

# **Emily Dickinson: In the Company of Others (Otherness *as* Company)**

**Annual Meeting of the Emily Dickinson International Society,  
3-4 August 2018**

**Friday, 3 August**

***“The Day that a Companion came”* (Fr. 1169)**

**9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.: Participant Registration**

Check in & Sign up for Reading Seminars, Poetry Reading Groups  
& Special Events  
Amherst College Alumni House

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**1:30-2:00 p.m.: Opening Remarks**

Welcome to Meeting Participants & Preview of Panels & Events  
Amherst College Alumni House

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**2:15-5:00 p.m.**

**Reading Seminars, Critical Institutes & Poetry Reading Groups**

## ***Reading Seminars (2 sessions, meeting concurrently)***

Reading Seminars A & B will meet between 2:15 and 4:00 p.m.; at 4:00 p.m., both Reading Seminars will converge in Converse Hall 207 to review their individual lines of inquiry, to map out points of intersection and to plot future directions for research and study. Reading Seminars are open to all meeting participants.

- **Reading Seminar A, *Reading Dickinson and Race in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***  
Converse Hall Room 207  
Leader: Stephanie Farrar (University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire)

In 2002, Paula Bernat Bennett daringly wrote, “Dickinson’s racial slurs are not the measure of her greatness, but they do point to its limits” (*Legacy*, 19:1. 2002). As scholars that affirm the relevance of academic insight to the social, political, and cultural realms—to the world itself—the rise in vocal white supremacy following the 2016 Presidential election in the United States urges us to enter a new conversation triangulating Emily Dickinson, scholarship and race. This reading group will begin by offering a brief chronology of scholarly approaches to issues of race in Dickinson’s poems and material context, including work by Paula Bernat Bennett, Vivian Pollack,

Li-Hsin Hsu, Wesley King, and others. In light of this scholarship, we will consider a range of Dickinson poems that appear to engage a variety of racial “others” alongside those that consider the concept of “whiteness”. Finally, we will discuss how Critical Race Theory and its subfield of Whiteness Studies may be combined with methodologies like cultural studies and formal aesthetics to enrich explorations of Dickinson’s conceptions of race. A list of primary and secondary readings will be made available on the EDIS website by 15 May.

□ **Reading Seminar B, “*Vesuvius@Home: Adrienne Rich’s Emily Dickinson in our Erupting World*”**

Converse Hall Room 209

Leader: Renée Bergland (Simmons College)

In her 1976 essay “Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson”, Adrienne Rich remarked, “To recognize and acknowledge our own interior power has always been a patch mined with risks for women; to acknowledge that power and commit oneself to it as Emily Dickinson did was an immense decision.” More than forty years later, we sometimes overlook the immense riskiness—and the feminist power—of Dickinson’s work. In this reading group, we will discuss Adrienne Rich’s landmark essay on Dickinson in light of subsequent feminist scholarship, pedagogy and social change. A list of primary and secondary readings will be made available on the EDIS website by 15 May.

**2:15-5:00 p.m.: Critical Institute (3 sessions, meeting concurrently)**

The Critical Institute provides an opportunity for participants to workshop critical essays and conference papers with established Dickinson scholars in small seminars. The Critical Institute is open to meeting participants who submitted work-in-progress in advance of the conference.

- **Critical Institute A: *Environment***  
Frost Library 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Open Access Conference Room  
Seminar Leader: Eliza Richards (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)  
Participants: Ryan Heryford (Cal State University, East Bay); Maria Ishikawa (University of Massachusetts, Amherst); Amy Nestor (Georgetown University, Qatar); Elizabeth Swails (University of Georgia, Athens)
- **Critical Institute B: *Science, Health and Medicine***  
Frost Library 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI) Seminar Room  
Leader: Faith Barrett (Duquesne University)  
Participants: Carol DeGrasse (Southern Methodist University); Vivian Delchamps (UCLA); Cate Mahoney (Princeton University); Jamie Uthall (University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire)
- **Critical Institute C: *Genre, Mode, Form***  
Frost Library 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI) Think Tank  
Leader: Alexandra Socarides (University of Missouri)  
Participants: Marva Duerksen (Willamette University); Efrosyni Manda

(University of Athens, Greece); Josie O'Donoghue (Clare College, Cambridge, England); Jeanine Webb (University of California, San Diego)

**2:15-5:00 p.m.: Poetry Reading Groups (2 sessions, meeting concurrently)**

Poetry reading sessions are open to all meeting participants.

