

Dickinson Links, Supplemental to the JSU Ethology materials

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[This first paragraph, only, along with selected annotated poems, is embedded within the ethology.]

Essential facts about Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) are that she published very few poems in her lifetime and was never pleased when she saw some of them published without her name attached (usually without her permission). Thomas Wentworth Higginson records, in an often re-published letter to his wife, his impression of meeting Dickinson. Dickinson had sent several poems for his consideration, and a correspondence ensued. Higginson admits being unprepared for the intensity of Dickinson's personality and unusual form that at first he attempted to suggest be altered. Yet it was likely Dickinson with or without Higginson's encouragement who elected not to pursue publication. Lesser acknowledged is that Helen Hunt Jackson begged Dickinson to publish and even requested to be ED's literary executor. However, Jackson died the year before Dickinson did. Factions of the Dickinson family were divided over the literary remains. Sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson wrote her prominent obituary and her daughter, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, later oversaw publication of much of the material that was in Susan's hands at Dickinson's death (published as *The Silver Hound*, 1915). However, unmarried sister Lavinia Dickinson entrusted the bulk of the manuscripts to their brother Austin's mistress, Mabel Loomis Todd, who worked with Higginson to produce three volumes and a composite volume, *Three Series Complete*, Todd also oversaw the first publication of Dickinson's letters. It was more than a half century later that scholarly more complete editions of the *Poems and Letters* were undertaken. Dickinson continues to be popular in the way she creates intrigue with her succinct, compressed style. She also continues to attract scholarly interest. The "myth" of Dickinson -- a recluse who wrote love poetry-- makes her the subject of many fictional treatments, from mystery novels to a poet who inspires other poets.

Conventions in the Annotations

The phrase "first editors" indicates how Emily Dickinson's poems first came to be published, in what are now public domain texts available through Project Gutenberg, in three separate series in 1890-1896.

Follow the link for the complete Project Gutenberg front matter, including the phrase:

"Edited by two of her friends

MABEL LOOMIS TODD and T.W. HIGGINSON."

EDL = *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*, the online concordance and dictionary hosted by Brigham Young University. Address: edl.byu.edu

Twentieth Century scholarly editions by Thomas H. Johnson and R. W. Franklin and The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson edited by Franklin have been consulted and are referenced accordingly. Elsewhere in the material are references to their editions and to biography and lecture by Alfred Habegger.

Additional Biographical Information

A brief biography can also be found at the Poetry Foundation:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/emily-dickinson>

It contains no author credit and no footnotes, but has an extensive bibliography. It is one good place to begin. Also be aware that Sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson wrote Emily Dickinson's obituary, a pdf version of which can be found here:

http://www.digitalamherst.org/archive/files/dickinson-obit_f980fa2dad.pdf

Credit and citation requirements for the obituary is here:

<http://www.digitalamherst.org/items/show/904>

A brief timeline, illustrated, can be found here:

<http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/timeline>

Poetry in the Public Domain

Gutenberg contains the primary work, the Three Series Complete, in numerous formats (HTML, EPub, Kindle, Plain text).

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12242>

The edition first published in 1924 by her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi is also noteworthy, as Bianchi had in her possession her mother's manuscripts of Dickinson poems. (Keep in mind that Dickinson's sister Lavinia elected to turn over what manuscripts remained after Dickinson's death to Mabel Loomis Todd, mistress to Austin Dickinson.) Barletby.com makes available the Bianchi volume:

<http://www.bartleby.com/113/>

A Celebration of Women Writers contains links to numerous editions that can be accessed online.

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/webbin/wnsearch?searchtype=startin&name=dickinson%2C+emily&firstyear=&lastyear=&birthyear=&deathyear=&country=anyðnicity=any>

If the link does not work, search at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/> for Dickinson among the alphabetical listing under D.

Note: Not all Dickinson poetry is in the public domain. This is because Harvard University Press owns the copyright on the two versions of the Collected Works, those edited by Thomas H. Johnson in 1955 and by R. W. Franklin in 1998, with the paperback reading edition of his three volume variorum edition made available in 2005. Project Gutenberg derives from the original text edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. The first publication, originally in the three separate series, was made without scholarly insights. Titles were invented (where Dickinson had none), and punctuation regularized to conform to the times. Beginning with Johnson's edition, which, according to Adrienne Rich's in the *Voices and Visions* film on Dickinson, brought new light to the poetry just by having the "dashes restored," the manuscripts and in some cases manuscript booklets have been more rigorously followed. Of those not originally published in the 1890s, perhaps the most crucial in understanding Dickinson's deliberate withholding of her work from publication is the poem "Publication is the Auction"; it can be found at poetry foundation, with credit to Franklin's edition:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/182914>

Brief Annotations of the Major Biographies

Gordon, Lyndall. *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds*. New York: Viking, 2010.

Highly speculative is Gordon's chapter postulating that Dickinson may have been epileptic. Of historical interest is her study in later chapters of the daughters of Mabel Loomis Todd and Susan Gilbert Dickinson who carried on family disputes yet were separately committed to preserving Dickinson's achievement.

