

She Could Be You

Margaret Joeline Brinson

Dorrance Publishing

(66pp)

978-1-63937-375-8

She Could Be You is a collection of poems that invites contemplation and recognition of our shared humanity.

In Margaret Joeline Brinson's measured poetry collection *She Could Be You*, vignettes about daily emotional struggles lead back to the frightening threat of racist violence.

Brinson's poems use plain language to explore the complex challenges of race, family, and faith in the US in the past sixty years. Unusual imagery and pleasing musicality enhance the messages of these poems, in which an unnamed "she" is described by an anonymous speaker. As an organizing principle, this vague perspective sometimes undermines the weight of the woman's experiences, though, in addition to the images, musings, and events depicted in the poems. "She" is faceless, ageless, and ungrounded, distancing the poems' emotional impact.

In "Sunday's Best," "she," as a child, attends church and reacts to seeing women's fancy hats fall to the floor in the passion of their worship. Elsewhere, "she" addresses the audience in more direct and impactful terms; "Spirit on the Rise" begins "Here I am. / Ears on the alert," establishing a sense of immediacy and a strong voice.

Some poems employ predictable rhyme patterns, but most are written in musical free verse form, making use of internal rhymes, slant rhymes, and alliteration in lines that beg to be read aloud. Unique images, as of a doll whose "head, a brain trust with eyes still on the world" survives sixty years after a white woman gives it to a Black child, emphasize the depth of the trauma caused by racism in the US. In the striking entry "The Fan," "she" is a child cooling her face with a handheld fan, executing a "Back and forth motion of her hand as she tries / to stop another drop of sweat." But the fan can only do so much: witnessing a cross burning on a neighbor's yard and people dressed from head to toe in white, "She wants the fan to erase the memory of what she saw; it does not happen." Instead, the child is condemned to live with this memory of terrorism and fear.

The overarching theme of the collection is expressed in one of its lines: "Fear is not a choice." Fears arise on their own from past experiences and present-day observations. The hope offered in these poems is that self-examination can make fears less fatal: "If she dares to explore them, / they would haunt her no more."

She Could Be You is a collection of poems that invites contemplation and recognition of our shared humanity.

MICHELE SHARPE (October 6, 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.