

# Bulletin

Volume 23, Number 2

November/December 2011

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

*Exist an Oriental Circuit*

*There is something peculiarly  
interesting to me in their self  
denial*

*... deserve hot irons,  
and Chinese Tartary*

*great com-  
mand over  
my risible  
faculty*

*like an Ori-  
ental Tale  
To others,  
fabulous -*

*African  
Exuberance  
And Asi-  
atic Rest*

*Oriental  
heresies  
Exhilarate  
the Bee*

*my Heart -  
outweighs -  
East India*

*His Mind  
like Fabrics  
of the East -*



*Opium Eaters & fearing to  
continue the practice*

*The Swarthy fellow swam -  
And bore my Jewel - Home -*

*Memories - of Palm -  
Cannot be stifled - with  
Narcotic -*

## ASIAN AUTHORS RESPOND TO DICKINSON

# EMILY DICKINSON INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

## Officers

President:	Jonnie Guerra
Vice President:	Martha Nell Smith
Secretary:	Nancy Pridgen
Treasurer:	James C. Fraser

---

## Board Members

Antoine Cazé	Jonnie Guerra	Nancy Pridgen
Paul Crumbley	Suzanne Juhasz	Martha Nell Smith
Jed Deppman	Barbara Mossberg	Alexandra Socarides
Cindy Dickinson	Marianne Noble	Hiroko Uno
(Honorary Board Member)	Elizabeth Petrino	Jane Wald
James C. Fraser	Vivian Pollak	(Honorary Board Member)

---

Legal Advisor:	Barbara Leukart	Chapter Development Chair:	Nancy Pridgen
Nominations Chair:	Suzanne Juhasz	Book Review Editor:	Barbara Kelly
Membership Chair:	Elizabeth Petrino	<i>Bulletin</i> Editor:	Daniel Manheim
Dickinson and the Arts Chair:	Barbara Dana	<i>Journal</i> Editor:	Cristanne Miller

---

## Sustaining Members

Martha Ackmann	David Gillies	Martha Nell Smith
Jane D. Eberwein	Cristanne Miller	Gary Lee Stonum
David H. Forsyth	Carol Phippen	Ethan Tarasov
James C. Fraser	Emily Seelbinder	Robin Tarasov

---

## Contributing Members

Yoshiko Akamatsu	Judith Farr	Burleigh Muten
Paul Beckley	LeeAnn Gorthey	Jo Ann Orr
Ellen Beinhorn	Jonnie G. Guerra	Vivian R. Pollak
Mary Elizabeth K. Bernhard	Suzanne Juhasz	Melanie Reed
Richard Brantley	Niels Kjaer	Robert M. Russell
Diane K. Busker	Mary Loeffelholz	Katherine B. Schwarzenbach
Antoine Caze	Cynthia Mackenzie	Nobuko Shimomura
Angela Conrad	Mayumi Maeda	Richard Tryon
Carolyn L. Cooley	Daniel Manheim	Hiroko Uno
Barbara Dana	Gregory Mattingly	Michael Wall
Scott Donaldson	Aífe Murray	Kathy Welton

*EDIS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial contributions of these members.*

EDIS *Bulletin* (ISSN 1055-3932) is published twice yearly, May/June and November/December, by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. Standard Mail non-profit postage is paid at Lexington, KY 40511. Membership in the Society is open to all persons with an interest in Emily Dickinson and her work. For further information, contact Jonnie Guerra, President, EDIS, 1812 Garden Street, West Lafayette, IN 47906 USA or jgguerra@purdue.edu. Annual dues are \$50.00 for regular members, \$30.00 for students, \$200.00 for sustaining members, \$113.00 for institutional members, \$100.00 for contributing members (all of whom receive the *Bulletin* and the *Emily Dickinson Journal*), or \$20.00 for associate members (*Bulletin* only). Membership inquiries should be directed to James C. Fraser, 159 Prospect St., Apt 7, Acton, MA, 01720-3654, USA. Membership applications and changes of address should be sent to The Emily Dickinson International Society, c/o Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211-0966, USA. Direct changes of address to jrnlcirc@mail.press.jhu.edu, 800-548-1784 (U.S. and Canada), or 410-516-6987; fax to 410-516-3866. Address submissions for the *Bulletin* to Daniel Manheim, Centre College, 600 West Walnut St., Danville, KY 40422, USA or dan.manheim@centre.edu. Submission deadlines are March 1 (Spring issue) and September 1 (Fall issue). All articles become the property of the *Bulletin*. Back issues are available for \$5.00 each from the editor. Copyright © 2011 by The Emily Dickinson International Society, Inc. The *Bulletin* is indexed in EBSCO, Humanities International Complete, and the MLA Bibliography.

# IN THIS ISSUE

## Features

- 4 **Emily Dickinson Knew How to Suffer** 25  
By Naoki Onishi
- 6 **Dickinson Reading the Orient and *Jane Eyre*** 27  
By Yanbin Kang
- 8 **Approaching Emily Dickinson**  
By Cuihua Xu
- 23 **Making Emily** 28  
By Norman Worrall

## Series

- 11 **Poet to Poet**  
“From Blank to Blank / A Theadless Way”:  
**On Myung Mi Kim** 14  
By Andrew Rippeon  
Series Editor, Jonnie Guerra
- 18 **What’s Your Story?**  
**A Scribe’s View of Emily Dickinson** 32  
By W.J. Waddington  
Series Editor, Georgiana Strickland
- 20 **Teaching Dickinson**  
**An Amherst Native’s Journey** 34  
By Liz Sokolov  
Series Editor, Marianne Noble

## Reviews

- New Publications**  
By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor
- Review of Paul Crumbley, *Winds of Will: Emily Dickinson and the Sovereignty of Democratic Thought***  
Reviewed by Domhnall Mitchell
- Review of Ruth Owen Jones and Sheila Rainford, eds., *Harvesting History: Amherst Massachusetts Farms 1700-2010***  
Reviewed by Susan Snively

## Members’ News

- Great Debates: 2011 EDIS Annual Meeting**  
By Dan Manheim
- 29 **In Appreciation: Karen Dandurand**  
By Martha Ackmann and Joanne Dobson
- Chapter News**
- 34 **Badinage Divine**  
**The Ninth Inning**  
By Jo Ann Orr

Cover Image: *Broadside*. The Great Chinese Museum. Reprinted by permission of the American Antiquarian Society.

Emily Dickinson’s fascination with the part of the world she casually referred to as the “Orient,” a place she loosely populated with Malays, Chinese, and East Indians, began with her 1846 visit to Boston. Hiroko Uno describes how, on that trip, in addition to her celebrated excursion to the Great Chinese Museum in Marlborough Chapel, she encountered exotic fabrics and other materials characteristic of the Chinese Trade.<sup>1</sup> Asian readers’ interest in Dickinson began early. According to Masako Takeda, Mabel Loomis Todd left a copy of “This is the land that sunset washes” (Fr297) to the village of Esashi, Hokkaido, in 1896,<sup>2</sup> and The Emily Dickinson Society of Japan was founded in 1980, almost ten years before the Emily Dickinson International Society. There is a long history of Dickinson scholarship in India, and the poet is growing increasingly popular in China. The already thriving dialog between Dickinson and Asian readers continues to expand.

<sup>1</sup>“Emily Dickinson’s Encounter with the East,” *Emily Dickinson Journal*, vXVII, #1, 2008

<sup>2</sup>Masako Takeda, “Emily Dickinson in Japan,” in Domhnall Mitchell and Maria Stuart, eds., *The International Reception of Emily Dickinson*, London, Continuum, 2011

---

Dickinson poems are reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from the following volumes: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition*, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1998, 1999 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Copyright © 1929, 1935 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, Copyright © renewed 1957, 1963 by Mary L. Hampson: Little Brown and Co., Boston. Dickinson letters are reprinted by permission of the publishers from *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1958, 1986 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson.

# Emily Dickinson Knew How to Suffer

By Naoki Onishi

Because I could not stop for the earthquake, it suddenly stopped for me. When it started to tremor in the early afternoon of March 11th, immediately I felt something I had never experienced. It got stronger and stronger, and lasted long, as if it would not stop at all. Although I could keep standing on the street of Tokyo and thought after the initial shock that everything would be all right, the silence on the street where all the cars momentarily stopped and began moving slowly was strange and eerie. The landscape was, so to speak, listening to what would come next.

For the people living in Tokyo like myself it was overwhelmingly shocking, but the city itself looked safe and the damage only minor, mainly because no fire was triggered by the earthquake. We went back to business, trying to resume routine work as if nothing had happened. But we were wrong. At the same moment when we thought it was all right and all over, something unprecedented in Japan's modern history of natural disasters was occurring in the broad eastern area of the country. Almost 20,000 people were struggling in vain for their lives in the mountainous waves of the great tsunami, and another dreadful disaster was concurrently beginning, the meltdown of nuclear power plants. We learned all these things from the breaking news on TV, which repeatedly showed appalling scenes of disaster, at first live from a helicopter, but later by carefully selected videos, so as not to show the real things, damaged and dead bodies.

Wordlessly watching TV, I was reminded of the similar devastating impact of the falling of the World Trade Center on 9/11 in 2001. Just the same way, I was watching TV speechless and could not stop watching the same horrifying scene repeated a thousand times until the image was perfectly imprinted in my brain, not knowing at that time that I was losing my classmate, who had been working for a bank in that building. In fact, as he was the first Japanese person discovered

among almost three thousands victims, discovery of his body was widely covered by the news media. I saw a profile-photo of his innocent and "narrow" face on the front-page of a newspaper.

What would people do to cope with this kind of traumatic event, and with the tremendous suffering, public or personal? These tragedies leave a deep scar in our minds which feels as if it would never heal. In what way can one fill the gap, the void almost physically felt in our body? As Dickinson wrote,

To fill a Gap  
Insert the Thing that caused it-  
Block it up  
With Other – and 'twill yawn the more –  
You cannot solder an Abyss  
With Air – (Fr647)

Reading the book *Wider than the Sky*, I learned that there had been a marathon reading of Emily Dickinson's poetry in the aftermath of 9/11. It was moving to read the article of Ellen Louise Hart concerned with the occasion, "May the Circle Be Unbroken: Reading Emily Dickinson after 9/11." We learn how Emily Dickinson's poetry functioned as a healing power, not simply giving some encouragement or cheering-up for the suffering people, but more deeply by sharing the feelings of loss and grief.<sup>1</sup>

Trying to get some sleep after the earthquake and tsunami, I could not get rid of the horrifying scenes which seemed to be embedded in my brain. It keeps coming back night by night. Emily Dickinson must have had the same experience:

It burned me - in the Night -  
It Blistered to My Dream -  
It sickened fresh upon my sight -  
With every Morn that came - (Fr636)

After several sleepless nights of worries and fears of aftershock, I opened the newspaper



Photo Credit: Yuichi Yoshitomi

and found a Japanese translation of a poem by Emily Dickinson quoted in a popular column entitled "Vox Populi Vox Dei," of the *Asahi Shimbun*, the major national newspaper<sup>2</sup>:

Unto a broken heart  
No other one may go  
Without the high prerogative  
Itself hath suffered too. (Fr1745)

This poem was quite moving, and in some sense, refreshing, because it offered sentiment and feelings different from the sorrow and grief of the suffering people, or the sympathy and encouragement other people offered to them.

At that time, all kinds of media were filled with public statements trying to show condolence and encouragement. It is natural for a human being to try to extend some kind of help to suffering people, physically and emotionally. But often, to the people who are in

the midst of deep sorrows and despair, even words of kindness can be disturbing and unpleasant. This kind of gap between a suffering person and one trying to console is painfully described in Joan Kirkby's essay, "'A crescent still abides': Emily Dickinson and the Work of Mourning." She writes, trying with good intention to console a person who was in deep sorrow, "I also remember his recoiling from my words while at the same time thanking me for telling him, but in a highly ironic tone. I realized then that I had crossed some unspoken boundary where it is almost never all right to speak of the inner world."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, as Dickinson mentioned, one has to have suffered oneself to approach suffering people. The experience is called by Dickinson "high prerogative" as if the experience were something powerful and privileged, only given to special high-ranked people. The same kind of understanding of the gap or distance between the suffering and the well-intentioned consoler was also expressed by John Keats after he nursed his brother through the last stage of tuberculosis:

None can Usurp this height  
But those to whom the miseries of the world  
Are miseries, and will not let them rest.<sup>4</sup>

Without denying, of course, the heart-warming efforts of lots of people who donated relief for the recovery of the disaster area, we learned that suffering can be only understood and healed by those who have suffered.<sup>5</sup>

During the rather long period after the disaster, public statements shown on TV almost to the extent of tedium replaced merry-making commercial films. They were all neutral or rather moralistic, endorsing mutual help and kind sympathy. One of them was a poetry reading, however, which was not directly related to the disaster itself but to a mental situation between the persons involved. The particular poem was written by an ill-fated Japanese woman-poet by the name of Misuzu Kaneko (1903-1930), who took her own life at the age of twenty-six to protest the fact that after her divorce, her womanizing husband would get custody of their daughter. Japanese law at that time stipulated that only the fa-

ther's side had the right to take care of a child when a couple divorced. Kaneko left 512 poems before her death, and some of them were published in major journals of children's literature, but soon totally forgotten. It is only recently that her poems were published in a complete edition. They began to draw keen attention, especially after the great earthquake. This is the poem almost all Japanese memorized after the earthquake:

Echo  
(Originally titled "Kodama" in Japanese)

When you say "Let's play"  
He says "Let's play"  
When you say "Stupid"  
He says "Stupid"

When you say "I won't play with you any more"  
He says "I won't play with you"

Later, you feel lonely  
And say "I'm sorry"  
He says "I'm sorry"

Are they echoes?  
No, anyone.<sup>6</sup>

Just like Nell McDonnell, who wrote that she stuck to the poem of Emily Dickinson in a crashing plane – "I hold onto the long o in 'Hope' as if it were a life preserver" – all those poets, Dickinson, Keats and Kaneko, were holding onto the words not for fame or money but to talk about the matter of life and death.<sup>7</sup>

The great earthquake and tsunami were tremendously shocking disasters, but probably they "kindly" stopped for us so we would learn something, which would not have been learned if it had not happened. For many of us it was, indeed, a life-changing experience. As an Emily Dickinson reader, at least I learned one thing, which is too obvious and basic. Many of us study Emily Dickinson's poetry professionally. While not denying the significance of scholastic approaches, cultural, gender, religious, biographical and theoretical, it is mandatory for us as readers of Emily Dickinson to maintain the simple fact in our mind. She, as well as John Keats and Misuzu

Kaneko, was writing poetry not for fun or for fame, but for life and death. Sometimes we lose sound insight into poetry when we put too much emphasis on scholastic approaches. In the classroom situations, therefore, may we not forget the "high prerogative." Emily Dickinson has the final word:

The Province of the Saved  
Should be the Art – To save –  
Through Skill obtained in Themselves –  
The Science of the Grave

No Man can understand  
But He that has endured  
The Dissolution – in Himself –  
That Man – be qualified

To qualify Despair  
To Those who failing new -  
Mistake Defeat for Death – Each time –  
Till acclimated – to –

(Fr659)

---

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ellen Louise Hart, "May the Circle Be Unbroken: Reading Emily Dickinson after 9/11," *Wider than the Sky: Essays and Meditations on the Healing Power of Emily Dickinson*, eds. Cindy MacKenzie and Barbara Dana, The Kent State University Press, 2007, pp. 69-82

<sup>2</sup>*Asahi Shimbun*, March 17, 2011

<sup>3</sup>Joan Kirkby, "'A crescent still abides': Emily Dickinson and the Work of Mourning," *Wider than the Sky*, p. 129

<sup>4</sup>A friend of mine in the disaster-stricken Sendai area wrote to me that this phrase of John Keats' poem, "The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream," kept coming to his mind.

<sup>5</sup>Taking this opportunity, let me express on behalf of the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan our heart-felt appreciation for the raising of a relief fund initiated by the Emily Dickinson International Society.

