Noah Webster’s 1828 *Dictionary of the American Language* we find listed “foreigner,” “one unknown,” and “one unacquainted.” In the Bible, the failure to welcome a “Stranger” carries a high penalty. From the beginning, the earth is seen as an asylum for outsiders, a way station for pilgrims and explorers.

“...and what indeed is Earth but a Nest, from whose rim we are all falling?” (L619)

The next constellation of poems and writings we consider re-orient us to the coordinates of the earth as refuge: “As if some little Arctic flower” (Fr177), “It bloomed and dropt, a Single Noon –” (Fr843), “The Crickets sang” (Fr1104), “The Sun went down – no Man looked on –” (Fr1109), “The Wind took up the Northern Things” (Fr1152), “Somewhere upon the general Earth” (Fr1226), “High from the earth I heard a bird” (Fr1778), “Not knowing when the Dawn will come” (Fr1647B), “In many and reportless places” (Fr1404), and “As it takes but a moment of imagination to place us anywhere” (Letters, Prose Fragment 66).

At first, these poems may not seem all that different from those we have just left behind. Here again, the speaker appears to be alone with the elements, the tilted, rotating earth, the sun falling below the horizon to mark the advent of night, then rising again to “shatter” us “with Dawn!” (Fr14B). Yet the speaker who reports, “High from the earth I heard a bird” (Fr1778) is not truly alone. A stranger herself, she nonetheless enjoys a relation of proximity, a slant nearness to the beings and things – “strange, bright crowds of flowers –” (Fr177), “Bees –

by the furlong –” (Fr266), the “firmamental seas –” (Fr266), the “Mountains” that “grow unnoticed –” (Fr768), “the Stones a’chase –” (Fr407) – with whom she cohabits the planet. “The Earth has many keys –” (Fr895) Dickinson wrote in a late poem that makes audible the vibrant biodiversity of our only dwelling place, the earth as primeval ark whose plenitude is manifest in the saturation of its phenomena and in generative networks not exclusively associated with human intentionality or agency: “Clogged only with Music, like the Wheels of Birds” (*Gorgeous Nothings* A 821). “In many and reportless places,” Dickinson writes, “We feel a Joy –” (Fr1404). The Earth is one of those places. Poetry is another. In both instances, “reportlessness” is proof not of emptiness – worldlessness – but of a sentient fullness that defies expression in the ordinary language of prose. This time, the reports my students post resemble a set of pitches or dynamic maps sent back from a creation whose coordinates remain in flux.

“Of Bliss the Codes are Few –” (Fr1617n)

There are those rare, incandescent moments when a poem lies open and bare to us and seems to propose that the work of art is not subject to historical contingency. In these moments, we run the risk of forgetting how such works necessarily reach us: as strangers from a once living time and place that – despite our best labors – we cannot ever fully recover or recreate. While the poem on the printed page disguises its condition as estranged and vulnerable, the poem in its manuscript body often reveals it. For our final encounter with Dickinson, we look at digital images of her manuscripts, so many of which are now freely available online. We speak of the iconic dimension of these documents, of the materials she composed on – from pristine sheets of embossed or

gilt-edged stationery to remnants of wrapping paper and discarded envelopes – and of their susceptibility to deterioration. Archaeologists, whose greatest burden is their awareness of the almost infinite depths of our losses across time, estimate that at least ninety-five percent of all the artwork ever created has vanished or been destroyed.<sup>5</sup> We think about the unlikely odds that Emily Dickinson’s work survives for us to read on an Earth that has already been spinning around the sun for 4.54 billion years.

We think about the equally improbable odds that this work will outlast the end of the human race and have a chance at eternity. We think about

ourselves reading – out there, alone, on a line of poetry. In these thoughts sparks the singular poignancy to reading her poems in a brief November that links us.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stevens, “The Snow Man.” In *Harnonium*. New York: Knopf, 1923.

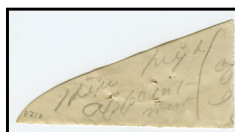
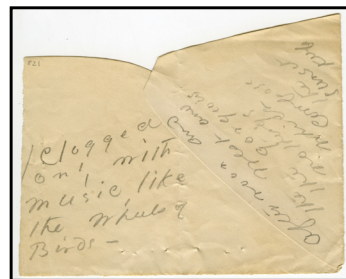
<sup>2</sup> Peter Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*. London: Recommended Records, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Cusack’s “Dawn Chorus, Chernobyl Town” is a 4.45 minute track on *Sounds from Dangerous Places*.

<sup>4</sup> Cusack’s “Baikal Ice Flo Split 1” is a 3.38 minute track on *Baikal Ice* (London: Recommended Records, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2007), p. 318.

Recently elected to the EDIS Board, Marta Werner has long reflected on places where the material meets the immaterial. She is the author of *Emily Dickinson’s Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Surfaces of Writing* (1996), *Radical Scatters: An Electronic Archive of Emily Dickinson’s Late Fragments*, and *The Gorgeous Nothings, Emily Dickinson’s Envelope Writings* (2013).



Marta Werner’s images of “Clogged only with Music,” reproduced from Amherst College Archives

Series Editor, Diana Wagner

## The Gardens of Judith Farr: Learning Dickinson’s Practicality

Judith Farr is a renowned scholar, teacher, and author. Well-known in *Dickinson Circles* for *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (1992), *I Never Came to You in White* (1996) and *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* (2004), she is Professor Emerita of English at Georgetown University. Her scholarly pursuits have ranged from Dickinson to Elinor Wylie to D.H. Lawrence. An accomplished poet herself, she is a sought-after speaker in the Washington, D.C. area.

Q. How did you first meet Emily Dickinson?

It seems almost as though the whole course of my life might be summed up as “Before Emily Dickinson” and “After.” I first “met” her – perfect conception – when I was about thirteen. My parents really lived for the Arts. My father was a symphony musician and recording artist; my mother was a passionate reader. I wanted to write poetry and Mother encouraged me. I remember her sitting on the porch of our summer home in Woodstock, New York, a volume of Dickinson’s poems on her lap. My father was rehearsing sections of the Mozart Bassoon Concerto in the fields below and Mother suddenly said, “Would you like to hear something beautiful?” She then read Emily’s “I’ll tell you how the Sun rose – .” And she said something like “this is another kind of music.”

I could not get over the line “The Hills untied their Bonnets” because it completely puzzled me – “bonnets”! – and I was crazy about it! I began to think about “Emily” all the time, mixing her and Mozart up together in my mind, and begged my parents to take me up to Amherst to see the Dickinson house. We went there on my birthday and I put flowers on Emily’s grave. Such a very long time ago!



Photo Credit: Richard Basch Studios

“Dickinson’s poem describes the killing of her flowers, an event that always seemed to her like murder.” Judith Farr on Fragment 558.

Q. In *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson*, you say that Dickinson’s garden was in part a studio, “in which artistic as well as practical decisions were made.” What are some of the practical decisions Dickinson made there?

First, she would have had to make the (practical) choice of which plants and flowers she wanted to grow. I find it fascinating that, as a most original poet, she was also unusual in her selections for both her garden and her conservatory. She described the outdoor garden as “my Puritan garden,” I think because in the two acres she developed she included woodland plants and old-fashioned perennials that were commonplace in New England. But she also grew lemon verbena, sweet clover and “Star of Bethlehem,” which few people could raise.

Q. So her flower choices were not very practical?

Oh yes, many were eminently practical, hardy and easy to grow: for example, the daisy (Samuel Bowles gave her the nickname “Daisy”) or heliotrope or lilac. But she also attempted temperamental flowers like the *Daphne odora* in the conservatory or the jasmine, beloved for its perfume. It was said that Miss Emily could grow almost anything. She decided to grow lemon verbena, which everyone knew could not be grown in New England!

She was ahead of her time. She was very clever in knowing how to suppress diseases, which was very surprising to peo-

## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

ple because they didn't have much knowledge of how to deal with illness in plants. She even knew how to dead-head flowers and strip them, for example, things we do now. Some have remarked that she did not grow orchids, and orchids were the delight of every Victorian woman, yet curiously she did not grow them.

Q. Following on this idea of practicality, what is the practical use of a garden for us today?

I am not the best qualified person to answer this question because I am by no means an authority on homeopathic medicines. But of course the practical would include seeds, blossoms, and stems that yield medical remedies. If lifting the spirits or training the eye aesthetically may be considered "practical uses," then gardens figure indeed.

I have just been reading about the Poet's Jasmine that Emily grew for 25 years in the conservatory, only to discover that the oil of the jasmine is used in dermatology as an anti-inflammatory agent, that it was employed in China as an anti-viral medicine and that most importantly it has long had a reputation as an aphrodisiac. I do not know if Dickinson knew the latter but apparently it appears in the *Decameron*. Too bad I didn't know. She wrote of the jasmine to Bowles' son on the eve, I believe, of his wedding, saying it had been his father's gift to her. Was she being naughty, I wonder.

But then she had to make practical decisions about the placement – which flowers she would choose and where they were placed. Other practical choices would have included how to set the garden out – in rows or rifts? In circles or other geo-

metric patterns? We do not know just how she arranged the outdoor garden, probably very simply like a "cottage garden," which was supposed to be exuberant, romantic, vines tumbling over an arbor, tulips in rows (as one of her poems says). She had great runs of daffodils and great rows of roses. The flowers by their very qualities and habits suggested virtues and vices to her.

Q. Do you think her garden was a spiritual workshop?

Oh, the spirit, no doubt about that.

"I trust your garden was willing to die. I do not think that mine was – it perished with beautiful reluctance." ED to Katie Sweetser (L668, 1880)

Q. What impact do you think the Conservatory restoration will have on Dickinson scholarship and enthusiasm?

Emily's conservatory – its contents & aura – is, I believe, very important. That she chose to grow Eastern flowers & plants there reflects her considerable knowledge of Darwin's theories, of Von Humboldt's *Kosmos* and, as my own scholarship has taught me, her fondness for the Hudson River paintings of Cole and Church, rich in Eastern subject matter and imagery.

One of her major symbols especially in the love poems is "Eden," which supposedly had its origin in South America. The Conservatory held flowers that had considerable fragrance. She sometimes associated poetic meter with perfume and poetry with exoticism. The Restoration

will draw people closer to an aspect of her nature that was supremely important and yet is sometimes inadequately noted: a respect for passion and the exotic. Her Conservatory she spoke of as "the little garden within" and there she was quite unique in growing not only "exotics" like the gardenia or the jasmine (Poet's Jasmine!) but by attempting to force bulbs there and to include humble flowers like daisies or violets, usually associated with the outdoors. The Conservatory had glass shelving, the plants being arranged according to height and requirements for air, light and temperature.

I always think the conservatory was attuned to her deepest heart. She went there to write often.

Q. If there is one big thing you want people to know about Dickinson, what is it?

So many people have said, was she crazy, was she really mad? Was she a gifted insane person? When I was teaching, the Chairman of the English Department at my university once asked me "How do you deal with Dickinson's madness?" I have occasionally been horrified to find that Dickinson's partial seclusion, and/or her preference for white dresses combined with various legends associated with her have made our greatest American poet appear to some people mad, rather than the genius she was. I would like people to know that her poems were written by a woman of extraordinary human sympathies, wisdom, affection for others and imagination; that she chose a quiet life suited to the creation of her art but that it was not a limited life of aversion and selfishness.

"For Dickinson...a garden was a refuge, a sanctuary, and a studio of sorts in which artistic as well as practical decisions were made."  
Judith Farr

## The Emily Dickinson Line

By Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau

... not Death, for I stood up ...

If it's not death, then what is it?

An empty Paris subway station, alone on the deserted platform, in the glare of the crude neon lights, the black tunnel stretching left and right, carrying wafts of the subway smell – metallic and humid, like warm rust chafed by the endless passage of wheels on rails, blended with the smell of continuous crowds, leather, fabric, hair, the overwhelming fruity-flowery detergent that tries to cover the underlying stench of urine and sweat.

The blue plate where the name should be is blank, a nameless station, a non-place, made for transit and she can't move.

... when everything that ticked – has stopped ...

... and space stares – all around ...

The lines run through her mind like distant echoes, almost inaudible. All is still, even her breathing feels constricted, suspended, like breathing with earplugs. She closes her arms around herself, not to get warm or stop herself from shivering, but rather in a gesture to check the very materiality of her body, which somehow seems unreal to her, light and stultified, like a lead feather swept by the subway drafts.

A minute ago she was still on the train, along with a multitude of other passengers, patiently jolted along, clutching the metal bar in the middle. Then she saw the cat: a beautiful fiery tabby with Abyssinian eyes peering into hers in a tight eyelock. Wonderful smiling eyes, inviting her, beckoning to her. No one seemed to be

paying attention to the cat but she, being absorbed in the routine commute tasks of texting, checking e-mail, playing some luridly colorful candy game on their phones, a few of them reading some daily free newspaper distributed at the entrance of the subway, others engrossed in a book – the usual subway portable library, some romance novels involving young maidens in the throes of passion with a twisted tormented lover, some thrillers, spy-stories, self-help books encouraging you to free your secret inner self, develop your hidden potential or find happiness in the little things, the latest much-talked-about Despenes or Houellebecq, the odd classic (Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Camus), the homework assignment of a high school senior or an undergrad. The cat and she were looking at each other across the subway crowd, in a sort of silent communication. Suddenly the doors opened, the cat swooshed out, and in an instant, without thinking, before the buzzing signaling the imminent closure of the automatic doors could even be heard, she followed.

