



NEWS RELEASE

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Emily Dickinson Museum to Host Birthday Lecture Dec. 11

AMHERST, Mass. – The Emily Dickinson Museum will commemorate the 178th birthday of its namesake on Thursday, Dec. 11, at 4 p.m. at Amherst College’s Alumni House with the annual Emily Dickinson Birthday Lecture. This year’s speaker, Virginia Jackson, will probe the question “What Did Dickinson Write?” and sign copies of her book *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* at the conclusion of the event. The program is free and open to the public.

Prior to the talk, officials from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) will make an announcement of new grant awards to the Emily Dickinson Museum and other organizations in Western Massachusetts.

In her lecture, Jackson will address some of the same questions she posed in *Dickinson’s Misery*, which won the MLA First Book Award in 2005 and the Christian Gauss prize from Phi Beta Kappa in 2006. In the book, she asks: How do we recognize a poem when we see one? How do we know that Emily Dickinson wrote poems? Because the poet’s writings were largely unpublished when she died in 1886, decisions about what it was that Dickinson wrote have been left to the editors, publishers and critics who brought her work to the public. Jackson’s approach to analyzing the poet’s manuscript material reveals a shift in the publication, consumption and interpretation of lyric poetry during the century and a half spanning the circulation of Dickinson’s work.

Jackson is an associate professor of English at Tufts University, where she has taught since 2006. She received her Ph.D. from Princeton University and undergraduate and master’s degrees from UCLA. She is currently at work on a book about the history and role of American poetry in public culture.

The museum’s annual Emily Dickinson Birthday Dinner will take place at the Amherst College Lewis-Sebring Commons later in the evening, from 6 to 9 p.m. Ticket prices are \$75 to \$150 per person. Call 413-542-5084 for information and reservations.

The Emily Dickinson Museum, comprising the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens, is devoted to the story and legacy of poet Emily Dickinson and her family. Both properties are owned by the Trustees of Amherst College. The museum is overseen by a separate Board of Governors charged with raising its operating and capital funds. The Dickinson Homestead was the birthplace and residence of the poet (1830-1886). The Evergreens was the 1856 home of the poet’s brother and sister-in-law, Austin and Susan Dickinson.

The Emily Dickinson Museum is located at 280 Main St. in Amherst, Mass. The official museum Web site is at www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m., through December 28; the museum is closed on major holidays.

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