



Annick Smith, *Crossing the Plains with Bruno*. San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2015. 216 pp. Paperback \$17.95. Epub \$17.95.

In May 2003, Annick Smith embarks on a drive from her home in Montana heading east to visit her mother in Chicago. At the time, Smith is 67, her mother 97. Accompanying Smith on the trek is her four year old chocolate lab, Bruno. Smith opens her book by explaining the significance of dogs to humans and the human bond to dogs. Bruno is her passenger on the trip, but he is more for her, too, as his presence keeps Smith grounded. She must always be cognizant of his needs on this journey, thus tethering her to reality as she drives across the country while thinking about her life. For Smith, the journey is one of a lifetime, her lifetime. As she travels, she remembers.

Smith reflects on the significance of the month of May: her birthday, mother's day, her husband's birthday as well as his death. As Smith drives, she thinks back on her life and those lives important to her. She tells readers about her family—her immigrant parents, Hungarian Jews; her husband, their life together, and his death; her sons, grandchildren, other relatives, and her current partner, William Kittredge. As she makes the passage across the plains she reflects on her life and the book becomes primarily memoir. The story is not chronological, but rather interspersed recollections based on her individual experiences. Yet, throughout the trip, Bruno keeps her grounded, and she also writes of the here and now which is reflected in the passages about her relationship with Bruno, the landscape, and the history and character of the areas she passes on her voyage.

While the work presents chapters as one day at a time, the narrative actually cascades through the years. In her narrative, Smith discusses the challenges in her life as well as the rewards. She not only shares the good memories, but also those that are painful and tender. She does not shy away from the negative, but explains it as a part of her life. In doing this, Smith draws readers into her world. She conveys who she is by sharing memories and describing her life experiences. In the work, readers get a sense of Smith's resilience and her willingness to live life fully.

While the title implies a specific trip across the plains with Bruno, it is actually much more. It is a glimpse into the life of a woman who has walked an interesting route down life's road. The book is a mix: part memoir, part history, and part storytelling about friends, family, Bruno, the other dogs that have graced Smith's life. Smith's work reminds us of our own journeys and how reflection can lead to self-evaluation or revelation. Indeed, it is worthwhile to venture across the Great Plains with Annick Smith and Bruno.

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