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The Argonauts



Synopsis

An intrepid voyage out to the frontiers of the latest thinking about love, language, and family Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* is a genre-bending memoir, a work of "autotheory" offering fresh, fierce, and timely thinking about desire, identity, and the limitations and possibilities of love and language. At its center is a romance: the story of the author's relationship with the artist Harry Dodge. This story, which includes Nelson's account of falling in love with Dodge, who is fluidly gendered, as well as her journey to and through a pregnancy, offers a firsthand account of the complexities and joys of (queer) family-making. Writing in the spirit of public intellectuals such as Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, Nelson binds her personal experience to a rigorous exploration of what iconic theorists have said about sexuality, gender, and the vexed institutions of marriage and child-rearing. Nelson's insistence on radical individual freedom and the value of caretaking becomes the rallying cry of this thoughtful, unabashed, uncompromising book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A beautiful and honest book about Nelson's experiences surrounding gender, feminism, and having a child. Throughout, while referencing various queer theorists and engaging some of their ideas, Nelson keeps to the intimate tone, which makes her memoir so stirring, through her lyrical style and realness. If you want a book that manages to acknowledge both the problematic way gender is often dealt with and the sheer amount of possibility there is to the human experience, this book is for you.

This was a tough book. I think Nelson is a good writer, and she did make some interesting points. However, this book just didn't work for me. There are some stream of consciousness books that I really have enjoyed, but they've all been fiction. There is something inherently narcissistic about writing a memoir, and I think that is amplified by the stream of consciousness narrative that expects you to understand the author's train of thought and her experiences without a ton of context. In a lot of ways this read like a personal journal that she just decided to publish one day. The interspersed random critical analysis of various scholars didn't work for me either. I do think that perhaps I would have connected with this book more if I was a mother or was at a point in my life where motherhood was on my radar. Although the book is framed as being about gender identity, to me it seemed to focus much more on motherhood.

I appreciate any artist who can relate theory and philosophy to everyday life - who can take their specific experiences and draw resonant themes without losing the details of what is specific. This is an accessible, exciting romp through theory, art, motherhood, philosophy, relationships, gender, pregnancy, death, and so much more. The author relates her thoughts, experiences, and connections without claiming very much as universal. It is a fine example of how gifted people live thoughtful, well-examined lives.

Did not disappoint. Complicated kinship, being a (queer) body in academia, the desire to believe in what language can do... and in Nelson's beautifully wrought style, lyrical and theoretical. I could not put it down.

This book reads really fast, not only because there are no chapter breaks, but also because it's really just an amazing book. Great writing that keeps you engaged. I cried and laughed. I've already re-read twice. Amazing.

Best thing I've read in months, in fact years. Defies categorisation, which is apt, because it's partly about the unhelpfulness of categories, and the imperative of freedom, creativity, self-expression, and acceptance. I unhesitatingly recommend this book to anyone with a brain and a heart. It is also - incidentally - beautifully, lyrically, mind-expansively, heart-openingly written. Upon finishing it, I promptly logged on to buy more Maggie Nelson.

To Maggie Nelson my most humble and lowest bow. Exuberant, palpable, intellectually stimulating,

but more importantly human to the core. This work is for those who want to expand their minds in acceptance of multiplicity and permutation in human species.

This is an interesting memoir by the author regarding her relationships with various people and subjects including sexuality, gender roles, homosexuality and childbirth. Her significant "other" was born a female but has now adopted the male gender. His name is Harry and he brings a young boy from a previous relationship into the mix. Harry and Maggie (the author) want to have a child together and so Maggie is artificially inseminated producing their son Iggy. This is a well written book but as you might be sensing I am having a tough time describing it as this is not a book that can be pigeonholed. This book is only for the open minded.

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