



Kyrie: Poems

Ellen Bryant Voigt

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In this mosaic of sonnets, her fifth collection, Ellen Bryant Voigt takes on a monumental challenge: to conjure up the influenza pandemic of 1918-19, a little-recorded event that killed 25 million worldwide, half a million in America alone. *The Nation* calls *Kyrie* "an astonishing collection . . . so spare and tightly woven, yet so mindful of the cadences of the speaking voice, that the poems read like verse drama."

Starting with the family, Voigt creates voices that gather into one vast community story, a "true tour de force" (*Boston Sunday Globe*) that speaks to our own time of plague.

Kyrie: Poems Details

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Author : Ellen Bryant Voigt

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From Reader Review Kyrie: Poems for online ebook

Karen says

Ellen Bryant Voight's series of sonnets about the Spanish influenza of 1918 is worth reading, if only for some personal insight into this historical (but often forgotten) event. The US death toll (according to a note found inside the book) was half a million dead. While I was sometimes a bit lost about the speakers of the some of the poems, other poems really captured the confusion and grief of this time period.

R. says

Quite an accomplishment, really.

Erin Bow says

Every once in a while I re-read this one to torture myself with the knowledge that are stunningly ambitious flawless masterpieces in the world, and some of them are little books of connected sonnets....

Peter Gaines says

A tremendous piece of craftsmanship. A study in perspectives, in voice, in the sonnet as a form. I plan to teach the book as a whole for the first time this spring.

kylajaclyn says

I am using the poems in this book as a model for a project on Frederick Douglass for Southern Lit. It was okay... I certainly have no interest in keeping the book. I did enjoy the theming and narrative arc that ran throughout.

Olivia F says

I selected this book because the last poetry book I read I really liked. I never really started reading poetry until this year but I discovered that I love it! The poems are so relatable and have amazing messages to them. I read the back of the book and it said that the author Ellem Bryant Voigt incorporates both scientific and spiritual visions. To be honest...I was intrigued but didn't ready know what it meant, until I read Kyrie! The book is about a plague and the heart wrenching stories about how people were effected by it. It is a difficult book to understand and I definitely am not 100% sure what some of the poems meaning or stories are but the ones I did get were amazing! They are about how family's and friends are suffering and coping through they're lives. I think the author did a very good job at portraying peoples pain and you could definitely feel it. They put a

lot of complex vocabulary and really brought a lot of compassion to their stories. I think what didn't work was it was hard for a high school student to understand some of the things and the way they were being said. There were a lot of poems that were too advanced for me to understand. I don't think I would recommend this book to a person my age, only because I really had to read through multiple times and sometimes I still couldn't comprehend. But, I do think an adult would really enjoy this. Overall the book Kyrie was ok.

Maughn Gregory says

Absorbing sonnets on the coincidence of the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 and World War I, as experienced by a handful of American families.

Lida says

A poignant collection of poems about the influenza epidemic of 1918. Due to the timing of this epidemic, a lot of the poems are also concerned with WWI. In my opinion, Ellen Bryant Voigt is one of the best poets of our time.

Lisa Feld says

It's a great concept: poems from the perspectives of various survivors and victims of the 1918 influenza epidemic. Some of the language was stunning, and I liked watching the different points of view weave in and out--a letter read out of order signaling the writer's death, for example. Some of the poems aren't as strong, but overall, it's impressive, especially on a reread.

Artifice Magazine says

Quite an accomplishment, really.

Sherry Chandler says

I talk about this book here and here.

It is not an easy book to read but well worth while. I think it has had a considerable effect on my own writing.

Miriam says

The Spanish flu is one of the most haunting and horrifying events in American history, and it is here

encapsulated in a perfect, frantic, desperate flurry of words, thoughts, and people, characters fleshed out in hints and suggestions. At times, Kyrie reads like a finely wrought history, others like Johnny Got His Gun put through a wringer of disease and time. The poems use unapologetically harrowing and unforgettable images to sear their way into the mind's eye, like that of cutting the cat's throat to attract and distract the flies, or that of the coffin-less child being drawn in a toy sled with his favourite things. Like the best books of any kind, but especially of poetry, this volume is intensely transportative. The afterward to the book hints that the Spanish flu has been largely forgotten in the popular imagination; while I have not known that to be true, if everyone read this book, there would be no chance of that.

Kitty says

A sequence of linked blank verse sonnets which addresses the repercussions of the 1918 influenza epidemic.

This is a book that provides examples of crafting... sonnets of reflections; sonnets about different people, Mattie, the Doctor, sonnets that are strictly metaphor.

The epilogue, written in six tercets draws the curtain with a snow storm-- first the window pane, filled with sleet,

"loud sheets of it", then the view of the blurred horizon and stone walls, "made // from what the earth cast up and didn't need." A memory of field in summer, and a horse, "now/ every stalk in the field in beaten down."

I love this final tercet:

"Such is the world our world is nestled in.

then in italics, as if a different voice: "And what if the horse were installed in the barn with a bucket of oats?" and the final line:

Shush, says winter, blown against the window.

Kristin says

This poetic history of the influenza pandemic of 1918 was incredible. Each poem is beautiful and works with the others to create a narrative in which the reader can live. A writer of historical poems myself, I found this to be inspiring and intriguing, and I hope to read more of Voigt's work soon.

Lindsey says

If you want a reference for how many ways to vary a sonnet this is a must-read. Her craft is stunning in places, though I also felt at times the form was forced for the sake of the sequence.

The subject matter is heartwrenching and convicting. There are moments when Voigt shines: the language catches you right at the throat of your heart. Her ability to evoke emotion THROUGH her restraint is both worthy of admiration and of an attempt at emulation.
