



Crossing the Water

Sylvia Plath

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Crossing the Water and Winter Trees contain the poems written during the exceptionally creative period of the last years of Sylvia Plath's life. Published posthumously in 1971, they add a startling counterpoint to Ariel, the volume that made her reputation. Readers will recognise some of her most celebrated poems – 'Childless Woman', 'Mirror', 'Insomniac' – while discovering those still overlooked, including her radio play Three Women. These two extraordinary volumes find their place alongside The Colossus and Ariel in the oeuvre of a singular talent.

Crossing the Water Details

Date : Published May 9th 1980 by Harper Perennial (first published 1971)

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Author : Sylvia Plath

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From Reader Review Crossing the Water for online ebook

Shannon says

Brilliant as usual, Sylvia!

cara says

I must confess, I always thought that, while she was certainly a good poet, Plath was never much to my taste. Evidently I was mistaken in only drawing my judgement from *Ariel*, as *Crossing the Water* really did fall into line with the kind of poetry that appeals to me.

Favourites:

- Finisterre
- Heavy Women
- Insomniac
- I am Vertical
- Widow
- Magi
- Love Letter
- Small Hours
- Last Words
- Ouija
- Two Sisters of Persephone
- Maenad
- Witchburning
- Crossing the Water

kerrie says

Love.

Candace Morris says

Harsh, severe, and beatiful, Plath shines within the genre of poetry.

Teresa says

"PAPOILAS EM JULHO

*Pequenas papoilas, pequenas chamas infernais,
sois inofensivas?*

*Estremeceis. Não posso tocar-vos.
Ponho as minhas mãos por entre as chamas. Mas nada
queima.*

*E fico exausta quando vos vejo
estremecer assim, pregueadas e rubras como a pele da
boca.*

*Uma boca há pouco ensanguentada.
Pequenas orlas de sangue!*

*Há nela um fumo que não consigo tocar.
Onde está o vosso ópio, as vossas cápsulas nauseabundas?*

*Se eu pudesse esvair-me em sangue ou dormir!...
Se a minha boca conseguisse desposar uma tal ferida!*

*Ou os vossos licores me penetrassem, nesta cápsula de
vidro,
trazendo-me a acalmia e o silêncio.*

Mas sem cor. Sem nenhuma cor."

(Georgia O'Keeffe)

Zanna says

I cannot put my finger on the source of the magic Plath works on me. When I read her poems it's as if a sister has come and taken my hand in the darkness. She cannot make one wrong step, like a beloved elder she is always clever and wise. I can't criticise; I'm an adoring fan.

Yet.

I read aloud and I cannot get music. And here is an image that does not leap to life, and here is something dated. Plath is not perfect, I can see that now, so I can see where she is strong: in her fearlessness in mining the depths, in her glacial clarity, in her sharp wit and tender wisdom.

She writes so much about women: her own experience as a woman, of the female body, of female roles. Her work is of its time in that - it's a marker hinting how much (or little) progress feminism has made, how much it has changed. Her anxiety about ageing is unbearably poignant in *Mirror*.

Elsewhere, she reaches a mystical tone, a voice intoning a rite, ringing the bones. She has a feeling for the shadow cast over us by death. Stone and water, plants and the body are her elements. She is ceremonial. Yet sisterly always, intimate. Perhaps that's the magic...

José Henriques says

A paixão entre a luz e a escuridão.

“... O teu dia aproxima-se... as horas de escuridão... iluminam os céus... pouco mais sei... não existe nenhuma noite para nos afogarmos... as colinas penetram na brancura... de olhos secos... eu sou ninguém... no interior dos meus olhos... em breve repouso com medo... vivo aqui... as nuvens florescem... dão cor ao meu sono... o meu espírito é um rochedo, sem dedos para me segurar... o resto do corpo está sem cor... o espírito da escuridão está em nós... este é o silêncio das almas perturbadas... um alma sem corpo... ecos que partem... a única coisa que vem a seguir é o mar...”

Espero que a Sylvia Plath me perdoe.

