



6-15-2004

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Recommended Citation

Schmidt, John (2004) "In Her Father's House," *Westview*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 2 , Article 26.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol23/iss2/26>

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In Her Father's House

by John Schmidt

Expect me not to show cause why I seek or why I exclude company.

Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

Much is made of Emily Dickinson.
Few dislike her prancing poetry,
but moderns, given to prattling,
reject her lifestyle. Too solitary,
which is not very sexy. Aloof
today is antisocial, a high crime,
not to mention unhealthy; just
ask any pop psychologist worth
his or her newspaper column.
Unmarried, she accepted aegis
of a male patriarch, remaining
a romantic nun, transcendental,
true to Wordsworth, fretting not
her convent's narrow room, nor
the lack of recognition, either
of her work or womanhood.
Now high priestess of a modern
cult of curious femmes fatales,
Whitman's woman at the blinds,
sexually repressed yet blessed,
martyred saint for modern times.

