



Vice: New and Selected Poems

Ai

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Collected here are poems from Ai's previous five books—*Cruelty*, *Killing Floor*, *Sin*, *Fate*, and *Greed*—along with seventeen new poems. Employing her trademark ferocity, these new dramatic monologues continue to mine this award-winning poet's "often brilliant" (*Chicago Tribune*) vision.

Vice: New and Selected Poems Details

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Author : Ai

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Julie says

So after doing a research paper on Ai. I found her poetry to be extremely dark and meaningful. Some of her stuff was filled with vulgar but the depth and emotion she portrayed through all her poetry was full of meaning. It was an astounding collection of poems.

Robert Lashley says

The early poems here-the ones in Cruelty (1973) and Killing Floor (1979)-are intricate and forceful. The best ones are learned, ambitious, drawing on such diverse traditions as Pound, the Oral Tradition, Browning's Monologues and Post Second Wave Feminism. Obsessed with trauma and agonizingly internal, they can raise powerful questions about race, gender, identity and the human capacity to digest an enormous amount of grief. Even when the message or structure of the poems don't necessarily jibe, they are consciously crafted enough to always be the readers time.

She loses me In the later poems, where she stops telling human personal stories and starts to ruminate on pop culture events and figures. Ai's early work interpolated the motif of the early Cantos- that poetry didn't have the language to encapsulate the grief and horror of modern life-more effectively than Pound ever did, but they worked when she wrote close to the vest of real life, what she knew, what she could see, what she could invent. When she started writing about OJ, Monica Lewinsky, Koresh, and the Okalahoma city bombing, the animating aesthetics of her work fall flat. Still, the book is worth it: there is much here that needs to be read if you want to understand the history of poetry, chew on some literary theorizing, or just read some good poems. If you can get a good copy of Cruelty on Amazon, however, I would go with that first.

Teresa says

<http://dog-earedpoetry.blogspot.com/2011/05/review-of-new-and-selected-poems.html>

Charles Xu says

I love the variety of poems in this book. You can really see the evolution in Ai's work with this book, especially how she transitions from narrating the atrocities in small, rural towns in the eyes of the lower class to narrating pop culture stars. It's interesting to see how she approaches both worlds with the same sharpness of language and fearlessness in exposing violence and abuse. Definitely not a poem to read for relaxation, but a great poem to read if you want to feel something in your heart.

Amanda says

My Favorite contemporary poet! She's brutally honest.

Wizzard says

At first I loved Ai and loved this book. Then I was somewhat luke warm towards it. Then I loved it again. She chooses emotionally complex and challenging subject matter. Her writing style is not super mind blowing, but I do appreciate it the more I read it. The stories that she tells are powerful, bold, stunning.

Tracy says

I loved these poems, especially the early ones. They are so powerful and a short poem tells a novel's worth of stories. Her imagery moved me intensely-- raw, badass and gritty--just how i like it :)

Miho says

i read this simultaneously with ai's dread and found them to be of the same quality of attention to words. but in subject matter this was of more nihilistic meanderings. i was frightened whilst reading most of these poems, but grateful to know the story she weaves with such brief passage.

Chelsea says

Ai's collection is startling, difficult, and important. Selected from the five books preceding this collection - *Cruelty*, *Killing Floor*, *Sin*, *Fate*, and *Greed* - these poems tackle dangerous parts of the human spirit in ways that leave readers gasping for air. Her metaphors and similes are often spiritual, ranging from Lazarus to Eve to Saturn and Lucifer. They ask us to challenge what we believe, as in, "how free is a woman? - / born with Eve's sin between her legs" (67) and show how preoccupations about God and religion course through human minds.

Ai uses sound to propel her poems, leaning more into "spoken word" rhythms and inertias as the years progress. For me, her use of sound is most successful in her earlier poems where she focuses more on image and lets rhythm move us more into sight. Beautiful dark lines like, "Night, that old woman, jabs the sun / with a pitchfork, / and dyes the cheesecloth sky blue-violet" (29) and "We strip away the tattered fabric / of the universe / to the juicy, dark meat, / the nothing beyond time. / We tear ourselves down atom by atom, / till electron and positron, / we become our own transcendent annihilation" (79) sing the images to us. As sound begins to take over in *Greed* and the new poems, the images feel weighted down and a bit more controlled by the sound. These poems also move into more current social and political allusions to figures such as Lee Harvey Oswald, Malcolm X, and James Dean. While these are strong poems dealing with difficult subject matter, they almost lose that dark and deep edge that I loved so much about the earlier pieces.

No matter how you nitpick, however, Ai's poems hit you like a truck and demand that you stand up again, keep turning the page. Often adopting new personas, Ai embodies the "vices" she describes in new ways in each poem. She does not shy away from the challenge of depicting the harsh realities of sin and cruelty, but rather embraces these personas with eerie accuracy. Joy Harjo calls this collection "frightening but necessary" and while sometimes the poems are hard to stomach, this is a book that forces us to wrestle with the demons in the world and the ones in the mirror.

Allissa says

I have a hard time handling some of the more graphic detail and horror, but it pays off, because Ai has some important things to say by addressing these issues.

Jessica says

I have a hard time reading more than a couple of poems at a time.....but I always come back....lots to think about and very dense. Her voice is powerful and she will not let up on getting you to see her truth. Love her work but can only take it in pieces. I don't know any other poet like her..

Holly Lindquist says

Some poetry is lovely, evocative and lyrical, perfect for reading aloud and drowning yourself in the taste of the words and the beauty of the imagery. Other poems are more visceral, meant to convey heavy social or political messages. Ai's poetry falls like a brick into that second category. It is a brutal glimpse of the dark side, of criminals, serial killers, victims, and forgotten people languishing in alleyways. It's the poetic equivalent of being punched in the gut. Certainly not for everyone, but well-conceived regardless.

SmarterLilac says

A solid overview of the important works from this poet.

Malik says

Christina says

Powerful, visceral, beautifully crafted and moving, but such an unremitting catalog of pain that, about

midway through, all that pain collected in me. I just couldn't continue for a time. After a weeks-long hiatus, I finally took it up again to sample the new poems at the end. Well-deserving of its National Book Award, but definitely not for everyone.