And now there she was, transfixed on the platform; it took her a minute or two to realize she was completely, utterly alone, as if no one had been in this station for ages, and would not be coming anytime soon. The cat, of course, had vanished.

Not a soul, not a train in sight, not a noise in sound, but the dripping from above of a little limestone stalactite, a single drop at slow intervals. The white tiles behind her ooze sulfurous fever ... on my Flesh... I felt Siroccos...crawl... a warm draft of wind, followed by a cooler one. Goosebumps. The hairs on her arms and at the back of her neck stir, she turns her head, begins to look for a path the cat might have

followed, starts for the white-tiled corridor behind her. Her soundless steps echo in the labyrinthine catacomb corridor, she treads on hard-earth, the broken concrete appears in patches on its surface ... like Chaos ... Stopless ... Cool ... The air is moist with the smell of cold clay and crumbled tiles, a mineral odor of destruction. Old skulls and bone shavings are lying about, amid the fragments of concrete, the earth and the ground tiles. She is groping her way, letting her hands linger at times on the cool walls, looking for a glimpse of the cat's tail, a fragment of whisker. Walking feels unreal, like walking in a thick foam of bath bubbles or in a deep fog, breathing in liquid air, hot and clammy at the same time, waiting for the bubbles to burst and disperse, for reality – whatever that is – to sink in. She sees the tip of one of the cat's ears, closes her eyes, hoping that when she reopens them the cat will have fully materialized before her, that she will scoop it up in her arms, feel the warm, purring fur, the soft whiskers on her cheek, and that cuddling the animal, she will feel real again, her own body rematerializing at its contact.

When she reopens her eyes she is back in the train, with the crowd around her, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* in one hand, the other hand on the metal bar. She closes her eyes against the light of the overhead neon lights, the multicolored stripes of the seats. The cat appears, the cat escapes, she follows. The straying begins.

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## From One Reading to Another: What Has Emily Dickinson Made Me Experience...

By Marjorie Micucci  
Translated by Antoine Cazé

... and also, of what has the poet of Amherst been the name? The name of a reading, by chance and by surprise, then “by degree.” Of various translations. From the pages of a bound collection of selected poems to the smooth silky grey tones of an aluminum beam inlaid with black typed letters made of hard plastic. From one name to another – from Dickinson, the poet, to Roni Horn, the contemporary visual artist. From a static and unquiet reading, in French – “*Le corps a une gravité simple / Que je ne comprends pas!*” (c. 1858)<sup>1</sup> – to a no less unquiet but unstable and mobile reading, in the delineated shapes of English words set in capital letters – “TO MAKE A PRAIRIE IT TAKES A CLOVER AND ONE BEE” (Roni Horn, *Key and Cue N°1755*, 1994). From one translation to another, one language to another, one form to another, for this same object – a Dickinson poem. From the space and material surface of the book to the space and surfaces provided by white walls in an exhibition hall. From one “room” to another, both steeped in the daily intimate solitude of an artwork behind closed doors, and yet open, linked to the present moment of the tangible world, peering into the outside – places and spaces of vision paying attention to the rustling and the events and the hidden geometries of the physical world.

Maybe Emily Dickinson was for a long time the name of her French translators? Maybe Emily Dickinson is and will always be – due to the circumstance of a PhD dissertation I am writing<sup>2</sup> – the name of Roni Horn? This kind of loss, or dispossession, should be acknowledged, just as the imperceptible disappearance of the original discovery should be accepted, the fading out of the initial experience, of the dazzlingly

obvious intimacy. Through these successive filters, and at the end of the day, I might say that Emily Dickinson has been the experience of a double reading – the variable one of her poems in translation, and the one of their Hornian doubles projected beyond the limits of literature. It has also been the experience of a subject taking the form of a double “I,” a reader becoming viewer, or the other way around, for whom the poem becomes a visit, an image, a view – in other words, this “viewer-reader” placed by Roni Horn in the intimate geometry of her em-



Roni Horn, “When Dickinson Shut her Eyes: no. 562 (Conjecturing a climate),” 1993  
8 elements, solid cast black plastic and aluminium, variable lengths (102.87 to 139.7 cm) x 5.08 x 5.08 cm  
Ed. of 3.  
Collezione Olgiati, Lugano  
Courtesy Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan

pathetic relationship and “posthumous collaboration”<sup>3</sup> with the poet: “. . . something that can only be brought here by you, the viewer / reader.”<sup>4</sup> Dickinson, or the experience of a possible form for the contemporary, and for a contemporary “I.” As she wrote in 1862: “I dwell in Possibility – / A fairer House than Prose – / More numerous of Windows – / Superior – for Doors – ” (Fr466). In our present time, might this not be a poetical and political “position” of the subject, too?

So, there have been several Emily Dickinsons – existing even before Roni Horn’s Dickinson, enclosed within the minimalist, highly formal shapes of the “Dickinson Works,” those sculpture series produced by the New York artist: *How Dickinson Stayed Home* (1992-1993), *When Dickinson Shut Her Eyes* (1993), *Untitled (Gun)* (1994), *Keys and Cues* (1994-1996), or *White Dickinson* (2006-2007-2008-2009). And first of all, there was a simple “I.” For a French-speaking reader, a non-specialist of English, the reading of Dickinson in the late 1990s depended on the sporadic publication of selected poems in collections whose titles – *Emily Dickinson, Le Paradis est au choix / Paradise is of the option*; *Emily Dickinson, Une âme en incandescence*<sup>5</sup>; *Emily Dickinson, Car l’adieu, c’est la nuit*<sup>6</sup>; *Emily Dickinson, Y aura-t-il pour de vrai un matin*<sup>7</sup> – were so many “calls” and “signs” and “entries,” just like Horn’s *Keys and Cues* were later,<sup>8</sup> consisting in the first line of a given poem leaning against the wall of the exhibition hall. Yet this initial entry into Dickinson’s lines and poems – alongside the discovery of scattered biographical details, from which there emerged the yet-to-be-explained image of the “Recluse” – was

incomplete, unaware as I was of the “poetic bulk” comprised of the 1,775 poems in the Johnson edition, or the 1,789 in the Franklin. The question of how to read Dickinson was therefore not a question – I was smoothly leafing through, frequently starting back at the beginning, unaware of what was missing, ignorant of the totality. It was an unremarkable, banal form of reading, from which two quatrains emerged as signs of a metaphysical proximity:

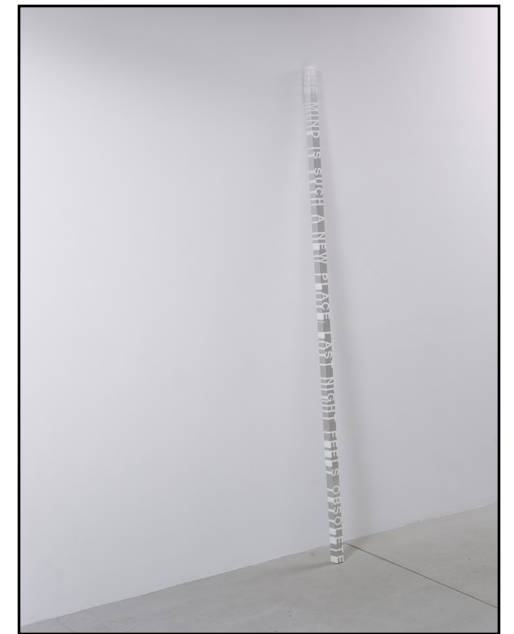
La prochaine fois : rester!  
La prochaine fois, les choses à voir  
Inouïes de l’Oreille  
Incrustées de l’Œil –

M’attacher, la prochaine fois,  
Pendant que les Âges se dérobent –  
Pendant que les Siècles battent le pavé  
Et que les Cycles tournent!<sup>9</sup>

In these experiences of reading, let me keep these lines in one of their French translations for a while. For the sake of their shape and their image, their textual landscape, the blanks and spaces they inhabit on the page. It’s not unlike the way a language sees, the eye of reading itself. And it’s also how the shape of these words suffuses the witness-eye of the reader with recognition.

Maybe one reads first in one’s own poetic language – before one attempts any forays into the riddle of the original – in which words are formal echoes of meaning. In French, Dickinson was finding its way into the familiar space of Verlaine and Mallarmé. In Italian, Dickinson was at home next to Leopardi and Giuseppe Ungaretti. For I read her equally in Italian, and that reading put me in touch with the “poetic bulk” of Dickinson’s works. Johnson’s *Complete Poems* was translated in 1995, in the “Grandi Classici” pocket book series published by Mondadori, and regularly reprinted since.<sup>10</sup> “Eternity” and “Immortality” merged with Leopardi’s “Infinite” and Ungaretti’s “Immensity” – not with the same meaning, but sharing the same quest.

Roni Horn allowed me to perceive Dickinson not only in a three-dimensional space and a plastic form, but also in the American space – even though she herself was able to read Dickinson in full only during one of her reclusive stays in Iceland – and in the poet’s language. I first approached her in this way on the occasion of Horn’s retrospective (*Roni Horn aka Roni Horn*) at the London Tate Modern in March 2009. The first room in this historical exhibition was what I later called in a critical article a “Dickinsonian room.”<sup>11</sup> There were three works: one of Horn’s enormous drawings in pigment (*Then 3*, 2006) – which are the best-known part of her work, together with her photographic series and molded glass sculptures – and two vertical sculptures made of long grey aluminum beams, on which the careless visitor could see nothing but white parallel lines, whereas the intrigued visitor could recognize letters, words, then a full sentence in white capitals, deciphered painstakingly rather than read smoothly. I was forced to read the wall label in order to identify the text: “I GIVE YOU A PEAR THAT WAS GIVEN ME – WOULD THAT IT WERE A PAIR, BUT NATURE IS PENURIOUS” (*White Dickinson*, 2007) and “THE MIND IS SUCH A NEW PLACE, LAST NIGHT FEELS OBSOLETE” (*White Dickinson*, 2006-2007). What Roni Horn entitles *White Dickinson* is made up of extracts from the poet’s correspondence. So, Dickinson was opening this retrospective, giving it its form, temporality and landscape, if not its meaning, if not a perception of the world between the here and the there, the hidden and the visible, the inside and the outside, event and presence, as well as the memory of presence. She was connecting it to pairs and doubles, the central motifs in Horn’s work; she was connecting it to this relationship between “I” and “you” set up by the artist as a familiar echo of Dickinson’s poetry, and following in the footsteps of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Further on in the exhibition, there was one of the *Keys and Cues N°1755*, a new landmark in



Roni Horn  
*White Dickinson*  
THE MIND IS SUCH A NEW PLACE,  
LAST NIGHT FEELS OBSOLETE  
2006  
Aluminium and white plastic  
273.7 x 5 x 5 cm / 107.75 x 2 x 2 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

the arc of an oeuvre drawing the signs and lines of a landscape.

White letters used for the image of what’s private; black letters used for the image of what’s public through publication – what is shown *a posteriori*. Roni Horn sets Dickinson in a plastic and material kind of literality, puts her out in daily material life: “I wanted to take the texts from the book and put them out in the world like any other physical thing with visible attributes and a way of being present.”<sup>12</sup> Not only does she let us read/see a poetic text, she also lets us read/see the figure of a life. Dickinson, or necessary solitude; Dickinson, or domestic and reclusive life; Dickinson, or the event of publication; Dickinson, or a “being in the world” that comes. Roni Horn shows us her own reading of Dickinson and what she allows her to do – “In the reading of





Roni Horn, «Key & Cue: no. 1035 (Bee! I'm expecting you!)», 1996  
Solid cast black plastic and aluminium  
112.3 x 5.08 x 5.08 cm  
Ed. of 3  
Collezione Maria Grazia e Claudio Palmigiano, Milano  
Courtesy Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milano

Dickinson's work, I am in the world as it is" – while turning the "viewer-reader" into the third corner of a triangle whose

remaining two corners are conceived as a double, or a pair: "The hybridizing of looking and reading, the manner in which these two acts are so deeply entwined in this work [*Keys and Cues*] form another kind of pairing, again with you as the third element to realize this intimacy." Thus, the two experiences – of the art object and of the reading – are no longer distinct. It's a reading that involves the body of the visitor as a whole, since in order to see and read, the visitor must move, choosing her point of view, the angle at which to read. So that such a reading of Dickinson by Horn implies a kind of performativity; just as it implies loss and incompleteness, too, since the viewer-reader will only ever be facing the fragment of a poem, a poem (often quatrains for the *When Dickinson Shut Her Eyes* series) in which every line is a separate beam – facing a part of the poetic whole, given that Roni Horn uses some forty poems in all for her "Dickinson Works." But the viewer-reader "is" physically positioned before the Dickinson poem in its true form, in this literality claimed by the artist. And it is this troubling experience, which "enlarges" the poem,<sup>13</sup> that the "I" and its doubles are allowed to live: the presence of the poem, in a rediscovered materiality.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Emily Dickinson, *Le Paradis est au choix / Paradise is of option*. Ed., trans., Patrick Reumaux. Rouen 1998. "It has a simple gravity / I do not understand!" p. 22-23.
- <sup>2</sup> "L'inscription du texte et de la poétique d'Emily Dickinson dans l'œuvre plastique de l'artiste américaine Roni Horn," PhD dissertation supervised by Prof. Mathieu Duplay, Université Paris Diderot Paris 7.
- <sup>3</sup> Roni Horn, *Everything was sleeping as if the universe were a mistake*. Barcelona 2014, p. 115.
- <sup>4</sup> Roni Horn, *Events of Relation*. Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1999, p. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> Trans., intro., Claire Malroux. Paris 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> Trans., intro., Claire Malroux. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, «Poésie/ Gallimard», 2007.
- <sup>7</sup> Trans., intro., Claire Malroux. Paris 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> "The Key and Cue is an entrance; but every entrance is also a point of departure. ... it is also a cue, a prompt, a signal to something ...." *Events of Relation*, p. 10.
- <sup>9</sup> "Next time, to stay! / Next time, the things to see / By Ear unheard, / Unscrutinized by Eye – // Next time, to tarry, / While the Ages steal – / Slow tramp the Centuries, / And the Cycles wheel!" *Le Paradis est au choix / Paradise is of option*, p. 50.
- <sup>10</sup> *Emily Dickinson, Poesie*, a cura di Massimo Bacigalupo. Milano 1995.
- <sup>11</sup> Marjorie Micucci, *Roni Horn: ses chambres avec vues*, www.poptronics.fr, 25 mai 2009.
- <sup>12</sup> Roni Horn, *Among Essential Furnishings*, in *Earths Grow Thick*, The Ohio State University Press, 1996, p. 80.
- <sup>13</sup> Jean-Christophe Bailly, *L'Élargissement du poème*. Paris: Christian Bourgois éditeur, collection "Détoits," 2015.

