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Positive as Sound: Emily Dickinsons Rhyme

By Judy Jo Small

University of Georgia Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 280 pages. Dimensions: 8.5in. x 5.5in. x 0.8in. The strange rhymes of Emily Dickinsons verse have offended some readers, attracted others, and proved a stumbling block for critics. In the first thorough analysis of the poets rhyming practices, Judy Jo Small goes beyond simple classification and enumeration to reveal the aesthetic and semantic value of Dickinsons rhymes and show how they help shape the meaning of her lyrics. Considering Dickinsons rhyming technique in light of its historical context, Small argues that the poets radical innovations were both an outgrowth of nineteenth-century aesthetics ideas about the music of poetry and a reaction against conventional constraints not the least of which was the image of the female poet as a songbird pouring forth her souls joys and sorrows in lyrical melody. Unlike other scholars, Small attaches special importance to Dickinsons own musical background. Revealing Dickinsons auditory imagination as a primary source of her poetic power, Small shows that sound is an important subject in the verse and that the phonetic texture contributes to the meaning. By looking closely at individual poems, Small demonstrates that Dickinsons deviations from normal rhyme schemes play a significant part in...

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