

Frowning at Emily

ALICIA SUSKIN OSTRIKER

The entire room was frowning at Emily
They wanted to know if she was crazy or what
It disturbed them she wrote so many poems
About death madness suffering,
Like: a normal person wouldn't do that,
Would they,
But they were too polite to complain, so
I had to make a speech about it.
Said: you know there are two basic
Approaches to life, some of us try to protect ourselves
Hoping no harm will happen to us
We try for damage control
We cover our rear ends don't we
While others want to experience everything
And are prepared to take the
Consequences – I was making this up
And just one kid in the room
Grinned and exclaimed "cool"
Under his breath.
Of course he was the boy
Who'd had four years of Latin
In high school and loved Virgil
But hell, we're grateful for whatever comes,
Aren't we.

Visiting Emily

*Poems Inspired by
the Life & Work of
Emily Dickinson*

*Edited by Sheila Coghill
& Thom Lamnaro*

Foreword by Robert Bly

University of Iowa Press

Iowa City

2000