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## Nectar of Infatuation: A Mennonite Coming-of-Age

By Sharon Hamilton

When I was little, kids at school used to ask me why I didn't wear black, if I watched TV, if my parents owned a car. I would explain that lots of Mennonites live in cities, and that not all Mennonites work on collective farms and avoid modern technology. I wore regular clothes; my parents owned a car; I watched TV. But in some ways my classmates' instinctive questions weren't wrong, because even city Mennonites tend to live in fairly traditional ways.

When I first encountered Emily Dickinson's poems, I found myself immediately struck by

a strange sense of recognition, and particularly with respect to her bee poems, with their exuberant depictions of the sensuous life: drinking, kissing, sex. It was weirdly like encountering my own coming-of-age experiences, but in poems by a woman who lived 150 years before I did.

"Look here!" (I could point at the lines) "Exactly how it felt the first time someone kissed me!" "And here! Precisely my reaction when I tasted my first glass of wine." But I am an Anabaptist who grew up in Canada in the late twentieth century. So, I wondered, why do

these poems by someone who lived in a different country, and in a very different time, seem so familiar to me?

\* \* \*

Emily Dickinson's ancestors came to North America as part of the great migration of Separatists in the 1600s fleeing to the New World (just as my own ancestors would do later) as members of a persecuted religious minority. My maternal grandparents came to North America as part of a different great migration. They fled to Canada as children with their

large families in the mid-1920s, from what is now modern Ukraine, when the Mennonites there began to be harassed, robbed, murdered and (just like everyone else) starved, following the Russian Revolution.



Tumbler belonging to Samuel Fowler Dickinson, commonly called a "flip" glass

For me, the experience of growing up in a religious home meant coming into contact with many beneficial things, not least including being raised within an extended community of extremely good and loving people, but within this kind of heritage can exist, obviously too, a number of restrictions. One imagines that Emily must also have experienced some of the weight of that constraint – which tends to lie, especially, against the most sensual things. I think we see some of her layered reaction to that situation in her bee poems, and I can relate to the tension that seems to exist there, because I knew it too.

Two years ago, on my first visit to Emily's home, I bought a copy of *Emily Dickinson: Profile of the Poet as Cook, with Selected Recipes*. I took this with me to a Vietnamese restaurant and began reading it over a bowl of fragrant lemongrass-infused vermicelli and barbecue pork. As I ate my noodles, I learned that during Emily's youth, Amherst experienced a local prohibition movement, which

the recorded contents of the Dickinson cellar suggest the family ignored. You do not tend to think about Emily Dickinson as a bathtub gin kind of girl. Yet, she sort of was. Family records show the Dickinsons served their guests rye, sherry, and port along with currant wine, and the guides at the Homestead museum charmingly note in their little recipe book that all of these could have been "home products" (9). In my case, my home was "dry" and my church was "dry" hence, unlike Emily, I grew up without exposure to alcohol, except once – and that came, quite innocently, through my babysitting.

One evening I went to the home of a family where I often babysat. My parents, I knew, did not approve of them, considering them a little too free-spirited, even (as my mother sometimes said) "hippies." The parents were celebrating an important anniversary. That night, before they left, they opened a bottle from which they poured a small glass for everyone, including for me and the children. The drink contained some sort of carbonation, a quality I recognized from soda pop. This carbonation, though, seemed different: lighter, fizzier. The taste, as well, unexpected. Slightly sweet, like the pop with which I was familiar, but with a tartness too, like biting into a green apple. On balance, I decided, better. Tastier than pop. What this meant: my first taste of alcohol, what was it? Champagne. Not, you must admit, a bad way to start.

And Emily? She appears not only to have participated in the brewing of family liquors, but to have tried them. She certainly wrote often enough, and appreciatively, about both drinking and its effects. In my favorite instance, she compares the effect of drinking to how we respond to an "Impossibility," suggesting that a great challenge acts like alcohol upon the spirit because it "Exhilarates the Man / Who tastes it" (Fr939).

Throughout my undergraduate years, I maintained the same habits I had grown up with, which meant I didn't drink. That situation changed only after graduation, during a sum-

mer backpacking trip abroad. One of my other girlfriends on this trip was Muslim. She, like me, had grown up in an alcohol-free home but, at the encouragement of the third friend travelling with us, we both agreed that we would be willing to try drinking while on the trip as part of truly experiencing the Europe we were about to encounter for the first time. In practice, this meant we would go to a village store and buy good bread and cheese and a local bottle of wine and walk off into a garden in the south of France, or to a rose-filled piazza in Spain, or off into the hills of Tuscany, and eat outside. Those were the circumstances under which I first tasted wine.

All of this came back to me with great vividness when I encountered Emily's famous poem about a bee delightfully smashed on nectar and a poet drunk on the beauty of a summer's day. "Inebriate of air am I," Emily declares, "And debauchee of dew; – / Reeling through endless summer days, / From inns of molten blue." "When landlords turn the drunken bee," she wonderfully adds, "Out of the Foxglove's door, / When butterflies renounce their drams, / I shall but drink the more" (Fr207a). Emily's inebriated bees veer around in her poems intoxicated by the nectar of wine and sunshine. But they also often react to the nectar of infatuation. I can relate to that situation too.

Not long after I returned to Canada following my European vacation, and just before I moved away to begin graduate school in another part of the country, a friend for whom I had long harbored a major crush surprised me by giving me a kiss good-bye. This was my first kiss. In one of her bee poems, Emily provides this description (from the perspective of a particularly ecstatic bee!) of how it feels to kiss someone, a desired someone, for the first time:

Lips unused to Thee –  
Bashful – sip thy Jessamines –  
As the fainting Bee – (Fr 205)

Your lips on mine, the poem says, like drinking fine jasmine nectar. The sweetest there is.





For me, perhaps I should add, not really so much like jasmine nectar. More the dark, earthy flavor of strong coffee. But Emily gets the sentiment exactly right. The felt mixture of shy awkwardness and pleasure. And, of course, the astonishment too. That life should contain something like this! The bee, the person, reeling with what they have just tasted.

In Emily's case, as we know, she most likely exchanged those sweet kisses with someone forbidden to her by the norms of her society, and of her faith. Which could suggest another reason why the bee metaphor she so often employed appealed to her. Emily liked the fact that bees drink nectar. This idea served for her over and over as a powerful image for the manner in which bees appreciate life. But I think she valued another symbolic aspect of their behavior too, and for the same reason that this image also resonated for me, as someone

who eventually recognized that to really come-of-age would mean moving far from home. In the second stanza of "Come slowly – Eden!" her poem about those jasmine kisses, Emily's bee flies to a flower and circles "Round her chamber," moving its wings so quickly they hum (Fr205). Her bees possess the ability, not always possible for people, to go wherever desire takes them: blossom to blossom. Freedom.

\* \* \*

One of the things that has proven most meaningful to me as I have tried to better understand my response to Emily Dickinson's bee poems has been the way in which this process has helped me come to terms with some of the ambiguity I obviously still feel about my own past. I find myself drawn to the way in which these poems celebrate the things of the sensuous life with a spirit of enthusiasm, even defiance! I admire this attitude precisely, I suspect, because this was not me.

I cannot say that I rebelled against the strictures I lived within – not least because, since I was also a geek, it seemed perfectly obvious to me that there were no plausible circumstances under which someone I felt attracted to might actually feel attracted back. Drinking, dating, kissing, sex: with the sole exception of my early exposure to champagne, I did not experience any of these things until my teen years were over. So it's probably fair to say

that when I read the bee poems, on some level I register regret. But that cannot be all, it occurs to me, because I find the poems so deeply appealing. Looking at Emily's bees, what else do I see?

Again and again, these poems celebrate the soul-stirring riches offered by welcome physical encounters – including, even, just being outside in the sun. Emily's bees don't only find satisfaction in life's pleasures, they revel in them. They drink so much they need to be kicked out at the Foxglove's door! In trying to work through my personal reaction to these poems, I have come to realize that if I still feel a bit embarrassed about how few of these things I experienced as a teenager, thinking about these poems has had the positive counter-effect of underscoring for me the other side to this story – which is how glad I am that things played out exactly as they did. When I read about Emily's bees with their transparent delight in drinking and kissing and sex, I reflect to myself, "Well, but didn't you respond with profound enjoyment once you finally (finally!) encountered these things?"

And I think, "Yes." I think, "As the fainting bee." And I feel thankful.

*Sharon Hamilton is a writer who divides her time between Ottawa, Ontario and Spring Brook, Prince Edward Island. Her last contribution to the Bulletin was "Emily Dickinson Meets Woody Allen?" in November/December 2014 issue.*

### Emily Dickinson Undergraduate Essay Prize

The Emily Dickinson International Society is seeking essays for a prize devoted to 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 \$100.

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 25, 2016: [epetrino@fairfield.edu](mailto: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.

## SUMMER BOUGHS Engraving Emily Dickinson

By Claire Illouz

Poets help us to put our feelings into words. We artists help them to assert their words in space. In my opinion, this is the kind of exchange an Artist's Book is aimed at.

I have made more than 25 Artist's Books to date, with various authors.<sup>1</sup> But the Book I made in 2014 with 3 poems by Emily Dickinson,<sup>2</sup> despite its small size, required much more time and work than the others.

Was it the difficulties I had with Dickinson's poetry at first reading? Was it my personal concept of the Artist's Book? Reasons probably lie on both sides.

In my case, an Artist's Book is a kind of limited edition, in which original etchings and composition choices are meant to interpret a text. The number of copies varies from 10 to 55. *Summer Boughs*, with its 30 copies, can stand as an example. This kind of edition gives licence to many inventive possibilities, allowing a totally new vision of a text. Of course, there are risks: for the author, the risk is that his or her text may not survive such harsh treatment: if it is not solidly constructed and meaningful, it will collapse and become hollow (needless to say, there was no such worry with Dickinson). For the artist, thoughtless choices can lead to incoherence, at times leading the reader completely astray.

Though my books are quite different from one another, each one is related to my artistic work. For example, *The Whiteness*<sup>3</sup>, an excerpt from *Moby Dick*, originated in my special relation to blank spaces in my drawing. *Ainsi le Talus*<sup>4</sup> is the result of etched researches about rhythm in landscape perception.

For me, to make an Artist's Book is to lead the text to an unexpected space, sometimes to the reader's surprise. I find that my total liberty in text treatment has no real limit, except coherence of meaning, bearing in mind, as a priority, that any technical choice can be made, provided it makes sense.

How do I work? I generally read and re-read the text, until it starts existing on its own in my mind, with the strange feeling that it is "cramped for room": then I know that it is in need of another support. At this point, my mind is generally crowded with thoughts, which I carefully note down. However, very few of these sketches will develop into feasible projects. . . .

This was particularly true for Dickinson's poems. My approach to her poetry took some time. Years ago, at first reading, I had the uncomfortable impression of a "curtain" hanging between us. So when Dr. Bob Wallace, of Northern Kentucky University, suggested that I work on Dickinson's verse, my first reaction was "Oh no, not Dickinson!"

Many re-readings finally did work to help me perceive the immense significance of her poetry. I feel more familiar with her life and work now. However, it seems to me that many read her poetry today with her biography in mind. As far as this project is concerned, I have tried, as much as possible, to forget what I know about her. I am aware that the very enigmatic feminine nature of Dickinson is often considered an important part of her genius. But to me, the meaning of these poems seemed strong enough to exist alone: that is why I have clung to the power of her words, with deliberately no reference to her life at all.

I had chosen 7 poems at first, and finally kept 3. Was I guided by my own art in this choice? If you look at some of my works, it won't surprise you that I have felt close to her approach to Nature.

For Dickinson, the whole world is loaded with meaning. As for Nature, every element has a part to play for the human mind. Dickinson's senses act as translators of Nature's language. She is always on the lookout for Nature's mutations and mysteries – an attitude I feel very close to in my drawing work, taking note of all phenomena, "reading" them as carefully as I would a book. I have always believed that the act of intense looking, the way it tells you, as it were, what an object has to say, is very close to the act of reading.