<sup>6</sup><http://www.japanstyle.info/03/entry15418.html>

<sup>7</sup>Nell McDonnell, *Wider than the Sky*, p. 66

---

*Professor Naoki Onishi, President of the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan, teaches in the Division of Arts and Sciences of the International Christian University in Tokyo. He has written, in Japanese, A Myth Called Pilgrim Fathers, and he has translated into Japanese books by U.S. historians Edwin Gaustad and Bernard Bailyn. Currently, he is working on a translation of Wider than the Sky: Essays on the Healing Power of Emily Dickinson, edited by Cindy MacKenzie and Barbara Dana.*

# Dickinson Reading the Orient and *Jane Eyre*

By Yanbin Kang

His oriental heresies  
Exhilarate the Bee,  
And filling all the Earth and Air  
With gay apostasy

Fatigued at last, a Clover plain  
Allures his jaded Eye  
That lowly Breast where Butterflies  
Have felt it meet to die – (Fr1562)

\* \* \* \* \*

The reference to “oriental heresies” in the beginning line of the above Dickinson poem compels me to examine Dickinson’s Oriental stance. Vivian R. Pollak observes that the Orient in the above poem suggests “an exotic world elsewhere, which is more willing to indulge the heretical sexual and political hungers” (86). She further argues that Dickinson recommends the Orient as “a fuller and more colorful life,” and rejects “white sustenance” (88).

However, my reading indicates that the clover’s plainness triumphs over “oriental heresies” even if the Orient is not blatantly condemned as place of submission to irrational impulses. This unfavorable evocation of the Orient collides with her more liberal and even utopian stance about the colored races and the East. For example, she defends an Asian “Leopard” which is “spurn[ed]” by Western “Civilization” (Fr276), and she invests the often-despised Malay with the wisdom of being “unconscious” of “Riches” (Fr417), of regarding gain and loss as “One” (Fr451). The challenge Fr1562 poses to these favorable views manifests the complexity of Dickinson’s racial ideas and the rivalry of strands of Orientalism available to her.

The phrase, “Oriental heresies” directs us to Dickinson’s readings that contained similar images of Orientalism. In many literary texts to which Dickinson had access, the Orient is described as luridly sexual, perverse, exotic and beautiful. The intermingling of the Orient as an embodiment of sexuality and as a hea-



Yanbin Kang at home in Guilin, China, “a beautiful place which every American president will visit.”

then world develops into Christian portrayals of the Orient as immoral and sexually licentious. For instance, Hawthorne specifies the “Oriental characteristic” of Hester Prynne as “rich, voluptuous” (147). In Dickinson’s favorite play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, the West is sober, military, and masculine while the East is exotic, pleasure-loving, and sexual. Cleopatra, an enchantress with unapologetic openness of sexuality, embodies an English fantasy of Egypt, a “carnavalesque zone of excess” and “impulsive self-dramatization” (Barbour 58).

In Shakespeare’s play, plainness fails. Octavia, Antony’s modest wife, in beauty and temperament Cleopatra’s opposite, is like Dickinson’s “Clover plain.” For instance, she arrives in Rome without the fanfare or trappings of a proper entourage. Antony perceives Octavia as rather lifeless and is willing to risk the security of the empire in order

to partake in the pleasures of Egypt. The plainness of Octavia precipitates, if it does not result in, Antony’s return to and reconciliation with Cleopatra.

In Dickinson’s poem, the opposite happens. The bee, exhilarated, first participates in boisterous indulgences. The line “filling all the Earth and Air/With gay apostasy” registers the heat of the sexual passion. As she elsewhere uses “Heresies of Transport,” “Puck’s Apostasy” (Fr1348) and “sweetest Heresy” (Fr671) to describe ecstasy, here “apostasy” is associated with “gay.” If the poem ended here, it would not seem that Dickinson couched “apostasy” or “heresies” in a pejorative way.

The second stanza changes the implications of this poem. Like a strong draught, emotional spurts cannot last forever. The satisfaction of desire leads to satiety. Sick of all the immoderateness, the bee comes to appreciate a chaste life and is lured by a “plain” clover. The charm of the clover’s “lowly Breast” is illustrated by the whole devotion she has earned from the otherwise dissolute “Butterflies.” The two stanzas together highlight the bee’s conversion. The bombastic abandon of “oriental heresies” is contrasted with the plain clover’s simplicity and restraint, whereas the words “to die,” which capture the butterfly’s contentment, are contrasted with the image of “filling,” which reveals the agents’ inner insecurity and void. The shift between the two stanzas betrays Dickinson’s notions about the economy of desire and the worth of peace. We can see that an earlier manuscript of this poem, in Franklin’s *Variorum* edition, compares “low” clover to “Sweet homestead,” and states explicitly that the bee is “intoxicated” with “peace” and has dismissed “rev- elry.”

For her pejorative use of “Oriental heresies,” Dickinson cannot escape the indictment of exploiting a negative Orientalism in Edward

Said's sense. But it is too hasty to conclude that Dickson intends to illustrate the superiority of Non-Oriental restraint to Oriental abandon. In effect, the words "Allures" and its variant, "Ensnares," invest the speaker's attitude towards "Clover" with a slight mockery. As Polak astutely observes, we need to distinguish "between the racial stereotypes the poem absorbs, its ambivalent critique of imperialism, and the larger vision it projects" (90).

In this poem, Dickinson's overriding concern is a spiritual transformation which entails the satisfaction of desire. It is after "his" experience of "Oriental heresies" that the clover emerges victoriously. The transformation or conversion is made possible by the previous bouts of "gay apostasy" and the resultant being "Fatigued at last." Without the tiring and disabling experience of "Oriental Heresies," he would never become perceptive enough to choose "clover" in the end. His eventual choice of simplicity and the consequent attainment of "rest" result from the internal transformation, with his previous dissolute experience as the indispensable phase. Employing "his" experience as an analogue for humankind, Dickinson illustrates a process of homecoming, with "Rest" as the ultimate spiritual state.

There seems to be an occasion that prompts Dickinson to employ the phrase, "Oriental heresies." The unspecified pronoun "His" in the beginning line of the poem suggests one characteristic feature of Dickinson's poetry, the "omitted center," that is, her refusal to supply the occasion about which she writes, which paradoxically betrays the existence of such an occasion (Leyda xxi). In writing "His oriental heresies," Dickinson seems inspired by *Jane Eyre*, her favorite novel, which she began to read at the age of nineteen and, as scholars have explored, constantly responded to in her poems. In a letter to Mrs. Holland in 1876, quoting a sentence uttered by Rochester, Dickinson explicitly compares Jane Eyre to the

"clover": "You remember from whom I quoted, when you brought me the Clover?" (L475). More significantly, Rochester's Oriental features, licentious past, jaded attitude, rest-seeking mentality, and ultimate conversion suggest this poem's connection with Bronte's novel.

In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester is represented as an Oriental. While playing charades, he is "costumed in shawls, with a turban on his head" which perfectly suits his "dark eyes," "swarthy skin" and "Paynim features" (185). His sultan power charms many parasites even though his Sultan largesse is an irritant to Jane Eyre. The women involved in his dissolute life are Oriental women, or described in traditionally negative Orientalist language. Bertha, "tall, dark, majestic" (307), is constructed as a warning of mindless pas-

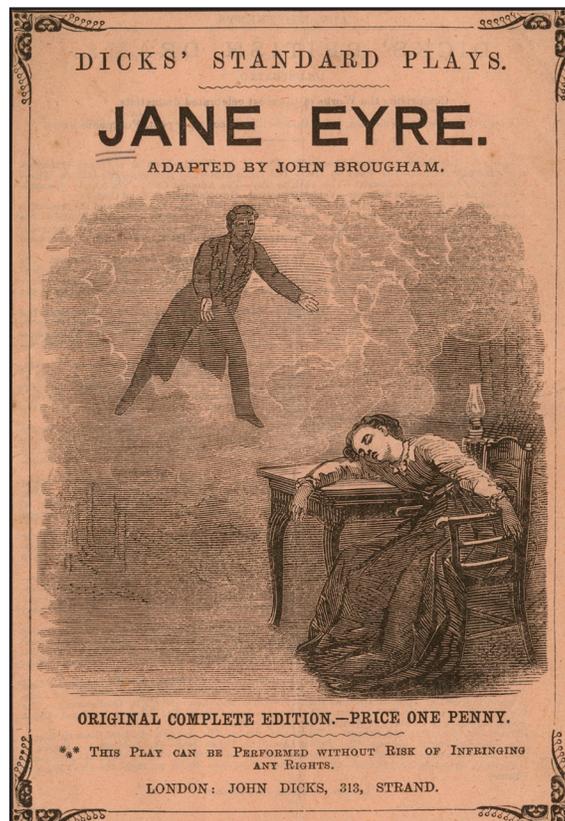
sion. Miss Ingram with "the raven ringlets, the oriental eye" (163), is merely a variation of Bertha. She is attired in "oriental" fashion and "her cast of form and feature, her complexion and her general air, suggested the idea of some Israelitish princess of the patriarchal days" (185). In addition, Rochester attributes his "reckless" "disappointment" (313) to Bertha's licentiousness in the magnitude of her madness. "Rest-seeking" (220), he finds Jane Eyre, albeit "poor, and plain" (163), preferable.

*Jane Eyre* can contribute to our understanding of Dickinson's use of "His" to modify "oriental heresies." Rochester is presented as "an Eastern emir, an agent or a victim of the bowstring" (185) and he can be both the active agent and the victim of "Oriental Heresies." On the one hand, he is invested with the sultan power that has charmed many "bee-like" parasites; on the other, his women can be seen as the aggressive agents: Bertha has her alluring charm, and as Jane Eyre observes, Miss Ingram is intent upon "fascinating" Rochester (188).

Dickinson's approach towards Rochester's transformation reveals her critical thinking. In front of Jane Eyre, Rochester delivers a long confession to justify his choice of her, mentioning the latter's "good and bright qualities" which he has sought for twenty years (220). The readers easily follow Rochester's logic and resort to the heroine's virtue to account for this erstwhile rake's conversion. Regarding Dickinson's experiences of reading *Jane Eyre*, Judith Farr states that one of Bronte's themes which attracts the readers and Dickinson is "the taming of the masterful aristocrat by the meek and little – but clever and good – governess" (204).

"His Oriental Heresies" testifies that Dickinson astutely heeds the first part of Rochester's rationalization about choosing Jane Eyre: "you wander here and there, seeking rest in exile. . . . Heart-weary and soul-withered, you come

*Continued on page 13*



"Jane Eyre hears Rochester calling." Title page illustration for John Brougham's *Jane Eyre* (first performed in New York, 1849), from Dicks' Standard Plays edition. The opium dream-like associations were evident in the novel's earliest adaptations.

Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

# Approaching Emily Dickinson

## By Cuihua Xu

A little more than a decade ago, when I was sitting in literary classes for my MA Degree, patience and courage were needed even to have a second look at Emily Dickinson's poems. She was regarded by my classmates as a gloomy, eccentric and pessimistic recluse. Each poem was a despair to me at first sight. But I was then encouraged by an old Chinese saying, "if a book or an article is read one hundred times, the apprehension can eventually be achieved (书读百遍, 其意自见)."

The belief that her poetry could be translated into Chinese first came to me in 2002, when I was reading "Winter under cultivation / Is as arable as Spring" (Fr1720), one of her shortest poems. This poem reminded me of some commonly known Chinese proverbs like "Spring is the best time to do the year's work; Morning hours are the best time of the day to work", and "A man who does not work hard in his youth will be grieved when he grows old." Such proverbs are telling the old wisdom of making good use of one's life time. Dickinson, however, carries the idea much further – to cultivate her land or her "Undiscovered Continent" (Fr814) even in winter, a season when people recuperate from the toil of the year. Dickinson might have gotten the idea while she was taking care of her plants and flowers in her conservatory, but cultivation to her could not be limited to the literally physical, as she is known as such an voracious reader and assiduous writer. Readers may benefit from the encouraging messages the poem sends: though cold winter is not the season for farmers to cultivate their land, it can still be the season for intellectual or spiritual cultivation; or, old-age cultivation can be fruitful if winter is taken as the last stage of one's lifetime, just as the saying goes, "one is never too old to learn." The poem enabled me to form in mind the image of a hardworking Emily Dickinson and see the possibility to come closer to her world.

What did she cultivate? What did she cultivate for? Why was cultivation so essential to her? Why did she have such a pressing sense of time? These questions have accompanied me through my past



The author in Aberystwyth, Wales, in 2010.

years of translation work, which relies heavily on dictionaries and a lot of solitary hours pondering my lexicon. I have come to understand what Emily Dickinson meant when she said "for several years, my Lexicon – was my only companion" (L261).

The form of a Dickinson poem cannot be directly represented in Chinese ideographical characters. A right comprehension is essential for achieving the core of a poem. In reading a poem for translation I always try to find the grammatical consistence and all the other elements such as the structure, the diction, the speaker, or the audience and

what the poem is about – all that helps me to get the essence and to figure out the tone of a poem. Some of Dickinson's poems provide me beneficial reading methods. Her attitude "To meet an Antique Book –" is displayed in "A precious – mouldering pleasure – 'tis –" (Fr569), where she instructed me "His quaint opinions – to inspect – / His thought to ascertain / On Themes concern our mutual mind –." That's what I am trying to do when I meet her works – to inspect her unexpected opinions and to ascertain her thought on themes that concern our mutual mind.

In my present state of knowledge gained from reading and translating half of her poems and some of her letters – including her 22 letters to her adolescent friend Abiah Root and most of her letters to her brother Austin – the world of Emily Dickinson appears to me a system of reflective thinking, like a big tree towering into the sky with branches intertwined and sticking out all round, every leaf shining in its way, yet all correlated with one another. However, the tree is still a vague vision far distant from me. The image of Emily Dickinson resembles the sunset she describes in Fr1416, "Defied to be defined –." One needs to struggle with all one's might to come closer to the trunk of the tree, to see a part of the truth.

Sometimes I marvel at my own persistent interest in Dickinson's works. When I attended the 2008 EDIS annual meeting in Am-

herst, I was asked at the banquet by a member why I, a foreigner, had an interest in Emily Dickinson, as Dickinson was difficult for native speakers. I expressed the simple delight I had by singing some Dickinson poems to the tune of songs like “Scarborough Fair” and “Changing Partners” and was later encouraged to sing to the audience. The question reminds me of my foreignness – my Chinese culture that takes a part in my translation of Dickinson. As a Chinese I find the ideas Dickinson expresses in her works have special appeal. My culture has a long tradition of valuing the ideas of different schools of thinkers. A Chinese saying, “文如其人,” which means “the writing mirrors or reflects the writer,” leads me to believe that the ideas of Emily Dickinson lie in her own texts despite the fact that she may “tell it slant –” (Fr1263).

For each poem I translated I’ve made a one-sentence or one-phrase comment in Chinese to summarize the main idea. Several I recognize as odes:

“Garlands for Queens, may be –” (Fr10) an ode to the rose

“Nobody knows this little Rose –” (Fr11) an ode or elegy to a little rose

“The Doomed – regard the Sunrise” (Fr298) an ode to people who have a right attitude towards death and thus enjoy life

“The Service without Hope –” (Fr880) an ode to the service without hope

“The Overtakelessness of Those” (Fr894) an ode to those who know the true meaning of death

“My Season's furthest Flower –” (Fr1030) an ode to a flower which outlives the others

“How lonesome the Wind must feel Nights –” (Fr1441) an ode to the wind

“No Brigadier throughout the Year” (Fr1596) an ode to the jay

I take notes in this way to indicate how I understand the poems I have translated. When reading these odes and many of her other poems, my attention is caught by the virtues for which Dickinson sings high praises: chivalry, charity, equity, unselfishness, courage, wisdom of life and death – qualities for brave, noble living. Frequently I feel that Dickinson’s inspiring spirit invites me to go further to explore her world. She is like a tour guide who leads the readers to travel around but refuses to show the beauty if a reader does not strive to find it. She “love[s] to buffet the sea ... love[s] the danger” (L39), so readers have to do the same.

Each of Dickinson’s poems should be treated as if each represents a world of her own. To translate her works into Chinese is often a

process of decoding. I would like to cite my translation of Fr220 as an example:

It’s such a little thing to weep –	哭泣是一件很小很小的事 –
So short a thing to sigh –	叹息是一件很短很短的事 –
And yet – by Trades – the size of <i>these</i>	可就是这些很小很短的事
We men and women die!	要了我们这些男人女人的命!

This poem is one long sentence. Obviously Dickinson omitted “and it’s” at the beginning of the second line to avoid being cumbersome. It is easy for readers to understand the first two lines. The difficulty in comprehending it appears to be the usage of the capitalized word “Trades,” which stands out rather unexpectedly if it is understood as “commerce” or “business,” but the context and the word “size” brings its meaning to light: “Trades” is used to refer to the transaction of the business of our own lives, the negative emotions, the small or short things. The poem may be paraphrased into one sentence: “We men and women die because of trivial things like weeping and sighing” or “For so little a thing as weeping or so short a thing as sighing we men and women pay the price of our life.”

In my translation I employ repetition to create some internal rhymes and at the same time to represent Dickinson’s emphasis on “little,” “short,” and “size.” If a reader of Chinese who knows English but does not know Emily Dickinson happens to read my translation of this poem and put it into English, he /she might translate it as follows:

To weep is a very very little thing –  
 To sigh is a very very short thing –  
 And yet it is such little and short things  
 That deprive us men and women of living!