□ **Poetry Reading Group A: “I think I was enchanted”: Reading Selected Poems, Letter-Poems, and Letters Dickinson sent to the Evergreens**

At The Evergreens

Leader: Martha Nell Smith (University of Maryland, College Park)

Susan Dickinson, the only contemporary reader of Dickinson's work for whom we can document Emily sent drafts and at whose behest Dickinson made changes to some poems, was an enthusiastic supporter and promoter of Dickinson's work. Susan sent poems to be published in the *Springfield Republican* and in Civil War publications such as *Drum Beat*, and introduced many Evergreens visitors to Emily Dickinson's work, including Mabel Loomis Todd, who reported being enraptured by Susan's reading of Emily's poetry. “I think I was enchanted”, Dickinson's account of reading Elizabeth Barrett Browning, will frame the focus of this group. We will examine a few poems and letter-poems known to have been read in the Evergreens parlor/literary salon and discuss the ecstasies of this intimate reading culture as we consider Dickinson's placing herself in a matrilineage of powerful women writers whose work Dickinson read, and was so affected by that “it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me”, an effect of engaged reading that Susan echoed in her assessment of “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers”, which after reading made her “always go to the fire and get warm after thinking of it, but I never can again.” Every member of this reading group should bring or will be given a copy of *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson* [The Evergreens: Space limited to 12 persons.] If those who are interested wish to read ahead of time, besides *Open Me Carefully*, consult *Writings by Susan Dickinson* (<http://www.emilydickinson.org/writings-by-susan-dickinson>), *Correspondence with Susan Dickinson* (<http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/csd.php>), and the Digital Articles found at <http://www.emilydickinson.org/exhibitions/digital-articles>.

• **Poetry Reading Group B: *In the Company of Dickinson: Notions of Solitude and Community in her Life and Work***

Alumni House Main Room

Co-leaders: Sophie Mayer (Sorbonne Paris 3) and Greg Mattingly (Guide, Emily Dickinson Museum)

As Adrienne Rich once wrote in “Vesuvius at Home”, Dickinson's so-called seclusion was “no hermetic retreat, but [...] included a wide range of people, of reading and correspondence”. Her solitude was “peopled”, in the sense of “inhabited”, not only because she lived surrounded by those she loved and corresponded with, but because she found company in the minutest being or element or shared thought. In fact, writing was probably what kept Dickinson “in touch” with others (as much as with herself), whether those who shared her close environment (friends and relatives); the authors and figures (historical, biblical, literary) she freely conversed with in her poems and letters; those who accompanied and inspired her every day (her “lexicon”, her dog, and Nature, as she wrote Higginson in an early letter to him); or her country at large, which she constantly alludes to more or less explicitly, at a time of profound disruption and distress. Thus, while progressively withdrawing from social life and events, and while breaking with

her “religious” community, she never sought to withdraw from the world and never ceased to be part of a “community”. This poetry reading group will ponder and discuss what the words “solitude” and “community” might have meant to Dickinson, and to what extent she reinvented and reinvested them on the poetic stage. A suggested reading list of poems and letters will be available on the EDIS website by 1 June.

**3:30-4:45 p.m.**

***“The Dust, will vex your Fame –’: Emily Dickinson’s Life in Manuscripts”***

A ‘show-and-tell’ presentation in the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections by curator Michael Kelly

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**5:15-6:00 p.m.: EDIS Congregation**

Reports from Leaders of the Critical Institute, Reading Seminars  
& Poetry Reading Groups  
Alumni House Main Room

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**Dinner on Your Own**

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**8:30-10:00 p.m.**

***Emily Dickinson’s Voice: Letters & Poems (A Concert Reading)***

Cole Assembly Room, Converse Hall, Amherst College

Voices include those of actors Amelia Campbell, Barbara Dana and Elizabeth Morton, reading a series of Dickinson’s poems; and scholars Christopher Benfey and Cindy MacKenzie reading “The Correspondence between Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson: A Reminiscence of the Letters of Emily Dickinson by Thomas Wentworth Higginson from the *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891”.

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**Saturday, 4 August**

***“Could you teach me now?” (JL 396)***

**8:00 a.m.-9:15 p.m.: Participant Registration**

Check in & Sign up for Special Events  
Alumni House Main Room

**8:00-9:15 a.m.**

***“The feet of people walking home”: A Walking Tour of Dickinson/Todd Sites***

Begins at Alumni House

This walking tour will highlight a number of sites in Amherst that were important to Emily Dickinson, her family and to Mabel Loomis Todd. Led by Julie Dobrow, a Tufts University professor and author of a forthcoming book that explores the lives of Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham, the tour will bring you on an easy walk enabling you to envision the 19<sup>th</sup> century Amherst in which the Dickinsons and the Todds lived.