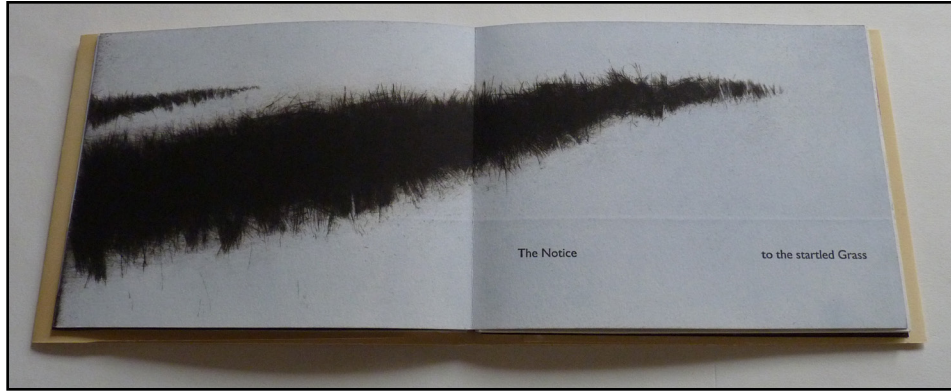
Drawing helps me to see and read this fragile language of things. Like any translator, Dickinson is perfectly aware of the difficulty of this impossible task: so am I.

This is why in conceiving this book, all along this year of work, I had the unsteady feeling of taking a walk with Dickinson, through some landscape unknown to us both. I have banned illustration, keeping in mind that all this is about sensations.

As a reminder of my own position towards one of the greatest American poets, the format of this book is modest. As I think Dickinson would have disliked a sophisticated presentation for her verse, I chose the simplest form of all, in free pages, with no binding, in the French tradition of "*Cahiers libres*."

Text is printed Letterpress. I have made and printed the etchings. I have hand-dyed BFK





SB.6 300, "Presentiment"

paper, so that each poem comes on a different color, and has an atmosphere of its own. The cover bears an embossing. A solid box protects the Book.

I – *Presentiment* is the first poem I ever read by Dickinson, and surprisingly enough, there was no "curtain" at all for this one. My first impression was very clear: I just felt that this poem was written for me.

Reading it over and over made me observe how Dickinson evokes here how scary the coming of night feels to her; she does this with devilish precision, if you consider how short this poem is. Being a sensation in progress, it seemed to me to need a horizontal space. This would be in harmony with the vision of the ground, or "lawn," (my many drawings of grass found good use there) from which, strangely enough, Dickinson makes Darkness rise.

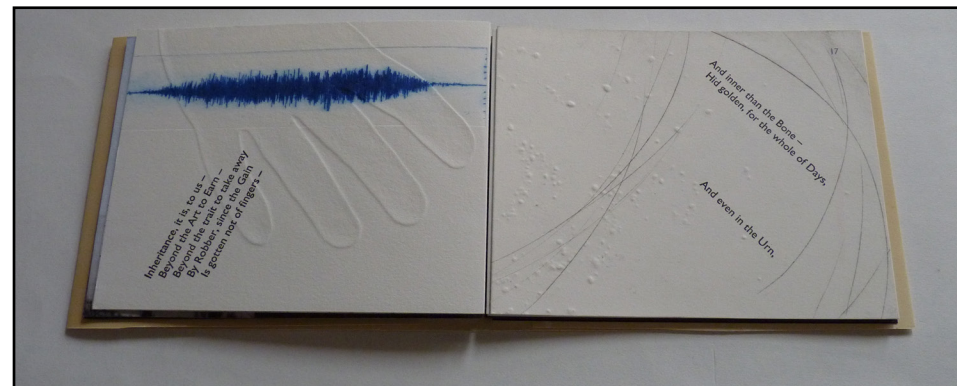
Having noted this, I knew I could risk what I often do in my Books: stretch the text in space, up to its limits. I often do this, and actually the stronger the text, the freer I feel to wring it and tear it to pieces, offering it a new life in Artist's Book form. I knew Dickinson's verse could stand this. The challenge was more on my side, to cope with her thought, and rhythm, with my etchings.

I cut the text into sections, spread lengthwise, along several pages. Thus the reader

slowly discovers this disturbing feeling, which asserts itself progressively. The "long Shadow" stretches onto one whole double page. The bluish paper (irregularly hand-dyed on purpose) gives the whole poem an uncertain dusky light. We become part of this grass, "startled" by the coming of night.

II – *Of all the sounds dispatched abroad* is a much longer and more complex poem.

The topic struck me for personal reasons: the wind has always bothered, upset, not to say frightened me. When I hear it, I have the mysterious feeling of a very ancient, primary sound, dating from way back when things started to exist in space: Air, at first touch, probably made such a sound...



SB.9 300, "Of all the Sounds"

The subject was not entirely new to me: in 2013, I had to illustrate the Wind-Borne Harp episode in Michel Tournier's novel *Friday and Robinson*. Though this was neither poetry, nor an Artist's Book, it was my first attempt to make Wind seem "visible."

Dickinson's verse goes much deeper. She wrote several poems about the Wind, but here the subject is precisely its Sound. The poem deals with the strangely deep tremor this "fleshless chant" leaves in our souls. An irrepressible force, Wind has no substance. Dickinson acutely feels the mysterious "charge" of these "tufts of tune" at work, as being eternally part of us ("inner than the bone"), before and after us.

Apart from a clearly visual – and beautiful – sensation at the beginning, where the wind is "working like a hand –" this poem deals with hearing sensations. So for my readers to perceive the right thing, my challenge was to find my own visual answer to Dickinson's words about Sound. After many difficult attempts, several sketches were kept. Some became etchings, engravings, or embossed images.

– For the text, I made wind blow on every single strophe, which were printed slanting, in every direction, and within the etching: image and verse are perceived together.

– For rendering supernatural sensations, I used embossed shapes: a cut-out of my own hand appears enormous on the page, "combing the Sky"; grains of "the Merry Dust" at play in the "Urn" whirl around on the page. These appear white on white, deeply printed into the paper, the way this sound leaves its imprint deep into our own . . . vacuity.

– For what I call "real" visions (Birds – Trees) as well as for Sound itself, I used etching and engraving.

I searched into scientific imagery for documents. My son, an acoustic engineer, found sonograms of wind sounds. Then started my "translation" work: after engraving these curves in dry point, I combined them with the etchings, making sound move through, or beside, or within the etching: the last sound curve appears entwined within the leaves of a tree: an echo to "In Seamless Company," the last words of this poem.

III - *We grow accustomed to the Dark* is here for 3 reasons:

1. It matches perfectly the state of mind I was in while making this book! Dickinson evokes here, with her usual precision and acuity, moments of doubt, of

uncertainty. I personally often feel like groping my way into "those evenings of the Brain" while at work.

2. Its obvious echo to *Presentiment*.

3. Its further echo, somehow contrary, to my Book *The Whiteness*.

However, what a good example of a poem totally reluctant to any image! I definitely had to stay in the background, letting Emily talk, in the Dark: I blackened paper, with pure printing ink, on which text appears in dark grey letterpress. The reader is upset: reading is purposely difficult, for lack of light. . . .

The unexpectedly genial idea in this poem is that discomfort does not end with the coming of Light, but with our getting used to its absence. This is where "Life" (white paper), though unsteady, finally steps in. Is there a better lesson for anyone with doubts?

The choice of these 3 poems by Dickinson was not easy: I would have loved to work on many others. While at work, I often wondered: Had Dickinson lived to see this Artist's Book, would she dismiss it? But this very important question will receive no answer. . . . This is why I thank all the

Dickinson specialists and librarians who have acquired this book. I hope to make my readers discover, or re-discover, those three great poems of hers, and above all, make them wish to read more.

<sup>1</sup> These can be browsed on <http://www.cillouz.com>

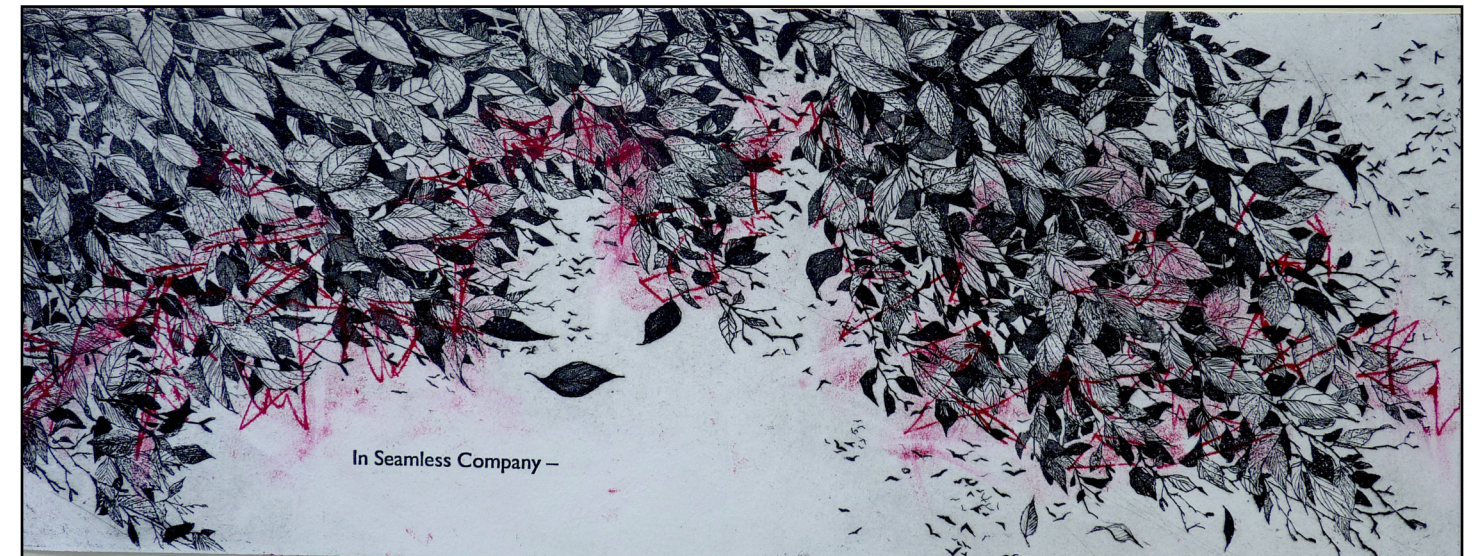
<sup>2</sup> SUMMER BOUGHS - 3 poems by Emily DICKINSON, 6 etchings and 3 embossings by C. Illouz. Letterpress by M. Roncerel & V. Auger. Edition of 30, on dyed BFK paper. (Chérence, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> THE WHITENESS – by Herman Melville (an excerpt from MOBY DICK). 2008 - 2 prints and 3 embossings by C. Illouz. Embossed white letterpress: Jean-Jacques Sergent. Edition of 25, on BFK paper. (Chérence, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> AINSI LE TALUS (TO THE ROADSIDE) – A long etching to read (length : 155. ½ in.), by C. Illouz. Printed on Chinese silk. Edition of 10, all unique. (Chérence, 2009).

*A painter and engraver, Claire Illouz lives and works in Chérence, France. She has made more than 25 Artist's Books to this day, now in various private and public collections, in Europe and USA. Her etching and book art were awarded by the French Academy of Fine Arts in 2012 and 2013. Her work can be seen at Gallery Susse Frères in Paris, and on <http://www.cillouz.com>.*

Below, SB.2 300, "In Seamless Company"





## How Garden-Restoration Volunteers Discovered Emily Dickinson

Text and Photos by Neil Soderstrom

As a child, Emily helped Mother in her gardens, later boasting to cousin Louise Norcross, “I was reared in the garden you know” (L206). By age 14, Emily had excelled in botany courses and was collecting and pressing plants into her large-format Herbarium, which eventually contained more than 400 specimens, labeled with scientific precision. Gardening remained a favorite pastime throughout her life.

Each year in June, I’ve been documenting garden restoration at the Emily Dickinson Museum, led by Marta McDowell. In her book *Emily Dickinson’s Gardens*, Marta writes, “Emily Dickinson was a gardener... You can host an Emily Dickinson game show with your friends. Say her name, and ask them what they think of first. It may be a white dress – or poetry, of course – or a well-known image of a sixteen-year-old girl staring boldly out of a daguerreotype. It probably won’t be gardening.”

Marta adds, Emily “shared love of plants with her parents and siblings. To friends, she sent bouquets, and to her numerous correspondents . . . she often enclosed flowers to . . . punctuate a message. She collected wildflowers, walking with her dog, Carlo. . . In winter she forced hyacinth bulbs and in summer she knelt on a red blanket in her flower borders, performing horticulture’s familiar rituals.”