I believe a translation can only be one type of interpretation, the best of which should lead readers to a better understanding of the original works. The challenge is a tremendous one concerning Dickinson.

Travelling in her world, I have come to realize that her attitude towards death, her exploration of the true meaning of death, is the essential base that leads me to understand her “business” of “circumference” (L268) – the world that reaches infinitely both outside and inside (L13). A typical Chinese does not like to talk about death openly as a result of a mingled influence from Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, each of which is more a philosophy than a religion. Buddhism causes a person to wish for a better incarnation in his or her next life, free from suffering, a life one ought to earn through kindness. Taoism emphasizes inner contemplation and mystical union with nature in favor of simplicity; this results in a belief that life and death are just part of nature. Confucianism, by contrast, provides him with philosophical and ethical teachings of practical moral values in ful-

filling his or her familial and social responsibility in this world. Confucius (551-479 BC), the founder of this school, is very well-known for his teaching about life and death: "If you do not know how to live this life, how do you know about death? (未知生，焉知死?)" In other words, one should simply put death aside.

Obviously a person's attitude towards the world and way of living may vary according to his or her concept of death. In Guangdong Province where I work, one of the major fast rising economic zones in China, number 4 is considered bad luck, since the Chinese character 四 for "four" and 死 for "death" are pronounced quite similarly; number 8, on the other hand, is lucky, as "eight/八" and "prosper/发" share a partial tone in Chinese pronunciation. For the pragmatic Cantonese, death is simply the end of a prosperous life.

For Dickinson, too, death is the end of living; the world after death is an unknown one. She wrote to her friend when she was very young, at the age of fifteen,

Does not Eternity appear dreadful to you. I often get thinking of it and it seems so dark to me that I almost wish there was no Eternity. To think that we must forever live and never cease to be. It seems as if Death which all so dread because it launches us upon an unknown world would be a relief to so endless a state of existence. (L10)

On one hand, she "almost wish[es] there was no Eternity" for its endless heavenly state of existence where many people wished to go after death (L10). On the other hand, she goes on, "I don't know why it is but it does not seem to me that I shall ever cease to live on earth –" perhaps because she witnessed too many deaths, old and young, including those "friends" she says she has "seen pass from my sight in the prime of their days like dew before the sun [and who] will not again walk the streets and act their parts in the great drama of life" (L10). She developed an acute sense of death and a realization of our limited and precious lifetime, for "I had no time to Hate –", "Nor had I time to Love –" "Some Industry must be" (Fr763). Such a pattern of thinking is reflected in her poetry and prose with her universal concern for human existence.

Dickinson cultivated her power of thinking and penetrated all fields concerning her life as a human being, which is also within the reach of our concern as human beings. Her insights on various subjects invite me to go further into her world and help me to see a wider world of my own and learn to "dwell in possibility." Her urgent sense of pressing time, for example, makes me feel the importance of time management and the importance of having goals for life. Again and again in her letters to Abiah Root, she expressed how time fled and what she must do to make good use of it:

The ceaseless flight of the seasons is to me a very solemn thought, & yet Why do we not strive to make a better improve-

ment of them? . . . With how much emphasis the poet has said, "We take no note of Time, but from its loss. 'Twere wise in man to give it then a tongue. Pay no moment but in just purchase of it's worth, & what it's worth, ask death beds. They can tell. Part with it as with life reluctantly." Then we have higher authority than that of man for the improvement of our time." (L13)

Her poems help me calm down, perhaps because she wrote them in a state of calmness. I feel comforted reading her poems. Her playful tone, her wisdom of life and her perspectives of seeing things give me a pleasant surprise and help to broaden my horizon from time to time. The understanding of each poem is a pleasant surprise and a reward to me. Her aim, I believe, is to probe philosophically and psychologically into problems concerning human existence. Like a carpenter who builds a house, her speaker in Fr475 expresses a wish to build temples for human beings, a house of faith or belief. In Fr489, she tells the importance of having faith. She wants to "bring an unaccustomed wine / To lips long parching" (Fr126), to offer spiritual nutrients to those who need.

The 2008 Amherst summer meeting was a wonderful experience to me. The visit helped me visualize the place that gave birth to so important a poet. It enabled me, which otherwise would be impossible, to apprehend and realize "An altered look about the hills –" (Fr90), Dickinson's description of the spring-summer beauty of Amherst and her marveling at the mystery of life. While visiting the libraries I often felt quite touched by all the efforts people have put forth to preserve each fragment of Dickinson's and especially by the efforts to transcribe each single letter to the words that we now have the chance to read. For the first time, I joined the Society selected by the souls who do not "shut the door." I feel deeply moved by the passion of all Dickinson scholars in doing all the research that will accompany and inspire me to go further on this road.

---

#### Notes

I thank Professor Jane Eberwein for constant encouragement and suggestions.

I am deeply grateful to my teacher Dr. Dwight St. John for teaching me to read from different perspectives and for proofreading this article. He came from Auburn University to teach English literature at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in 1996 when I was one of his students.

---

*Xu Cuihua teaches English as a foreign language at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China. She is interested in perceiving what Emily Dickinson says between her lines and translating her poems into Chinese.*

# POET TO POET

**Series Editor: Jonnie Guerra**

*Special thanks are due to Cristanne Miller for bringing Myung Mi Kim to my attention and then recommending Andrew Rippeon to explore Kim's "poet to poet" relationship with Dickinson. I personally have enjoyed listening to Kim discuss her poetry on YouTube, especially what she had to say about "the work of mourning" and her Dickinson-like concern with going beyond simply acknowledging or reporting a loss to create something new out of the experience.*

## “From Blank to Blank / A Threadless Way”: On Myung Mi Kim

**By Andrew Rippeon**

Lilac wander  
Soak spine  
Unite all three  
Father look/mother—task  
Mother I  
Mast  
Horizon  
Burn  
Salt  
From blank to blank / A threadless way

– Myung Mi Kim, *The Bounty* (75)

Myung Mi Kim's verse is, on the surface, quite unlike that of Emily Dickinson. Where Dickinson's poems frequently work within (and often brilliantly subvert) the boundaries of meter and the conventions of poetic persona, Myung's poems (as in the extract above from her second book, *The Bounty*) often appear to be snatches of language as overheard, as fragmented, or as otherwise mixed from various sources. And contrary to the grade-school adage that most of Dickinson's poems with their rhymes and common meter can be sung to the tune of "The Yellow Rose of Texas," poetic sound in Myung's verse occurs at the level of the individual syllable in contrast with and relation to other syllables.

The differences between the poets themselves also seem wide. Dickinson's near-mythic reclusiveness needs no recounting, save as contrast to the later poet's at times forced citizenship in the larger world. Following the upheavals of the Korean War, Myung and her

family emigrated to the United States when the poet was nine years old – young enough, as she's noted, to be acculturated into American society, but old enough to retain some memories of Korean landscape, history, language, and culture.

Since then, Myung has lived on both coasts (spending time both at Johns Hopkins and at San Francisco State University) as well as in the Midwest (Iowa). Currently, she lives in Buffalo, NY, where she teaches in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo. I met Myung about six years ago, just prior to enrolling in the Poetics Program. In those six years, we've talked almost exclusively about my own research and writing. Her poetry, it seemed, always informed and was informed by her teaching, but seldom if ever came up in our conversations, so it was a welcome opportunity for me to be invited to profile Myung for the *EDIS Bulletin's* Poet to Poet series.

Since Myung often inserts quotations from other texts into her poetry, I went

back to her books – *Under Flag* (1991), *The Bounty* (1996), *Dura* (1999), *Commons* (2002), and *Penury* (2009) – to see if I could find references to Dickinson. In my re-reading, I was struck again by the wide range and exquisite pressures Myung brings to the scene of the poem. In any of her five books, readers will encounter phrases culled from military dispatches and Renaissance anatomy; portions of citizenship tests and fragments of children's song; birds; fading memories; national boundaries in dispute; all of which together flower into carefully arrayed clusters of sound largely independent of recognizable metrical or stanzaic pattern.

I noticed again that as her work has unfolded, it's grown sparser, with more pressure placed upon each syllable – and upon the histories of that syllable, as well as its shape for different speakers of different bodies and backgrounds. In her two most recent books, *Commons* (2002) and *Penury* (2009), these pressures have reached new levels of intensity. Some of the most striking work in *Commons* appears in passages where phrases are strung together with none but the faintest hint (yet still a hint) of connection:

The central organizing myth of comprehensive knowledge

Bent as light might bend

The openings in the human body

The age that one is  
I will be my mother's age also



Photo Credit: Arielle Brousse

# POET TO POET

Color of robin's egg against  
spring grass  
(*Commons* 44)

And in *Penury*, this logic of connection is practiced in ever more discrete ways: the bright and delicate [i]s and [s]s of

stinging nettles  
wild scythe swing

machines hunch  
vehicles in and out"  
(*Penury* 85)

lead on to the darker [r]s and [u]s of  
abrupt bundle specular scruple  
prone  
(*Penury* 99)

Reading Myung's work at length, one finds amid such aural pleasures a deeply convicted engagement with military and political upheaval as it presses in on the historical and particular human subject. Those "machines" and "vehicles" in that field of nettles are surely connected with the movement of people in response to capital and conflict; the same ear that traces those [i]s and [s]s hears also the absurd poetry in "Bunker buster bomb" (38), or the abusive prepositional twists in "Step on people with shoes on" (56). But looking for Dickinson, I was a bit stumped: I found a single line, from Dickinson's poem Fr484; this line concludes Myung's long poem "The Bounty" (quoted in my epigraph), appearing in her book of the same name.

Written in approximately 1862, Dickinson's "From Blank to Blank" is roughly contemporary with the first years of the American Civil War and Dickinson's surge in poetic production during those years, and can be situated among other poems that more or less explicitly engage with that national upheaval (such as "A Slash of Blue! A sweep of Gray!" [Fr233], "When I was small, a Woman

died" [Fr518], "It feels a shame to be Alive" [Fr524]). More interestingly, in my view, is that in this poem Dickinson's speaker claims to have "...pushed Mechanic feet," and that "To stop – or perish – or advance" are "Alike indifferent." She continues: "If end I gained / It ends beyond / Indefinite disclosed." How, I wondered, did Myung imagine her poetry intersecting with Dickinson's – and why at that particular line?

Such "indifference" as Dickinson's Fr484 claims might be a condition for pessimism, and while some have read the poem in this way (see Richard E. Brantley, "Dickinson's Signature Conundrum" for a summary of readings of this poem<sup>1</sup>), having never gotten a sense of pessimism from her work, I didn't think this was its appeal for Myung. "I can't recall the 'first time' I read Emily Dickinson," Myung wrote me after I asked, "though I suspect it was in elementary school. I'd answer that question by saying that it's as if I've always read Dickinson. Her cadences, rhythms, prosody are imbricated in my own. Much of my book, *The Bounty*," she continued, "was written in the company of an Emily Dickinson concordance. Her lexicon is in motion; it recalls, forges anew, reassembles. It notices the culturally sedimented materials in each constitutive facet of language. As a poet, I find solace and freedom in Dickinson's devotion to the exquisiteness of complexity."

Her response, in a manner I've come to expect having spent time in seminar and conversation with her, of course served to re-frame the very question I'd asked. Though I was looking for an answer about something like poetic "lineage" or "influence," Myung's was a response about affinity. In her remarkable phrasing, *The Bounty* wasn't written "under the influence of" or "with assistance from" Dickinson's concordance, but rather "in the company of." And with that concordance's contents in motion, Dickinson's "threadless way" then becomes a condition of tremendous possibility, and in its "Mechanic feet," her poem now seems to

engage more with the process of poetry, with a poem's unfolding regardless of its epistemological stability (let alone certainty). Dickinson and Myung, as fellow-travelers from blank to blank, have set their work at developing a particularly poetic epistemology at once dealing with and in many ways enacting the uncertain and the ongoing. Dickinson's poems on uncertainty are many (her "Perception of an Object costs / Precise the Object's loss" [Fr1103] comes most quickly to mind), and Myung's statements, too, on the relationship between poetry and uncertainty are numerous.

In "Anacrusis," for example, a 1999 statement of poetics, she proposes "A poetics...as that activity of tending the speculative," and asks, "what is the poem's potential for registering a correspondence between speed of perception and word, for allowing a complex nexus of variables, temperings, and modulations to take place at the instant of writing?" These remarks clearly resonate with her writing in the 2002 "Pollen Fossil Record," a statement of poetics appended to her 2002 volume *Commons*, where Myung describes "Swerves, oddities, facts, miscues, remnants – threnody and meditation," and notes that the purpose of the poem is "the perpetually incomplete task of tracking what enters into the field of perception (the writing act) – its variegated and grating musics, cadences, and temporalities" (107). In her more recent conversation with Lynn Keller, Myung similarly states that "Poetry, for me, unbounds knowledge from Fact, Truth, or final articulation."

"I am humbled and delighted," Myung told me recently, "in the way Dickinson's work reminds me to (re)think etymology, semantics, parts of speech, word play, sonic associations, resemblances, and permutations. In the presence of Dickinson's work, the word can be palpated – the word is a palpitation." That prod toward such rethinking, the visceral flutter and touch of the verse, is certainly part of the "Indefinite disclosed" of Dickinson's Fr484 and

# POET TO POET

much of her other verse. And so how is this, I turn again to ask, a part of Myung's poem and book, *The Bounty*? It is in this book and in this poem that Myung's verse most openly declares itself as transected by the lines of household and family narrative. These are always a part of Myung's practice, but *The Bounty* in particular appears under the aegis of "mother" on its flyleaf (at once dedication, exhortation, ascription, and invocation) and the long poem lending its name to the book is dedicated to Myung's then-young son Malcolm.

"Unite all three," she writes in the stretch of verse that will conclude with Dickinson's "threadless way," and these "three" seem to be at once drawn from the family triangle as well as from across the generations, always with the poet at their center. "From blank to blank" stands here as at once a testing as well as a leaving open of values drawn from the family, and a projection of poetic potentials upon the family itself – "If end I gained," this moment in Myung's poem seems to say of the family, "It ends beyond / Indefinite disclosed." Those po-

entials have been remarkably generative for both poets in their shared exploration and arc of the unknown and the ongoing. Finally, "I return to Dickinson again and again," Myung says, "because in her work, the dialogical is always unfolding (or enfolded) – the shifting scales of the human and the divine, finitude and temporality, transparency and opacity—unbounded bounds of sociality and kinship."

---

<sup>1</sup>*The Emily Dickinson Journal* 16:1, 2007, 33 – 35.

---

"Reading the Orient and *Jane Eyre*"  
Continued from page 8

home after years of voluntary banishment: you make a new acquaintance" (220). Rochester's "Heart-weary and soul-withered" situation, his home-seeking pilgrimage and his desire for "rest" capture Dickinson's mind. She ascribes his conversion more to his previous experiences than to *Jane Eyre*'s intellect. She downplays *Jane Eyre*'s moral uplift and reversely highlights Rochester's self-transformation, conforming to her basic tenet that all growth "Gravitates within" (Fr790).

The compositional context of Dickinson's poem also illuminates her somewhat provocative ethnical reference and her general stance towards the Orient. Her response to Rochester's change drags her into the vortex of the negative Orientalism embedded within Brontë's novel, and thus contaminates her with this strand of racism. However, we should note that the phrase "Oriental heresies" is merely vestigial; the dialogical angle which shapes the development of this poem is "Rest" and a circular way towards it, a "Circuit" in Dickinson's signature word, which suggests Dickinson's link with another strand of Orientalism.

"Circuit" is a word which pertains to "Circumference," Dickinson's confessed "Business" in an 1862 letter to Higginson (L268). She once wrote, "My little Circuit would have shamed / This new Circumference—have blamed—/The homelier time behind" (Fr283). Elsewhere,

Circuit, or "Revolution," entails self-transformation: "Every Summer is / The Entomber of itself" (Fr1044). This notion also suggests the reverse working of things as the sun's "Solemn Petals," "expanding" in all directions, "Culminate – in Rest –" (Fr787).

Intriguingly, in the graveyard elegy, "This quiet Dust was Gentleman and Ladies" (Fr1090), Dickinson employs the phrase, "Oriental Circuit" to summarize the interaction between "Bloom and Bees." The colorful human life ends up in a "quiet Dust" and completes the whole cycle from gaiety to disappointment. And then, Dickinson writes, "Bloom and Bees / Exist an Oriental Circuit / Then cease, like these –." "Oriental Circuit" might suggest a route which undergoes expansion and culminates in "Rest."

