



# The Crossing

*Andrew Miller*

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**The Crossing** Andrew Miller

**From the author of the Costa Book of the Year *Pure*, a hypnotic, luminous exploration of buried grief and the mysterious workings of the heart.**

*She is sailing. She is alone. Ahead of her is the world's curve and beyond that, everything else. The known, the imagined, the imagined known.*

Who else has entered Tim's life the way Maud did? This girl who fell past him, lay seemingly dead on the ground, then stood and walked. That was where it all began.

He wants her - wants to rescue her, to reach her. Yet there is nothing to suggest Maud has any need of him, that she is not already complete. A woman with a talent for survival, who works long hours and loves to sail - preferably on her own. A woman who, when a crisis comes, will turn to the sea for refuge, embarking on a voyage that will test her to the utmost, that will change everything ...

From the Costa Award-winning author of *Pure* comes a viscerally honest, hypnotic portrait of modern love and motherhood, the lure of the sea and the ultimate unknowability of others. This pitch-perfect novel confirms Andrew Miller's position as one of the finest writers of his generation.

## The Crossing Details

Date : Published August 27th 2015 by Sceptre

ISBN : 9781444753493

Author : Andrew Miller

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Fiction, European Literature, British Literature

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# From Reader Review The Crossing for online ebook

## Mary Lou says

Maud is a detached girl, difficult to get the measure of, and with no apparently close relationship with either her parents or her partner. Having suffered a tragedy she embarks upon a journey – both literally and emotionally.

Andrew Miller often provides only the bare bones of what is happening, but at the same time uses the most beautiful, clear and lyrical language. This is challenging for a reader who needs to know exactly where, when, why and how and who has no knowledge at all of sailing. And yet he keeps this reader with him all the while gripped by this atmospheric novel.

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## Roz Morris says

This is one of those books that stopped the world for me. Husband would suggest a DVD; I would plead more time with this novel instead.

It centres on a woman, Maud, who is a loner. The first half is mainly concerned with her unsettling effect on others, while the second follows her interior life - and inevitably the consequences of events from part one. Miller has created a character who is not as warm as other people seem to expect, and indeed as they require. To an extent, this seems to be a fascination of his, as in *Ingenious Pain* he explored the idea of a man who was unable to feel any kind of uncomfortable stimulus.

Maud is truly a haunting character, and I'm still trying to work out why. This is not a book of simple emotions. You don't feel sorry for her; you don't know what to feel, which of course is why she is so disconcerting to the others around her. Especially those who expect to have a two-way relationship with her - her boyfriend and his family, her colleagues. You could say she's the original cold fish, but there are no easy ways to describe her. There are also no labels to suggest we can package this as a study of Asperger's, which is quite fashionable at the moment. Besides, she doesn't have many of the features of Asperger's; she is simply a person with these characteristics, complex and truthful. And she's painted with such empathy that you understand what it is like to have her peculiar wiring. Kurt Vonnegut said that a good book allows you to meditate in the mind of another - and Miller can turn you into Maud. Or perhaps we all have a little of her in us.

The Crossing contains a shadow of another book, too; Miller's capacity to create moments of great tenderness. In *The Crossing*, this comes after Maud and her boyfriend Tim have had a scare in their boat. The way Miller describes their reaction creates a complex and subtle bond between them, and I found myself rereading those lines, like a child discovering a new game. Similarly, there are moments with other characters that carry this warm humanity. He achieves a similar thing in *Pure*, with the main character and his wife. The words used for that scene forever create a deep sense of closeness, in lines you can return to and puzzle over. However, *The Crossing* is not a retread of that relationship by any means. The similarity is very temporary.

Miller's prose is beautiful, but never trips up the narrative. It's plain when it needs to be, enchanting when that's called for. You will find moments of delight and poetry, but the story will keep pulling you on.

So why four stars instead of five? Truth be told, I wasn't happy with the ending. There is resolution, but I didn't find it satisfying enough. It seemed predictable. I've often found Miller's endings to be disappointing, as though he simply ran out of steam. Or perhaps the end is something that simply doesn't interest him. Certainly he gave me enough delight during the voyage that I don't mind too much about it. So - four stars, and I'm happy to recommend.

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### **Alysha says**

Getting through this book was a struggle. Plot was boring and odd. Characters were lifeless and uninteresting. Maybe I missed something but I really disliked this novel

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### **Catherine Banner says**

What I love about Andrew Miller is that every one of his books is different, startling and worth reading. The Crossing follows the inscrutable character of Maud, first through the eyes of her husband Tim and then moving closer to her own perspective (though she never becomes fully fathomable), in a narrative roughly divided by a tragic life event which befalls the couple around the midway point of the book. Maud is never completely readable, and to me the novel is all the better for it. There's something luminous and unknowable about all of Miller's writing which I love and which sets it apart from much of the rest of the dominant strand of literary and historical fiction in the UK. The beauty of his work and its detail and gifted strangeness stand out, to me, as exceptional. Highly recommended, though if you are new to Miller I would start with one of his historical novels, either *Ingenious Pain* or *Pure*.

