

Jane: A Murder (Soft Skull ShortLit)

By Maggie Nelson

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Jane: A Murder (Soft Skull ShortLit) By Maggie Nelson

Jane tells the spectral story of the life and death of Maggie Nelson’s aunt Jane, who was murdered in 1969 while a first-year law student at the University of Michigan. Though officially unsolved, Jane’s murder was apparently the third in a series of seven brutal rape-murders in the area. Nelson was born a few years after Jane’s death, and the narrative is suffused with the long shadow her murder cast over both the family and her psyche.

Jane explores the nature of this haunting incident via a collage of poetry, prose, and documentary sources, including newspapers, related "true crime" books, and fragments from Jane’s own diaries written. Each piece in Jane has its own form that serves as an important fissure, disrupting the tabloid, "page-turner" quality of the story, and eventually returning the reader to deeper questions about girlhood, empathy, identification, and the essentially unknowable aspects of another’s life and death. Part elegy, part memoir, detective story, part meditation on violence, and part conversation between the living and the dead, Jane’s powerful and disturbing subject matter, combined with its innovations in genre, expands the notion of what poetry can do—what kind of stories it can tell, and how it can tell them.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Maggie Nelson is the author of nine books of poetry and prose, many of which have become cult classics defying categorization. They include the New York Times bestseller *The Argonauts*, *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*, *Bluets*, *The Red Parts: A Memoir*, *Women, the New York School, and Other True Abstractions* and *Something Bright, Then Holes*. Since 2005 she has been on the faculty of the School of Critical Studies at CalArts, where she is currently the Director of the MFA Creative Writing Program. She lives in Los Angeles.

Users Review

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George Cardenas:

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