Belinda says

Quite possibly my favorite book of poems by Sylvia Plath--and that is saying something as she is one of my favorite poets. This particular book speaks to me deeply in so many ways. The poem "Insomniac" is so personal for me, and so beautifully wrought. I highly recommend this book.

mwpm says

But I would rather be horizontal.
I am not a tree with my root in the soil
Sucking up minerals and motherly love
So that each March I may gleam into leaf,
Nor am I the beauty of a garden bed
Attracting my share of Ahs and spectacularly painted,
Unknowing I must soon unpetal.
Compared with me, a tree is immortal
And a flower-head not tall, but more startling,
And I want the one's longevity and the other's daring.

Tonight, in the infinitesimal light of the stars,
The trees and flowers have been strewing their cool odors.
I walk among them, but none of them are noticing.
Sometimes I think that when I am sleeping
I must most perfectly resemble them -
Thoughts gone dim.
It is more natural to me, lying down.
Then the sky and I are in open conversation,
And I shall be useful when I lie down finally:
Then the trees may touch me for once, and the flowers have time for me.

- **I Am Vertical**, pg. 12

* * *

Empty, I echo to the least footfall,
Museum without statues, grand with pillars, porticoes, rotundas.
In my courtyard a fountain leaps and sinks back into itself,
Nun-hearted and blind to the world. Marble lilies
Exhale their pallor like scent.

I imagine myself with a great public,
Mother of a white Nike and several bald-eyed Apollos.
Instead, the dead injure me with attentions, and nothing can happen.
The moon lays a had on my forehead,
Blank-faced and mum as a nurse.

- **Small Hours**, pg. 28

* * *

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful -
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

- **Mirror**, pg. 34

* * *

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.

O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

- **Metaphors**, pg. 43

* * *

Black lake, black boat, two black, cut-paper people.
Where do the black trees go that drink here?
Their shadows must cover Canada.

A little light is filtering from the water flowers.
Their leaves do not wish us to hurry:
They are round and flat and full of dark advice.

Cold worlds shake from the oar.
The spirit of blackness is in us, it us in the fishes.
A snag is lifting a valedictory, pale hand;

Stars open among the lilies.
Are you not blinded by such expressionless sirens?
This is the silence of astounded souls.

- **Crossing the Water**, pg. 56

Lisa Hiton says

obsessed.

Tracy Kendall says

Sylvia Plath is a genius. Some of my favorites are Wuthering Heights, Blackberrying, Mirror. But really, I loved them all so much I've picked up Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams again, which I had never finished. Finishing Crossing the Water makes me want to read everything Plath.

Rachel says

This is the silence of astounded souls.

Eve Kay says

*"Stars open among the lilies.
Are you not blinded by such expressionless sirens?
This is the silence of astounded souls."
Crossing the Water*

Some: the most beautiful, utterly moving, prose.
Others: lackluster, mediocre, bland.

*"Your absence is inconspicuous;
Nobody can tell what I lack."
Parliament Hill Fields*

Ally Armistead says

Plath's poems in this beautiful and haunting collection are akin to the sensation of gripping an ice cube in the palm of your hand. Painful and raw, Plath deals in what most people cannot accept or sit with: the passing of seasons, the sharp edges of living, the threadbare fragility of life. The objects of her poems--a barrette, a candle, a mirror--are beautiful because they are temporary, and because they are temporary they are also painful.

My favorite poems of this collection are "Insomniac," "The Babysitters," "Candles," "Mirror," and "Who."

Her language, as always, inspires me:

"Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness/ In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman/Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish."

"October's the month for storage."

"The hoops of blackberry stems made me cry/Now they light me up like an electric bulb/For weeks I can remember nothing at all."

"They are the last romantics, these candles:/Upside-down hearts of light tipping wax fingers/"

"So we bobbed out to the island. It was deserted--/A gallery of creaking porches and still interiors/Stopped and awful as a photograph of somebody laughing/But ten years dead."

"On this bald hill the new year hones its edge/Faceless and pale as china"

"The night sky is only a sort of carbon paper/Blueblack, with the much-poked periods of stars/Letting in the light, peephole after peephole"

A must read for all lovers of poetry and Plath and beauty, "Crossing the Waters" is every bit as powerful (if not more so) than "Colossus" or "Ariel."

Heather says

This book makes me wonder why no one tried to stop her from killing herself.
