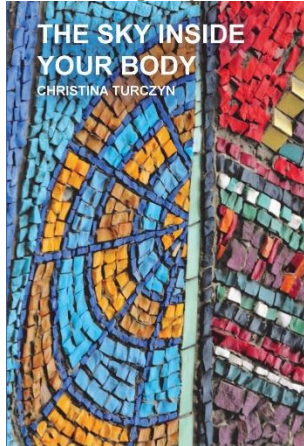


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POSTED ON DECEMBER 29, 2022 by LIGHTWOOD

The Sky Inside Your Body/ poems by Christina Turczyn/book review by Laurence Carr



Christina Turczyn's book of poetry, *The Sky Inside Your Body*, published by Poets of Queens Press: Yara Arts Group, NYC is a powerful collection that immerses the reader inside the voice and spirit of each piece. The book's front and back covers are by Waldemart Klyuzko with an interior design by Oleksandr Frazze-Frazenko.

In many pieces, the poet utilizes the first person "I" and the second person "you" in a way that strongly focuses the reader and can then become a private whisper. I could hear the poet sitting nearby speaking these pieces directly to me, an accomplishment for any writer.

These shifts into second person "you" also create different tones for each poem with a distinctive sense about how we perceive the world. Sometimes the voices remain undefined; the reader might hear an omniscient voice from an all-knowing presence, who has observed us and then divulges fragments of information. Many times, the poems feel like moral tales, scraps of knowledge that can be taken in and reserved for future use. Reading the poems a second and third time allows the words to ingrain even further into our psyches, yet another value to these pieces and their author.

The poet, by tapping often into the first person "I", creates a range of characters, each with a unique voice. And each with a point of view and an energy to speak directly to us. With these poems, I again felt the presence of the writer but who never infringed on my space. I could meditate upon each piece and come up with my own take away. One of the important qualities of the poems is their ability to move the reader into this meditative state, to ponder further upon meanings and toward the more poetic details of word choice, line breaks and stanzas, all of which are handled masterfully. The book divides into four sections, each with a tonal point of view allowing the themes and subject matter to expand throughout the volume

I was pleased to see the poem "Ulster Heights, New York", a poem I had published in *Riverine*, an anthology from Codhill Press. Here, the poem has even more resonance and a broader context, surrounded by other like pieces. Also included in the book is a longer prose poem, "Social Distancing," which appears here in *Lightwood* magazine. Take a look at that piece in its entirety by going to the Search Button in *Lightwood*.

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I was engaged by the variety of forms that the poet includes. Prose poems are interspersed along with ekphrastic pieces involving artists: “Van Gogh: Church at Auvers-sur-Oise”:

Blue of windowpanes that do not see,
blue of midnight waiting for the moon,
blue of time growing thicker in love,
blue of the deepest layer of water become sky,

Also included is:

Winter Morning, Montclair
(after George Innes)
A tree breaks the field in half, as though
memory, too violent for dream, falls into dawn
The grass itself is peaceful: Wood shavings
scattered across a frozen surface;
here and there, reeds summon deep water,

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Both the breadth of the writing and their emotional content draw in the reader can hold us. Especially true are the confessional poems, “Witness” and “Leaving Harvard” among others, that examine the relationships between the poet and those close to her. I believe these poems will speak to the reader for they balance the objective observations with subjective, intimate feeling. An example is:

“Past the half-life”
of grief, what remains is the self beyond whatever it can lose. \\
At home today, we hold each other, cry black stars of tears
as leaves of sky close around us so tightly, we forget
all of those still with us who are dead

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Also of note is the poem “Dream’s Long River”, presented bilingually. After a first reading, I was left with an admiration of the range of forms and the subject matter that the writer delved into, each poem with a strong presence. This collection is life-giving with a depth that brings solace in time when we need it. Take the time to read *The Sky Inside Your Body* and savor the words, ideas, and its emotional strength. And take a look at Christina Turczyn’s work here in *Lightwood*.

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Christina Lilian Turczyn, a former Fulbright Scholar, received her B. A. in English from Cornell, and her Ph.D. in English/Creative Writing from Binghamton University. She has taught critical and creative writing at Fairleigh Dickinson, William Paterson University, and SUNY–New Paltz, among other institutions. She is a member of the Harvard Club of New York, where she was an active member of the U.N. group. Currently a freelance writer and visual artist, Christina has, in the past five years, contributed watercolors to twenty exhibits. Those include the Cornell Club of New York’s “Cornell Has Talent,” as well as diverse exhibits sponsored by the Ridgewood Art Institute. In 2011, Christina attended the College Art Association’s National Professional Development Workshop for Artists in Trenton, N.J.