

In *The Threshold Of Broken Waters*, Emily Bilman explores the most transforming experiences of human life and the indelible traces they leave on our memories in which birthing becomes a metaphor for writing. For a woman, giving birth is a transformative experience and many of the poems are about the joy and pain of giving birth to another ultimately unknowable being. The metaphor of pregnancy is extended to tackle the contemporary issues of water as a rare resource and the current migrations that transport refugees to new shores.

Just as a woman gives birth to a baby, a poet gives birth to a poem with all its attendant joy and pain and its ultimate mystery. In the words of Emily, she becomes the voice which unfurls / into a poem. In poetry as in life, one enters through one threshold which leads to another and another, rather like the character of Judith in Bartók's opera, Duke Bluebeard's Castle who opens one barred door after another, dreading what she might find but unable to renounce the human need to search for what is most true, whatever the cost. Only through such courage and persistence can one achieve those rare moments of transcendence.

It's only after we go through those life-altering experiences and achieve an emotional balance that we can begin to explore the deepest questions of existence. There is the sudden memory of the poet's father waving to bring (her) back to the safe shore. The book contains a moving reference to Emily Dickinson as though the vicissitudes of time itself had, at last, been overcome and the poet's watch stopped at eternity. Out of all the struggles which many of the poems in this collection enact, there comes those unexpected healing shafts of memory, perhaps the richest of all our human gifts as revealed by Marcel Proust and Emily's poetry.

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Emily Bilman

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Poetry