

## BOOKS

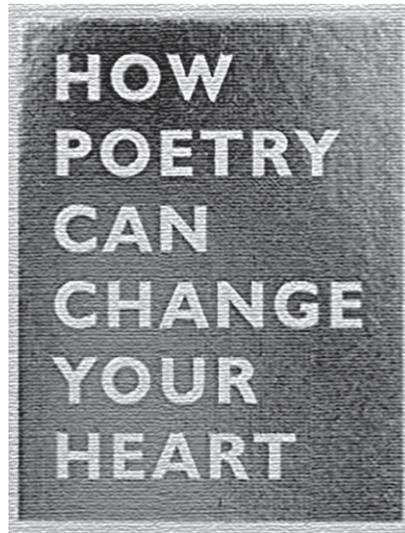
# Poetry for Everyone: Adventure, Exploration, and More

BY KARLA J. STRAND

Andrea Gibson and Megan Falley, *How Poetry Can Change Your Heart*. Chronicle Books, 2019. (The HOW Series.) 128 pp. bibl. \$12.95, ISBN 978-1452171807.

When I was a girl I loved Shel Silverstein. I guess you could say he was my first introduction to poetry. The wit and irreverence of his poems had me feeling like I was breaking the rules by reading them. Silverstein's subversive writing and cartoons paved the way for me to appreciate Gwendolyn Brooks's "We Real Cool" and Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" later on, when I also adored Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

But then at some point my love for poetry dropped off. I'm not even sure how or when it happened; I just stopped reading it. Then last year I read a book of poems that gave me a sharp reminder of how much I once loved the genre: *Black Queer Hoe*, by Britteney Black Rose Kapri (and you should read it). I devoured it and then picked up several other collections in quick succession: *Citizen Illegal*, by José Olivarez; *blud*, by Rachel McKibbens; and *A Bound Woman Is a Dangerous Thing*, by DaMaris B. Hill.



Only later did I notice that I had never entirely let go of poetry. I still listened to spoken word and ate up Saul Williams, Sonya Renee Taylor, and Dasha Kelly Hamilton. I had this realization after I was sent a little pink volume penned by two other beloved spoken-word artists, Andrea Gibson and Megan Falley: *How Poetry Can Change Your Heart*. It's not primarily

a collection of poems but a description of the genre in the simplest and most authentic terms.

Poetry, the authors explain, is adventure, exploration, emotion, healing, humor, irony, and more. Really! There are poems and poets out there for each of us; it's just a matter of finding them. "Poetry is for you," they insist, and it's true!

In addition to convincing you to read more poetry, Gibson and Falley explain some of the genre's various styles, forms, and other elements. Then, after explaining the "rules," they encourage you to throw them all out! They want you to try your hand at writing poetry, whatever that is to you, and they offer ideas for beginning a regular writing practice.

Filled with inspiring quotes and poems and a useful bibliography, this little book offers a gateway into poetry that would be appropriate for any public or school library as well as academic libraries that serve undergraduates.

[Karla J. Strand is the gender and women's studies librarian for the University of Wisconsin System.]

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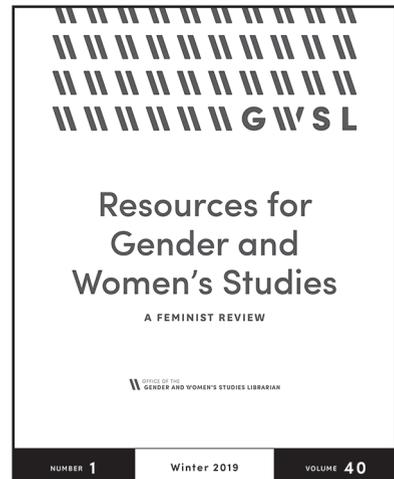
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