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**9:15-10:30 a.m.**

**EDIS Annual Members Meeting**

Alumni House Main Room

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**10:45-12:00 p.m.: Keynote Address**

Vivian Pollak (University of Washington, St. Louis)

*“Reading beyond Our Emily Dickinsons”*

Alumni House Main Room

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**12:00-1:45 p.m.**

**Working Lunch**

Boxed Lunches will be available to all meeting participants.

Alumni House

***12:00-1:45 p.m.: “Went out upon Circumference -”: The Research Circle***

Alumni House Library

Leader: Ellen Louise Hart (Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon; University at Santa Cruz, retired)

A “research circle” is a meeting place where conference participants—academic researchers, teacher-scholars, artists, readers and all interested others—discuss projects-in-process and search together for new knowledge from their different perspectives.

This circle is open to all. Please contact Ellen at [ehart@ucsc.edu](mailto:ehart@ucsc.edu) for more information about presenting/participating in this session,

***1:00-3:00 p.m.: “The Lark is not ashamed / To build upon the ground / Her modest house –”: A Walking Seminar***

Begins at the Homestead

The chronology and manifestations of changes to the Dickinson family property—Homestead, Evergreens, and acreage—are well known in outline but confusing in detail. Through documentary studies, restoration projects and archaeology, the Emily

Dickinson Museum continues to piece together evidence of stasis and change to the houses and grounds during the 175 effective years of ownership by the Dickinson family and its heirs. Jane Wald, Executive Director of the Emily Dickinson Museum, will explain the building history of the site, including new findings and remaining questions, in an intensive behind-the-scenes exploration of the Dickinson houses and grounds. *Note:* Due to the size of rooms within the houses, participation is limited to 12.

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**2:00-5:00 p.m.**

***Teaching Our Emily Dickinsons: Pedagogical Challenges, Experiments & Futures***

***2:00-3:00 p.m.: Pairings: Approaches to Teaching Dickinson and Others***

Alumni House Main Room

Presiding: Alexandra Socarides (University of Missouri)

Elizabeth Sagaser (Colby College), “Meeting Apart: Shakespeare, Dickinson, and Our Students”

Paraic Finnerty (Portsmouth University, UK), “Two Emilys: Doubles and Dialogues in Dickinson and Brontë”

***3:15-4:15 p.m.: Dickinson, Pedagogy and Experiment in Secondary Education***

Alumni House Main Room

Presiding: Marta Werner (D’Youville College)

José Reyes (Supervisor of Humanities 6-12, Marlborough Public Schools, Marlborough, Massachusetts), “‘So many questions to put Them / Have I the Eagerness’: Using Student-Generated Questions to Spark Collaborative Close Readings”

Stephen Eric Berry (Research Associate, Youth Studies Program, University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research in Ann Arbor), “Scavenging a Poem: Inspiring High School Students to Re-imagine Dickinson Through the Envelope Writings”

Sara Brock (Dept. of English, Paul D. Schreiber High School, Port Washington, NY), “‘Tell It Slant’: Experiments with Verse and Photography”

***4:15-5:00 p.m.: Flash-cards: Pedagogical Approaches to an Embodied Dickinson***

Alumni House Main Room

Elizabeth Petrino (Fairfield University); Daniel Manheim (Centre College); Marianne Noble (American University); Brooke Steinhauser (Emily Dickinson Museum)

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**4:15-5:00 p.m.**

**Special Event: A Conversation with Laurie McCants**

Alumni House Library

McCants tells the story of creating *Industrious Angels*, a “solo hand-crafted-story-spinning-shadow-puppet-memory-play-with-music evoking the secret creative lives of women, mother/daughter bloodlines, and the ghost of Emily Dickinson.”  
Performed tonight at this year’s Ko Festival, Amherst, 8-10.p.m.

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**5:00-6:00 p.m.**

***A Tribute to Alice Parker, American Composer, Conductor & Teacher***

Presiding: Emily Seelbinder & Margaret H. Freeman, on behalf of the EDIS

Alice Parker, “*The Music in the Words: Rhythm, Pitch and Phrasing in Two Worlds.*” A lecture accompanied by recorded selections from Parker’s many and varied settings of Dickinson’s texts. Alumni House Main Room

**6:00-6:30 p.m.**

***Summation***

Update on EDIS Conference 2019  
Alumni House Main Room

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**6:30 p.m.**

***Evening Send off: Picnic at the Homestead\****

“*The Table is not laid without / Till it is laid within –*” (Fr. 1219)

\*Note: Tables and chairs will be set up on the Homestead grounds for picnickers. Feel free to bring a blanket and your own favorite picnicking gear.