Dickinson's very use of the adjective "Oriental" to modify "Circuit," also intends to highlight its "Oriental" origin. This phrase betrays that Dickinson might have certain knowledge about the Oriental thinking even though the idea of "circularity" does exist in both East and Western culture, as Zhang Longxi has argued in relation to Dickinson's notion of "Circumference" (73-76). The writings of Transcendentalism, which resort to the Orient for the light of wisdom, can be a possible resource for this Oriental reference. In effect, Dickinson's wisdom of idleness, rest, contemplation and so on echo what Transcendentalists have constructed

about the Orient, even though she barely demonstrates an interest in Eastern philosophy.

In this light, "His Oriental Heresies" constitutes an arena of two strands of Orientalism which Dickinson was exposed to and engaged with. Considering Dickinson's accidental mentioning of "oriental heresies" and her deliberate proposing of "Oriental Circuit," we can say that Dickinson, despite the taint of a racist Orientalism, mainly espouses, like the other Transcendentalists, a Utopian stance towards the Orient.

---

## Works Cited

- Barbour, Richmond. *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576-1626*. Vol. 45. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Penguin, 1960.
- Farr, Judith. *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance*. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1998.
- Leyda, Jay. *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*. Yale University Press, 1960.
- Pollak, Vivian R. "Dickinson and the Poetics of Whiteness." *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 9.2 (2000): 84-95.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Zhang, Longxi. *Unexpected Affinities: Reading Across Cultures*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2006.

# Great Debates

## 2011 EDIS Annual Meeting

Dan Manheim

*The Bulletin gratefully acknowledges Steve Fratoni for providing exceptional photographs from the Annual Meeting.*

“Who says?” asked one panelist. “They’re old debates. They’re not energizing.”

“What Makes a Dickinson Poem ‘Dickinsonian’”; “Who Was the Master”; “The Dash”; “Why Didn’t Dickinson Publish” – the Great Debates addressed during the sessions at this year’s EDIS Annual Meeting have indeed been addressed by many readers and scholars, and as that admittedly “grumpy” panelist noted, there was never any hope of settling them. So what were members to do? What was the purpose of reviving old debates?

As the society members in attendance discovered from the opening remarks onward, debate itself can be energizing no matter one’s stake in the resolution, and conversations among people passionate about the poet inevitably become engaging, whether directed to the primary topic, or in the interstices between the planned remarks.

The welcoming address was delivered not by a Dickinson scholar, but by a Great Debater, Massachusetts State Senator Stan Rosenberg, who relished the opportunity to meditate on what one does when one debates, what vir-



Stan Rosenberg spoke about what makes a great debate.

tues one must master, what human relations one may thereby retard or further.

That the Great Debates sessions would prove neither old nor non-energizing was established by out-going EDIS Vice President, Jed Deppman, in a presentation he called, “Her Character a Tonic, Her Future a Dispute: Emily Dickinson and Controversy.” Since there are many Dickinsons, why, he asked, should we insist on one? The poet herself didn’t like to argue. Instead, she “enthuses” us – a word Deppman deployed with the full measure of its etymological significance. His remarks on what Dickinson might make of our debates centered on Fr1596, a poem about disputation in Nature itself, in which he tantalizingly saw in the representation of a jay the shadow of a mischievous allusion to civic neighbor Austin’s censured alliance with an astronomer’s wife. But the inventiveness of Jed’s presentation defies simple synopsis (“we should all bow down before him,” privately remarked a smitten acolyte). Far more than introducing



Jed Deppman got the audience enthused.

the theme of the Meeting, he modeled the way the subsequent sessions would enthuse: how they would turn a simple argument into a springboard of imaginative energy.

In the first debate, on what makes a poem Dickinsonian, panelists Christopher Benfey, Antoine Cazé, Theo Davis, and Suzanne Juhasz tried out various terms for the poet’s distinctiveness – “emotional and cognitive complexity at high speeds,” offered Cazé; the “unexpected gift” that “changes everything” added Juhasz – even as they insisted that such an insistence on uniqueness might, as Davis said, “obscure” an author. The very term, she noted, necessarily connects her to other poets: do we say that Kafka is “Kafkaesque”?

Perhaps the most memorable part of the session was when Benfey read a Dickinsonian poem and asked the audience if it was by the poet. No one was willing to admit to thinking it was hers, and of course it turned out to be Fr1670. “Where were you,” a former Amherst resident gleefully challenged, “when the town put up \$15,000 to help the Jones Library purchase a Dickinsonian poem that proved to be a forgery?” The Mount Holyoke professor pled that he had been “Out of town.”

When Millicent Todd Bingham, with the 1955 publication of *Emily Dickinson’s Home*, released to the world full versions of three letters that have come to be known as the “Master Letters,” she must have foreseen the frenzy of speculation that for a time diverted (some would say, “derailed”) study of the poet. At “Who Was the Master?” – the opening session of the first afternoon – one panelist, independent scholar Ruth Jones, made her case for specific identification, but the rest, Phoebe Putnam, Eliza Richards, and Martha Nell Smith, were more interested in how and why we read the letters. A recurring

topic was implied narratives: Putnam saw the “librarian and the cruel villain”; Richards, *Jane Eyre*; Smith, *David Copperfield*. Whomever Dickinson was addressing in the letters – whether one person in all three (presuming a single “Master”), or several people (on the possibility that the letters have been unjustifiably yoked together), or a supposed person (reading the letters as experimental fictions, or parodies, or forging grounds for poems of emotional extravagance) – the letters struck many readers for how richly literary they are. Several members of the audience noted the mid-19th-century popularity of Bettina von Arnim’s letters to Goethe, which inspired Louisa May Alcott and Caroline Sturgis to write master letters to Emerson. Writing turbulent letters to a “Master” was a literary thing to do.

During the late afternoon of the first day, the attendees broke up, some going to see an exhibition of Dickinson-related manuscripts assembled by curator Michael Kelly in the Robert Frost Library Special Collections room, and others convening with new and relatively new focus groups, including New Directions in Dickinson Studies, a group for emerging scholars and emerging ideas; K-12 Teachers; Local Chapters; Dickinson and the Fine Arts; and Graduate Students.



Michael Kelly shows Society members items from the archives.

The evening saw the college banquet hall brimful of Dickinsonians eager to hear *New York Times* arts columnist Holland Cotter speak about his formative reading. Cotter spoke of a Boston boy’s early discovery of the poet, when as an adolescent he took Sunday trips to Fruitlands, inspired to follow Alcott and join a commune, and when he once marched up to a pre-museum Homestead and announced to an attendant that “someone I know used to live here” in order to gain admittance to the shrine.

Already loving the poems for their strange sounds, Cotter read Rebecca Patterson’s 1951 biography, *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson*, and, electrified, returned to the poems to discover their gender fluidity, their rebelliousness. She became for him the “Outlaw of Amherst” – someone who, as Cotter has elsewhere written, took an “oddfit kid with authority issues” and “made being different not just okay, but something to want to



Holland Cotter was pleased to discover a fellow outlaw.



Cristanne Miller described a poetic of sound, while Peggy O’Brien argued that the inner voice precedes all notation.

be.”<sup>21</sup> Cotter ended by quoting Bob Dylan’s line, “To live outside the law, you must be honest,” saying that it was just such honesty he found in Dickinson, and consequently in himself.

Participants in Saturday’s first session, on Dickinson’s dashes, were not even agreed on what to call the various graphic elements that beckon to and baffle students of the poet’s manuscripts. Panel chair Gary Stonum, having just seen irreproducible dashes on an odd archival manuscript where Dickinson wrote a poem about a house on an envelope shaped like a house (the text reproduced as Fr1512), noted that in some measure Dickinson “shaped” her poems “through inscription.” Cristanne Miller argued for deemphasizing graphic elements, granting that while they are “not irrelevant,” the writing is nevertheless “the least stable aspect of her poetic,” changing with each new transcription of a poem.

Ellen Louise Hart countered that the marks reproduced as dashes have multiple functions and should not be isolated from a context in which other equally visible, equally interesting markers are dismissed as random. Scholar of Irish poetry Peggy O’Brien called punctuation “time made verbal,” and



associated the dash with all other elements related to temporality. And for Paul Crumbly, dashes mark voices and serve as a device for resisting complacency.

Though the panelists were alive to the differences in their perspectives on the graphic, all saw the graphic elements as intimately connected to voice. O'Brien noted that "the inner voice precedes all writing" and hence any manner of "publication," of transcription, may be an imperfect translation of that inner voice.

The last of the Great Debate panels turned to that very issue of publication. Scholar Karen Dandurand, archive curator Michael Kelly, and two younger scholars, Trish Kannan and Seth Perlow, explored the historical context of the circulation of Dickinson's poems. While there was some debate about whether Dickinson's sharing of materials constituted a form of publication (and several members privately regretted the lack of a working definition of "publication"), all four saw her as considerate of possible readers beyond her lifetime but determined to keep control of what she had written. Kannan argued that the fascicles were "placeholders for a future public," and Perlow, while noting with Dandurand that some writers chose "coterie publics" which might have been more numerous than the audience for certain minor publications nowadays, said that the poet was "attentive to the openness of the future." At the same time, Dandurand reminded the audience of the poet's words to Higginson, "Today, makes Yesterday mean" (L268): print publication might have drawn a line under a poem in a way that would betray what she wanted to do.

Some of the most valuable and engaging events of the Annual Meeting were not plenary sessions. Late Saturday morning, some of the Society's most excellent scholars offered an array of "master classes," which, if Marianne Noble's mini-seminar on "I measure every Grief I meet" and "I cried at Pity – not at Pain" is exemplary, were very lively and illuminating indeed. Saturday night,

members were treated to a showing of *Seeing New Englandly*, a video documentary about the poet written and narrated by poet Susan Snively (and sponsored by the Emily Dickinson Museum). Early risers on Sunday attended a Research Circle led by Ellen Louise Hart where they could share their projects and exchange suggestions.

In the end, those who had been suspicious of the Great Debates were not so grumpy after all. A closing session entitled "What Have We Learned? What New Ideas Have Emerged?" gave a diverse group of society members the opportunity to reflect on the previous days' sessions. That any lingering grumpiness had subsided was indicated by an audience member's subsequent response that the session was "the most substantive, elegant, thoughtful, and forward-moving one we've ever had." Panelists offered a range of reflections, but all addressed in one way or another a question implicit in Mary Loeffelholz's concern that the Great Debates are *sui generis* to Dickinson studies, and posed explicitly by Margaret Freeman, "How can EDIS use what we've learned to reach a wider audience?"

Alex Socarides was invigorated to begin articulating "half-ideas" about what new issues for emergent scholars might be embedded within the Great Debates. Kate Dunning found ways in which a graduate student who loves the poetry can begin to "enter the space" of scholarship; and museum guide David Gar-



Midori Asahina closes the meeting by reminding Society members of Dickinson's inclusiveness.

nes, thinking about the questions of curious visitors, reflected that readers will always want to know as much as they can about this woman they love, but that for all their desire to know her, Dickinson enthuses rather than reveals, inviting us, in Emerson's words, to "mount to paradise, / by the stairway of surprise."

In the end, the weekend's conversations were marked more by fascination with the elusive poet than with defending old or staking out new positions. As readers seek the channels of enthusiasm that the poet inspires, they will inevitably stake firmly resolved positions. Nevertheless, a society member privately mused, between those times when we promote most firmly our decided beliefs, we may surprise in ourselves a vagrant, furtive, outlaw enthusiasm for the very elements our interpretations have been at pains to exclude.

If inclusiveness became the inadvertent theme of the final session, it could not have been better expressed than by the final speaker, who was invited to tell a story that took all of us beyond the enclosures of academic study and *sui generis* debate. Japanese scholar Midori Asahina, who joined a strong contingent from the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan, read Fr1745, one of the "most famous Dickinson poems in Japan." In a newspaper column shortly after the March 11, 2011, earthquake (see Naoki Onishi's fuller account of the article elsewhere in this issue), the author exhorted readers to proper respect and compassion toward those most deeply affected by the disaster:

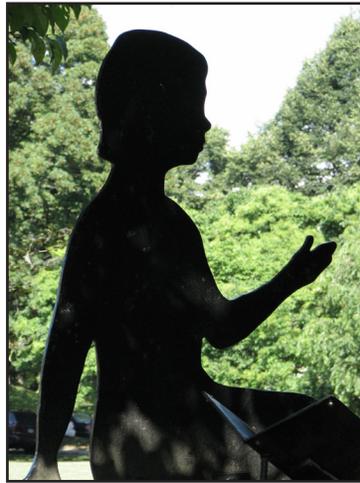
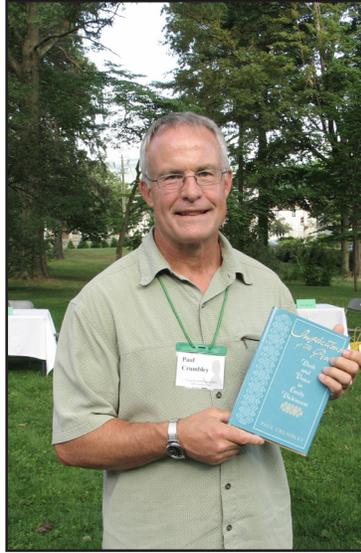
Unto a broken heart  
No other one may go  
Without the high prerogative  
Itself hath suffered too

As the audience listened to the words of the poem first in English, then in Japanese, it was easy to recognize that for all our provisional debates, Dickinson finds a way to include us all.

Note

<sup>1</sup>Holland Cotter, "My Hero, the Outlaw of Amherst," *New York Times*, May 13, 2010.

# A SCRAPBOOK OF IMAGES



# What's Your Story?

*Georgiana Strickland, Series Editor*

## Why Emily? A Scribe's View of Emily Dickinson

By **W. J. Waddington**

*When an artist discovers Emily Dickinson, something special happens. Here, calligrapher Bill Waddington tells how his encounter with the poet took his art form in a new direction. See examples here and on the back cover.*

*To tell the story of your encounter with Dickinson, email me at [georgiestr@aol.com](mailto:georgiestr@aol.com).*

When I began to study the art of calligraphy more than two decades ago, I looked for material that would spark artistic creativity but that would be inspirational as well. Although I had worked in the commercial art field for several years, I did not find the artistic challenges entirely satisfying, and I continued to attend fine art classes in my spare time – which led me directly into the arena of calligraphic art.

Modern calligraphy, defined as “the art of beautiful writing,” has evolved over the centuries (with the definition derived from the Greek words for “beauty” and “writing”), and described by Plato as “the geometry of the soul which manifests itself physically.” From the earliest efforts of man to communicate by means of cave drawings and symbols, to the development of the Roman alphabet, our modern system of written communication was created, and calligraphy emerged as a full-fledged art form worldwide. Devotees have learned that this “expertise” requires concentration and precision. With nearly 300 calligraphy guilds established worldwide, interest in calligraphy has developed unabated. As a late bloomer in the pursuit of that “expertise,” I have struggled onward – not unlike the Man of La Mancha in his pursuit of the “impossible dream.”

I began my study of calligraphy in 1986, with my early efforts focused on biblical passages and similar inspirational writing on the topics of “faith” and “hope.” In my ongoing search for new material, my attention eventually shifted to the

poetry of Emily Dickinson. Although I was familiar with some of her work from my college days, I also remembered seeing Julie Harris in her outstanding performance as Emily Dickinson in *The Belle of Amherst*, which I had been privileged to see in Denver. With these recollections in mind, I decided to explore the world of Emily Dickinson more fully and began reading many of the books and articles that had been written about her.

Despite the innuendo and seemingly endless speculation concerning her personal life, I became more and more fascinated with Dickinson's life and work. Her transition from gregarious youth (with her sharp wit intact) to the reclusive woman who dressed only in white, writing poetry in the privacy of her room at night by lamp and candlelight, only to emerge from the shadows after death to become recognized as one of America's greatest poets – this is a truly remarkable story in itself.

As I studied her poetry and correspondence, I began to visualize illustrations that could be developed to support the images she created in word and verse. The greeting cards reproduced here were created entirely by hand, both the lettering and the illustrations – they are not computer generated. I produce each piece of work as a “broadside” – a work that can be matted and framed for display at a gallery. Broadside are created using metal pen “nibs” and an opaque watercolor or other medium on good quality acid-resistant paper, and then reduced in

size to produce greeting cards. Master copies are saved for future printing.

I work with a variety of existing calligraphic alphabets that have been developed during the past two thousand years, from formal Romans to a variety of alphabets developed during the Middle Ages such as Carolingian, Gothic (or Black Letter, as used in medieval manuscripts or Bible translations) as well as Foundational, Humanistic, Italic, Uncial—and the list goes on. I feel adequately challenged by those styles developed by “master calligraphers” and do not feel the need to try to create something new.

