

# The New Criterion

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## The audacity of Emily Dickinson

by Bruce Bawer

*On Emily Dickinson's poetry.*

One day late in 1881, the young wife of a recently hired instructor at Amherst College wrote to her parents in Washington about her impressions of her new hometown. Among other things, she told them about a mysterious woman who was “the character of Amherst”:

It is a lady [she explained] whom the people call the Myth. She is a sister of Mr. [Austin] Dickinson [the college treasurer], and seems to be the climax of all the family oddity. She has not been outside of her own house in fifteen years, except once to see a new church, when she crept out at night, & viewed it by the moonlight. . . . Her sister, who was at Mrs. Dickinson's party, invited me to come & sing to her mother sometime. . . . People tell me that the *myth* will hear every note—she will be near, but unseen. . . . Isn't that like a book? So interesting.

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**Bruce Bawer's** book *The Victims' Revolution: The Rise of Identity Studies and the Birth of the Woke Ideology* will appear in paperback this March from Bombardier Books.

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