



The Madness Vase

Andrea Gibson

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Andrea Gibson's second book of poems, *TITLE*, offers a breathtaking continuation of the poet's most tender and honest work. Her first book, *Pole Dancing to Gospel Hymns* opened the door to Gibson's unapologetic voice, yet *TITLE* manages to take an even more intimate look at the subjects of family, war, spirituality, gender, grief and hope. The poems' topics range from hate crimes to playgrounds, from international conflict to hometowns, from falling in love to the desperation of loneliness. Gibson's work seizes us by the collar and hauls us inside some of her darkest moments, then releases out the other side. Moments later, we find ourselves inhaling words that fill us with light. Her luminous imagery is a buoy that allows us to resurface from her world clutching new possibilities of our own. Throughout her career, Gibson's poems have always been a call to social justice. But this collection goes beyond awareness. Her images linger in our psyches and entreat us to action. They challenge us to grow into our own skin. The journey may be raw at times but we are continuously left inspired, held, and certain we are not alone. By the time you finish reading *TITLE*, you too will believe, "Folks like us/We've got shoulder blades that rust in the rain/But they are still G-sharp/Whenever our spinal chords are tuned to the key of redemption/So go ahead world/Pick us/To make things better."

The Madness Vase Details

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From Reader Review The Madness Vase for online ebook

Ana says

Favourite poems, some of which I reread, particularly “Ashes,” but also:

“The Jewelry Store”

“Andrew”

“Glider Plane”

“Somewhere, a Carpenter”

“Gospel Salt”

“Staircase”

The poem that actually had me tearing up: “Sleeping.”

I could only read it once.

Yasmin says

There is a god walking among us on this earth

N Yen says

My favourites:

Sleeping

Somewhere, A Carpenter

Ashes

I Sing The Body Electric, Especially When My Power's Out

Lilli says

Occasionally pretty good, but Andrea Gibson still finds a way to ruin these tiny gems and makes them feel accidental and completely subconscious. Accidental beauty and intentional laziness isn't good enough anymore, I'm sorry :/

Saiber says

2015 Reading Challenge - Read as many Poetry Books as you may.

Andrea Gibson is one of my favourite poets. Her voice is strong and her emotions are real and raw.

I have read Pole Dancing to Gospel Hymns. And I liked it better than the Madness Vase. Actually I just liked a lot of poems from each one. But I prefer PDtGH

I like the imagery she paints, the words she weaves. She is soo awesome. <3

The best part about this collection was that there were these couple of fun poems. :D

God I can't wait for Pansy to come out.

Noora says

This is absolutely amazing. I have no words to describe how beautiful Andrea Gibson's writing is. I love her style, metaphors and passion behind her words. This book, hands down, is now one of my all time favorites.

Sassafras Lowrey says

Andrea Gibson is one of my favorite poets so I'll read/listen to about anything they write. I appreciated that this poetry collection had a few pieces that I wasn't familiar with (from listening to their albums).

Beautiful/heartbreaking/inspiring. I love the way that they play with metaphore especially with the body/politics/the world/queerness/ religion

Lauren Kelly says

I wanted some poetry as catharsis from the horrific events that happened in Orlando this past weekend, and Andrea Gibson was just what my heart needed.

I inhaled it with the same necessity as real air. Gibson's poems are raw emotion, shaking fury and soft vulnerability. She navigates trauma and queerness and love and heartbreak while never losing her thread of activism nor her keen sense of beauty. Splendid.

Marie S. says

It's hard to put into words what I think about Andrea Gibson. They move me so much and leave me speechless and thinking about what I've done with my life so far.

I'd say I preferred Pansy, but it's close.

Katie says

These aren't poems one can read passively; they require devotion.

Kara says

For the past few years, I've seen many quotes from Andrea Gibson's poems on tumblr and other places. I've also seen some of her performances on YouTube (many/most of the poems from this book are up on YouTube if you search for them). I'm not a poetry guru by any means, so I don't have much to compare this to? But I did enjoy it. I really like her lyrical style. Some of her stanzas hit me like a ton of bricks. I got this from the library, but I'd love to own it someday.

Caroline says

I bought this book when Andrea Gibson performed at my college (UTD whoosh!). She was amazing. I literally cried listening to her perform. So I was excited to read this collection.

There were a lot of really great poems, but just as many that fell flat for me, unfortunately. I think part of it is that her style of poetry lends itself more to performance than the written page (obviously, since she's a slam poet champion). I don't usually read a lot of slam poetry either, so that could just be my bias showing.