I am frequently asked “Why Emily?” I believe my answer to that question is spelled out clearly in the comments I have already made, but I must add that I continue to be motivated by a statement Emily made in a letter she wrote in 1884: “I work to drive the awe away, yet awe impels the work” (L891). On those rare occasions when I think I have calligraphed the last poem or comment made by Emily that I want to do, I inevitably find another poem or comment in a letter or interview that captures my attention – and if the “awe” kicks in, I say to myself: “Why not Emily!”

---

*W.J. (Bill) Waddington is a free-lance artist and calligrapher from Hill City, South Dakota – the “heart” of the Black Hills. Bill and his wife presently live in central Texas. He is a member and former president of the San Antonio Calligraphers' Guild. His current work focuses on biblical passages and other inspirational texts, as well as the poetry of Emily Dickinson. His Dickinson cards are available from the gift shop at the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst.*

# What's Your Story?

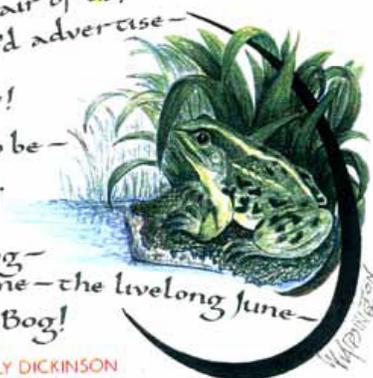
## EXHILARATION

is the Breeze  
That lifts us from the Ground  
And leaves us in another place  
Whose statement is not found—  
Returns us not, but after time  
We soberly descend  
A little newer for the term  
Upon Enchanted  
Ground—

EMILY DICKINSON

I'm Nobody! Who are you?  
Are you—Nobody—too?  
Then there's a pair of us!  
Don't tell! They'd advertise—  
you know!  
How dreary—to be—  
Somebody  
How public—  
like a Frog—  
To tell one's name—the livelong June—  
To an admiring Bog!

EMILY DICKINSON



A Route of Evanescence—  
With a revolving window  
—And every Blossom on the Bush—  
An early Morning's ride—  
—A Rush of Cochineal—  
The mail from Lunis, probably—  
—A Resonance of Emerald—  
—A Rustle of its number—  
—A Rustle of its number—  
—A Rustle of its number—

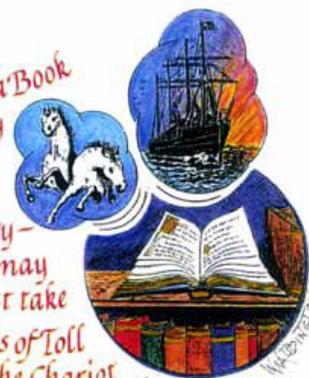


I work to drive the  
**AWE**  
away, yet  
**AWE**  
impels the work.

EMILY DICKINSON

There is no Frigate like a Book  
To take us Lands away  
Nor any Coursers  
like a Page  
Of prancing Poetry—  
This Traverse may  
the poorest take  
Without oppress of Toll  
How frugal is the Chariot  
That bears the Human soul.

EMILY DICKINSON



# TEACHING DICKINSON

*Series Editor, Marianne Noble*

Teaching Dickinson is a new series that will appear periodically in the Bulletin. If you teach Dickinson in classes at any level and you have anecdotes, observations, recommendations, or illuminating experiences that you would like to recount in an article, please contact the series editor, Marianne Noble, [mnoble@american.edu](mailto:mnoble@american.edu).

## An Amherst Native's Journey towards Teaching Dickinson

By Liz Sokolov



Photo Credit: Dan Sokolov

### THE AMHERST CONNECTION

To grow up in Amherst is to grow up in the shadow of Emily Dickinson. I felt an unspoken pressure to measure up to her brilliance, or, failing that (which is inevitable), at least to have a confident understanding of her poetry. But what they don't tell you when you are a young girl growing up in Amherst is that no one has a confident understanding of her poetry. For years, she and I avoided each other. Sure, I knew her biography, but I did not know her poetry. It took me two degrees in literature, ten years of teaching high school English, and, most importantly, a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant in 2009 to return to my hometown and study Dickinson non-

stop for a week with scholars and teachers from all over the country to finally feel closer to her life's work. Finally close enough, I created a Dickinson elective course entitled "Emily and Friends" for seniors at the all-girl's private school where I teach, The Madeira School, in McLean, VA.

### TEACHING DICKINSON FOR THE FIRST TIME

My first year at Madeira, I inherited a packet of Dickinson poems to teach. For the first night's homework, some girls chose to analyze "Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple" or "A Route of Evanescence." The result was a sheaf of forced arguments about love, or friendship, or other vague, but universal themes. I found myself saying "No, this poem is about a sunset, and that poem is about a hummingbird," and then I felt as if my scolding might well have prevented these girls from appreciating Dickinson. "Note to self," I said: "Next year, create a lesson plan that invites the girls to revel in her riddle poems: tell the girls that one poem is about a sunset, and one poem is about a hummingbird, and then have them decide which is which and write up a defense of why." Success!

I always made sure to devote class time to analyzing "Because I Could Not Stop for Death," because that was one poem I felt I controlled. And yet, I marveled that my strongest English students would choose to write on one of the challenging Dickinson poems, such as "I'm 'wife' – I've finished that –" or "What soft cherubic creatures." Inspired by my brave students, I was eager to expand my understanding of Dickinson, and

applied for the NEH grant to study her in-depth for one-week back in my home town.

### INSPIRATION BACK IN AMHERST: THE NEH WORKSHOP

I dutifully completed my homework in preparation for the workshop. I read the hundreds of assigned poems marathon style, several times over. I was in awe at the poetic gems I had never read before, and in awe at how she began to make so much more sense to me when I read her, not one poem at a time, but in waterfalls of poems overflowing, one to the next. At the workshop, when *bona fide* Dickinson experts readily admitted that they sometimes understood stanza 1 of X poem, and part of stanza 2, but that subsequent stanzas evaded them, I was freed from my fear of her.

I returned to school with new ideas for the brief junior unit. Many of the non-canonical poems struck me as powerful for adolescents, with their chartings of emotional upheavals, and I decided to add some of those poems to the packet for juniors, such as "I got so I could take his name," which is one of those poems where you are with her completely in stanzas 1-3, only to find her drifting off into a place that elicits great discussion and speculation. I also decided to reorganize the packet so that instead of offering what I now see as limiting thematic titles such as "Death" or "Nature," the poems would be organized by difficulty level – ease the students in, I thought, and then move to the more challenging poems.

I also returned from my week of all-Emily-all-the-time with burning to create a full

# TEACHING DICKINSON

Dickinson elective. Having studied her biography, learning how to evaluate the myths and realities of the Belle, as well as being immersed in her time period, and learning of the Dickinson digital resources available, I felt confident that I could simultaneously hook students on this great poet, while at the same time teach them sound scholarship.

## “EMILY AND FRIENDS”

My department chair gently communicated to me that it was only the rare senior who would sign up for a class entirely on Dickinson, so I decided to teach Dickinson along with her favorite authors. I determined who her favorite authors were by skimming the index to her *Selected Letters*, and I amassed “proof” for my students, through excerpts from her letters, that she indeed loved Shakespeare, the Bronte Sisters, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. I typed this proof directly into the syllabus, as much for myself as for my students. The syllabus became much more than daily assignments; it was a place for me to draw connections between the alternating units on Dickinson’s poetry and letters, and the texts of her “Friends.”

The girls would read the longest novel of the course – *Wuthering Heights* – over the summer. I paired *Othello* with Dickinson poems and letters on emotional pain. Following the passionately destructive love of Othello and Desdemona, we studied the “Master Letters,” reading not just the letters, but opposing theories on the master’s identity or even existence. *Silas Marner* was the only feasible option for George Eliot because of its short length. Thematic connections emerged: Dickinson’s reclusiveness matched Silas’s, as did the saving power of children to a lonely heart, and I was able to pair Dickinson’s poetry and letters for or about children with our study of the text. Interestingly, Silas suffers from epilepsy, so I was also able to bring in Lyndall

Gordon’s hot-off-the-press theory of Dickinson’s own possible epilepsy to the discussion. Lively class discussion ensued as a result of the intersection of biography, letters, and literature. The girls had never analyzed a letter as a piece of literature, and they enjoyed combining their often astute psychological insights with close textual analysis.

## ASSIGNMENTS EVOLVE NATURALLY

The beauty of teaching a Dickinson elective is that there are so many resources available to teach the students to be true scholars. Our first unit on Dickinson involved studying her variorum, and discussing at length what difference a word makes. I gave students the facsimile of her handwritten poem “It Sifts from Leaden Sieves” and had them transcribe it to the best of their ability, as a way for them to get in touch with the difficulty of the transcription and editing process. (This transcription activity is from the NEH workshop). Then they read several variorum editions of that poem and chose their favorite version. Their assignment was to write a letter to the editor of our collec-

tion, R.W. Franklin, either offering an argument in support of the version he chose to publish, as if they were defending him from critics, or a respectful, but forceful critique of his choice. The assignment is challenging in that students need to negotiate clearly between versions, and they need to clearly articulate the difference a word or phrase makes.

The major essay of the term involved choosing one of Dickinson’s “loaded” words, and tracing it across several poems (for my full assignment sheet, visit the Emily Dickinson Museum homepage, where it is published: [http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/files/education/Sokolov\\_NEH\\_Lesson\\_Plan\\_for\\_Dickinson\\_Museum\\_Website\\_Publication.pdf](http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/files/education/Sokolov_NEH_Lesson_Plan_for_Dickinson_Museum_Website_Publication.pdf)). This project involved use of the the *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, a searchable on-line and free database (<http://edl.byu.edu/>). There, not only can one search for the definition of a word from Dickinson’s own dictionary (Noah Webster’s 1844 *American Dictionary of the English Language*), which helped my students refine their interpretations of poems, but by



“A happy group of ten burgeoning ED scholars!”

Photo Credit: Megan Butterfield

# TEACHING DICKINSON

entering one word into the database, one can locate all her poems that contain that word. (I learned about this resource through the NEH workshop.) I had gone ahead and prepared a list of viable words (with fewer than 10 associated poems – some words had hundreds of references, and therefore would be too onerous for a short project). Students searched the *Lexicon* for the poetic references, read the poems, and narrowed down which poems (typically three) they would unify in their essay. Students wrote essays on “Spider,” “Church,” “Bread,” and “Train,” among others. Below is a student’s thesis on the significance of Dickinson’s use of the word “Spider” in poems 90, 513, and 1163:

Emily Dickinson uses the word “spider” in her poems to show that common beings can produce extraordinary and even divine entities. Her use of the word “spider” demonstrates Dickinson’s spiritual journey of defying the formal, structured religion of the Church and formulating her own spiritual connection with nature.

Most of the students succeeded in crafting a compelling and clear thesis; knitting together three poems was more challenging, though they made strides towards making connections among the poems. The success of this assignment lay in the originality of the task; students were proud to choose a viable word, study many poems with that word, narrow their selection of poems, and link them together with a unifying argument.

The final project of the term was both scholarly and creative: write your own one-woman Dickinson show. We viewed the classic Julie Harris film, *The Belle of Amherst*, and the girls loved the combination of humor and depth of emotion, though they feared they would have nothing “new” to add. We solved that concern by focusing on one aspect of Dickinson’s life, instead of tackling her entire biography as playwright William Luce did. Some students wrote on Dickinson’s relationship with Susan Dickinson, Judge Otis Lord, or Austin. Others wrote

about her relationship with gardens, religion, or domesticity. We had touched upon each of these topics during the course, but now students had a few weeks to conduct their own research, using both print and on-line resources. Distinguishing their own words from Dickinson’s with italics, students were required to include use of her letters as well as a central poem in their show. They were encouraged to use meaningful stage directions. Ideas gained from scholarly works were cited in parentheses and in a works cited page. The final performance was held in the evening, so students, faculty, and parents could attend. Below is a passage from the middle of a student’s script on Dickinson’s relation with religion:

Why should God be viewed as any better than us? He is not so aloof and inaccessible as the Christians seem to think. [pauses]

The Transcendentalists understand the beauty of nature and its relation to my God much more deeply and fully than any Christian scholar I’ve met. When I’m alone in my garden, I find a union with my God that no dogma could ever teach.

*Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –  
I keep it, staying at Home –*

Inspired by the narrative point of view in “Because I Could Not Stop for Death,” another student chose to write from beyond the grave. In this student’s piece, she explores Dickinson’s love for Sue. As part of her research, she learned that Dickinson often called Sue her “Sweet,” and so she used the *Lexicon* to locate and study all the “Sweet” poems (a nice take-off from the “loaded words” assignment), and determined that some were probably written to Sue. Still another student, amazed at the revelation late in the class that Emily had had, what I called, a “late life love” with Otis Lord, chose to imagine that relationship:

Since you are all making assumptions anyway, I might as well tell you plainly. [matter of fact tone] *I confess that I love[d] him.* [happy tone] *I rejoice that I love[d] him.* [Very energetic, almost shouting] *I thank the Maker of Heaven*

*and earth – that gave him me to love* [pause, calmer now]. And although it may surprise some of you, I have evidence that he was in love with me too [laughs]. For one thing, he had been courting me since 1878 and we had been writing letters to each other weekly. [As if talking to Otis right there, quiet, intimate] *to lie so near your longing – to touch it as I passed, for I am but a restive sleeper and often should journey from your Arms through the happy night...*”

## LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

I am teaching this course for the second time this fall. I have tried to build in more revision time for the writing assignments, so we can overcome some of the developmental challenges such as clearly vacillating between variorum, or linking discussion of multiple poems together.

By the end of the course, I believe the students felt closer to Dickinson, and in the process improved their analysis and research skills through scholarly assignments that will prepare them for the rigors of college work. I will do some things differently (course evaluations noted that I had a tendency to be too defensive of Dickinson, which is the pitfall of being an Amherst native!), and some things the same, but I will certainly bake Dickinson’s gingerbread again for the last day, which, falling in December, nicely corresponds to her birthday. (Note to self: bring milk next time, as 19th Century gingerbread is a bit hard going down!)

---

*Liz Sokolov grew up in Amherst, MA and attended Brandeis University, where she earned a BA in English, and Georgetown University, where she earned an MA in English. She has been teaching English at independent high schools in the Washington, DC area for ten years, the last five of which have been at the Madeira School in McLean, VA. The best salutation Liz ever received was addressed, “To Liz – the other Belle of Amherst!”*

# Making Emily

## By Norman Worrall

In July last year we put the final touches to *Becoming Emily*, a feature-length film which looks at Dickinson through some thirty letter extracts and forty poems.

I had been enthralled with Dickinson's poetry for many years, yet also puzzled as to why despite "official" recognition of her genius there had been no national-pride movement to affirm her status as America's greatest poet.

So how then to make even a small contribution to spreading the word? Since I'm a composer of sorts, I thought of setting some of her poems to music. But this has been done many times over by others more capable than I. However, I did have a little film experience and with help from friends, a film or video might also be possible. The task then would be to make such a film accessible to a broader audience who had perhaps only a high-school acquaintance with Dickinson's world.

Making films can be a very expensive business. In the big-time film world a million dollars will barely get you started. However, there also exist small independent companies such as ourselves, Visible Music, who can get by on micro-budgets, provided nobody expects to get paid much – or even at all. On such a budget we obviously couldn't undertake a full period drama, so it followed that others in Dickinson's life would have to be treated as marginal figures. However, making a virtue of necessity, this would in turn have the advantage of emphasizing the overwhelming internality of Dickinson's existence.

We began by casting for three actors to play Emily at different periods of her life, and were surprised at how many thought they could carry it off, undeterred by such considerations as even approximate phys-

ical resemblance or relevant experience. The real problem, however, was finding a mature Emily, since actors in their fifties are usually well established and disinclined to accept paltry offerings. As it happened, this dilemma was soon bypassed when it became clear in early edits that managing change of appearance and



The author works on a scene with Nicola Howard

voice for even two actors was going to be problematic. This in turn led to thoughts that the narrative might be better carried by just one "Emily," using the device of talking us through her life by drawing on memories from a family album. So we moved out to some splendid gardens nearby, sat our chosen Emily – Nicola Howard – on a handsome bench, and shot all the footage of her turning through the pages of the album. A quick look at the roughs and it seemed the idea was going to work.

