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Cynthia Voigt

A Solitary Blue (Tillerman Cycle, 3)

United States (1983)

TAGS: Horace Venus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	A Solitary Blue (Tillerman Cycle, 3)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1983
First Edition Details	Cynthia Voigt, *A Solitary Blue*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 1983, 249 pp.
ISBN	9781442428805
Official Website	cynthiavoigt.com (accessed: 25 February, 2020).
Awards	1984 – Newbery Honor Book
Genre	Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Cynthia Voigt , b. 1942
(Author)

Cynthia Voigt is an American author best known for the Tillerman family novels. She is the author of 33 books for children and young people, and two books for adults, spanning a range of genres and audiences. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Voigt graduated from Smith College in 1963 and later became a secondary school English teacher. Her novels have won numerous awards, including the prestigious Newbery Medal for *Dicey's Song* in 1983. The first Tillerman novel, *Homecoming*, was nominated for a National Book Award in 1982.

Source:

Official Website (accessed: 04 September, 2019).

Bio prepared by Sarah Hardstaff, University of Cambridge, sflh2@cam.ac.uk

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Additional information

Translation

Chinese: □□□□□ [Gu dan de lan se], trans. Xiaoyi Wang, Bei jing yan shan chu ban she, 2014.

Dutch: *Niemand anders dan ik*, trans. M Slagt-Prins, Querido, 1990.

French: *Le Héron Bleu*, trans. Rose-Marie Vassallo, Flammarion, 1989.

German: *M wie Melody: die Geschichte von Jeff, Dicey Tillermans Freund*, trans. Cornelia Krutz-Arnold, Taschenbuch-Verl, 1997.

Swedish: *Solo för gitarr*, trans. Harriet Alfons, Bonniers juniorförl, 1985.

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

The other titles in the Tillerman Cycle are:

Homecoming (1981),

Dicey's Song (1982),

The Runner (1985),

Come A Stranger (1986),

Sons From Afar (1987) and

Seventeen Against the Dealer (1989).

Summary

A Solitary Blue tells the story of Jeff Greene, a character first introduced in *Dicey's Song* (1982). When Jeff is seven, his mother Melody abandons him, purportedly to devote herself to helping others. Meanwhile Jeff's father, an academic known as the Professor, is distant and seemingly uncaring. From an early age Jeff is accustomed to feeding both himself and his father, experiencing extreme anxiety lest his father become unhappy. Jeff becomes ill as a result of being neglected by his father, who is encouraged by Brother Thomas, a close friend, to send Jeff to the doctor. After this illness Jeff has contact with

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his mother for the first time in several years, staying with her family in South Carolina for the summer. Jeff is enamoured with his mother, despite heavy hints that she is selfish and emotionally abusive. The following summer, Jeff realises how cruel his mother is to him and becomes depressed and isolated. He and his father eventually move to Crisfield to aid his recovery. There he meets his future romantic partner Dicey and the rest of the Tillermans, the main characters of Voigt's Tillerman Cycle.

Analysis

Towards the end of Part One of the novel, whilst staying with his mother, Jeff confronts her about her dishonesty and lack of interest in him. He later returns to an island he has found, a place where he can be alone with his feelings. But while on the island, Jeff also becomes disconnected from society, in a nod to *Robinson Crusoe* and other island narratives. Prior to his encounter with the solitary blue heron of the novel's title, Jeff sleeps out on the beach under "millions of stars", waking to see only "Venus, the morning star, low on the eastern horizon, large and white" (Voigt 1983, 118). Venus, named after the Roman goddess of beauty and love, dominates the sky as Melody dominates Jeff's thoughts, but is ultimately a distant and fleeting presence. Moreover, the time of day (morning) and position of Venus (in the east), both imply beginnings: Melody may be Jeff's first love (see also Plotz 1988, 76; Watson 2003, 96–98), but now he has to move on.

Names often convey important meanings in Voigt's work. Melody's name suggests individualism; meanwhile, Jeff's father, known always as 'the Professor', is called Horace, recalling the Roman poet. Associated initially with emotional distance and academic solitude, the Professor later wins public acclaim for his book of historical biographies.

The Professor meets Brother Thomas when they both take a class in Greek together (p. 19). Brother Thomas represents a link between the intellectual knowledge of the Professor and awareness of the care and attention that Jeff desperately needs (see also Reid 1995, 49). This is emphasised again at the end of the novel when Brother Thomas translates the word 'fideles' as 'trustworthy' in a Christmas card to Jeff (Voigt 1983, 229).

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Horace Venus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Abandonment Adversity Appearances Coming of age Communication Depression Divorce Emotions Environment Expectations Family Gaining understanding Heritage History Individuality Isolation/loneliness Loss Love Maturity Nature Old age (Old people) Parents (and children) Rejection Relationships Resilience Travel Truth and lies Values Water Youth
Further Reading	Plotz, Judith, "The Disappearance of Childhood: Parent-Child Reversals in *After the First Death* and *A Solitary Blue*", *Children's Literature in Education* 19.2 (1988): 67–79. Reid, Susan E., *Presenting Cynthia Voigt*, New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1995. Watson, Victor, "The *Tillerman* Series", in Margaret Meek and Victor Watson, eds., *Coming of Age in Children's Literature: Growth and Maturity in the Work of Philippa Pearce, Cynthia Voigt and Jan Mark*, London: Continuum, 2003, 85–124.

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