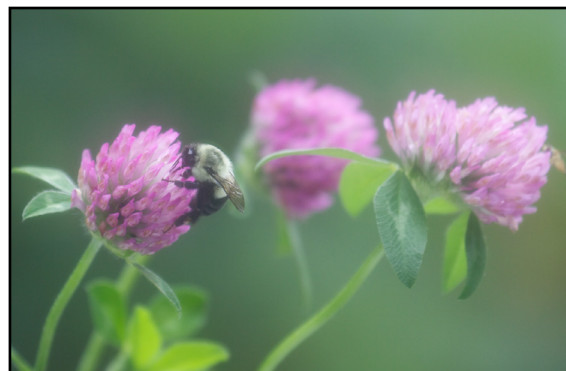
In the family’s attached conservatory, Emily tended delicate perennials including begonias, carnations, ferns, fuchsias, heliotrope, jasmines, oleander, and primroses. About two years before her death, she wrote Elizabeth Holland, “I have made a permanent Rainbow by filling a Window with Hyacinths, which Science will be glad to know, and have a Cargo of

Carnations, worthy of Ceylon, but Science and Ceylon are Strangers to me, and I would give them both for one look of the gone Eyes, glowing in Paradise –” (L882).

Emily’s niece, Martha (Mattie) Dickinson Bianchi, recalled the gardens of her paternal aunts used to sit on the retired little side piazza, where we joined them.... The giant Daphne odora, moved out from the conservatory, stood at one end with the Cape jasmine. Two tall oleanders were blossoming in their green tubs, and a pomegranate whose flowering was an event to us all. The flagged path to the garden began here, leading down through the grass to a meandering mass of bloom. It was against Aunt Lavinia’s will that anything there was ever uprooted or pruned. She adored profusion. The roses clapped their hands high over two old-fashioned arbors; the honeysuckle lured the humming-birds all day; nasturtiums pranked like unruly schoolboys; self-sown flowers of humbler origin el-

Top right, heliotrope; middle right, cardinal flower; bottom right, bee on red clover (*Trifolium pratense*).

“Two things I have lost with Childhood – the rapture of losing my shoe in the Mud and going Home barefoot, wading for Cardinal flowers and the mothers reproof which was more for my sake than her weary own for she frowned with a smile . . .” [L, Prose Fragment 117]



Victoria Dickson

bowed and crowded their more aristocratic neighbors. There were carpets of lily-of-the-valley and pansies, platoons of sweet peas, hyacinths enough in May to give all the bees of a summer dyspepsia. There were ribbons of peony hedges, and rifts of daffodil in season, marigolds to distraction – a butterfly Utopia.”

### This Year’s Garden Volunteer Days: June 3 – 5

#### First Encounters:

• Educator Clare Green recalls, “I first learned an Emily Dickinson poem by default. When I was about 7, my older sister was memorizing ‘I’m nobody. Who are you?’ (Fr260) out loud for a school assignment, prancing around the house. I thought it a silly poem but was too young to fully grasp its meaning.

“For my birthday, many years later my son, Ned, mailed an anthology of Emily’s poetry. He inscribed it, ‘Dearest Mother, May this book keep you 44 years young. Happy Birthday to a Wonderful Mother!’ That book became a friend. Over time I memorized a few poems and read more

about Emily’s life, visited the Homestead, and brought friends there.

“The book is a treasured gift with profound meaning now that my son has excited life from an ice-climbing accident on Mount Washington, New Hampshire, and like Emily was ‘called back.’ A simple gift has deep roots and continues to nourish the heart.”

• Artist Victoria Dickson explains, “When I attended the first poetry discussion group in the old parlor at the Homestead in 1997, I was just recovering from a very serious illness. I entered, tentatively, into an amazing world of word images written by a mysterious and gifted poet. I was awestruck! That marked the beginning of my enduring passion for Dickinson’s poetry. Participation in poetry discussion groups and volunteering in the gardens have greatly contributed to my work as a literary painter.

“I have been working on a uniquely ambitious project, painting more than 80 flowers and plants that E.D. refers to in her poems and letters. Often the beauty of a poem strikes me, so I go in search of the flower or plant to match it. Sometimes instead, the flower leads me to a poem. Dickinson’s words are always with me when I paint.

“I enjoy pairing poems with paintings and applying just the right watercolors to paper to record the beautiful hues and forms in Dickinson’s floral world. The poet’s use of dozens of color words from amber and amethyst to umber and vermilion demonstrates that she often took a painterly approach in her writing. I hope she would be pleased with my efforts to paint her poetry.”

• Retired Latin teacher Judith Averill recalls, “I grew up in New Jersey and had never heard of Emily Dickinson, even though I attended what was considered an excellent high school. I first became aware of Emily and the growing appre-



Judith Averill

ciation of her poems after moving to Amherst in fall of 1971 with my professor husband and two children.

“After Amherst College’s acquisition of the Homestead in 1965, it was occupied by a faculty family and could only be seen by appointment. Visitors were shown only a few downstairs rooms full of the faculty family’s furnishings. Then, in November 1990, my husband and I read that Polly Longworth was signing copies of her newly published *World of Emily Dickinson*.



Marta McDowell





Clare Green and Jackie Burkett

son. Where? In the downstairs hallway of that virtually inaccessible house – no longer a faculty residence but not at all developed as a museum. There we met Polly and purchased her book. My curiosity was piqued. Subsequent years have seen an amazing arc of public recognition of Dickinson as well as development of Homestead programs.”

- Dickinson biographer Polly Longworth had this experience: “In 1954 in a Smith College class devoted to poets of the American Renaissance, Emily Dickinson was, for the first time, included in Reinhart’s new anthology of poets, along with Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Whittier, Bryant, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell and others. In fact, there were more Dickinson poems than those of any other poet, maybe because the anthology’s editor was George Whicher, professor of English at Amherst College and a Dickinson biographer. My book is now old and tattered, filled with marginal classroom notes, except for the Dickinson section, which is pristine. Our Smith professor didn’t know what to do with Dickinson. He couldn’t fit her into his picture of the 19th century greats. We just jumped over her. Later, in 1961, I moved to Amherst when my husband joined the Amherst College administration. That’s when I met people who recited her poetry. There was her house, her grave, even people who had known Dickinson’s niece, Mme. Bianchi. I dove in.

“Has Emily influenced my own plant selection? If I could find some fringed gentian, which is scarce, I’d try to grow it, but most of the plants she loved I love and grow too, though I can’t keep exotica alive, perhaps because I live one Hardiness Zone colder than she did. I’ve planted acorns from the big Dickinson white oak and raised its seedlings; but I’ve given most away, except for one in my yard in Royalston. It’s six feet tall now.

“Favorite words on plants and gardening: ‘We like March – his Shoes are Purple –’ [Fr1194], ‘A sepal – petal – and a thorn’ [Fr25], the stanza ‘Lilacs – bending many a year – / Will sway with purple load...’ from ‘It will be Summer eventually’ (Fr374), ‘The Grass so little has to do’ from ‘I wish I were a Hay’ (Fr379), and ‘In the name of the Bee – / And of the Butterfly – / And of the Breeze – Amen!’ (Fr23).

- Archivist Jackie Burkett comments, “I came to appreciate Emily as a kindred spirit through her gardening, rather than starting with her poetry. I attended Mount Holyoke College, so of course I’d heard of her (and had actually listened to Robert Frost reciting his poetry there). However my studies were in the sciences, and I was always more interested in the world of nature.



Jane Harwood



Polly Longworth

“Like Emily as a child I loved exploring local woods and fields, and started my first garden (vegetables). After college, living in magnificent rural Scotland widened my perspective literally and historically. I came to recognize that my own sensibilities were more in tune with some earlier times and places. Thereafter, living in NJ for 31 years, my gardening had many aspects, including historic preservation.

“Having now moved back to the Amherst region, thanks to my daughter’s professorship at Amherst College, I want to participate in the restoration of Emily’s garden and see the conservatory reconstructed. Here I’ve been delighted to again work with Marta McDowell, whom I knew from my Rock Garden Society in New Jersey. I’d enjoyed Marta’s *Gardens of Emily Dickinson*, as well as the New York Botanical Garden’s 2010 six-week celebration: ‘Emily Dickinson’s Garden: The Poetry of Flowers.’”

- Social worker Jane Harwood recalls, “My best introduction to Emily was from Joe Schiffman, a charismatic professor of American lit at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. His class was so popular that you had to be an English major to get in. He made Emily so fascinating (okay, eccentric) that when I first moved to Amherst in the early 1970s,



McDowell with Conservatory Plan



Margaret Freeman and Everett Decker



Andrea Goguen



Caroline Conway

practically the first thing I did was visit her house, feeling almost compelled to make a pilgrimage. The house was very different then, occupied by a faculty person, only open to the public a few hours per week – quite a change today.”

- Poet Caroline Conway says, “I can’t recall my introduction to Dickinson, and quite prefer it this way. It’s as if her poems are an elemental fact I’ve always been aware of. My favorite poems include ‘A Route of Evanescence’ (Fr1489) and ‘The Brain – is wider than the Sky’ (Fr598).”

- A retailer who at UMass majored in French, Andrea Goguen enjoyed this early introduction: “I first read Emily’s work in eighth grade English class. When I was a teen, I liked her letters more than her poetry because they enabled me to experience her life in those days, as if she were sharing her innermost thoughts and feelings with me. Discussing her eccentricities helps to keep her interesting.

“I thank Emily for her heritage and her honest, articulate writing that will be enjoyed for generations to come.

“During garden-restoration days, I learned a lot from the garden plan. And this inspired me to plant iris, snapdrag-

ons, tomatoes, and herbs, including oregano, thyme and basil in my yard.”

- An EDIS founder, Margaret Freeman recalls, “I was in the first group of foreign graduate students in the Smith College American Studies Diploma program in 1962–63. I had never heard of Emily Dickinson until Helen Smith introduced me to some of her poems in her literature seminar. I was puzzled and intrigued by her syntax, which has become a lifelong obsession.

“When we were planning the creation of the Emily Dickinson International Society, I chose ‘Finite – to fail, but infinite – to Venture’ (Fr952) as our slogan.”

#### On Introducing Emily’s Poems to Teens:

- Polly Longworth: “Ask teens to read some poems – perhaps her nature poems to start with, and there are dozens to choose from. I don’t mean just read, but read aloud in a group of other teens. That’s how one begins to claim E.D. for oneself – by saying her words aloud. There’s always something to discover in one of her poems, and many of the nature poems take the form of riddles that have to be figured out. After the teenage-

*Continued on page 26*



Series Editor, Jonnie Guerra

While wearing my hat as Senior Advisor for the Council of Independent Colleges, I was introduced to Jeanetta Calhoun Mish – poet, writer, and literary scholar – at a workshop in Cleveland. When we discovered our mutual admiration for Emily Dickinson, I invited Mish to contribute to the Poet to Poet series and am delighted she agreed to be featured in this issue.

Mish is the author of *Oklahomeland*, a collection of essays recently published by Lamar University Press, and of two award-winning poetry collections. Her 2009 poetry collection, *Work Is Love Made Visible* (West End Press) won an Oklahoma Book Award, a Wrangler Award, and the WILLA Award from Women Writing the West. Her first collection, *Tongue Tied Woman*, was published by SoulSpeak Press as the winner of the 2001 Edda Poetry Chapbook for Women Competition. Her third poetry collection, *What I Learned at the War*, is forthcoming in 2016 from West End Press. Mish directs The Red Earth Creative Writing MFA program at Oklahoma City University where she also serves as a faculty mentor in writing pedagogy and the craft of poetry. She is editor of *Mongrel Empire Press*, recognized as 2012 Publisher of the Year by the Woodcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers, and contributing editor for *Oklahoma Today* and *Sugar Mule: A Literary Journal*.

## Emily & Me: An Accidental Friendship

By Jeanetta Calhoun Mish

Guest am I to have  
Light my northern room  
Why to cordiality so averse to come  
Other friends adjourn  
Other bonds decay  
Why avoid so narrowly  
My fidelity – (Fr1717)

to write as a girl and to write about death? Throughout my life, Emily Dickinson has arrived as good friends do, serendipitously, when I have needed her.

For her entire life, my mother was a member of the working class; like many other young women from 1950s rural Oklahoma, she didn't finish high school because she married at sixteen and was forced to drop out. However, before she left school, my mother competed in statewide speech contests in "dramatic interpretation" – the oral recitation of memorized poetry. Refuting my dissertation advisor's opinion that working-class people didn't read or write poetry, Momma read poetry to me. She told me she started reading to me when I was only a quickening. I remember hearing her read – declaim – poems she told me were written by Robert Frost, Lord Byron, and Emily Dickinson. Prepared by my mother's instruction, I wrote my first poem in second grade, an elegy on the death of my dog. How did I know at the age of seven that death was a monumental subject for poetry? Could it be that hearing Emily's poems in my mother's alto voice gave me permission

While I don't remember which anthologies we used in junior high, I definitely remember reading "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (Fr 60) – it seemed a perfect poem for a girl like me who wrote poems, was smart but definitely not popular, and from the wrong (kind of) family. A middle child like Emily, I, too, felt like nobody and thought I had found a kindred spirit. When I was 16, our high school held its first poetry contest, judged by Rudolph N. Hill, a local man who served as Oklahoma state poet laureate in 1966. The poem I entered, entitled "My First Time" was chosen as the winner. The poem was oblique and completely metaphorical, since it concerned my first sexual experience. The series of metaphors could have represented a myriad of "first" experiences; they also al-



Photo Credit: Denise Low-Weso, Poet Laureate Emerita of Kansas

lowed plausible deniability. I punctuated the six-line poem with dashes, in an attempt to make it look like a poem by the only female poet I was familiar with at the time.