Right from the start we had felt Nicola would shape up well as Emily, but other casting experiences had been more variable. My partner, Jean, and I were out shopping in the local farmers' market when we

spotted a boy surely born to play Gib – the right age, the same finely-boned features and even the long blond hair – and accompanied by an obviously protective mother. We had nothing with us to prove who we were, and I had to start explaining out of the blue that we were making a film etc., etc. The mother looked at us with a veneer

of politeness but must have thought we were nut cases or pedophiles. I left a phone number but no call came.

We had better fortune in casting Emily's dog, Carlo. With help from members of the Society we established that Carlo was a chestnut-brown "Newfie," a cold-climate beast and one we wouldn't expect to find at all in the milder climes of southern England. We started calling veterinary clinics and drew the expected blanks, until a nurse recalled a client who

had two (!) Newfoundland hounds – and, unbelievably, one in chestnut brown.

I visited the owner and was almost literally bowled over as two creatures the size of small ponies bounded into the room from the yard. Luckily, at second visit, the brown Newfie got on well with Nicola, and didn't seem to mind being called "Carlo." We also learned that Carlo responded well to directing if rewarded with liver tidbits. When not required on set, he'd keep cool by resting his belly on the nearest slab of shady concrete and drinking copious amounts of water.

Our initial idea was to present the film as a "found object" – something in scratchy

sepia discovered in an Amherst attic, complete with the classic jerky presentation of a silent movie. Early edits in this mode showed we were losing more than we gained, so we finally settled on a grainy image with somewhat desaturated color. Marcus Korhonen worked wonders with the camera and the trickier aspects of directing, then later with the brunt of online editing. If the project had been my inspiration, he certainly was its anchor. Yet in the end we both depended on our principal actor Nicola Howard, and on her “becoming Emily.”

Apart from a few linking words, the script was written by Dickinson herself; I simply arranged the materials to represent one view of her life. Different script writers/arrangers and of course directors would produce different results; the whole thing is far from a neutral process. For me, the most important operating principle was to work with as much truthfulness as possible – as, in fact, becoming Emily. With this guiding principle, I felt it mattered not too much whether, say, her early lover (in fact or in fantasy) was the Reverend Wadsworth or the Springfield Republican editor, Sam Bowles, or indeed one of the other outside contenders. What did matter was Dickinson's experience, and so often the pain and turmoil which become transfigured in her poetry.

Thinking about poetry in a film context presents its own challenges. Surely, one might think, the words themselves are sufficient without any need for visual prompts. Sufficient, yes, but visual treatments which enhance both the mood and content of a given poem are possible, as well as hopefully saying something about Dickinson as a person. For example, we catch her sense of mischief in “Tell all the Truth but tell it slant –” (Fr1263) by having her address a Venetian mask. Again, it seems likely that many of her ideas for poems occurred while she was in the kitchen, so we turn to this setting for “God gave a Loaf to every Bird” (Fr748) and “We play at Paste” (Fr282). But such explicitness can be overdone. Take for

example, “Out of sight? / What of that? / See the Bird – reach it” (Fr733): here it seemed obviously important to shoot out of doors in a fairly wild setting, but I felt it would have been “invasive” to show the actual bird, perhaps a bobolink, circling overhead. Then inevitably in other poems (such as, “I reckon – when I count at all –” [Fr533]) very plain and uneventful visuals offered themselves as most appropriate.

It is hoped that the final selections of letters and particularly of poems are sufficiently representative of Dickinson's oeuvre – not easy, given that she wrote what emerges in print as three volumes of poems and a similar three volumes of letters. What should the selection criteria be? Most obviously, anything chosen needed to be a recognized “good” poem or letter extract; second, it must be largely understandable to an audience having a brief exposure in the course of a film; and, third, if possible it should be capable of being woven into and contributing to her life narrative.

I also wanted to get across the point that her poems did not just “appear,” but had to be worked on, crafted and created, and that we should at least glimpse her engaged in this process, as we do for three of the poems. Furthermore, I believe poetry generally is delivered too quickly in public performance, so Nicola and I worked on a slower pacing that would give Dickinson's language a better chance to work in the imagination of the viewer. At one point, stemming from anxiety that even then the poems would not be sufficiently understood, I had text on screen as well, but cinematically this device simply didn't work and it was quickly dropped.

Other than the big, wide-shot scenes, most footage was shot in my own (Victorian)



Carlo and Nicola get familiar.

house and garden which, strange to say, turned out to have most of the props we needed just lying around. To think how often I'd been told it was all junk! Other outside scenes were shot around the English Kent coast. Luckily, I was able to write the supporting and incidental music myself rather than resort to library tracks. In the end we had a feature-length film which managed to address the most significant aspects of Dickinson's inner and outer life. As for genre, the film as it finally emerged is locatable somewhere on a continuum between poetry workshop and period drama.

Of course, ours is by no means a definitive version of Dickinson; there is still room, for example, to bring out the dynamics of the wider Dickinson household in a full period drama as the children grow up and friends and servants come and go. But for the time being this is our contribution to her memory.

---

*Norman Worrall is English by birth but has lived in several countries including the US where, courtesy of Fulbright, he spent four graduate years at Indiana University studying not literature but experimental psychology. Since retirement from London University he has developed interests in composing music using Logic/VSL and in making short films, of which Becoming Emily is so far the most ambitious.*

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

By Barbara Kelly, Book Review Editor

**Bouson, J. Brooks, ed.**

***Critical Insights: Emily Dickinson.***

Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2011. 400 pp. Cloth, ISBN 1-58765-695-8, \$85.00, includes free online interactive access to full print content.

This volume is part of a series of resource texts on single authors or books intended for sophisticated high school and college students. Divided into four parts, it contains eighteen essays offering a range of individual responses to Emily Dickinson. The first part, on Dickinson's life, work, and influence, includes J. Brooks Bouson's introductory essay and two previously published essays by Gerhard Brand and Jascha Hoffman. The second part, "Cultural Contexts," contains four current essays: Elizabeth Petrino's "Emily Dickinson and Her Culture," Fred D. White's "Major Trends in Dickinson Criticism," Margaret H. Freeman's "Dwelling in Possibility: An Introduction to Dickinson's Poetics," and Matthew J. Bolton's "The Conscious Corpse in Browning, Housman, and Dickinson." The third part, "Critical Readings," gathers eleven previously published essays (1998-2008) by Faith Barrett, Sarah E. Blackwood, Jed Deppman, Joanne Feit Diehl, Jane Donahue Eberwein, Christine Gerhardt, Suzanne Juhasz, Patrick J. Keane, Nancy Mayer, Helen Vendler, and Shira Wolosky. Six of these essays first appeared in the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. The fourth part, "Resources," provides a chronology of Dickinson's life, a list of her works, including publication dates, a bibliography, contributor profiles, acknowledgments, and an index. Works cited after each essay offer additional resources. The book cover features Laura Hills's retouched daguerreotype of Dickinson, displaying short, dark curls, and a white ruff, further

retouched by Martha Dickinson Bianchi in 1924.

**Fuller, Randall.**

***From Battlefields Rising: How the Civil War Transformed American Literature.***

New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 251 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-19-534230-7, \$29.95.

Fuller begins and ends his book discussing volcanoes, asserting that nineteenth-century artists, writers, scientists, and theologians were obsessed with volcanoes, Emily Dickinson being the writer most closely identified with them. He writes about "the great volcano of civil war," including the major battles and the writers who experienced the "bloodiest conflict in American history": Louisa May Alcott, Dickinson, Frederick Douglass, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Melville, Whitman, and others. He says that Emerson was among those who "helped to propel the country into war," while all "struggled to make sense of the Civil War in old and new literary forms." In "Telling It Slant" (74-92), Fuller discusses nineteen Dickinson volcano and Civil War poems and her letters, describing her voice as "unparalleled in American literature, full of abrupt halts and catches, ringing with the unexpected, odd music of a rusted hinge, a screen door banging shut, a forlorn bird singing across a wintry meadow." He says, "The war dead . . . appear throughout Dickinson's work of the period, puncturing the grand narratives and high-minded ideals used to justify the war." Even scholars familiar with Dickinson's life and work can enjoy Fuller's natural gift for storytelling, and his clear, concise, and gracious prose in this well researched book

about the intersection of literature and the Civil War: how writers affected the Civil War and how it affected them. Included are 47 unique black and white photographs, notes, and an index.

**Gilbert, Sandra M.**

***Rereading Women: Thirty Years of Exploring Our Literary Traditions.***

New York: Norton, 2011. xvii, 380 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-393-06764-4. \$29.95.

Combining memoir, history, and criticism, Gilbert's sixteen essays offer an overview of her evolution as a feminist thinker, educator, and critic. The essays are presented in three sections: "Finding Atlantis – and Growing into Feminism" represents Gilbert's feminist thinking; "Reading and Rereading Women's Writing" shows "ways of examining the dynamics of gender and genre through analyses of poems and novels"; and "Mother Rites: Maternity, Matriarchy, Creativity" examines "revisionary imaginings of maternity in the last two hundred years." Fourteen essays, published between 1977 and 2008, are bookended by Gilbert's first essay describing her awakening to feminism and her final essay exploring maternity's constraints, creativity, and power. Writers discussed are Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Emily Dickinson, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Edith Wharton, and others. Gilbert includes two essays on Dickinson: "The Wayward Nun Beneath the Hill: Emily Dickinson and the Mysteries of Womanhood" (1983), where she shows the poet transforming "the minutiae of her life into the mysteries of her art"; and "'Dare You See a Soul at the White Heat?': Thoughts on a 'Little Home-keeping Person'" (2008), where

The *Bulletin* welcomes notices of all Dickinson-related books, including those published outside the U.S.

Send information to Barbara Kelly, 444 Washington Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301, U.S.A.

Email: [barbarakelly@psualum.com](mailto:barbarakelly@psualum.com)

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

she presents Dickinson creating bread and black cake as well as poems such as “I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –.” Gilbert’s interest in “women’s achievements in the past and present along with feminist criticism’s potential for the future” provides informative, accessible reading for both feminists and general readers. Included are a preface, notes and a bibliography; no index.

---

### Kearns, Michael S.

*Writing for the Street, Writing in the Garret: Melville, Dickinson, and Private Publication.* Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2010. xii, 171 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-8142-1140-3. \$45.95.

Kearns’s scholarly yet accessible study explores Melville and Dickinson’s preferences for writing in the garret, seeking *symbolic capital* or prestige through limited circulation of their work among an educated, affluent class or non-commercial market, while others writing for the street aimed for *economic capital* through large scale print production, distribution, and profit in the public market. Five chapters address the cultural and economic context in which Melville and Dickinson worked. In “Marketing by Mug,” Kearns discusses the daguerreotype as “a cultural phenomenon” popular with an “image-hungry public,” a marketing ploy avoided by Melville and Dickinson. In “The ‘Endless Riband of Foolscap’ and Publishing by Manuscript,” handwritten manuscripts are distinguished from marketed books that turned writers into authors concerned with compensation and demands from editors, publishers, and the public. In “‘Firmament’ or ‘Fin’: Copyright, Authority, and Ownership,” readers learn that nineteenth-century copyright law privileged “public access to a literary work,” and that “publishing by manuscript was intended to preserve . . . ownership while generating symbolic capital.” In “‘The brain is just the weight of God’: Hand, Mind, and Manuscript,” Kearns focuses on Melville and Dickinson’s composing process and how “the mental, spiritual, and physical realms

substantially interpenetrated” their work. In “Not ‘Convenient to Carry in the Hand’: Commercializing Melville and Dickinson in the Twentieth Century,” both writers’ posthumous careers are examined. Drawing from Emerson, Pierre Bourdieu, William Charvat and other past and present critics, this well researched, informative book includes 11 black and white photographs, notes, works cited, and an index.

---

### Marshall, Alan.

*American Experimental Poetry and Democratic Thought.* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009. xi, 315 pp. Cloth, ISBN 0-19-956192-6. \$95.00.

Marshall argues that a century of American experimental poetry, from Walt Whitman to George Oppen, “has been animated by a communicative imperative, a power of recognition, whose impulsive life and continuing resonance are insistently political.” Rather than an ideological history, he proposes a “visionary history, a series of intellectual experiments, whose free connections . . . correspond to deeper freedoms and connections.” He addresses the tension that exists between equality and individualism in democracy, exploring the American “democratic disposition” towards equality and how it “gets recognized, expressed, or thought about in poetry.” He says that Whitman, Ezra Pound, Dickinson, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Robert Creeley, George Oppen and others “have participated in . . . a confluence of arguments and experiments . . . by means of which a democratic society comes to variable, pluralist, multifaceted self-consciousness.” His study draws from thinkers Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Stanley Cavell, Freud, Hegel, Heidegger, Karl Marx, David Riesman, Donald Winnicott, and Toqueville among others. In “‘I am alive – because / I do not own a House’: Emily Dickinson, Mina Loy, and Lorine Niedecker” (92-145), he argues in his discussion of Dickinson (101-112) that her propensity for privacy “demonstrates the exhaustion and ultimate inadequacy

of privacy, its metamorphic dependency on a contiguous public realm.” Marshall discusses J 605, 700, 706, 817, and concludes, “Dickinson becomes her own public, rehearses her own being, is received by herself, and anticipates the public recognition of her work.” His scholarly book includes notes, works cited, and an index.

---

### Showalter, Elaine, ed.

*The Vintage Book of American Women Writers.* New York: Vintage Books, 2011. xix, 822 pp. Paper, ISBN 1-4000-3445-1. \$18.95.

Showalter’s chronologically arranged anthology includes 350 years of stories, essays, fables, and poems created by eighty women writers, a balanced mix of both canonical authors and those less well known, from Anne Bradstreet and Mary Rowlandson to Amy Tan and Jhumpa Lahiri. Included among others are Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Edith Wharton, Marianne Moore, Genevieve Taggard, Elizabeth Bishop, and Sylvia Plath. A concise biographical sketch of no more than half a page introduces each writer. Emily Dickinson is represented by three poems: “To fight aloud, is very brave –” (Fr 138); “Wild nights – Wild nights!” (Fr 269); and “I like the look of Agony,” (Fr 339). In Showalter’s introduction, “The Mothers of Us All,” she recalls that early women writers tended “to avoid publicity and to deprecate their own achievements,” and that “the main reason women do not figure in American literary history is because they have not been the ones to write it.” She suggests that we need historical chronology “to see how women writers fit on the literary timeline of American literature,” and we need literary context that situates women writers “in relation to their contemporaries and their precursors.” This book celebrates women’s contributions to the literary canon, seeks to correct past omissions, and offers a broad, fresh selection of reading. Intended as a companion to Showalter’s literary history,

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

*A Jury of Her Peers* (reviewed in the fall 2009 *EDIS Bulletin*), this book contains a table of contents, an introduction, and acknowledgments; no index.

---

## Book Notes

Now available in paperback edition:

Anderson, Douglas.

*A House Undivided: Domesticity and Community in American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, \$34.99.

Correction: In the Book Notes section of the Spring 2011 issue of the *Bulletin*, Cindy McKenzie was omitted as co-editor of *Reading Emily Dickinson's Letters: Critical Essays*. The editor regrets the oversight.

---

## Book Reviews

**Crumbley, Paul.**

*Winds of Will: Emily Dickinson and the Sovereignty of Democratic Thought*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010. 278 pp. Cloth, ISBN 978-0-8173-1703-4, \$53.00.

*Reviewed by Domhnall Mitchell*

Paul Crumbley's first monograph on Dickinson, *Inflections of the Pen: Dash and Voice in Emily Dickinson* (1997), was and continues to be a landmark in the poet's modern reception: in it, he (correctly and compellingly) challenged Bakhtin's critique of lyric poetry as monologic, uncovering within and across Dickinson poems a carnival of competing voices, while also drawing attention to the contribution made by the (autograph) dash to their dialogic forms. *Winds of Will* is in many ways a companion piece to *Inflections of the Pen*: it contests critical claims of political conservatism in the poetry, with each of the five main chapters promoting different aspects of Crumbley's contention that Dickinson was by instinct, heritage, and practice a democratic poet.

Among the many highlights of the book are innovative and comprehensive readings

of individual poems, where Crumbley focuses on historical, formal, and material particularities while maintaining a strong and consistent thesis. A typical example is the interpretation of Fr856, "I play at Riches – to appease," where he demonstrates how the primary speaker's ostensibly compliant rejection of political enfranchisement is pitted against a "shadow narrative that stands in dialogic tension with the one the speaker struggles to affirm" (57) – a shadow narrative which is partially revealed through the use of dash and comma at specific points. These alert and thoughtful readings provide much of the momentum and pleasure of the book.

