



remembered rapture: the writer at work

By bell hooks

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With grace and insight, celebrated writer bell hooks untangles the complex personae of women writers. Born and raised in the rural South, hooks learned early the power of the written word and the importance of speaking her mind. Her passion for words is the heartbeat of this collection of essays. *Remembered Rapture* celebrates literacy, the joys of reading and writing, and the lasting power of the book. Once again, these essays reveal bell hooks's wide-ranging intellectual scope; she is a universal writer addressing readers and writers everywhere.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

African American women writers, being both black and female, face challenges that the rest of us might never have even considered. While this essay collection is ultimately a celebration of the writing life and of the writers author bell hooks (who signs her name with lower-case letters) cites as inspirational, it also illuminates the issues she and other black women writers have to contend with in their careers. Hooks has been criticized for, among other things, being incredibly prolific (she has been called "the Joyce Carol Oates of black feminist writing") and for her scope: "Black writers," says hooks, "always have difficulty gaining recognition for a body of work if anything we do is eclectic." Though hooks does take her critics to task, she is more concerned with confronting a system that seems determined to work against black women--and other minority--writers. She is critical of publishers for throwing the largest advances and promotional efforts at white male authors. She complains that "when writers from marginalized groups do work that is truly marvelous," the literary establishment is likely to see that work as a "rare exception." And she even rails against black women writers themselves, saying that "Nothing diminishes our efforts to gain a greater hearing for nonfiction by black women more than the severe dismissals of this work by black women."

Autobiography is one form of writing that hooks feels is particularly difficult for black women writers, most of whom come from families that never previously "had to think about whether a relative would write something about their lives." In fact, she says, autobiographical writing is troublesome for writers who do not "come from class backgrounds where there are rituals of public confession like psychoanalysis." As a child, says hooks, "talking openly outside the family about any aspect of family life was considered a form of treason." Now, though her family is proud of her and pleased that she has not forsaken her origins, she says, "writing about my life has created an emotional distance between me and my parents. An intimacy we once shared is gone." --Jane Steinberg

From Publishers Weekly

The 22 essays in cultural and literary critic hooks's 17th book were written over a period of 20 years and loosely trace her decision to become a writer and her metamorphosis into an academic. Together, they constitute a mixture of intellectual autobiography and manifesto on the proper living of a writer's life. Although in some essays hooks ruminates on her childhood in a working-class Southern black family, many others read like transcripts of lectures for college courses in American literature (hooks has taught at Yale, Oberlin, and the City College of New York), complete with suggested readings. She frequently analyzes her own work alongside the writing of Toni Morrison, Emily Dickinson, Lorraine Hansberry and Jamaica Kincaid. (According to hooks, Kincaid is taken more seriously by "mainstream" critics because she is not African American and because "writing by black writers who are not African-Americans tends to be seen as always more literary and therefore more valuable.") Some of the essays deal with the "politics" of publishing, the duplicity and rancorousness of academe and envy within the ranks of black writers. As always, hooks emphasizes the importance of personal and political identity to writing. Her prose is clear and she presents her arguments with a confident passion. If her politics are predictable, hooks infuses the best of these essays with a personal tone that sheds warm light on this one particular writer's writing life.

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From Library Journal

In these impassioned essays, prolific writer hooks offers the process and politics of writing with her examination of memoir, autobiography, diary writing, and poetry. At the outset she takes issue with critics who contend she writes too much, arguing that, as yet, "no woman has written enough." She goes on to focus

primarily on black female writers, showing support for those who are not published and still developing their skills. She writes of spirituality, the feminist movement, and women's studies as keys to her success as a writer and critical thinker. Finally, hooks pays tribute to her literary influences: Emily Dickinson (as she did in *Wounds of Passion*, LJ 10/1/97), Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Lorraine Hansberry. This serious look at writing by women remarkably captures their essence. Recommended for academic and literary collections.?Ann Burns, "Library Journal"

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