



NEWS RELEASE

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Emily Dickinson, Household Work, and Poetry: An Afternoon of Domesticity With authors Aife Murray and Daneen Wardrop

AMHERST, MA, - The Emily Dickinson Museum will present a joint lecture and discussion, *Emily Dickinson, Household Work, and Poetry: An Afternoon of Domesticity*, at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 27. Authors Aife Murray and Daneen Wardrop will share highlights of their individual research and participate in a moderated discussion about Dickinson's domestic and artistic habits. The program, which is free and open to the public, will take place at the Amherst Woman's Club, 35 Triangle Street, Amherst.

Aife Murray and Daneen Wardrop have each authored a new book focusing on intriguing yet overlooked aspects of Emily Dickinson's world. In *Maid as Muse: How Servants Changed Emily Dickinson's Life and Language* (2010), Aife Murray reveals how domestic workers in the Dickinson household influenced the poet's cultural outlook, artistic subjects, and even poetic style. In *Emily Dickinson and the Labor of Clothing* (2009), Daneen Wardrop explores Dickinson's literal and metaphoric connections to the fabrics and fashions of her time. Both scholars portray a poet who, though often depicted as an isolated recluse, was deeply immersed in and influenced by nineteenth-century culture and customs.

In *Maid as Muse: How Servants Changed Emily Dickinson's Life and Language*, Murray refutes the myth of the isolated genius and presents an intimate story of joined lives between Emily Dickinson and her domestic servants. Part scholarly study, part detective story, part personal journey, Murray's book uncovers a world previously unknown: an influential world of Irish immigrant servants and an ethnically rich one of Yankee, English-immigrant, Native American, and African American maids and laborers, seamstresses and stablemen.

Daneen Wardrop's *Emily Dickinson and the Labor of Clothing* analyzes the poetics of fashion in Dickinson's work. Wardrop argues that close examination of Dickinson and fashion cannot be separated from the changing ways that garments were produced during the nineteenth century. She examines issues of domestic labor and describes the Lowell textile mills and the Amherst industry of the Hills Hat Factory located almost next door to Dickinson's Homestead. The recent retrieval of textiles from approximately thirty trunks found in the attic of The Evergreens, which formerly belonged to Dickinson's brother and sister-in-law, further enhances this original interdisciplinary work.

Aife Murray was an affiliated scholar with the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Stanford University and was named the 2007 Scholar in Amherst by the Emily Dickinson International Society. She has led several public walking tours of Amherst from the perspective of the Dickinson servants. She also created *Art of Service*, an artists' book collaboration with housecleaners and gardeners who worked at the Emily Dickinson Museum. She lives in San Francisco.

Daneen Wardrop is a professor of English at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. She is the author of *Word, Birth, and Culture in the Poetry of Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson* and *Emily Dickinson's Gothic: Goblin with a Gauge*.

For more information about the March 27 program, contact Cindy Dickinson, director of interpretation and programming, at csdickinson@emilydickinsonmuseum.org or 413-542-8429.

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 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 official museum website is www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org. Regular museum hours are Wednesday through Sunday 11 a.m. until 4 p.m., March 31 through December 31, 2010, with extended summer hours 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., June through August. The Emily Dickinson Museum is located at 280 Main Street in Amherst.

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