The first chapter of *Winds of Will* begins by immediately grappling with the monarchical vocabulary in Dickinson's poetry that has attracted a degree of critical suspicion, correctively relating it to a more widespread use of similar terms in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American political discourse, when the transfer from a regal and parliamentarian to a democratic system headed by "an elective monarch" relocated political authority in middle-class individualism. With power comes responsibility, and Crumbley argues that many of Dickinson's poems can be seen as rehearsing the very same procedures of evaluation and choice that were at the core of democratic decision-making. But elections, as chapter two points out, were not open to women, and Crumbley traces the "gymnastic self" of rhetorical positions developed by Dickinson – including a spectrum of verbal registers and a strategic questioning of assumptions about natural order and the individual – in order to prepare her readers for the challenges of a fuller democratic participation.

Chapter three looks at Spiritualism, quoting judiciously from nineteenth-century documents in order to show a socially radical and antiauthoritarian movement where women had prominent roles, which the poet in turn appropriated for the purposes of underscoring her own poetic advocacy of democratic individualism. Though not all of the poems

chosen can be gainsaid as Spiritualist performances only (many of them have a Gothic dimension, for instance), Crumbley is aware of this: his footnotes are quick to point out that the poems support a range of possible interpretations, but his own readings foreground aspects of their meaning that have hitherto received little attention, helping to clarify what he sees as Dickinson's tendency to encourage a liberal scepticism towards authority in its more restrictive shapes and forms.

This resistance to confinement, in the guise of Dickinson's rejection of the institutions and conventions of print culture, leads Crumbley back in chapters four and five to a familiar concern with Dickinson's non-publication and the status of her manuscripts. He traces the poet's habit of distributing hundreds of poems in (and sometimes as) notes and letters to friends as evidence that she consciously embraced a collaborative and informal mode of circulation based on nineteenth-century gift culture.

His references to both the exchange between Dickinson and Susan Gilbert Dickinson over Fr124, "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers," and to subsequent transcriptions by the latter of other works by the poet, build on previous research by Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart, but also extend their investigations in examining the significance of Dickinson's correspondence with Helen Hunt Jackson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Crumbley argues that an initially reluctant Higginson (who was also actively involved in reform politics) eventually agreed to edit Dickinson's poems at least in part because of the insights he had gained into "her insistent defiance of cultural codes" over the course of their correspondence (169). And Crumbley aligns himself with Marta L. Werner, Melanie Hubbard, and others (including Smith and Hart again) in seeing an overall development in the inscription and collation of Dickinson's manuscripts "away from the clean page of the bound book to an increasingly unruly text that finally refuses containment" and allows for a greater degree of readerly intervention and play (201).

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

Crumbley's book goes a long way towards demonstrating that Dickinson's poetry lends itself in many ways to egalitarian positions, and cements his own position as one of the most gifted critics writing on Dickinson today.

*Domhnall Mitchell is a professor of English in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. He is the author of Emily Dickinson: Monarch of Perception (2000) and Measures of Possibility: Emily Dickinson's Manuscripts (2005), and he is co-editor (with Maria Stuart) of The International Reception of Emily Dickinson (2009).*

---

**Jones, Ruth Owen, and Sheila Rainford, eds.**

***Harvesting History: Amherst Massachusetts Farms 1700 - 2010.***  
Amherst, MA: Amherst Area Publications, 2010. 343 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-615-40590-2, \$29.95.

***Reviewed by Susan Snively***

Readers of Emily Dickinson can find much of interest in this handsomely-produced book, edited by Sheila Rainford and Ruth Owen Jones. Working their subject's rich loam, scientists, poets, farmers, teachers, and environmentalists portray Amherst as "just a country Town," in Emily Dickinson's words. The book's stunning photographs show scenes the poet would recognize: ripe apples, fields, the autumn sky "blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple," and winter's monochrome. Histories and anecdotes characterize the place where the poet lived her whole life.

Rebelliousness among Amherst citizens surfaced in religious dissidence and Shays's Rebellion of 1786-7 against the state's "tyrannical" taxes. One fourth of the rebels were connected to the Dickinsons by blood or marriage, yet eventually most became civic leaders. Emily might have

appreciated their mixture of radicalism and responsibility.

Rooted in the agricultural community, Dickinson gardened, baked, and belonged to the Hampshire Agricultural Society. Dickinson friend and neighbor William Smith Clark helped to found the Massachusetts Agricultural College. Although we don't know whether the poet met Ralph Waldo Emerson when he visited Amherst, she would have appreciated Emerson's comment that "Nature is as subtle as she is strong."

The poet's father Edward Dickinson helped to found the Agricultural Fair in 1846, when Emily was 15. We can picture her among the jostling crowds, at the juried exhibits, perhaps slurping an oyster or tipping apple cider. As the "Farmer's Fair" moved to a larger venue (pictured in a dramatic aerial photograph), it featured horse-racing. Edward Dickinson protested the potential rowdiness and gambling, but in 1860 Emily's brother Austin Dickinson served as "Marshall" of the grand horse parade.

Ed Wilfert, in "The Dickinson Meadow," lists the changes in its ownership from 1810 until 1923. The land was lost by Emily's grandfather Samuel Fowler Dickinson in the 1820's, recovered by Edward Dickinson in 1855, and gradually sold off to Irish immigrants and to owners of a hat factory. Edward and Austin were developers of property both agricultural and commercial. A time-lapse photograph might show how the original 17 acres shrank into a smaller meadow, then into a factory, a school, tenements, the house built by Austin for Mabel and David Todd, three acres of land owned by the last Dickinson heir, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, then into house lots.

The sad and humiliating end of Dickinson ownership of the meadow came in 1907, when Martha's estranged husband, Alexander Bianchi, sold off the remaining three acres, denying Martha the income from the land. Disputes over Dickinson land often barely masked quarrels about sex and propriety. By 1923, the remnant of the Dickinson meadow was subdivided into fourteen house lots.

Among the eleven poems in the book (by Helen Hunt Jackson, Robert Francis, Arnold Kenseth, and Robert Frost), *Harvesting History* includes two poems by Emily Dickinson, "What is - 'Paradise' -" (Fr 241) and "The Grass so little has to do" (Fr 379). "Who lives in Paradise?" she asks. "Are they 'Farmers' - / Do they 'hoe' - / Do they know that this is 'Amherst' - / And that I - am coming - too -"

For Dickinson, farm work heals her hunger, awkwardness, and lonesomeness. "The Grass so little has to do" shows the Dickinson meadow as a space for day-dreams.

As the poet Robert Francis said, "Poets / Are rich in point of view if they are rich in anything. The farmer thinks one thing: / The poet can afford to think of all things / Including what the farmer thinks. . . ." (213).

Emily Dickinson, who thought of all things, often embraced a farmer's thoughts. At age 11 she wrote her brother, away at school: "... the chickens grow very fast I am afraid they will be so large that you cannot perceive them with the naked Eye when you get home ..." (Johnson, *Letters*, 18 April, 1842)

An 1873 directory lists about 230 farms in Amherst, the year before Edward Dickinson died. At present, Amherst has fifty farms, including a dairy farm, cornfields, and growers of tobacco, perennials, annuals, evergreens, berries, wetland plants, apples, grapes, vegetables, herbs, horses, and chickens. In Emily Dickinson's time, local farmers, including her family, sustained needy families with donations of food. At present, Amherst citizens can buy shares in a farm's harvest and visit the Farmer's Market for fresh produce, cheeses, meat, bread, soap, and popsicles. The hens are still "laying finely." In Amherst, Emily's "gazing grain" still gazes back at us.

*Susan Snively has written four books of poetry and a novel. She wrote and narrated Seeing New Englandly, a film produced by Ernest Urvater for the Emily Dickinson Museum, where Snively works as a guide.*

## In Memoriam: Karen Dandurand

By Martha Ackmann and Joanne Dobson

**K**aren Dandurand, prolific scholar of Emily Dickinson, died of cancer on September 12, 2011 in Indiana, Pennsylvania. She was 64. Karen was an associate professor of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) where she served for several years as the director of the Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism Program. Interim IUP President David Werner called Karen “a beloved teacher” known for her interests in nineteenth-century American Literature, women’s literature, autobiography, and letters.

The focus of Karen’s work on Emily Dickinson emerged at the University of Massachusetts where she wrote her 1984 dissertation on “Why Dickinson Did Not Publish.” In researching nineteenth-century newspaper archives for that dissertation, Karen unearthed four previously unknown Dickinson publications that had appeared during the Civil War. Karen announced this remarkable discovery in the March 1984 issue of *American Literature*.

“[T]hese four newly discovered texts,” she wrote, “and the circumstances of their publication oblige us to reconsider two vexing issues concerning Dickinson: her supposed indifference to the catastrophic events of the Civil War and her attitude toward publication itself. Both assumptions are disproved by 1864 publications. Three of the poems published in Brooklyn must be seen as her contributions to the Union Cause.



Karen Dandurand, Joanne Dobson, and Martha Ackmann at the July 2011 EDIS Annual Meeting in Amherst, MA.

Moreover, the publications and reprints in 1864 make clear that editors were interested in her poems and that more poems would have been published had she offered them.” Karen’s essay won the MLA’s 1984 Norman Foerster Prize for the year’s best essay in *American Literature*.

We had the great fortune to meet Karen while we were graduate students at UMass and recall with pleasure the many hours we spent discussing the poet and working as guides at the Dickinson Homestead. At

a time when scant attention was paid to other women writers of Dickinson’s time and place, we frequently spoke of the need to examine her within the context of the American women writers who were her contemporaries.

Soon we three presumptuous graduate students found ourselves petitioning the English department chair for a little money to produce a newsletter on the subject. We had modest goals: we wanted to reach out to other scholars with similar interests and learn more about other American women writers of the nineteenth century. *Legacy* the newsletter eventually became *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* and soon developed into the premier scholarly publication on U.S. women’s literature, serving as the catalyst for the formation of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW).

Through it all, Karen was the constant, working as one of SSAWW’s first vice presidents and, until recently, remaining an active Society officer. While never one to boast, Karen patiently and methodically used her passion for old books and forgotten texts to help establish and nurture a scholarly field that flourishes 27 years after *Legacy*’s first newsletter.

In 1986, Karen and her husband Larry moved from their lovely Victorian home in Northampton, Massachusetts, to Penn-

sylvania, where she started her teaching career at IUP. It was a Pennsylvania homecoming of sorts for Karen – she was born in Wilkes-Barre.

During her career at IUP, Karen taught undergraduate courses in many aspects of nineteenth-century American literature and supervised graduate dissertations ranging from Mabel Dodge Luhan to Anthony Trollope to, of course, Emily Dickinson. She is remembered fondly by her former graduate students. Anne Ramirez recalled that when she proposed to write a dissertation on Dickinson because she thought she would never tire of reading the poet, Karen told her that was “a very good reason.” As a dissertation supervisor, Karen was “always gentle and supportive,” Anne said.

While teaching, Karen also continued her research and writing, editing *Dickinson Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography 1969-1985* (Garland, 1988) and contributing essays on the poet’s publications and letters to anthologies including *Dickinson and Audience* (Orzeck and Weisbuch, eds Michigan, 1999) and *Reading Emily Dickinson Letters: Critical Essays* (Eberwein and MacKenzie, eds., Massachusetts, 2009). Jane Eberwein remembers that Karen’s “scholarly disposition asserted itself in a passion for precise knowledge and careful judgments.” In fact, Karen’s detailed understanding of *Legacy’s* history and trustworthy hand at SSAWW convinced Jane to become the

organization’s first membership and finance officer.

Karen also was a frequent speaker at EDIS conferences and Annual Meetings, and at special events at the Emily Dickinson Museum. Karen was a “great and steady friend of the Museum,” said Jane Wald, executive director. “We could always rely on her for accuracy, nuance, and meaningful interpretation.”

The Museum staff was especially delighted, Jane said, when Karen accepted their invitation to give the keynote talk for the opening of the “my Verse is alive” exhibit. It was a fitting return, Jane said, “to the place where [Karen] had spent much time as a graduate student and as a scholar.”

Recently Karen focused her research on Susan Hale, nineteenth-century American author, traveler and artist. She also was a member of the Society for the Study of Rebecca Harding Davis and Her World, the Charlotte Perkins Gilman Society at St. Francis University in Loretto and the Olana Partnership in Hudson, New York.

Sharon Harris, who together with Karen founded SSAWW, wrote, “Few people in our field are as knowledgeable about the broad field of U.S. women writers as was Karen. Meticulous in her scholarship, she also aided generations of young scholars in the field, both as a teacher and as an editor. Karen never loved the limelight, but she was always there, working steady-

ly to promote women’s writing. . . . She followed her own drummer, and those of us who came to know her will always appreciate the integrity of her individual path within the profession.”

We looked forward to so many more conversations with Karen, exchanges that were infused with her sly wit, exacting recall of countless Dickinson connections and tales of her recent finds in used book stores. Nobody combed a shelf of discarded books like Karen and nobody else had her patience for poring over blurred microfilm in archives.

Many of us were fortunate to spend time with Karen at the July 2011 EDIS Annual Meeting in Amherst where she spoke on the lively panel “Why Dickinson Didn’t Publish.” Knowing her for over thirty years, we also knew how to tease Karen and enjoyed asking a perennial question that always drew a smile. “How many cats do you have now?” we inquired at the EDIS meeting last July. Karen looked sheepish, a bit embarrassed, but she answered honestly and with no small measure of pride. “Five,” she said – a number not as high as the Dandurand cat census had been.

We will miss our friend deeply.

Karen is survived by her husband Larry, her brother, John Abrahamson, her sisters Kristine Pyle and Karla Dowd, two nieces, a nephew and five beloved cats.

---

## Ruth Stone: 1915-2011

Of Emily Dickinson, poet Ruth Stone wrote, “When I read her poems, these original, hard as steel poems, and I feel the intensity in every word, words used in new ways, bent to her will, then I think she was self-sufficient, an artist whose mind was never asleep, whose concentration recreated, made fresh all that she saw and felt, as though she saw through the ordinary barriers, not as a visionary, but as a laser beam. But when I think of how little recognition she received in her lifetime, and how devastated she must have felt, though her fierce pride concealed it, then I am angry and sad. Yes, a great artist knows and can work in almost total isolation, but it is a terrible thing to have to do. The original mind seems eccentric, even crazy sometimes. In her cryptic inventions, she broke the tiresome mold of American poetry. We still stand among those shards and splinters.”

To hear Ruth Stone (1915-2011) read in tribute to Emily Dickinson, please visit Titanic Operas: <http://www.emilydickinson.org/titanic/stone.html>

## Research Opportunities

### EDIS Scholar in Amherst, 2012

The Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS) invites applications for the 2012 Scholar in Amherst Program. The scholarship is designed to support research on Emily Dickinson at institutions such as the Special Collections of the Frost Library of Amherst College, the Jones Public Library, the Mount Holyoke College Archives, the Smith College Special Collections, the Dickinson Homestead, the Evergreens, and the Amherst Historical Society.

The award of \$2,000 is to be used for expenses related to that research such as travel, accommodations, a rental car, or reproduction fees. Upon completion of research in Amherst, recipients will write a letter to the EDIS Board outlining what they achieved with EDIS support, and we appreciate acknowledgment in any resulting publications. A minimum stay of one week in Amherst is required; recipients may also use the fellowship to initiate a lengthier stay in the area. Preference will be given to persons with completed PhDs who are in the early stages of their careers.

To apply for the 2012 Scholar in Amherst Award, please submit a cv, a letter of introduction (written by the applicant), a two-page project proposal including preliminary budget and brief bibliography, by January 15, 2012, to Jed Deppman at [jdeppman@oberlin.edu](mailto:jdeppman@oberlin.edu). Letters of recommendation are not accepted as part of the application packet. Applications will be acknowledged upon receipt and applicants notified of final decisions by March 1. For more information, see [www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org)

### EDIS Graduate Student Fellowship, 2012

**The Emily Dickinson International Society will name a 2012 graduate student fellowship in memory of Karen Dandurand to honor her contributions to Dickinson studies.**

The Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS) announces a fellowship award of \$1,000 in support of graduate student scholarship on Emily Dickinson. The award may be used to fund travel to collections or conferences, to support book purchases, or for other research expenses (such as reproduction costs) necessary to the project. Preference will be given to applicants enrolled in doctoral programs and engaged in the writing of dissertations or other major projects directed toward publication.

Applicants should be aware that a dissertation project need not be focused solely on Dickinson; however, a substantial part of the work should significantly engage Dickinson's work. To apply, please send a cv, a project description, the names and contact information of two references, and a dissertation prospectus or other relevant writing sample of no more than 25 pages to Jed Deppman at [jdeppman@oberlin.edu](mailto:jdeppman@oberlin.edu). Applications are due by January 15, 2012. Letters of recommendation are not accepted as part of the application packet. Applications will be acknowledged upon receipt and applicants notified of final decisions by March 1. For more information, see [www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org)

## Upcoming Conferences

### 2012 ALA and SSAWW

The American Literature Association will hold its twenty-third annual meeting in San Francisco, May 24-27, 2012. The Emily Dickinson International Society will sponsor two panels. One panel is open to papers on any aspect of Dickinson's life or literary work. The topic for the second panel is Dickinson's Development. Please send proposals and academic affiliation/bio information to Vivian Pollak ([vrpolak@wustl.edu](mailto:vrpolak@wustl.edu)) by January 10, 2012.