Some of my favorites:

"Maybe I Need You"

"Gravity" -- "We wear our traumas / the way the guillotine / wears gravity. / Our lovers' necks / are so soft."

"Somewhere, A Carpenter" -- "To think a sweater / is made entirely of knots. / My stomach could clothe a village tonight. / I am not ready. / The hungry never are."

"Andrew"

"Contact Solution"

"I Sing The Body Electric, Especially When My Power's Out" -- "I started talking to the stars in the sky instead. / I said, 'Tell me about the big bang.' / The stars said, 'It hurts to become.'"

Casey says

I've heard some of Gibson's slam poetry on YouTube so I was really excited to read this collection and it was absolutely amazing. Gibson writes about a lot of topics such as war, losing people, gender identity, being queer, love(a lot of love poems), and not really fitting the expectations placed upon them. As someone who is queer and trans, I really related to a lot of the poems in this collection. I never really see myself represented at all in anything let alone literature. So for me reading about a person who has gone through the struggles I have was so refreshing and comforting, as I feel less alone in this world. I don't really want to get

too personal in this review, so I'll just say I'm really glad I've read it. But even for people who aren't queer in anyway, Gibson writes in such a way that doesn't feel preachy, and really focus on their feelings. As a reader you really understand why certain experience had such a massive impact on Gibson, and really how universal their emotions are. As someone who is trans people often tell me that they don't know what it's like to be trans which is obviously true. Maybe you don't know what it's like to be misgendered on a daily basis, or what it's like to transition etc. but you probably know what it's like to try to be someone your not, or to be confused about self identity, or feel like you don't completely fit in etc. Being trans isn't some abstract idea that only trans people are allow to know what it's like. I am human , and I experience human emotions in the same way you do, maybe for different reasons but you could apply that to everyone. So what I'm trying to say is I think Gibson really expresses questioning gender identity and gender expectations in a retable and understandable to everyone regardless on your own experience with gender. That's why this collection means so much to me.

Christopher Butson says

Andrea Gibson is one of my favorite living, breathing poets. She is an activist; the LGBTQ experience and other issues of equality pervade her work. Her poetry, however, very often transcends these themes. "My mouth is a fire escape," she writes, with all the fury of a prophet, "the words coming out don't care that they are naked. There is something burning in here." *The Madness Vase* is probably my favorite collection of her work. The only real complaint I have is that there are numerous typos throughout this book.

Lola says

While Andrea Gibson's first poetry collection is obviously superior, their second collection *The Madness Vase* is still superb. They still deal with hard hitting issues such as the consequences of war on veterans, their families, and the people we fight against (*Sleeping*), suicide (*Piano*), and violence against the LGBT community (*Ashes*). Gibson does not pull any punches, and they approach their subjects with raw honesty and rich emotion. Nothing in their work is contrived or forced. Maybe it's because they started out in poetry slams and spoken word, but Gibson's writing never feels stiff. They are not only honest but also funny. Not laugh out loud funny but a nudge-in-the-ribs and a sly smirk kind of funny. More poetry should be like theirs.

Perhaps the best poem in the collection is the title poem *The Madness Vase*. I love this poem because it gets to the core of why people write poetry. We write it so that we can breathe again, so that we can be okay. I have problems with anxiety and am not ashamed to admit I take medication for it, but sometimes writing a poem helps me more than those pills ever could. It feels like a weight is lifted off my chest. When I read *The Madness Vase*, I thought, "Somebody understands." Because I love this poem, here it is in full text (and my favorite part in bold).

“The nutritionist said I should eat root vegetables.
Said if I could get down thirteen turnips a day
I would be grounded, rooted.
Said my head would not keep flying away
to where the darkness lives.

The psychic told me my heart carries too much weight.
Said for twenty dollars she'd tell me what to do.
I handed her the twenty. She said, "Stop worrying, darling.
You will find a good man soon."

The first psycho therapist told me to spend
three hours each day sitting in a dark closet
with my eyes closed and ears plugged.
I tried it once but couldn't stop thinking
about how gay it was to be sitting in the closet.

The yogi told me to stretch everything but the truth.
Said to focus on the out breath. Said everyone finds happiness
when they care more about what they give
than what they get.

The pharmacist said, "Lexapro, Lamictal, Lithium, Xanax."

The doctor said an anti-psychotic might help me
forget what the trauma said.

**The trauma said, "Don't write these poems.
Nobody wants to hear you cry
about the grief inside your bones."**

**But my bones said, "Tyler Clementi jumped
from the George Washington Bridge
into the Hudson River convinced
he was entirely alone."**

My bones said, "Write the poems."