Emily Dickinson disappeared from my life after she helped me win the high school poetry contest, and I didn't meet with her again

until I was a thirty-seven-year-old college freshman. My first class was American Literature I, taught by American Romanticism scholar Michael Kearns, and it centered on Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Poe, and Dickinson. Learning from a scholar how to read Emily was enlightening – there was so much more in those poems than I had intuited on my own.

Later, in a master's degree course on poetics, one of the assigned texts was Susan Howe's *Singularities*. The collection challenged and intrigued me – Howe's combination of history and radical poetics made me want to read everything she'd ever written, a desire that reintroduced me to Emily, through *My Emily Dickinson*. A year after I took the poetics class, I wrote a poem for Walt Whitman. Emily showed up, unbidden; I didn't realize she had visited until I was revising the poem:

I am thinking of Walt Whitman  
because there is a certain slant of sorrow in my heart  
that has transformed everything –

I rarely communed with Emily in the years between my master's degree and the completion of my dissertation, except for bumping into our mutual friend, Genevieve Taggard, while researching leftist 1930s poetry. However, in 2003, a poet-friend, retiring from university teaching, sent me a large box of his office books which included *Emily Dickinson, Woman of Letters* (Turco, et al, 1993), *14 by Emily Dickinson* (Thomas M. Davis, ed., 1964) and Cynthia Griffin Wolff's critical literary biography (1986), all of which I made use of when teaching, as a grad student, American Literature to 1865. Of the extensive selection of poems in the Heath anthology's fifth edition, I chose for my students, among others, "Wild nights – Wild nights!" (Fr269), "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" (Fr260) "They shut me up in Prose –" (Fr445), and "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun –" (Fr764). My selections were made based on three questions: Which poems did I love, so I could model that passion for my students? Which poems did I understand well enough to teach? Which poems might speak to a class consisting primarily of 18-20 year-olds, many of whom were first-generation college students? Of course, I chose "I'm Nobody," since the poem had appealed to a younger me; I chose "They shut me up in Prose," because, as a poet, I could think of few worse punishments, and "Wild Nights," to compare with Van Morrison's "Wild Night." I was surprised when it was "My Life had stood a

### to ask and be answered

i am thinking of walt whitman  
because the lilac bush in the back yard is blooming  
because its canes are swaying and rocking,  
swaying and rocking in the stiff spring breeze  
because their uncomfortably sweet scent coming  
through my bedroom door smells like death  
because i wish i could say kaddish for the early deaths  
of my grandfather and father and brother  
because an unkindness of ravens has taken up residence among the  
flowering dead nettles and in their voices  
the chant of another whose visions invade my dreams

i am thinking of walt whitman  
because i have found myself lonely despite my desires  
because yesterday i wandered in the supermarket  
with the two of them and envied their eloquence  
because among my intimates i count four poets,  
four musicians, and an artist, all thirsty and true  
because i want to embrace my lover but find myself  
driving him away with rage and venom  
because i stood a long time last night gazing up at the moon and  
her  
beloved venus dancing through the moist night-air  
gathering stars as souvenirs

i am thinking of walt whitman  
because there is a certain slant of sorrow in my heart  
that has transformed everything  
because i am aching to be expansive,  
to embrace the world as it is  
because i believe that loving the world  
in its wholeness might save me from melancholy  
because i am convinced that in the refuge of  
his wisdom i will find equanimity  
because i am desperate  
for a reaching 'round of his lyrical arms,  
desperate to imagine myself sacred in his eyes,  
longing to ask and to be answered in affirmation,

are you thinking of me, walt whitman?

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Renée Bergland, Book Review Editor

**Christine Gerhardt**  
*A Place for Humility: Whitman, Dickinson, and the Natural World. University of Iowa Press, 2014. 286 pp. Paperback, 978-1-60938-271-1, \$47.50*

Christine Gerhardt is correct that “Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are widely acknowledged as two of America’s foremost nature poets.” Since this is so, it seems strange that there is little sustained engagement with Dickinson among ecocritics and environmentalist literary critics. It is even stranger that Dickinson critics tend to neglect ecocriticism and environmentalist reading. The reluctance to read Dickinson environmentally or ecocritically is particularly puzzling, since, as Gerhardt reminds us, “Dickinson’s poems about the natural environment have long played a major role in Dickinson scholarship.”

From the point of view of Dickinson studies, then, Gerhardt’s book is long overdue. Her work fills a significant gap in the scholarship. But the book is not addressed to Dickinson scholars alone. It is a carefully balanced comparative study that devotes equal time to Whitman and Dickinson, each of whom gets a chapter in every section. The book is divided into four parts that focus on four different geographic scales, starting with a section on the very small, followed by sections on the local, the regional, and finally the planetary. In her explanation of the book’s structure, Gerhardt points out that “the notion of scale – especially

if one uses the metaphor of concentric circles – ” links Whitman and Dickinson’s “shared concern for particular places to key concepts of their poetic projects at large.”

“Scale Framing” is also central to current critical debates within ecocriticism. Tim Morton and Timothy Clark argue that problems of scale vex environmentalism’s tendency to moralize. When looked at on a planetary scale, seemingly ethical environmentalist criticism (what we might call “green” environmentalism) can seem overblown and self-aggrandizing. If we imagine ourselves as living in the age of the Anthropocene, the new geologic age defined as the era when the planet has been irrevocably changed by human activity, then much “green” environmentalist literary criticism can be described as naïve, if not outrageously self defeating, in its focus on human activity.

Gerhardt’s book addresses the problem of scale directly, and offers a nimble (if slightly indirect) response to the posthuman and antihuman theoretical strains of prominent ecocritics like Tim Clark, who warns against using Earth as “an index of the human.” Rather than defending the human or denying it, Gerhardt moves from the human toward the humble, and advocates humility. In her elegant formulation, “Humble and human share the same root: the earth.” Therefore, she describes the earth itself as a “place for humility.”

Gerhardt draws on Whitman and Dickinson to propose her intelligent, pragmatic, and ethical response to Morton’s dark ontology and Clark’s despairing veer toward nihilism. It is no accident that Whitman and Dickinson are cornerstones for her, since they significantly revise the British Romantic poets who Morton and Clark build their arguments upon. Yet although Gerhardt reads both poets well, Whitman’s voice does not ring out as strongly here for me as Dickinson’s does. The final Dickinson chapter concludes with “The Fact that Earth is Heaven.” Gerhardt argues that Dickinson “links a religiously motivated humility to a more profound reluctance to assume control over the earth, both in epistemological terms and as a local-global ‘dwelling’ place.” Therefore, Gerhardt asserts, “Whether the primary ‘place’ of this poem is heaven or earth, it advocates a position with respect to both that precludes the common assumption that we are able to grasp our environment, or even fully dwell in it.” Dickinson’s multilayered humility, as Gerhardt uncovers it, pushes environmentalist criticism to a new dimension.

Although it argues persuasively for the central importance of humility, the fact is that this unassuming book is a big one. Don’t let the modest green cover deceive you: this is significant and important work, and it makes real contributions to Dickinson and Whitman scholarship as well as to environmental criticism.

– R. B.

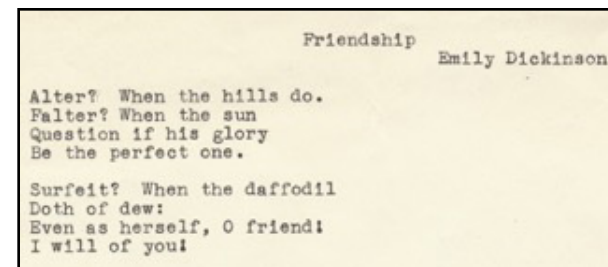
The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S. Send information to Renée Bergland, 3 Barrett Road, Hanover, NH 03755, U.S.A. Email: renee.bergland@simmons.edu

Loaded Gun” that most appealed to my students, some of whom grasped the hunting metaphor from personal experience and others who approached it as a talisman to protect them against the all-too-common violence and abuse in their homes.

Recently, Emily has returned to me and I’m grateful for her renewed presence in my life. Oddly, a few weeks ago, she reappeared in the guise of actress Daisy Ridley, who plays Rey in the new *Star Wars* film. In one of the trailers for the film, someone asks “Who are you?” and Rey responds, “I’m no one.” I thought immediately of my childhood-favorite Dickinson poem. However, this time I heard in Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody” not a sad, ostracized girl, but echoes of Odysseus. Given her education, Dickinson surely was playing on Odysseus’ answer to Polyphemus’ “Who are you?” The answer was key to his – and her – survival. Moreover, the statement carries connotations of the old literary trope and favored American myth of the “self-made man,” a term first made famous in an 1832 speech by Henry Clay. As Mark William Roche notes in *Why Literature Matters in the 21st Century*, “the self-made man does not acquire an identity by being part of the cosmos; he gains it by achieving a self-identified end” (134). To claim the name “Nobody” – to claim no genealogy as a poet, to have no “anxiety of influence,” to be entirely original – was an audacious move, especially for a woman of the period. Moreover, in asking “Are you – Nobody – too?” Dickinson again asserts her right to select her soul’s own society. My new understanding of this poem leaves me in

awe of the courage of its artistic statement and the woman who made it.

About a month before I began writing this essay, I opened a faded green cardboard box marked “Keepsakes,” the last of my mother’s personal effects. Inside, I found her award medals for dramatic interpretation. I also found an almost-disintegrated manila envelope. Inside that envelope were a fascicle of my mother’s own poems, handwritten clean copies, and a typed selection of her dramatic interpretation pieces. Emily was there, too, in my mother’s memory box, taped closed since her marriage in 1957, which still held the faint scent of a pressed carnation corsage.



*Works Cited*  
 Roche, Mark Williams. *Why Literature Matters in the 21st Century*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2008.

*Soderstrom: continued from page 23*  
 ers have considered a particular poem for a while, have them read it aloud again – I’ll bet they read it differently.”

- Jackie Burkett: “To arouse a child’s interest, I believe it’s important to develop their appreciation for nature and help them recognize the impact of humans on the world.”
- Margaret Freeman: “I advise giving teens a copy of Everett Decker’s *haiku Emily!* And encourage them to look up corresponding Dickinson poems.”

**haiku Emily!**

During my first garden-restoration photo visit, Everett Decker and Polly

Longworth labored in hot, humid weather pulling deep-rooted weeds. At shift’s end, I noticed Everett with Polly near her car, handing her a substantial box that I later learned contained 1,789 of his haiku-inspired poems, each based on one of Emily’s poems. (Upon teaming with Polly that day for weeding, Everett hadn’t realized that Polly was a widely respected Dickinson biographer and one of the Museum’s longest-serving board members.)

After reading Everett’s manuscript poems, Polly offered this testimonial for the cover of the eventual book containing 125 of Everett’s poems, each numbered to match numbers in R. W. Franklin’s 1998 chronology: “An amazing, brilliant body of work. Sometimes Everett Decker

unlocks obscure Dickinson poems, sometimes he clarifies one, and sometimes he creates something entirely new. In reading both his work and Dickinson’s together, I found most of the ‘haiku’ successful standing alone, yet the engagement with both poets made them most meaningful to me. haiku Emily! is fascinating – a true labor of love.”

*Neil Soderstrom abjures the shroud of eccentricities employed to pique interest in Emily. Instead he introduces and reintroduces her to the public as the beautiful, talented, and perceptive person she was – much loved and respected by family, friends, and children. The Boston Globe rated Neil’s Deer-Resistant Landscaping among the 10 Best Gardening Books in 2009.*



**James R. Guthrie**  
*A Kiss from Thermopylae: Emily Dickinson and Law. University of Massachusetts Press, 2015. 272 pp. Paperback, 978-1-62534-113-6, \$25.95.*

*Reviewed by Daniel Schweitzer*

Recent years have seen a proliferation of books and articles that describe Emily Dickinson as a thoughtful, careful observer of and participant in the larger intellectual culture of her era. Paradoxically, when these works succeed, the force and clarity of their arguments can nearly obscure the tremendous research upon which they are constructed, lending genuinely novel insights the appearance of almost intuitive truths. James Guthrie's *A Kiss from Thermopylae* could be said to be one of these works, for although it is unlikely that most readers will approach Dickinson's letters and poems with the capacious knowledge of the legal culture of her time that he brings to bear, the vibrancy and deftness of Guthrie's prose carries the reader through legal textbooks, case laws, biographical and cultural concerns, woven together through readings of her poems so compelling that it becomes easy to lose sight of how original many of his arguments are.

Organized thematically, each of the book's seven chapters focuses on a major legal issue of the day, including bankruptcy, equity law, contracts, property, estate law, and criminal law; the final chapter considers the rule of law more generally. The capacious simplicity of this structure makes room for many overlapping concerns. As one might expect, Guthrie engages with the numerous instances of legal idioms in her poetry, as well as her substitution of "legally inflected words for those having more generic denotations," but these terms are an entry point for his argument rather

than its ultimate end (10). Her interest in and familiarity with the law, he demonstrates, were more for Dickinson than simply an available lexical option; they were a form of thought, an approach to the world and to poetry that simultaneously gave her a model of language "replete with words and expressions conveying a sense of enactment not present" in other discourses, suffusing her poetry with the same potential as performative legal language to alter "the very fabric of reality . . . not just for the adjudged, but also for the rest of society" (14). Guthrie argues that Dickinson's letters and poetry intimate a familial and mental life suffused by legal concerns and the changing nature of the law through the debates of the nineteenth century. The book shows how her poetry indirectly "transmutes" pressing legal issues of the time in a way that illuminates her thinking on "authoritarianism and individuality, social responsibility and the rights of citizens, religion and reason, fairness and obedience" (17).

