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Clarion Review

No New or Polished Coins
Tempe Finn Crosby
Trafford Publishing
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Tempe Fenn Crosby's poetry was driven by an unabated interest in people and an unvanquished hope that the gulfs between them could be navigated by consciously understanding their surrounding circumstances. These works cover topics from friendship and memory to faith and love but all acknowledge the importance of how we frame our lives. "Poetry Seminar" for example presents competing views on perspective: "things seen from a twelve-story window" versus "the lurching roar of subway speeding toward some determined destination."

Besides cracking the exclusive directory of the *International Who's Who in Poetry* during the 1970s Crosby was also an avid genealogist. That pursuit provided her with portals into other people's struggles and triumphs. It gave her sources of friction to examine without having to worry about hurting the feelings of her own loved ones.

Some of Crosby's notable strengths were her willingness to change up form layout and aims. She takes note of the Modernists who were still holding on at the beginning of her writing life with a couple nods each to T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein. Other poems are closer to the Confessionalism launched by Edna St. Vincent Millay (among others) which took a more central place in the '60s and '70s. Lucille Clifton whose poetry has reflected interest in metaphysics and family histories appears to have also impacted Crosby's work for the good.

These poems were gathered from nearly four decades so readers are able to gather a solid sense of Crosby's style over her writing career. One weakness never completely vanquished is tied to Crosby's interest in nailing down abstract ideas. At times she weighed abstracts against each other until the subject itself was barely discernable among the thickening conceptual mist. The risk seems worth the occasional side effect however as she made great progress at unifying the intellectual and emotional components of human beings.

Often her clear-cut successes at that pursuit were through the vehicles of short poems. She hits the core concern right away and wisely jumps out of the poem. One nice example of

this shifts an entire relationship in a single exchange. Here's the whole poem "Insight":

'Look at it my way' she said.
But that's exactly what's wrong' I replied
'I have looked at it your way
Entirely too long.'

No New or Polished Coins is about the searches which achieve their objectives and the ones whose outcomes hang in limbo. Here's a haiku about arrival: "In all the world this / quiet dusty road only knows / the way to your house." This book is the lovely swan son of an earnest thinker who made a great deal of progress before leaving the world. It's definitely a recommended read.