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### **Michael says**

It is said a thing of beauty is a joy forever; indeed long will the elegance and eloquence of this work reverberate through this read's mind.

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### **Leah says**

#### **Passionless...**

Maud and Tim are an unlikely couple – he gregarious and open, she lacking any kind of personality whatsoever, of any kind, and apparently unable to speak in sentences longer than four words, despite her intelligence. However, he falls in love with her and she... well, acquiesces is the word that springs to mind. They have a good deal of fairly passionless yet intimately described sex which, thankfully, results at last in a pregnancy. I say thankfully because the exhaustion brought on by the child stops them having more sex for a while. But after a few years of living together, during which Maud's contribution to the household

conversation gradually adds up to roughly twenty words, tragedy strikes! No, sadly not Maud. She survives – proving yet again that there is no justice in this world. Unable to express her emotions, assuming she has any, Maud takes off in her beloved boat where she can sail and sail and sail without having to speak to anyone at all. Fortunately she manages to have a last bout of sex just before weighing anchor, just in case any reader was missing it...

Oh dear! Sometimes a book and a reader just don't gel and I fear that's the case with this reader and this book. And yet I feel I'm probably being unfair. It reminded me in many ways of *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, only much better written I hasten to add, and while I thought that book was pretty awful, 99% of the rest of the universe seemed to think it was wonderful. Basically it's a coming to terms with grief story but with a central character with so little personality that I couldn't feel any empathy for her. Perhaps we're supposed to assume that inside she's a seething cauldron of suppressed emotion, but if so it's too well suppressed. Or perhaps she's supposed to be autistic. I don't know – but she behaves like a speech-free automaton for the whole book, forming no real relationships with any of the other characters, though of course all the men she meets are attracted to her, for no reason I could understand.

The first half is taken up with her one-sided relationship with Tim, who seems to think she's vulnerable and that he needs to take care of her. But in fact, she's so self-sufficient that the rest of the world doesn't really impinge on her at all. When their child is born, Maud returns to work leaving Tim to be the child-carer. After a failed attempt to get the baby to enjoy sailing, Maud begins to leave Tim and the child at home at weekends while she goes off alone in her beloved boat.

The tragedy happens about halfway through and from there on the book tells us of Maud's attempt to deal with her (presumed) grief by taking to the seas on a solo sailing trip. I hoped that might be more interesting but sadly Maud's lack of emotion now becomes coupled with endless, tediously over-detailed descriptions of how to sail a boat, using a bunch of nautical terminology that meant most of it created no images in my mind.

*“She shackles the tack to the base of the spare stay then hanks on until she reaches the head...She uncleats the halyard, slithers back to the jib, undoes the halyard shackle with the marlinspike she once gave to Tim as a present but which later, somehow, became her marlinspike, attaches the head of the jib, frees the sheets from the furling jib, reties the bowlines through the clew of the storm jib, hoists the jib from the mast, regains the cockpit, sheets in the jib, cleats it, and sits on the grid of the cockpit sole, her chest heaving, her clothes soaked through.”*

Perhaps people who sail will find this kind of description riveting, but I'm afraid I found it about as thrilling as the instructions on a piece of Ikea do-it-yourself furniture, and even less comprehensible. By the two-thirds stage I was skimming pages, hoping desperately to get to the end.

And then the ending brings the same kind of semi-mystical mumbo-jumbo that nauseated me so much in *Harold Fry*. Miller avoids the sickly sweetness of that book, but unfortunately also avoids either credibility or emotional warmth. But maybe it's just a matter of taste.

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Hodder & Stoughton.

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**Barbara says**

I couldn't put this book down. Stayed up way too late last night reading it.  
What a skilled author, what a smart writer. What a sad lonely story, beautifully drawn.  
I'm off to my library's web site to reserve some of his earlier books...  
I don't remember who recommended this to me, but, whoever you are: thank you.

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### **Rod MacLeod says**

Brilliant for about 80% but I really didn't understand the context of the final chapters. Perhaps I'm a bit dim but I couldn't work it all out. I'm glad I read it but would find it hard to recommend as I couldn't really work it all out

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### **Hugh says**

Andrew Miller is a versatile writer whose books are always worth reading. This one is a curious hybrid of several different genres, held together by the heroine Maud, who is feisty but reserved and aloof.

