

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing

(martin) The title probably alludes to the name Bathsheba and not an actual crossing. This is a biblical reference to a woman named Bathsheba. She was a soldier's wife, and that soldier was off in battle. The king, David, noticed Bathsheba and seduced her. He ordered her husband to the front line in battle so she would surely die. After the soldier's death, David felt free to take Bathsheba as his lover and wife. This is a story of coveting, Bathsheba being a temptation, the object to be coveted by man. Then there's the constant mention of Rembrandt in this poem. He was an artist who worked and died in Amsterdam. Though he enjoyed financial success, his family all died before him, including his two wives and children. He painted a piece called "Bathsheba" which shows Bathsheba as she receives the message of King David summoning her. The next part of the title, "Crossing", can mean different things. Of course, a town can have a crossing between two streets or just a general town crossing. To cross somebody is to wrong them, so the poem might allude to how Bathsheba crossed her husband. Also, in more a stretch, Bathsheba is crossing her legs in the painting, so the poem may be about the contrast of a lady-like attitude with not so lady-like behavior, or perhaps the crossing of the legs signifying a resistance to infidelity. The beginning of the poem obviously describes the painting with the mention of a woman rippling with nakedness (wrinkles) and a letter, along with the mention of painting. Carson describes this painting as a "drop of life". With the way the lines end with periods, the reader can choose to read the poem line by line or to connect line to line. Many lines make this possible like "he shows/ Him bewildered" and "As if just in/ From journeys." "Paints Rembrandt's stranger," could refer to Bathsheba as Rembrandt's stranger or the stranger actually doing the painting. Bathsheba's train of thought which Carson and the reader can relate to is described in the lines saying "A letter in her hand she is. Traveling. Out of a thought toward us." Bathsheba thinks about being unfaithful and travels out of that thought to actually do it, but she also travels toward us, bringing us the readers into the picture, so to speak. The language of the poem sounds sexual as well, with the word "inside" framing the beginning and the amount of "in" and "out" in the poem, along with "her foam arrives before her even when he paints Rembrandt's stranger." The gender pronouns specifically point to a tension there, so the reader can arrive at the connections Carson plays with.

Amendments

monte (none)

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing (tiffany)

My interpretation of this town is very similar to Martin's because the history of Bathsheba is so integral to the meaning of the poem and history is pretty concrete. As Martin stated, Bathsheba is a Biblical figure who was seen bathing by King David and then seduced by him after certain ties had been cut (i.e. her husband). Rembrandt created a painting titled "Bathsheba at Her Bath", which depicts a naked Bathsheba receiving a summons from the lustful David. This all ties into certain phrases in the poem - "Dressed as a woman rippling. / With nakedness she has. / A letter in her hand". So, outside of the historical

context, the remainder of the poem is up to interpretation. I think that "Bathsheba's Crossing" is referring to a journey, a crossing over in reality from the realm of the created. The poem states that "Rembrandt painted a drop of life". I think that this is stating that he created this painting. A "drop of life" is a moment frozen on a canvas. It's standstill, captured. However, about midway through the poem, Bathsheba starts to embody a state of motion - "she is. / Traveling. / Out of a thought toward us." "A thought" seems to refer to Rembrandt's conception of Bathsheba within his mind. It appears that Bathsheba is breaking boundaries, moving toward her observers instead of staying still, motionless. I think that the constant reference to "Rembrandt's stranger" is alluding to the numerous self-portraits that Rembrandt created. It's a representation of himself. It's him, but also not him, a stranger. The last five lines seem to suggest that as Rembrandt paints, he, too, is engaged in motion, a journey. He's not just standing in front of a canvas, but rather traveling to that moment in time. Thus, he ends up "bewildered and tousled. / As if just in. / From journeys. / On tracks and side roads."

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing (tom)

Martin's analysis seems pretty complete I can see clearly every angle of the reads which he proposes. I am wondering about the stranger mentioned in this poem. I wonder if it speaks of the second person in the painting who at first glance would appear to be a maid of Bathsheba's. I wonder however if Carson was not privy to some other information about this stranger or if at the least had some speculation. Perhaps Carson thinks this other figure in the painting to be Rembrandt painting himself into the picture. Artists were known for doing such things and when one looks carefully at the other figure in the painting the face is strikingly masculine.

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing (Allison)

This analysis seemed pretty complete, I couldn't think of anything much to add. I think Carson is definitely talking about Rembrandt's painting, and I like the exploration of the language Carson chooses to use in describing this piece. The last few lines, where "As Rembrandt he shows. Him bewildered and tousled" made me think there may be something more that Rembrandt himself put into this painting. The model for Bathsheba is Rembrandt's mistress, which gives the painting almost a double meaning. I'm still not quite sure what the journeys at the end of the poem are alluding to, except they're on tracks and side roads, which sound like they're off the beaten path. This may allude to taking mistresses or straying from what is right, etc.

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing (casey)

I don't have much to add to Martin's analysis other than reinforcement. The drop of life inside has notable similarities with an impregnated egg, life forming inside a drop on the most finite of levels. This falls in line with Bathsheba's crossing being a reference to Rembrandt's painting of Bathsheba with crossed legs. Rembrandt is also guilty of coveting Bathsheba, by placing a drop inside his relationship to the poem contains a very sexual nature.

courtney (none)

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing (marina)

I think Martin got a lot out of this poem, and it's going to be somewhat hard for me to add too much to it, but there are a couple of things that I can say. First off, there's the meaning of crossing, as in a cross as well as crossing paths or lives, that is intersecting, not necessarily blocking off, then the Biblical story would come into play in relation to David and Bathsheba's paths in lives crossing and Bathsheba's husband's path ending.

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing Amendment (matt)

Wow, you've really looked at every angle in this poem. I really can tell you what else you might look at because you've done it all. You've researched the references, you've looked for alternative readings (such as the legs crossing instead of an actual crossing), you looked at utterance. I wish I was this thorough.

Town of Bathsheba's Crossing (mike)

I don't have much to add to Martin's analysis other than reinforcement. The drop of life inside has notable similarities with an impregnated egg, life forming inside a drop on the most finite of levels. This falls in line with Bathsheba's crossing being a reference to Rembrandt's painting of Bathsheba with crossed legs. Rembrandt is also guilty of coveting Bathsheba, by placing a drop inside his relationship to the poem contains a very sexual nature.

Bathsheba (abby)

I think Martin did a very thorough job with this, even including the painting here. It's definitely a reference to all the things it can be, Rembrandt, the Biblical thing. The interesting thing is that it IS all of the things, and I think that plays off of the "Towns" having "lines" connect things and meaning. I am curious about "her foam" as it seems like some kind of phallic or rabid reference, it could be sin? I'm not sure on that, but it is the one line that stands out to me as odd.

martin (none)