Each chapter balances between examinations of the legal terms, Dickinson's knowledge of the debates raging around them, and the implications they have for readings of her poetry. Thus, even subjects that seem from their basic descriptions to be dry and abstruse – who but a specialist would see bankruptcy law as interesting? – become fascinating touchstones for any number of issues. Guthrie, for example, convincingly argues for the importance of the notion of bankruptcy to Dickinson personally, who was keenly aware of the financial straits into which her grandfather Samuel drove the family, and also poetically, as a typological metaphor for Adam's fall and redemption (27). Notions of legal equity, in Guthrie's handling, become reflections for larger issues of justice and set the stage for a wickedly funny and deeply compelling reading of "Alone and in

a Circumstance" (Fr1174) that is one of the several highlights of the book.

As important as the copious legal knowledge and individual readings Guthrie presents here is his sense throughout of the ways in which law, like poetry, works to create, define, and limit social roles and relationships. Much of the biographical information here focuses on Dickinson's relationships with her grandfather Samuel, father Edward, and brother Austin (all of whom practiced law), her correspondence with Otis Lord, and numerous other legally literate friends. More largely, her legal thought allowed her to consider her relationships and her roles in precise, nuanced ways, such that (as Guthrie amply illustrates) her notion of contract law becomes intertwined with the legal disempowerment of women, and her ideas of "property ownership" become inextricable from the attendant gendered concerns over rights.

Ultimately, Guthrie's choice of central legal terms proves judicious, as their range allows him to address a host of legal and cultural issues without losing sight of Dickinson's poetry. The only dissatisfaction I feel with *A Kiss from Thermopylae* is that I want more: there are a number of major areas that offer themselves for consideration as relevant to both the 19th-century legal landscape and Dickinson's works, including citizenship law and enfranchisement, to name just two. This fresh-piqued interest testifies to the significant contribution that Guthrie's book will make to ongoing studies of Dickinson, literature and law, and 19th-century of American literature.

*Daniel Schweitzer is a graduate student at SUNY Buffalo, where he is working on Dickinson and other 19th-Century US authors.*

**Nora Carroll**  
*Academy Girls. Lake Union Publishing, 2015. 394 pp. 978-1-50394-744-3, \$14.95.*

**Nina de Gramont**  
*The Last September. Algonquin Books, 2015. 320 pp. 978-1-61620-133-3, \$18.28.*

**Holly Nadler**  
*Emily: In the Here and Now. Branden Books, 2015. 228 pp. 978-1-82832-595-0, \$14.95.*

### Emily Dickinson, Imaginary Friend

By Annelise Brinck-Johnsen

Is Emily Dickinson relevant to the readers of today? Given the number of Dickinson-related novels that have sprung up in 2015, the answer seems to be yes – but with a catch. There's something about Emily Dickinson that reminds these authors of a genteel, upper crust New England of days gone by. As an inveterate New Englander myself, with a fondness for the pearls, clam chowder, and worn L.L. Bean flannels that prop up an ever-present fantasy of summering on the Vineyard, this nostalgia appeals to me. But there are limits to even my self-indulgent New England fetishization. Oh! The nostalgia for the days of yore when women's options were limited, and their frustration (sexual, political, intellectual) could be channeled into poetry! Three recently published Dickinson-themed books, *Academy Girls*, *The Last September*, and *Emily: In the Here and Now*, all revolve around literary 21st-century women whose marriages have fallen apart, and who turn to Dickinson for comfort.

Of course, there is more to these books than just sexual frustration and New England scenery. Nora Carroll's *Academy Girls* charts the return of Jane Milton, a failed author, to her old boarding school,

where she finds that (Gasp!) boys have been admitted and that the student body as a whole is more stressed out than ever before – surprising, considering that during Jane's tenure as a student she investigated a murder, hid evidence of a suspicious death, broke into a library, and was eventually expelled for plagiarism that she didn't even commit! The drama of the past pales in comparison to the emotional struggle Jane faces raising her son, falling for a married man, and dealing with the aforementioned stressed-out students, who drink Starbucks, wear Abercrombie and Fitch, and don't care about Emily Dickinson. Told through interwoven flashbacks, the crux of the story involves Jane and her friends' investigation into the murder of a scurrilous headmaster. All the clues are Emily Dickinson poems, and the fallout from the investigation shapes the fate of the characters.

The best use of Dickinson in the book is in the continual return to Fr307:

A solemn thing – it was – I said –  
 A Woman – white – to be –  
 And wear – if God should count me fit –  
 Her blameless mystery –

Carroll uses this fragment to allude to the inherent difficulty of being a woman with intellectual ambitions in a callous, indifferent, and patriarchal world. Though neither Carroll, nor her protagonist Jane come across as particularly solemn or isolated, the point is well taken. I do not mean to suggest that we should write off this book as frivolous because it concerns itself mainly with women's issues. With its lack of originality, however, I think we can be allowed to find fault.

*The Last September* by Nina de Gramont gives us another woman who adores Dickinson and uses Dickinson's poetry to help understand her own life. This centrality of poetry is evident from the book's first foreboding sentence: "Because I am a student

of literature, I will start my story on the day Charlie died." Gramont's heroine Brett is in the 8th year of her PhD at Amherst College, juggling a difficult dissertation on Dickinson with a fifteen-month old child, a philandering husband, and his mentally unbalanced brother. Against the always lovely backdrop of a dying summer at Cape Cod, Brett's life falls apart when her husband, Charlie, is brutally murdered. Unfortunately, there are no poems functioning as actual clues to the murder in this book, but the compassionate depiction of a self-doubting woman filtering her anger, fear, and love through the lens of literary analysis rings uncannily true at times (though occasionally the literary references stretch a bit too far to be fully believable – a scene where Brett catches her husband cheating and immediately starts to ruminate on Hemingway's wife comes to mind). Though none of the novels in this review are particularly academic, I find that de Gramont paints the most believable picture of academic life, and Brett's thesis on Dickinson's intense letters to her sister-in-law serves as a nice counterpoint to the energetic and emotional plot of this genuinely enjoyable, if occasionally self-conscious book.

Luckily, Holly Nadler's *Emily: In the Here and Now* lacks any self-consciousness whatsoever. Instead, Nadler's uninhibited novel embarks on a wacky and ridiculous plot in which a shadowy agency reanimates Emily Dickinson's body. Whereas the other protagonists had to extrapolate Dickinson's beliefs from her writing, Nadler's protagonist Lucinda is gifted with a flesh and blood Emily Dickinson resurrected by science to keep her company and dispense useful advice. Lucinda is in need of advice: she has been divorced three times; and her academic career at an unspecified college seven miles away from the town of Amherst has been harmed by her bestselling book (also entitled *Emily: In the Here and Now*). Lucinda has made her entire career by writ-

*Continued from page 31*

## Roger Lundin (1949-2015)

By Jane Donahue Eberwein

Roger Lundin's death last November 13 suddenly took from us an insightful, energetic scholar whose work framed Dickinson's writings in the context of nineteenth-century upheavals in religion, science, and literature. Best known for *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* (Eerdmans, 1998), Lundin had recently edited a forum on Dickinson for *Religion and Literature* (46.1, 2014) that included his own essay, "The Tender Pioneer in the Prairies of the Air: Dickinson and the Differences of God," along with contributions by James McIntosh, Richard E. Brantley, Victoria N. Morgan, Linda Freedman, Miho Nonaka, Thomas Gardner, and myself.

It was in connection with that forum that I got to know Lundin in person – and to learn that he pronounced his name "Lundeen" with the emphasis on the second syllable. We met at a panel he organized for the 2013 MLA annual meeting. He proved to be a gracious companion and a man whose physical stature amply measured up to his intellectual standing. Later that year, he gave a paper, "Vicariously from Vesuvius: Dickinson Meets the World," at the Maryland conference – his first attendance at an EDIS event, though he mentioned several times how he had wanted to get to the Trondheim meeting. We talked then about possibly collaborating for another panel this summer in Paris, and it was when I tried to recruit Roger for that proj-

ect that I discovered the notice of his death on the Wheaton College, Illinois website.

Emily Dickinson was a central figure in Roger Lundin's ambitious project of studying American religion and literature with emphasis on the nineteenth century, when science undermined the natural theology that had supported Christian thought and for the first time raised the possibility of unbelief as a tenable and perhaps even necessary response to advancing knowledge. He linked Dickinson to other writers who recognized and responded to such challenges. In *Believing Again: Doubt and Faith in a Secular Age* (Eerdmans, 2009), Lundin likened her to Herman Melville as one who "found the idea of 'signing off' appealing, but also . . . dreaded the thought of being forsaken by God and robbed of divine promises," who experienced an internal struggle "between the desire to be free of God's judgment and the fear

of being orphaned by his death" (113). That book develops more fully the argument in *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* where he linked her with Melville, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, each of whom "took the full measure of the loss of God and bravely tried to calculate the cost" (148).

The biography gave Lundin opportunity to correct misperceptions of Dickinson's religious history. It was not Puritanism against which she rebelled but the Whiggish piety of the antebellum Connecticut Valley. Nor was her adult perspective so much one of defiance as disenchantment along with a restless pursuit of "perennial questions about language, consciousness, and God" that advocates of an emerging secular positivism dismissed (216). While admiring her courage in confronting the intellectual upheavals of her time, he also delighted in her metaphorical brilliance and tonal range.

As an avowedly Christian scholar-teacher, Lundin ranged widely in his explorations of literary theory, hermeneutics, science, art, theology, and approaches to teaching. His books and essays drew upon Shakespeare, Blake, Wordsworth, Emerson, Paul Ricoeur, Kenneth Burke, Hans Ur von Balthasar, Karl Barth, and Marilynne Robinson among many others, and memorial tributes by his students on the Wheaton College website reveal how brilliantly he linked all these thinker-au-



Photo reprinted courtesy of Wheaton College

thors to perennially recurring issues of faith and doubt. Teaching awards and frequent lecturing invitations reflect his communicative gifts, and I am especially delighted to read Sara Elliott's recollection of how fully Lundin engaged himself, even physically, in what he taught: she reports, "I can see him, as if it were just yesterday, standing and reciting Dickinson, stretching out his long arm, twisting his 6' 6" frame just slightly to demonstrate how 'worlds scoop their arcs.'"

Lundin's most lasting professional affiliation was with Wheaton College, from which he graduated in 1971. After earning a Master's degree in Theological Studies from Gordon-Conwell Seminary and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Connecticut, he joined the Wheaton faculty in 1978 and was Professor of English and Arthur F. Holmes Professor of Faith and Learning at the time of his death. He held visiting appointments at other colleges, most recently at the Duke Divinity School, and was president of the Conference on Christianity and Literature. Another affiliation central to Lundin's work was his role as Director of the American Literature and Religion Seminar, affiliated with the Erasmus Institute at the University of Notre Dame. Two essay collections edited by Lundin emerged from that collaboration. *There Before Us: Religion, Literature, and Culture from Emerson to Wendell Berry* (Eerdmans, 2007) presented work by Barbara Packer, John Gatta, Michael Colacurcio, Katherine Clay Bassard, Harold K. Bush, Jr., M. D. Walhout, Gail McDonald, Lawrence Buell, and Andrew Delbanco along with his own essay on "Nimble Believing: Dickinson and the Conflict of Interpretations." *Invisible Conversations: Religion in the Literature of America* (Baylor, 2009) featured an essay on Dickinson by Elisa New with a response by Barbara Packer

as well as Lundin's introduction and concluding reflection, "The Play of the Lord': On the Limits of Critique."<sup>1</sup> His latest among many books was *Beginning with the Word: Modern Literature and the Question of Belief* (Baker, 2014).

Roger Lundin is greatly missed by fellow Dickinson-lovers as well as by his wife Sue, their three children and seven grandchildren, his students, colleagues, and fellow scholars. We regret losing his kindly manner, depth of knowledge, scrupulous editing skills, and graceful prose. And we may wish for him the blessing he himself evoked with respect to contending critical camps: "If there is a place for the poor, the dispossessed, and even the virtuous on the rumbling lope to heaven, and if the antelope and the lion may both take their place upon the ark, is it too much to hope that in these places and processions, there might be room even for some Constantinians, an Amherst recluse or two, and even a few branch-climbing Calvinists?" (*Invisible Conversations*, 194).

Note

<sup>1</sup> Other contributors include Denis Donoghue, Lawrence Buell, Mark A. Noll, Albert J. Raboteau, Katherine Clay Bassard, John Stauffer, Alan Wolfe, Andrew Delbanco, Stanley Hauerwas, and Ralph C. Wood.

Long-time EDIS member Jane Donahue Eberwein is Distinguished Professor of English, emerita, at Oakland University, in Rochester, Michigan. Most recently she co-edited, with Stephanie Farrar and Cristanne Miller, *Dickinson in Her Own Time* (Iowa, 2015).

### Book Reviews, continued from page 29

ing about the general population's love for Dickinson, and even coined the name "Emily-Head" to describe the poet's many hardcore fans who love her so much that they copy her manner of wearing a ribbon about her neck. As an international expert in the art of loving Dickinson, Lucinda is naturally the one entrusted with her reanimated body, and the duo get to chat about Lucinda's ex-husbands, Dickinson's decidedly male, never in any way female (how rude to even suggest such a thing) lovers, and the nature of death. It is perhaps the strangely conservative view of Dickinson

that is the true undoing of this otherwise hilarious book. Though the incorrect facts and unusual grammar definitely do not help, they could perhaps be overlooked in light of the entertainment provided by imagining Dickinson running around New England with a gang of murderous poet-reanimators in hot pursuit, but the moralizing view of Dickinson as some form of saint is immensely grating. The energetically silly plot is marred by this incongruous piety.

