

life of the poet, Nuala O'Connor's *Miss Emily* and Susan Snively's *The Heart Has Many Doors*. The rest participated in the second of two afternoons of workshop sessions on Dickinson's Elements.

These workshops highlighted the theme of the Annual Meeting by centering in a kind of archiving of the ways Dickinson registered the four classical elements. Friday afternoon's sessions focused on Earth (led by Martha Nell Smith and Ellen Louise Hart) and Fire (Antoine Cazé and Elizabeth Petrino), whereas Saturday's workshop participants discussed poems about Air (Eleanor Heginbotham and Dan Manheim) and Water (James Guthrie and Lois Kackley). If the discussion of poems about Air was representative of the level of conversation in the sessions, these workshops were thoughtful and animated, with consistently illuminating observations coming from everyone in the room. A session leader was heard to confess that he had come away with many more ideas than he had brought in.

All this while, behind closed doors, the sessions of the third Critical Institute were taking place. To emphasize and facilitate the support of research in early stages of development, the Institute sessions are closed to the public; nevertheless, they have become an increasingly popular feature of the Annual Meetings for young scholars and anyone else eager to test ideas out among others who have worked on the same issues in Dickinson's writing. Institute sessions for 2015 included "Sociality and Communication," "War and Death," "Inspiration / Atmosphere," "Ecology and Nature," "Scale and the Scientific Imagination," and "Thinking / Being."

Late Saturday afternoon, jazz pianist Tomoko Ozawa, leader of the "Tomoko Ozawa Quintet" and piano accompanist at the Boston Conservatory, Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre and Dance



Complex, performed some of her settings of Dickinson's poems on the piano at The Evergreens, sharing her own reading of emotions archived in the poems, in the same parlor where the poet played her reportedly "weird improvisations" more than 150 years earlier.

Later on, those who could tear themselves away from Amherst's vivid restaurant fare and find their way down dark deserted streets to the Wilder Observatory – built too late to have housed David Todd's efforts to discern radio signals from Mars – traced patterns in



the nighttime sky, while those interested in more sublunary patterns made their way to the Homestead to have their own inner lives deciphered by palmists and tarot card readers.

The final Plenary session, Sunday morning, saw Michelle Kohler, author of the recently published *Miles of Stare* (Alabama 2014), about figures of vision in 19th-century literature, turning her attention to figures of time in Emily Dickinson. In Kohler's reading, Dickinson's celebrated image of a train, in "I like to see it lap the Miles –" (Fr383) becomes an archive of her culture's responses to time keeping. Likewise, the solitary singer of "At Half past Three" (Fr1099) desperately fails to keep a coherent register of the accurate time. The "Maelstrom, with a notch" (Fr425) becomes, by contrast, a tyrannical timepiece.

Kohler's title, "Prompter than a Star – Dickinson's Clockwork," in short, reflects her sense of the poet's response to the "encroachment" of time-keeping upon a hitherto organic orientation in time. The many clocks, notches, and gauges in the poems mark the advent of exactitude in time, yet this exactitude was countered by the fact that each locality kept its own time, based on different relations to the stars. There was at once too much exactitude in time-keeping and not enough. Hence Dickinson's train in Fr383, for all its promptness, was following a railroad clock that would have been different from the town's time-pieces set by the church tower, which themselves might likely have jibed imprecisely with the factory whistles marking the line between work and leisure. Long ahead of her time, Dickinson was asking, "does anybody really know what time it is?"

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