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**8:00-10:00 p.m.**

**Laurie McCants’s *Industrious Angels*, Ko Festival Performance**  
Holden Theatre, Amherst College

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**Special Conference Events**

***At the Emily Dickinson Museum***

**EMILY DICKINSON MUSEUM PROGRAM**

Thursday, 2 August, 5-8 p.m.

During Amherst Arts Night Plus, visit the Emily Dickinson Museum for a pop-up art exhibition, open mic, and readings by featured poets. For more information go to <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/events>

### **EXHIBIT AT THE HOMESTEAD AND EVERGREENS**

“I thank these Kinsmen of the Shelf”: Selections from the Emily Dickinson Museum’s Project to Recreate the Dickinson Family Libraries

Saturday, 4 August, 6-8 p.m. *Other times TBA.*

In the spirit of the Annual Meeting’s theme, “In the Company of Others”, the Emily Dickinson Museum presents *duplicate editions* of texts that Emily Dickinson and her family read and owned in the spaces where they were most used.

### **EMILY DICKINSON MUSEUM PROGRAM**

Garden Pollinator Fair

Sunday, 5 August, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon.

Gardener-in-Residence Marta McDowell leads a “pollinator fair” in the Homestead gardens. Suitable for all ages, participants may engage in a variety of activities including making a butterfly feeder, pressing wildflowers, and following their own “route of evanescence”, For more information go

to <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/events>

### **August Garden Days**

Monday and Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.–1 p.m.

Volunteer Garden Days at the Emily Dickinson Museum under the direction of Gardener-in-Residence Marta McDowell. Participants help to maintain gardens and carry out projects that advance the Museum’s landscape restoration plan.

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### ***At the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections***

“The Dust, will vex your Fame –”: Emily Dickinson’s Life in Manuscripts”

Friday, 3 August, 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Amherst College Archives and Special Collections

Curator Michael Kelly offers a show-and-tell presentation in the archives.

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### ***At the Theatre***

**Emily Dickinson’s Voice: Letters & Poems (A Concert Reading)**

Friday, 3 August, 8:30-10:00 p.m., Cole Assembly Room, Converse Hall, Amherst College

Voices include those of actors Amelia Campbell, Barbara Dana and Elizabeth Morton, reading a series of Dickinson’s poems; and scholars Christopher Benfey and Cindy MacKenzie reading “The Correspondence between Emily Dickinson and Thomas

Wentworth Higginson: A Reminiscence of the Letters of Emily Dickinson by Thomas Wentworth Higginson from the *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1891”.

**Laurie McCants’s *Industrious Angels*, Ko Festival Performance**

Saturday, 4 August, 8:00-10:00 p.m., Holden Theatre, Amherst College

*Industrious Angels* is a solo hand-crafted-story-spinning-shadow-puppet-memory-play-with-music evoking the secret creative lives of women, mother/daughter bloodlines, and the ghost of Emily Dickinson.

*Note:* EDIS conference participants will receive discounted tickets for this performance: Adult tickets – \$20 each; Student & Seniors \$16 each.

*Stay tuned for more information about registering for this special event.*

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***On the Ground: Tours of Amherst***

**“The feet of people walking home”: A Walking Tour of Dickinson/Todd Sites**

Saturday, 4 August, 8-9:15 a.m. Participants gather at Alumni House

This walking tour will highlight a number of sites in Amherst that were important to Emily Dickinson, her family and to Mabel Loomis Todd. Led by Julie Dobrow, a Tufts University professor and author of a forthcoming book that explores the lives of Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham, the tour will bring you on an easy walk enabling you to envision the 19<sup>th</sup> century Amherst in which the Dickinsons and the Todds lived.

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***Special Events***

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Saturday, 4 August, 4:15-5:00 p.m.

McCants tells the story of creating *Industrious Angels*, a “solo hand-crafted-story-spinning-shadow-puppet-memory-play-with-music evoking the secret creative lives of women, mother/daughter bloodlines, and the ghost of Emily Dickinson.” Performed at the Ko Festival, Amherst. Conversation at the Alumni House Library.

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### ***A Note to Teachers***

The Emily Dickinson International Society, in conjunction with the Emily Dickinson Museum, is pleased to offer participating teachers a Certificate of Participation, which might be of use to you in your school districts.

Although we cannot offer teachers Professional Development Points, please be aware that your public school district has the capacity for teachers to "bundle" several activities together to earn PDPs. The Emily Dickinson International Society annual meeting provides three easily documented 1-hour sessions that address English Language Arts Pedagogy and Content.

The following three points are important to keep in mind when bundling your activities:

- The professional development event must be at least 10 hours per topic.
- All activities must be related to one topic focused on either content or pedagogy.
- The "bundle" of 10+ hours must include a product that provides an assessment of learning. (This may be an end-of-course assessment or an observable demonstration of learning.)