All told, these three different novels boil down to a similar premise. They narrate the connection forged between a beloved poet and those who read her. Their com-

mon downfall lies in their shared assumption that one must be an academic to truly love and understand Dickinson – and the subsequent unconvincing depictions of the life of a woman scholar who truly "gets" Dickinson. Where they succeed is in demonstrating the deep love and devotion engendered by a truly remarkable poet – and that is nothing to sneer at.

Annelise Brinck-Johnsen is an undergraduate at Dartmouth. She will be presenting a paper at the EDIS International Conference in Paris this summer, sponsored by Dartmouth as a James O. Freedman Presidential Scholar.



## New EDIS Board Member-At-Large

### George Boziwick

George Boziwick is a composer and music librarian with an MA in music composition from Hunter College, and an MLS in Library Service from Columbia University. His compositions, which include a number of Dickinson settings, have been recorded and performed by a variety of ensembles and organizations including Composers Concordance, the Goliard Ensemble, and the Dorian Wind Quintet. Since 1986 he has been on the staff of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, first as a music librarian, and Curator of American Music, and most recently since 2006, as Chief of the Music Division.



portant part of Dickinson's life and cultural times. He has published blogs on Dickinson and music for both the New York Public Library and the Houghton Library at Harvard University. His article "My Business is to Sing": Emily Dickinson's Musical Borrowings" was published in the May 2014 Special Issue of the *Journal of the Society for American Music*, and his forthcoming essay, "Emily Dickinson's Music Book: A Performative Exploration," the source of Red Skies Music Ensemble's performance at last year's meeting, is scheduled for publication in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* in 2016.

EDIS members know him best as the co-founder, with Trudy Williams, of The Red Skies Music Ensemble, whose mission is to present programs that make archives and special collections come alive through research and performance. They have co-created and presented four different programs on Dickin-

son and music, most recently at Harvard University and at the 2015 EDIS Annual Meeting, in Amherst.

George's area of Dickinson research is a musicological one, focusing on music as an im-

He is thrilled and honored to have been elected to the Board of the EDIS, and he looks forward to working with the Board and to bringing his network of composers, performers, presenters, music scholars, and information professionals into the sphere of the Emily Dickinson International Society.

### Polly Longworth Receives 2016 Sammy Award

The Jones Library has announced that distinguished Dickinson scholar, Polly Longworth, has been selected as one of the winners of the Third Annual Samuel Minot Jones Awards for Literary Achievement. The other 2016 Sammy has been awarded to Aaron Lansky, founder of the Yiddish Book Center at Hampshire College, and a recipient of a 1989 MacArthur Fellowship Grant.

As chair of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, Polly Longworth helped to establish the Emily Dickinson Museum, including both The Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens. Her books on Emily Dickinson include *Austin and Mabel: The Amherst Affair and Love Letters of Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd* (1984), *The World of Emily Dickinson* (1997), and, with Christopher Benfey, *The Dickinsons of Amherst* (2001).

The Sammy award honors Samuel Minot Jones, benefactor of the Jones Library, which is well known to EDIS members for the extensive archive of material related to nineteenth-century Amherst.

Longworth affirmed the honor of receiving a Sammy: "I'm grateful that the Jones Library, an enterprise at the spiritual heart of the Amherst community, will present me one of its awards. I'm also delighted to be in the company of Aaron Lansky, who has rescued a language from extinction. The ceremony provides me an eight-minute chance to thank the world for inventing libraries, the Jones among them, as places that keep alive and nourish the lifelong joys of reading, research, and writing, without which we'd all be barbarians."



Polly Longworth at the Emily Dickinson Exhibition at the New York Botanical Gardens in 2010

### 2016 Emily Dickinson International Society Graduate Student Fellowship

#### Justin Tackett

The 2016 EDIS Graduate Student Fellowship has been awarded to Justin Tackett. Justin is a PhD candidate in English at Stanford University. He is researching sound technology and poetry from 1850 to 1930 in Britain and America. His dissertation comprises chapters on stethoscopy, phonography, microphony, radiophony, and telegraphy, the last of these focusing on Emily Dickinson. In this chapter, telegraphy represents immediacy and compression of language, elements that also figure prominently in Dickinson's poetry. He plans to use this generous EDIS fellowship to travel to Amherst for the first time to visit the Homestead, Evergreens, and Dickinson archive, as well as to research the impact of the telegraph (and telephone, initially called the "speaking telegraph") on the town and Dickinson family. Most recently, he has published articles on Victorian periodicals and Gerard Manley Hopkins, with an article on Inklings member Charles Williams forthcoming this summer.

### 2016 Emily Dickinson International Society Scholar in Amherst Award

#### Gillian Osborne

The 2016 EDIS Scholar in Amherst Award has been granted to Gillian Osborne. Gillian is a postdoctoral fellow in English at Harvard University's Center for the Environment, where her research and writing interests include American literature, poetry and poetics, and environmental history. She holds degrees from Columbia University (in comparative literature) and the University of California at Berkeley (in creative writing and English) and has taught at UC-Berkeley, Bard College, and San Quentin Correctional Facility. Her work on Dickinson has appeared in the *The Emily Dickinson Journal* and *The Boston Review*, and she has published poems in such journals as *The Threepenny Review* and *Volt*.

Her current book project investigates how nineteenth-century American writers, desiring a closer communion with the natural world, could long for both an end to literature and the intensification of literary faculties. Focusing her investigations through Dickinson and Thoreau, she considers authors and naturalists on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite their differences, these authors focalize a common sensibility of the period – a faith in fundamental literary practices of thought, reading, writing, and figuration as a means of connecting humans to the earth.

### 2017 EDIS Fellowship Prizes

The EDIS announces a **Graduate Student Fellowship** award of \$1,000 in support of graduate student scholarship on Emily Dickinson. The project need not be devoted solely to Dickinson, but her work should be a substantial focus. The award may be used for any expense incurred to advance the project. Preference will be given to applicants in the dissertation stage or writing a work aimed at publication. To apply, please send a cv, a cover letter, a 600-800 word project description, a brief bibliography, and contact information for two references to Eliza Richards at [ecr@email.unc.edu](mailto:ecr@email.unc.edu). Applications are due by January 15, 2017. Applicants will be notified of final decisions by March 1.

The Emily Dickinson International Society invites applications for the 2017 **Dickinson Scholar**

**Award**, which supports new research on Dickinson. The project need not be devoted solely to Dickinson, but her work should be a substantial focus. The award of \$2,000 may be used for any expense incurred to advance the project. Preference will be given to applicants with completed PhDs who are in the early stages of their careers. To apply for the award, please submit: a cv, a cover letter, a 600-800 word project proposal, a brief bibliography, and a preliminary budget to [ecr@email.unc.edu](mailto:ecr@email.unc.edu). Deadline for applications is January 15, 2017. Applicants will be notified of final decisions by March 1.

For more information, see [www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org)

**2016 Annual Meeting**  
**"The Angled Road Preferred Against the Mind": Experimental Dickinson**  
**Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris**  
**June 24-26, 2016, Paris, France**

REGISTRATION FEES

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Member Registration  | 150   |
| Graduate Student Member Registration   | 75    |
| Non-Member Registration  | 185   |
| Graduate Student Non-Member Registration   | 100   |
| Conference Patron (Patrons will support lower fees for graduate students) – To regular conference fee, ADD \$150 or more | _____ |
| Unable to attend? Support the conference with a contribution   | _____ |
| Friday Evening Banquet tickets, @ \$50 each  | _____ |
| Total:   | _____ |

**No Refunds After May 31st, 2016**

**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.

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

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

## Dickens in Dickinson

By Alex Duvall

Allusions to the works of writers Emily Dickinson admired in her youth do appear in her poetry. "So bashful when I spied her!" (J91) contains a direct reference to the character Alfred Jingle, and his exploitative actions in Charles Dickens' first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*. Dickinson regularly quoted Dickens in letters, sometimes even as if his characters are living in Amherst (e.g., L30).

In *Pickwick*, Mr. Jingle has won the friendship of the Pickwick Club, and has been invited to stay at Dingley Dell with the Wardle family. Mr. Wardle, an aged country gentleman, has a sister of a similar age who has never married. Mr. Jingle reveals his true colors to the club and takes advantage of the situation: "It was a remarkable coincidence perhaps, but it was nevertheless a fact that Mr. Jingle within five minutes of his arrival at Manor Farm on the preceding night, had inwardly resolved to lay siege to the heart of the Spinster Aunt, without delay." Here, Mr. Jingle makes his move to flatter the old woman, stealing the opportunity to woo the spinster sister of Mr. Wardle of Dingley Dell, in order to run off with her and marry her for her money.

The poem takes on a narrative perspective of the fictional Mr. Jingle, the ne'er-do-well Dickensian character, confessing his crime to the reader. The opening lines and first stanza of Dickinson's poem allude to the scene where Mr. Jingle first encounters the Spinster Aunt:

So bashful when I spied her!  
 So pretty – so ashamed!  
 So Hidden in her leaflets  
 Lest anybody find –

The Spinster Aunt is described in Dickens' novel as having bashful reactions to the passes at her made by the aging Mr. Tupman (member of the Pickwick Club), as well as later, when the young rascal, Mr. Jingle, makes his move and actually succeeds in convincing her that Mr. Tupman is deceiving her with his affection (something Mr. Jingle is actually

intent on doing). "Whether the hearing herself described as a 'lovely woman,' softened the asperity of her grief, we know not. She blushed slightly, and cast a grateful look on Mr. Jingle." Here, the Spinster has been won over by the deceitful charm of Mr. Jingle.

The second stanza describes not only her "blushing" at the attention from men, but also feigned resistance from the Spinster:

So breathless till I passed her –  
 So helpless when I turned  
 And bore her struggling, blushing,  
 Her simple haunts beyond!

As Dickens describes the scene, "He (Mr. Tupman) jumped up, and, throwing his arm round the neck of the Spinster Aunt, imprinted upon her lips, numerous kisses, which after a due show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively. . . ." The "simple haunts" that Dickinson's Mr. Jingle is referring to are the gardens of Dingley Dell, which the Spinster never ventures out of. It is here that Mr. Wardle's servant (known as the Fat Boy) catches the Spinster kissing Mr. Tupman and conversing with Mr. Jingle. The Spinster "haunts" the garden in that she frequents it often, enticing older gentlemen.

In the third stanza, *Pickwick* appears specifically:

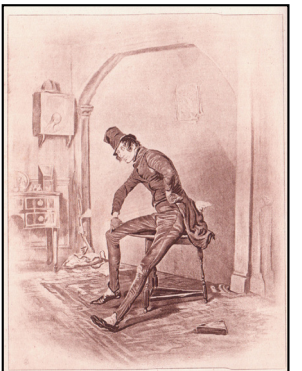
For whom I robbed the Dingle –  
 For whom betrayed the Dell –  
 Many, will doubtless ask me,  
 But I shall never tell!

Jack Capps heard the reference to "Dingley Dell" in these lines, but he does not explore the context. Mr. Jingle's motives are questioned by Mr. Wardle and the Pickwick Club when Mr. Jingle is confronted at the hotel where he runs away with the Spinster. "'You – you are a nice rascal, aren't you?' exclaimed Mr. Wardle, breathless with passion. . . . 'How dare you drag my sister from my

house?'" Mr. Jingle is accused of treachery in "robbing" Dingley Dell, and "betraying" the Pickwick Club, but never openly admits that he ran off with the Spinster even though he accepts a bribe to call off his marriage proposal to her.

Presumably, he wanted to run off with an older woman of wealth for her money. Dickinson, however, asks "*For whom*" he did it, not why. While he may have done it for himself,

Dickinson hints at nobler motives. At the end of the novel, Mr. Jingle returns and assists Mr. Pickwick and his servant during their brief stay in a debtor's prison (the portion of the novel Dickinson invokes in her letter to Jane Humphrey, cited earlier). His humility appears when he sees that his treachery resulted in their imprisonment, but a reader of *Pickwick* does not see this side of Mr. Jingle until the story's end.



Mr. Jingle as represented by Frederick Barnard, in the 1885 edition of *Pickwick*.

In this view, "whom" could refer to the Spinster Aunt herself. Mr. Jingle may have intended to manipulate her emotions for money, but he was also the first person who did more than just flirt with her in the garden (like countless other fat old men like Mr. Tupman). Mr. Jingle instilled a sense of excitement, passion, and adventure in the simple, lonely life of the spinster sister of Mr. Wardle.

*Alex Duvall's work has appeared in Cygnus Journal of Speculative Fiction, Iridium Sound: Breakroom Stories, Breath and Shadow Magazine, Engineers & Engines Magazine, and NKU Expressed, among others.*





*A Route of Evanescence  
With a revolving Wheel;  
A Resonance of Emerald,  
A Rush of Cochineal;  
And every Blossom on the Bush  
Adjusts it's tumbled head, –  
The Mail from Tunis – probably,  
An easy Morning's Ride. (Fr1489)*

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