The Society for the Study of American Women Writers will hold its triennial conference in Denver, October 10-13, 2012. The general topic for the conference is "Citizenship and Belonging." There will be one Emily Dickinson panel. Papers about citizenship/belonging, and especially about Dickinson and global citizenship, should be submitted to Martha Nell Smith ([MNSmith@umd.edu](mailto:MNSmith@umd.edu)) by the conference due date of February 6, 2012.

#### Member-at-Large Election

This Spring EDIS will be holding an election for a Member-at-Large position on the Board of Directors. Ballots will be distributed to all members of the Society. Please remember to vote.

## EDIS MEMBERS' NEWS: CHAPTER NEWS

### EDIS Chapter Group Update: Gathering Together to Read Dickinson's Poetry

By Nancy List Pridgen and Lois Kackley

Chapter groups continue to multiply – and astound! Chapter groups consist of several Dickinson enthusiasts getting together locally to discuss Dickinson's poems – and perhaps Dickinson's letters. Chapter groups can do anything from unlocking the mystery of a difficult poem to helping the Emily Dickinson International Society prepare for an annual meeting or conference. Like Dickinson, we dwell in possibility – perhaps chapter groups may even start a blog on the Local Chapters section of the Emily Dickinson International Society website!

The potential of local chapter groups keeps revealing itself. Lois Kackley and the Amherst, Massachusetts, Chapter of EDIS happily assisted co-sponsors Martha Ackmann, EDIS president (2010-11) and the Emily Dickinson Museum Executive Director Jane Wald with the annual meeting in Amherst on July 29-31. Members of Amherst EDIS stuffed packets and nametags and provided registration/welcoming services. This chapter group enlisted Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, especially Tony Maroulis, chamber director, who provided online advertisement of the event and even donated items such as event folders. When an anonymous donor volunteered to provide \$1,100 for the first-ever "giant" street banner to announce to the world the upcoming annual meeting, Amherst EDIS coordinated all resources necessary to make it happen.

With the help of Artist Aidan Sinclair of Houston, who designed the banner, EDIS Treasurer Jim Fraser, and others, happy was the day to deliver it to the Town of Amherst for hanging. The reusable banner's center section allows for updated event title, date, and other information.

Now we need a Dickinson chapter group to spring up in Cleveland to aid in preparing for next year's EDIS meeting, "Emily Rocks," scheduled for August 3-5, 2012!

Ellen Beinhorn and the Beaufort branch of the Emily Dickinson International Society were featured in a two-page article, "Ode to Emily: Members of the Emily Dickinson Society Members Share Their Love of Poetry" in *The Bluffton Packet*, April 27, 2011. Ellen's picture graces the cover. The group meets in Bluffton, South Carolina. Discussion in meetings centers on themes, such as Dickinson's love poems or flower poems. <http://www.islandpacket.com/2011/04/30/1632431/ode-to-emily-group-shares-love.html>

At the EDIS weekend, Nancy List Pridgen made contact with several members who are working to make chapter groups a reality in the Emily Dickinson International Society. She talked with EDIS board member Antoine Cazé, who will soon sponsor a Dickinson chapter group in France. This group will consist mostly of academics and students working on Dickinson, but will reach out to all lovers of Dickinson's poetry in France by organizing readings of her poems. She also talked with another board member, Hiroko Uno, who is a member of the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan, a group that was in existence before EDIS.

Hiroko Uno reports that the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan has 100 members. They have a one-afternoon symposium every June, which includes a special lecture and two or three paper presentations. They issue a newsletter each year, in which the resumes of all the presentations in the conference of the previous year are printed.

Ellen Hart and LeeAnn Gorthey are making plans to reinstate the Dickinson chapter group in Portland, Oregon. LeeAnn attended the Local Chapters Affiliates Meeting on Friday afternoon, July 29. Also in attendance were Nancy List Pridgen and Lois Kackley, co-chairs of the EDIS Chapter Group Committee, and two members of Amherst EDIS – Greg Mattingly and Jeff Morgan. Amherst EDIS has had eight

members join the Emily Dickinson International Society, a chapter group record! Antoine Cazé and Bill Pridgen were also present. Bill and Nancy will be starting a chapter group in the San Antonio, Texas, area in September of this year. Friday evening at the EDIS banquet, Nancy met Harold Bond of Reading, Massachusetts, who has presented several local Emily Dickinson events and would like to sponsor an EDIS chapter group in Reading.

This past summer Bill and Nancy held the third annual Emily Dickinson in the Hill Country weekend at UBarU Ranch, a Unitarian Universalist camp outside of Kerrville, Texas. An enthusiastic group gathered to discuss some of Dickinson's most difficult poems. This weekend was called, "Thinking with Emily Dickinson," a title inspired by Jed Deppman's book, *Trying to Think with Emily Dickinson*, a book which also provided the group with some of the most helpful approaches to exploring Dickinson's thinking. The weekend culminated in a decision to meet once a month as an EDIS chapter group.

This year Lois and Nancy wrote two lists of interest to sponsors and would-be sponsors of Dickinson chapter groups – "Steps for Starting an EDIS Emily Dickinson Chapter Group" and "Activities for EDIS Chapter Group Meetings." The first, which explains how to start a Dickinson group, is already on the EDIS website, in the Local Chapters section. The second will also take its place on the website. In addition, this section of the website is available for announcements and discussion of local chapter groups. If you want to post something to the site – or start a blog on a Dickinson poem – contact [edis-website@umd.edu](mailto:edis-website@umd.edu) | Rebecca Mooney, University of Maryland, Web Master. This information is conveniently placed on the bottom of each page of the website. You can also contact Nancy List Pridgen, [possibility@satx.rr.com](mailto:possibility@satx.rr.com), or Lois Kackley, [lobobolink@mac.com](mailto:lobobolink@mac.com).

# MEMBERS' NEWS

## EMILY ROCKS IN CLEVELAND: EDIS 2012 Annual Meeting

The Emily Dickinson International Society annual meeting for 2012 will take place in Cleveland, Ohio, on the campus of Case Western Reserve University, August 3-5. The theme is "Emily Rocks," and one of the events will accordingly be a field trip to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in downtown Cleveland (and also a downtown dine-around at restaurants featuring several celebrity chefs).

On the program will be several of our usual events: workshops (aka master classes) on individual poems, the research circle, meetings of affiliate groups, and the annual business meeting. Featured events will include a presentation, likely multi-media, by Martha Nell Smith on Dickinson's presence in modern rock music; a talk by archivist Gwen Mayer on ED's grandfather, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, about his time as treasurer of what was then Western Reserve College; an event featuring contemporary poets, still in the planning stages; and possibly a talk on Emily Dickinson as she features in contemporary fan, material, and popular culture.

Housing will be available at Glidden House, a 1910 mansion turned boutique hotel, at CWRU's notably upscale Village, at 115 dormitories, and at other local hotels. Most events and facilities are located in the world-famous University Circle neighborhood, hence within walking distance of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra's home at Severance Hall, and the numerous other museums and arts facilities in the area.

Registration and housing information will be available in the Spring 2012 issue of the *Bulletin* and also, in early spring, on the Emily Dickinson International Society website.

---

### EDIS Membership Form

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

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

Please check if this is: new address membership renewal

#### Annual Membership Category:

Sustaining Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200.00	Institutional Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$115.00
Contributing Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00	NEW: Joint EDIS/Dickinson Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00
Regular Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00	Student Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00

(All of the above Members receive both the *Emily Dickinson Journal* and the *Bulletin*)  
Associate Member  \$20.00 (*Bulletin* only)

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

#### Gift Memberships

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

Use additional page for further gift memberships.

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

[www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org)

# Badinage Divine

What possible connection could there be between Emily Dickinson and baseball? Even though the first intercollegiate baseball game pitted Amherst College against Williams (Amherst won 73-32 in 25 innings), there is little chance the poet ever saw a game. Yet documentary filmmaker Jim Wolpaw opens his idiosyncratic documentary, *Loaded Gun: Life, and Death, and Dickinson*, with a dream vision of the poet playing second base, and there have been at least two baseball cards with Dickinson's face and stats on the back. Here Jo Ann Orr imagines how a whole game involving Dickinson and others in her community might have played out.

## The Ninth Inning

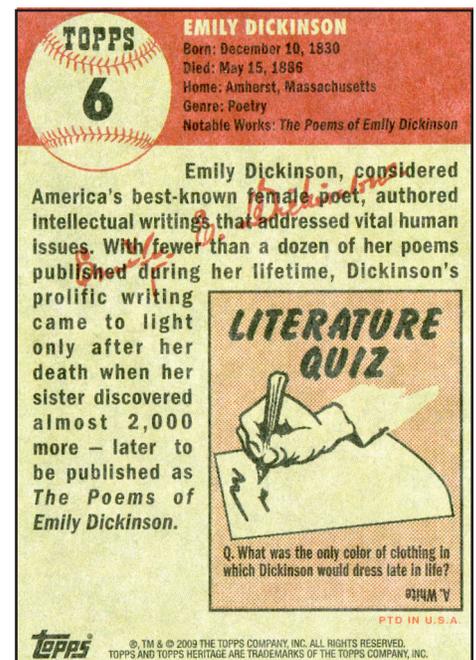
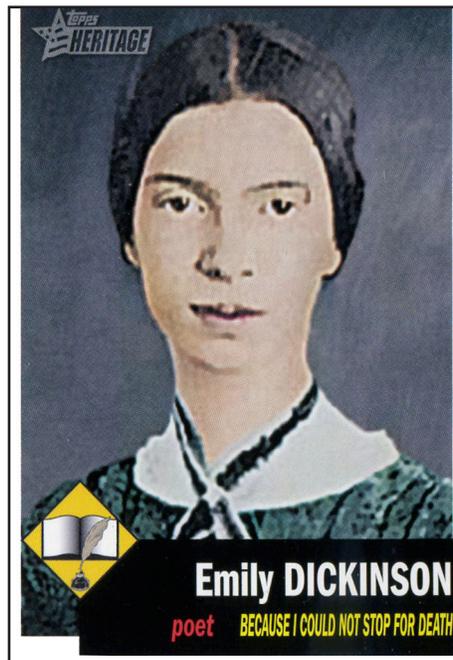
Jo Ann Orr

Prologue: "The Ninth Inning," an imaginary and playful story, contains elements of truth that those familiar with Dickinson's biography will recognize. The story, written with admiration and respect for the "baseball players" it names, is based on information in several biographies, especially Richard B. Sewall's *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), and Lyndall Gordon's *Lives Like Loaded Guns*, (Viking Penguin, 2010).

\* \* \*

It's the bottom of the ninth inning and the Amherst Immortals are leading 3-2 over the Holyoke Holys, who are at bat. The Immortals must get the Holys out during this final inning in order to win the coveted baseball championship of the Greater Springfield Massachusetts Counties.

Most residents of Amherst have come to cheer for the home team, which consists of a surprising gathering of Dickinson family and friends. Dr. Josiah Holland and his wife, Elizabeth, are sitting in the front row. Dr. Holland, a man of many talents, has brought a black leather bag containing smelling salts and other remedies in case of fainting spells and other injuries to the players or spectators. Mattie, Ned, and Gilbert Dickinson are



The Emily Dickinson Baseball Card is a fabulous reality. It is #6 in the 2009 Topps American Heritage Baseball Card Series.

cheering and waving flags as the Immortals run to their field positions.

T. W. Higginson is on the mound stretching his long arms and legs, ready to throw the first ball of the inning to the catcher, Emily Dickinson, who is adjusting her mask. She signals for a fast ball, but Higginson ignores her sign and throws an outside curve ball. The umpire, Judge Otis Phillips Lord, shouts, "Ball One."

Dickinson again signals for a fast ball and Higginson again ignores her sign and throws a curve ball, which the batter blasts down the middle between the cute and coy Mabel Loomis Todd, playing shortstop, and scrappy Vinnie Dickinson at second base.

Oops! They collide and Vinnie is unable to whip the ball to the steady Helen Hunt Jackson at first base in time for the out. There is an unofficial delay as Mabel

Todd and Vinnie Dickinson squabble over who owns second base.

Dickinson calls for a time-out so that the quarreling twosome can calm down. The fans begin to take sides shouting, "Go Vinnie, Go Mabel." Judge Otis Lord shouts above the clamoring crowd in uncharacteristic slang, "Play bawl or yur outta here!"

Meanwhile amidst the mounting tension, Dickinson hurries to the mound to have a word with Higginson, who seems mildly bewildered with his catcher's calling of the pitches – a contrast to his usual confident, cool demeanor. What did they say to one another at that momentous moment? No one knows. It was such a brief exchange and Dickinson's face was hidden behind her mask.

Unperturbed, she hustles back to home plate, quickly brushing the dust from her white dress. Adjusting her mask, she signals for the next pitch. Steadfast in her strategy, Dickinson calls for a fast ball. Higginson throws another curve ball which the batter blasts out to the orthodox preacher covering right field, but the dependable Reverend Charles Wadsworth makes an extraordinary catch for the first out. One out! Two outs to win! The cheering grows louder and louder!

Dickinson signals for a changeup this time, and Higginson, beginning to catch on that his catcher may know what she is doing, obliges. The batter hits a fly ball to Austin Dickinson in center field, who is usually focused and highly competent. Today, however, instead of keeping his eye on the ball, Austin is keeping his eye on the shortstop Mabel Loomis Todd. He fumbles the ball and the runner is safe on first. Judge Lord shouts for all to hear, "Error." Sue Dickinson, Austin's wife, who is playing left field, does not show her feelings.

Tensions escalate! Now there are runners at first and second with only one out. The crowd both cheers and boos, but who are they booing? Eager to end the game and return to the joy of her flower gardens and the peace and quiet of her home, Dickinson signals for another changeup. Higginson concurs.

The batter belts a sharp grounder to third baseman Samuel Bowles. Ever alert and diligent, Bowles scoops up the ball and whips it to Vinnie Dickinson covering second base to force the runner coming from first. Always ready for the unexpected, Vinnie whirls and hurls the ball to first base, where Helen Hunt Jackson catches the ball to complete the double play.

The AMHERST IMMORTALS WIN! They are the baseball champions of the Greater Springfield Counties. The fans go wild, yelling and clapping for the home team. The outfielders rush in to celebrate with the infielders and shake hands with the Holyoke Holys. Vinnie's "inciting voice" (L827) could be heard above the others, "Good job, Em."

The catcher slips away unnoticed, pushing back her auburn hair as she says to her faithful dog Carlo at her side, "Whew!" "Luck is not chance – / It's Toil –" (Fr1350). To herself she says, "Perhaps you laugh at me! Perhaps the whole United States are laughing at me too! *I* can't stop for that! My business is to love. . . . *My* business is to sing. . . . Perhaps you smile at me. I could not stop for that - My Business is circumference" (L268 and 269).

---

*Forty years ago, when refrigerators were still unadorned, Jo Ann Orr invented the refrigerator magnet with a message. Since becoming a fan of Emily Dickinson, she has adapted for the Museum several designs that feature Emily Dickinson's "message to the world."*

*The inspiration for "The Ninth Inning" came from seeing circumferential home runs at the ballpark and from the movie Field of Dreams.*

*Jo Ann Orr copyright 2010 Morning Glory Greetings*

---

**SPECIAL ISSUE:  
"Pearls in Eastern Waters: Emily Dickinson in Asia"**

EDJ's special issue on "Pearls in Eastern Waters," planned for November 2013, welcomes essays dealing with Dickinson and any aspect of Asian thought, literature, culture, philosophy or religion, translation, and reception. For the purposes of this issue, "Asia" will be broadly defined. Because this is a special issue, we will consider short and primarily factual as well as longer, analytical pieces for publication. To be considered for publication, essays must be conversant with current Dickinson scholarship. To submit an essay for this issue, please include the line "For Consideration in 'Pearls in Eastern Waters Special Issue'" following your title. Submissions are due by 15 November 2012.

# Annual Meeting: Amherst 2011



*The Bees –  
became as  
Butterflies –  
The  
Butterflies –  
as Swans –  
Approached –  
and spurned  
the narrow  
Grass*



Follow us on [facebook](#)

"Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS)"

[www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org](http://www.emilydickinsoninternationalsociety.org)