



Feelings Are Facts

Yvonne Rainer

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If you're interested in Plato, you're reading the wrong book. If you're interested in difficult childhoods, sexual misadventures, aesthetics, cultural history, and the reasons that a club sandwich and other meals—including breakfast—have remained in the memory of the present writer, keep reading.

—from *Feelings Are Facts*

In this memoir, dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer traces her personal and artistic coming of age. *Feelings Are Facts* (the title comes from a dictum by Rainer's one-time psychotherapist) uses diary entries, letters, program notes, excerpts from film scripts, snapshots, and film frame enlargements to present a vivid portrait of an extraordinary artist and woman in postwar America.

Rainer tells of a California childhood in which she was farmed out by her parents to foster families and orphanages, of sexual and intellectual initiations in San Francisco and Berkeley, and of artistic discoveries and accomplishments in the New York City dance world. Rainer studied with Martha Graham (and heard Graham declare, "when you accept yourself as a woman, you will have turn-out"—that is, achieve proper ballet position) and Merce Cunningham in the late 1950s and early 1960s, cofounded the Judson Dance Theater in 1962 (dancing with Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, and Lucinda Childs), hobnobbed with New York artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Morris (her lover and partner for several years), and Yoko Ono, and became involved with feminist and anti-war causes in the 1970s and 1980s. Rainer writes about how she constructed her dances—including *The Mind Is a Muscle* and its famous section, *Trio A*, as well as the recent *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*—and about turning from dance to film and back to dance. And she writes about meeting her longtime partner Martha Gever and discovering the pleasures of domestic life.

The mosaic-like construction of *Feelings Are Facts* recalls the composition-by-juxtaposition of Rainer's work in film and dance, displaying prismatic variations from what she calls her "reckless past" for our amazement and appreciation.

Feelings Are Facts Details

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Maša says

If before reading this book I had a bit of a crush on Yvonne Rainer's persona, it has now blown up into love. Absolute favourite of the year!

The book is not a conventional autobiography but rather an in-depth recount of her first forty years. Through describing her life path while at the same time including works of art that inspired her or detailed descriptions the motives and processes of her own work, Yvonne Rainer reveals herself to us wholesomely and enables us to understand her and her legacy even better.

Amanda says

A gorgeously written, self-aware memoir that is in equal measures an academic text, an unstuffy psychoanalysis, and a history of cutting-edge art and dance from 1950-1980. Rainer's life is an incredibly interesting one, and her voice is so clear throughout the book. She criticizes and conceptualizes the genre of memoir enough to make it clear she is being very deliberate about structure and subject matter, but not so much that it becomes cloyingly meta. Liberal use of photographs and quotations from her own work allow someone like me, who's never experienced her artworks, to follow along regardless.

Hannah Marie says

One of the best memoirs I've ever read. She is always on-point: honest, witty, incisive. Because of Yvonne Rainer's involvement with Robert Morris & others, the book also reads as a kind of insider view of recent art history, which is fascinating.

k says

What I like about this book is, first, Yvonne--who I knew nothing about before I read this--and, second, the way she writes about the purpose and process of art (or anything a person loves--I don't dance, but things she says about dancing make me think of how I've felt about writing).

Jenny R says

A fun if tonally disjointed memoir about dance and art in '60s NYC. Rainer is conversational, open and honest. The book can't seem to decide if it wants to be in present or past tense, about family/emotional drama or the nature of an artistic life. But despite the incongruity, it's a fun, education read.

Brian says

Up until 2/3rds of the book I kept thinking, " would love to read this." Later on, the story seemed to lose steam. Certainly the end was very abrupt and felt tacked on.

The writing is very good. I would recommend it.

Mary Billyou says

A LOT of fun! like a beach read!

Rachel says

It was an interesting read, but I found it to be a bit disjointed.
Really interesting how a lot of her experiences ended up being in her films.

Cate says

beautiful and very depressing.

Tráese says

I do believe that Rainer and I were separated at birth!

Mitsuko says

I'm not so sure about this one. I was really excited because the origins of the title, and her being in therapy...family of origin themes, etc. I just couldn't finish it because of boredom.
