



I DREAM OF EMPATHY

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ABSTRACT

*In the Year of Drought to What Will become of this City Marianne Szyk's **IDream of Empathy** is a significant and urgent addition to the poetry collection market. The very first pages of this book have the ability to grab a reader by the heart and the brain. How does the poet manage to do this feat? The poet seems to do this with ease and charm primarily and carefully through her use of vivid imagery, realia, flashbacks and juxtaposition. For example, the poet talks about a miserable man who was carried to anoak. The photo of a hang tree reminds her of days in Oregon.*

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From powerfully haunting poems such as *In the Year of Drought* to *What Will become of this City* Marianne Szlyk's **IDream of Empathy** is a significant and urgent addition to the poetry collection market.

The very first pages of this book have the ability to grab a reader by the heart and the brain. How does the poet manage to do this feat? The poet seems to do this with ease and charm primarily and carefully through her use of vivid imagery, realia, flashbacks and juxtaposition. For example, the poet talks about a miserable man who was carried to anoak. The photo of a hang tree reminds her of days in Oregon.

I dream of empathy
but I wake up
to a photograph
of a hang tree.

Years later in California
the tree still stands
with its silver-white bark,
wise body hair of moss,
and branches flung
against a paper-winter sky.

The photograph on the wall
reminds me
of my days in Oregon,
tickling off the madrone,
the chinkapin,
even the sequoia in a yard,

As the poet explores the plight and blight of immigrants or other vulnerable people living under harsh conditions characterized by the trash of daily life, swarms of mosquitoes—the crucial question is: do the contemporary citizens and leaders of this world have the conscience and capacity to place themselves in other people's shoes?

In The Third Year of the Drought

Drapes across the windows
conceal the landscape outside:
the solitary trees, the metallic sky,
the scuffed hills that were once
pillows for a dead man's dreams,
back when it rained all winter
and he was a young man
imagining himself old.

Only the immigrants are outside,
riding bicycles on the ash-black road
in the harsh sun and constant drought.

As I was devouring this collection word by word, sentence by sentence, I couldn't help thinking and asking: have we become worse than apes? For empathy is thought to be deep-rooted in our bodies, brains and our history of evolution. Offering up images that seethe with refined and refreshing revelation, Marianne succeeds in galvanizing a reader into being intimate with the dream of empathy, its realities, its emotions and experiences.



Perhaps the following piece epitomizes the poet's knack for fashioning an impactful literary journey. The wonderful imagery invoked by the heart of this piece still lingers and weighs on my mind.

She Wonders What Will Become Of This City

The sky above swells into a bruise over a blood vessel.
Swarms of mosquitoes rise from puddles and gutters.

It is always about to rain, sometimes about to thunder.
Acid rain cannot cleanse the ground or the air.

The pages of books dampen and thicken,
becoming too heavy to turn, too blurred to read.

The green fuzz of moss grows over trees
like plague on teeth. Bones ache with decay.

Buses stall. Last year today would have been Code Red.
No one walks. No one rides for free.

She wonders what will become of this city
once the oceans rise and ghost towns form like coral
reefs.