In the first part of the book we follow Maud's relationship with Tim. They meet as members of a university sailing club and are brought together after Maud has a fall while working on the boat. They become a couple, Maud starts a steady job as a scientist, and the rather vain and narcissistic Tim dreams of being a musician while being subsidised by his rich family. Maud persuades him to buy and repair a neglected but seaworthy yacht, but their plans for it are derailed when Maud becomes pregnant.

The second part is several years later. Tim has been the main carer for their daughter Zoe, but he and Maud are drifting apart when Tim is involved in a tragic road accident in which he is badly injured and Zoe is killed. He then leaves her and after a confrontation with his family she is forced to take extended leave from her job and, at a loose end, decides to sail the boat, with little more than a vague plan to head west.

The voyage is described in detail, as something of an Arthur Ransome style adventure story. From here on I will use spoiler tags, as the remainder of the story has some unexpected twists, which I can't avoid discussing. (view spoiler)

The book is always readable, if somewhat heavy on nautical terminology, it has some fine descriptive passages, and Maud is a fascinating character, but overall I felt the book did not quite work, and tries to cover too many incompatible bases.

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### **Maya Panika says**

Another highly literary page-turner from Andrew Miller, whose 'Pure' was my favourite book in 2011 so I was mad with anticipation over The Crossing, his first book since Pure, and... it's good, of course – not as wonderful as Pure, but then, Pure is such a very hard act to follow.

This is the story of Maud. Maud is an extremely odd creature. Is she autistic (autism is definitely flavour of the month it seems; I read The Crossing at the self-same time as The Life and Death of Sophie Stark which is

also about a cold and un-empathic, semi-psychopathic young woman)? It's never stated as such, but she's definitely somewhere on that spectrum. Maud only really comes at home on boats; something about them seems to resonate with the only moments of connection and warmth in her childhood, the times she spent sailing on the local lake with her grandfather, and she doesn't let things like home, husband and child get in the way of her need to be on the water. After a family tragedy, she becomes intensely drawn to her boat, the *Lodestar*, which seems to take the place of her family in her heart. She has a far warmer relationship with the *Lodestar* than any of the humans in her life.

Any book by Andrew Miller is going to be extraordinary; the writing sublime, the tale enigmatic. The *Crossing* doesn't disappoint in any of this, and yet I couldn't love it as I've loved other books by him. Perhaps it was the lack of heart; the subject, Maud, is such a cold fish and so hard to empathise with or to love, that (this being always her story) maybe some of that lack of empathy and feeling rubs off in the prose? The hints of the supernatural felt oddly misplaced too, since they didn't seem to go anywhere, but I still found that part of the story easier to accept, more in keeping with the dreamlike state of Maud's world, than what came later. The last section of this (decidedly peculiar) book seemed so weak after what had gone before. It didn't seem to fit with the rest somehow, and the end was not an end but merely a place to stop, something I found deeply unsatisfying. Which is why I'm so sure I'm missing something profound here – I'm sure someone will enlighten me if I am – but I really couldn't judge the point of the last few chapters, unless it was simply the plain and obvious one of ice-queen Maud being made to care, to be a mother, almost against her will (and was it the ghost that drew her there with this lesson in mind)? If so, it felt unusually heavy-handed, with a sledge-hammer lack of subtlety that I've never come across before in a work by this author, and why I feel I may be missing something, because other than that, I admit I'm at a loss. These reservations and disappointments aside, I enjoyed every second I spent reading it; it drew me in, as Andrew Miller always draws me in, and held me spellbound from the start until the wreck of the *Lodestar*. But from the moment Maud stepped ashore, I have to confess, I was lost, and not a little bored. I still recommend it though; it is a brilliant character study and gorgeously, gloriously well-written.

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## **Elyse Walters says**

I need to fall back to sleep now...  
but I couldn't put this down.  
This was my first Andrew Miller novel.

We meet Tim & Maude...  
There was a line  
"It's not clear if they will have sex"...  
THERE IS MUCH THAT IS NOT CLEAR ABOUT Maude STAMP...

In the first part of the novel, Tim & Maude are brought together by an accident Maude has on a sailboat. Gripping- intriguing- the entire way the accident unfolds.  
They are both members of the University sailing club.  
Tim spends every minute 'helping' .... at the hospital/ then at her 'bare-bones' minimalistic apartment. An eerie loneliness was felt inside her home.  
Maude's incredibly mysterious...(a biologist)... quiet .. isn't at all curious about Tim's life.  
Even after they do become lovers ...I wondered ..  
"what's wrong with her?"...  
Tim, who is completely different from her, comes from a wealthy family, ... and because money doesn't seem to be an issue - he can spend his days doing yoga and playing his guitar. He's obsessed with Maude.

His mother tells him - she would have wished another type of girl for her son... but he says he loves Maude.

