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Hollywood Notebook: Masterfully Raw and Intimate

Zachary Jensen · Wednesday, January 13th, 2016

Wendy C. Ortiz' first memoir, *Excavation* (Future Tense Books 2014), was a compelling book that dealt with the misuse of trust that was perpetrated when her private school teacher embarked on a relationship with her when she was only thirteen. Although she had plenty of publishing credits under her belt prior, this was her first official book, and quite the book it was. One year later, this nonfiction writer, poet, and essayist is presenting us with her latest endeavor *Hollywood Notebook*, which was published by Los Angeles based Writ Large Press in the summer of 2015.

The book, which is a memoir of sorts, chronicles Ortiz's life during her early thirties, living in Hollywood, CA, which for someone who is just entering this stage of life, I can assure you that the concept of having your life all figured out at this point is a myth, making for plenty of material to draw on. Similarly, Ortiz is dealing with the issues of trying to figure her self out, working jobs she does not necessarily enjoy, and managing her way through the trials and tribulations of love in both the sense of sabotaging it or trying to embrace it; all the while, she is trying to carve out time for her real passion of reading and writing. After only a few pages in, it is obvious just how personal the text is.

As the title hints, you will not find a "traditional" text here. The book is broken up into ninety different sections (or notebook entries) of varying length, with some being as short as a few sentences while others are two or more pages in length. Each of these snapshots takes us to a brief moment in the mind of Ortiz as she is negotiating her life. With no dates or specific current events mentioned very often, it can sometimes be hard to pinpoint the when of the situation. This is not a detriment to the narrative though, as it doesn't feel like the purpose of this text anyways.

The writing style itself is just as varied as the lengths of each entry. While some sections are written in a more traditional prose fashion, others are written in lists, poetry in various forms, stream of consciousness murmurings, and even a combination of the previously mentioned forms. All of this is done in a very diary format kind of way in both its style and sincerity.

The writing is raw and personal, yet masterfully crafted. It's as if Ortiz was working on a story that only she was meant to read. One can't help but feel almost intrusive for opening the pages and that is part of the charm. Everyone has, at one point or another, wanted to know exactly what someone else was thinking and feeling, and with *Hollywood Notebook*, we get to experience the guilty pleasure without worrying about getting caught.

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