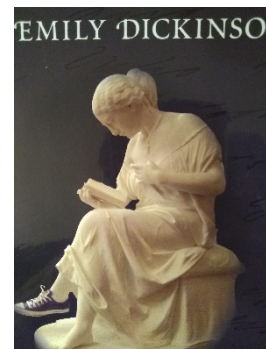


Eleanor Elson Heginbotham, Ph.D.
 FALL 2020
 OLLI/AU: Eight Sessions
heginbotham@csp.edu (questions welcomed)



Their Emily Dickinsons: Selected Women Poets Lit by Her Lamp
#677: Thursday Afternoons 1:45-3:15

*The Poets light but Lamps –
 Themselves – go out –
 The Wicks they stimulate
 If vital Light*

*Inhere as do the Suns –
 Each Age a Lens
 Disseminating their
 Circumference
 (Fr 930)*

*I rather think I see myself walk up
 A flight of wooden steps and ring a bell
 And send a card in to Miss Dickinson. . .*

*. . . but should we? That would quite depend
 On Emily. I think she'd be exacting,
 Without intention possibly, and ask
 A thousand tight-rope tricks of understanding.
 But, bless you, I would somersault all day
 If by so doing I might stay with her. Amy Lowell*

Class objectives and standards appear in the following pages; meanwhile this extremely pliable plan. Day 1 –

Day 1 Introduction to possible Dickinsons, Later Poets, and the Class

Along with some biography (don't believe the movies), an emphasis on *How* her work reached the poets we will discuss later. Helpful: Dobrow's *After Emily*

Day 2 – E D and Helen Hunt Jackson (1830-1885) and T. W. Higginson (1823-1911)

“The age demanded. . .” Dickinson in the 19th Century and Problems of “Print”

Day 3 – E D and Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

“Split the Lark and you'll find the Music.” The Lyric Voice of Dickinson and early readers

Day 4 – E D and Marianne Moore (1887-1972)

“No Idea but in Things.” Specificity, observation, and/ or powers of persuasion

Day 5 – E D and Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)

“Myself was formed a carpenter.” Self (sexual and other) discovery in multiple lives

Day 6 – E. D. and Adrienne Rich (1929-2012)

“Volcanic” imagery; the power of pain disciplined. An important essay included

Day 7 – E D and Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) and Ted Hughes (1930-1998)

“Half in Love with Easeful Death”: The temptations and terrors of suicide; an afterlife?

Day 8 – E D and Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) and Tracy Smith (1972: a friend!)

“Exhilaration is the Breeze”: Loving Life – and Ecstasy and Poetry

Objectives of #677. “This was a Poet,” begins an essential Dickinson poem. Thus I hope that

1. The class acquaints you with the facts and the various theories behind the genius of Dickinson
2. That it equips you with ways to solve her riddles – her difficult poems – and that it delights you with the more accessible poems full of whimsy and wit
3. That we have the mutual pleasure of hearing each other read aloud the poems as prompts for discussions; that those discussions stay on-target, that is remain on the poem in question.
4. That it introduces you or furthers your knowledge of major American writers, each of whom acknowledged the influence of Dickinson. We will not try to match a poem by Dickinson to a specific poem by one of the other writers (though we will discover some that are echoes) but rather to explore the distinctive voices and passions of each poet in relation to Dickinson.
5. That it reminds you of those lessons in prosody from your high school classes and raises your awareness of rhyme (slant/ true), rhythm (meters), figurative language (metaphors /similes/ metonymies/ and so forth), and formal constructions (even a villanelle). For such a purpose I attach my one-page all-you-need-to-know sheet on terms for discussing forms.
6. That we laugh and cry and scratch our heads and have a good time in the presence of remarkable women and two remarkable men.

Reading: NONE required between classes – BUT you will probably feel more comfortable and find the discussions richer if you fill in the background (and correct it as necessary) by dipping into the virtual industry of books and articles about Dickinson and the poets she influenced. Of those hundreds of resources, I attach a brief list to this syllabus. You are welcome to discover more and tell me about additions to the list. The book by Vivian Pollak that inspired this class is highly readable, but it is difficult to parse out between sessions. I will recommend pages as appropriate. Read around in the other poets; I will provide xeroxed copies of poems to be discussed for the next class session each week.

What to bring to each class: Your curiosity, your courage, this syllabus, and – a MUST – the Franklin Edition of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. I will list poems for each session, but we may move beyond those on the suggested list and will almost certainly not finish all that *are* on the list
Discussions: Keep them targeted on the poems, bring in specific sources if you find relevant passages in your reading, be brave, be honest (if you don’t want to read aloud, it’s OK; if you have a problem or complaint, raise it privately first).

Terms Particular to Dickinson: These are too complex to be two-liners here; I will discuss them throughout our eight sessions, introducing them on the first day as appropriate.

Fascicles

Transcendentalism

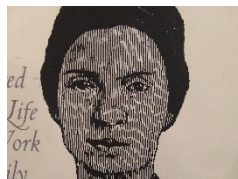
Modernism

Existentialism

Calvinism

Ballad Form/ Hymn Stanza

“The Deleted Subject”/ Object; Riffaterre’s “Hypograms”



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