Many people are drawn to Maude - yet it's not as though she is overtly trying to attract attention. Maude was aloof, simple - the opposite of flashy.

We wonder if she is meek and frail or actually quite clear and strong.

Tim & Maude get married...but she's not particularly happy with him.

Things change tragically & drastically in the second half ....'The Crossing' is the perfect title...

We take a journey with Maude to Paris and about...

Enter motherhood - and children

Maude seems the most unlikely character to be satisfied with a child dependent on her....

I'll say no more....

Andrew Miller's writing is seductive. His prose convincingly captures the mysterious Maude Stamp.

Back to sleep! Nite! ?

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### **Lisa Edwards says**

I was lucky enough to be given an advance copy of this back in May and as I'm a huge Miller fan, I read it immediately in one weekend. It's not up there with *Ingenious Pain*, *Casanova* or *Pure* for me, but his trademark lyricism and exploration of human emotion is as brilliant as ever. At the time I described it as 'literary *Gone Girl*' in that there is a woman at the heart of the story that is seemingly heartless and to some extent inhuman. As someone who often feels the 'lure of the sea' her story resonated with me.

I can't make out if the second half was a dream or reality, but it is a really pacy read with some incredibly thrilling passages at sea. If you're into sailing, this book is for you! For me, it was about motherhood and the maternal instinct, and maybe more about how humans deal with grief in different ways and how we back away from those who find it difficult to show any emotion at those times.

Out 27 August.

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### **Steve Griffin says**

This book isn't exactly long, but it takes you on an amazing journey. In the character of Maud, the author has created someone both mysterious and scientific, rooted in the world. When she's met by tragedy her journey alone across the Atlantic, one moment calm and the next terrifyingly wild, is gripping. I wasn't so sure about the ending, but this seems to me a resonant book for our times.

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### **Claire says**

Really good all the way through but the last section was just a bit surreal- and the ending was meh!



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## Issicratea says

I have always found Andrew Miller a frustrating novelist to follow. He is a great stylist, without doubt, master of the show-stopping phrase or sentence; that's the main reason why I generally at least attempt his novels. He also has a good eye for a subject (his most famous novel, *Pure*, tells the story of a young engineer in immediately pre-revolutionary France hired to clear the ancient cemetery of Les Innocents and demolish its church.)

What frustrates me about Miller is that the fairy who showered him with these great gifts seems to have forgotten to give him the gift of structuring a narrative. Just about everything I have read by him (*Pure*, *Oxygen*, *Ingenious Pain: A Novel*—probably my favorite of his novels—and *Casanova in Love*) starts very strongly and then peters out. Miller's novels seem all original concept (setting, time, ideas) and no "story." Characters are also not a forte.

*The Crossing* I thought worked better at the level of narrative arc than most of Miller's novels, although it's a strange, bisected, or trisected piece. We start in the realm of the contemporary realist novel—not Miller's usual territory—watching an improbable "opposites attract" marriage gradually crumbling apart. Class tensions play a role in this disintegration (Tim is posh; Maud is not); but so also does Maud's opaque, self-sufficient, "unfeminine" character.

So far, so OK. Where the book came alive for me was in the second segment, where, for reasons that can't be revealed without a spoiler, we follow Maud on a transatlantic one-woman voyage, the crossing of the title (or one of the crossings, the most literal.) This is a virtuoso sustained piece of technical writing, challenging for the non-sailors amongst us ("she uncleats the halyard, slithers back to the jib,") but with a wonderful, drifting, incantatory rhythm to it. This is voyage as therapy, a vital space outside human commerce; Maud is "a hermit in her floating cell, a pilgrim, an exile." I loved the way the fascinating monotony of the journey was broken by incidents of varying degrees of strangeness—most strikingly, an encounter with a floating suitcase, presumably the debris from an air crash, with the owner's possessions stacked neatly inside it, memorials and metonyms for his vanished body and life.

After this stunning seaborne passage, Maud fishes up in the third and oddest of the three narrative segments, on the coast of Brazil—odd enough to have reminded some readers of Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*, of which there are echoes elsewhere in the novel. I liked this peculiar, edgy, dream-like sequence, and even the inconclusive ending, though I can see why some have found it annoying.

In an interesting article on the genesis on this novel in the Guardian (see link below), Miller states of this novel that his one ambition for it is "that it should be hard to close down on, hard to precis." He certainly achieves that end. I finished it a little while ago, and haven't by any means "closed it down" in my mind. I think that is something to do with the way in which the novel "crosses" half-way through from a realist key to something more lyrical and symbolic, closer to Miller's usual fabulist mode. Combined with the use of an uncannily affectless, almost Mersault-like focalizing character, this transition has the effect—to follow the governing metaphor of the novel—of loosening us from our moorings as readers, setting us adrift on a crossing of our own.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/201...>

