

Incarnadine: A Poetic Exploration of Blood, Memory, and the Body in Mary Szybist's Poetry

In the realm of contemporary American poetry, Mary Szybist's "Incarnadine" stands as a profound and evocative body of work that interrogates the intimate connections between blood, memory, and the human body. Through a masterful alchemy of language and imagery, Szybist's poems delve into the visceral and the ethereal, excavating the hidden layers of our physicality and its inextricable ties to our interior lives.



Incarnadine: Poems by Mary Szybist

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 862 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Print length : 81 pages

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The collection's title, "Incarnadine," is a word that means "to make flesh-colored," hinting at the central preoccupation of Szybist's poetry: the human body as a site of both profound vulnerability and indomitable resilience. Throughout the collection, she explores the body's capacity to both wound and heal, to both conceal and reveal the intricate tapestry of our experiences.

Blood as Memory

One of the most striking features of "Incarnadine" is its exploration of blood as a metaphor for memory and the passage of time. In the poem "After the Blood," Szybist writes:



““The blood remembers. It says that you were once a child who slept with a doll, its china arms cracking like twigs in your embrace.””

Here, blood serves as a repository of lived experience, a living archive that carries the traces of our past. It is through the lens of blood that we glimpse the ephemeral nature of childhood, the fragility of human life, and the enduring bonds that shape us.

The Body as a Sacred Landscape

In Szybist's poetry, the body is not merely a physical entity but a sacred landscape, a terrain that bears witness to both our triumphs and our trials. In the poem "Litany in Which the Beloved's Body Is Addressed," she writes:



““I have walked through the chambers of your heart and found them filled with shadow... I have kissed the scars on your wrists and whispered secrets to your wounds.””

Through these intimate and reverent lines, Szybist transforms the body into a sanctuary, a place of both pain and healing, of both vulnerability and strength. Her poems celebrate the body's capacity for love, loss, and transformation.

The Interplay of Trauma and Healing

Trauma is a recurring theme in "Incarnadine," but Szybist's approach is not one of despair but of resilience and hope. In the poem "The Glass Essay," she writes:



“I was born with shards of glass in my skin. They could not be removed, only buried deeper.”

Here, trauma is not a definitive ending but a catalyst for growth. The speaker's wounds, though painful, become a source of wisdom and a path toward healing. Through the act of writing poetry, Szybist transforms the trauma of the past into a transformative force.

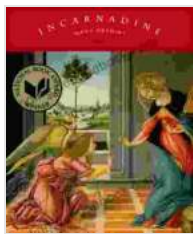
Mary Szybist's "Incarnadine" is a powerful and moving collection of poems that explores the profound connections between blood, memory, and the human body. Through her masterful use of language and imagery, Szybist transforms the body into a sacred landscape, a repository of memory, and a site of both trauma and healing. Her poems invite us to confront the complexities of our physicality and to find within our vulnerability a source of strength and resilience.

As the final lines of the collection read:



“In this body, in this life, we are all incarnadine.”

Szybist reminds us that the human body is not merely a vessel but a testament to our lived experiences, our shared humanity, and our enduring capacity to heal and to love.



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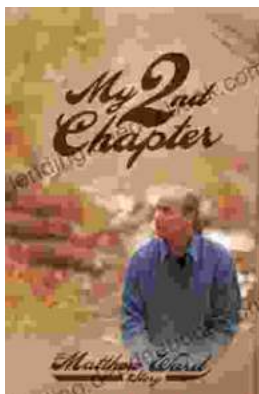
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