Habegger, Alfred. *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson*. New York: Random House, 2001.

This biography is insightful and carefully annotated. Among the many illustrations is the reproduction of albumen print purchased on eBay by Philip F. Gura in 2000 and discussion of it in Appendix 1: "A Second Photograph of Emily Dickinson?" Numerous other appendixes and charts supplement Habegger's thesis, that Dickinson carefully crafted her seclusion with a determination that close friends or special visitors received her blessing with handcrafted gifts of verse. Habegger credits the R. W. Franklin work on manuscript books and assembling the variorum edition of the complete poems. He makes a solid case for this sturdy reassessment.

Sewall, Richard B. *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, 2 volumes. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974.

Now considered the groundbreaking early work of elevating Dickinson beyond the myth of remembered locals, Sewall's chapters are divided only roughly chronologically, and focus instead on influences and relationships. A whole chapter on the "Master" letters in manuscript and an extended chapter on the "war between the houses," or disagreements between Lavinia and Susan Gilbert Dickinson after the poet's death.

Wineapple, Brenda. *White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson*. New York: Knopf, 2008.

From the subtitle, it is obvious that Wineapple hones in on what she deems the most formative of Dickinson's relationships, that of the editor/writer Higginson. With much new material from their correspondence and from how he shepherded then withdrew from Mabel Loomis Todd's editing projects, the book is the most recent important scholarship.

Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. *Emily Dickinson*. New York: Knopf, 1986. A close reading of some central poems as well as careful grounding in the religious orthodoxy and non-orthodoxy are strengths of this well designed work. Wolff is precise in making sure she consults the same dictionary edition as Dickinson did; she is especially probing in dealing with the

paradoxes of faith and why Dickinson's "compression" or severely impressionistic essences of usual grammatical form are so cryptic.

Dickinson: Gardening and the Natural World

The New York Botanical Garden mounted an exhibit in 2011. Not all of the pages on the web are archived. Here is one:

<http://www.nybg.org/plant-talk/category/exhibit-news/emily-dickinson/>

Follow its links to watch the videos on YouTube.

At least two reputable books have been published that consider Dickinson as gardener-poet with enough training in botany to be more than an occasional observer of blooms and seasons. *The Gardens of Emily Dickinson* by Judith Farr with Louise Carter (Harvard UP, 2004) contains rich references to Dickinson's floral knowledge as well as connections to the literary and biblical associations for Eden. Marta McDowell's *Emily Dickinson's Gardens: A Celebration of a Poet and Gardener* (McGraw-Hill, 2005) is a less scholarly appreciation, organized around the seasons of the year. It provides suggestions for nurseries that supply the plants Dickinson was familiar with. Harvard University's Dickinson Collection contains high quality resolution of her herbarium <<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/collections/modern/dickinson.cfm>>. Also of interest is a chapter in Victoria N. Morgan's *Emily Dickinson and Hymn Culture* (Ashgate, 2010) entitled "Tracing Dickinson's Bee Imagery."

Most importantly for literary and social history, scholar Christopher Benfey uses Dickinson's reference to hummingbirds as centerpiece for his study, *A Summer of Hummingbirds* (New York: Penguin, 2008). He elevates the wider significance of the near meeting between Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd. After Todd sang to Dickinson (listening without showing herself), they exchanged gifts in September 1882 (Todd gave Dickinson her painting of Indian Pipes (later the cover and front plate for Todd's edition of Dickinson's poems); Dickinson reciprocated with a copy of her poem, "A Route of Evanescence." Benfey's subtitle, *Love, Art, and Scandal in the Intersecting Worlds of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Martin Johnson Heade*, captures the broad scope from which he proposes that the post Civil War fascination for hummingbirds, the adulterous affairs of the poet's and Harriet Beecher Stowe's brothers, and painter Heade's pursuit of Mabel Loomis Todd provide renewed fascination for the secrets beneath the surfaces of nineteenth century literary lives.

Aggregator Sites

These list numerous links to other sites, or contain a wealth of information.

Donna Campbell's *American Writers* site at Washington State University has this page on Dickinson, with links and their descriptions. Her own bibliography is extensive.

<http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/dickinson.htm>

The Dickinson Electronic Archives. Copyright 1994 Martha Nell. Maintained by Rebecca Mooney by University of Maryland: <http://www.emilydickinson.org/>

The Emily Dickinson Museum now includes the Homestead and the Evergreens. Its website is rich with resources and includes an illustrated timeline: <http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/>

The American Transcendentalism Web was originally created in Spring 1999 at Virginia Commonwealth University for [Professor Ann Woodlief's](#) graduate class in Studies in American Transcendentalism. Now housed at Texas A&M University, the Legacy version of the site contains a sub-section on Dickinson:

<http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/roots/legacy/dickinson/index.html>

Within this section are texts of selected "Transcendental" Poems by Dickinson,

<http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/roots/legacy/dickinson/emilypoems.html>, with the first of them, "The Soul selects her own Society—" annotated with a commentary by Robert Luscher, <http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/roots/legacy/dickinson/onsoul.html>