

# The New Criterion

## Poems

February 1996

### Emily's courtship

by [Robert McDowell](#)

The visitor stands at the grave in knee-high snow.  
He's been calling your house since 1962  
Asking for you.

Is he a distant or close relation to  
That man in Baltimore who annually visits Poe?  
Certainly you would know.

And if this man who calls you should break through,  
What Loneliness, Time, and Pain must he endure  
At your father's door?

Brushing aside that meddling sister of yours  
He calls upstairs, "Emily, my darling, my dear,  
There is nothing to fear!"

Don't greet him in the frills and curls you acquired late,  
Long after the Romantics claimed you,  
But come down as you

Always were, your hair tucked in a tight bun,  
Your limbs loose in a drab, light summer dress  
The color of afternoon sun,

The armpits and a flare up the back darkened with sweat  
(For you have been sweeping all morning), your ...

Robert McDowell

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