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Ruth Bader Ginsburg , Mary Hartnett (With) , Wendy W. Williams (With)

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The first book from Ruth Bader Ginsburg since becoming a Supreme Court Justice in 1993—a witty, engaging, serious, and playful collection of writings and speeches from the woman who has had a powerful and enduring influence on law, women’s rights, and popular culture.

My Own Words offers Justice Ginsburg on wide-ranging topics, including gender equality, the workways of the Supreme Court, being Jewish, law and lawyers in opera, and the value of looking beyond US shores when interpreting the US Constitution. Throughout her life Justice Ginsburg has been (and continues to be) a prolific writer and public speaker. This book’s sampling is selected by Justice Ginsburg and her authorized biographers Mary Hartnett and Wendy W. Williams. Justice Ginsburg has written an introduction to the book, and Hartnett and Williams introduce each chapter, giving biographical context and quotes gleaned from hundreds of interviews they have conducted. This is a fascinating glimpse into the life of one of America’s most influential women.

My Own Words Details

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Hackmops says

I am inspired and in awe. The book highlights a terrific woman, one I aspire to emulate in professionalism and skill and sheer badassery. The book is largely a collection of essays, speeches and judicial writings and it works very well to shed a light on the mind and character of the Notorious RGB. The entire volume is very well-rounded with later texts referencing earlier content, I cannot imagine the effort it must have been to create a cohesive book from the sheer wealth of available work. Published recently but in a pre-Trumpian era, it also contains a sort of optimism that I sorely needed - there will always be good people fighting for what is right and their voices will be heard. I highly recommend this.

Nicole~ says

The Interpretation of Justice

She has been called notorious, controversial, scandalous, contentious, more recently said to have "lost her mind" (quote from an empty-headed jack-o'-lantern)..but that's ok- such attributes have made her an effective trailblazer and pathmaker in her judicial career. For the words from a petite 5' 1" female frame to be heard and pondered with a degree befitting the seriousness and impartiality required of the highest court in the land, they must erupt on occasion from a volcanic core, such is the passionate belief that drives this Supreme Court Justice.

My Own Words is a composite of Justice Ginsburg's most compelling lectures, speeches, writings, positive and dissenting arguments of her decades' long career that illustrate the tough, resilient make and model of who she is today.

From a young age, she was inspired by Vladimir Nabokov, who *"changed the way I read and the way I write. Words could paint pictures, I learned from him. Choosing the right word, and the right word order, he illustrated, could make an enormous difference in conveying an image or an idea."* Becoming a lawyer in a time when women were not enthusiastically welcomed in the world of law, Ginsburg graduated from Columbia Law School in 1959, highly qualified yet struggled to gain employment in a male-centric profession. She became involved with the ACLU and developed its powerful extremity: the 'Women's Rights Project'. Eventually, she would get the opportunity to argue for gender equality under the equal protection element of the Fifth Amendment, and would masterfully litigate several of the most important women's-rights cases in the history of the Supreme Court. She cleared a path for re-examination and interpretation of gender prejudice under the Fourteenth Amendment, sealing her reputation as the foremost legal eagle on behalf of equality of the sexes.

Confirmed to the Supreme Court on August 3, 1993, Ginsburg followed Sandra Day O'Connor to become the second woman named to SCOTUS, and the first woman of Jewish heritage. She has since carried forth her advocacy for gender equality to bench decisions, earning the honorable moniker: "the Thurgood Marshall of the women's movement."

On a bench that is constantly seeking equilibrium, Ginsburg fervently weighs in against some heavy opponents. She acknowledges her bench colleague to the right with fondness, her dear friend (deceased this year), Justice Scalia: *"We are two people who are quite different in their core beliefs, but who respect each other's character and ability. There is nobody else I spend every New Year's Eve with.....Once asked how we could be friends, given our disagreement on lots of things, Justice Scalia answered: "I attack ideas. I don't attack people. Some very good people have some very bad ideas. And if you can't separate the two, you gotta get another day job. You don't want to be a judge. At least not a judge on a multi-member panel."*

How can anyone argue against that opinion?

As a matter of genuine regard for each other, Ginsburg relates that, before playing in the SCOTUS sandbox, they always begin with handshakes (no gropes allowed) - each Justice with the other. They lunch together by choice, share birthday wishes garnished with best intentions (not demonizations) and a wine toast, and traditionally welcome new members with a fancy feast. This is how mature grown-ups should play-'nice', following a model for civility and respect for one's peers - something that's strikingly and frustratingly lacking in today's campaign playground.

*We have sharp differences on certain issues—recent examples include federally mandated health insurance, affirmative action, public school desegregation plans, the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms, control of corporate spending to elect or defeat candidates for public office, access to court by detainees in Guantanamo Bay, state efforts to apprehend undocumented aliens. But through it all, we remain collegial and, most of the time, we genuinely enjoy each other's company. Ordinarily, our mutual respect is only momentarily touched by our sometimes strong disagreements on what the law is. All of us appreciate that the institution we serve is far more important than the particular individuals who compose the Court's bench at any given time...**Our charge is to pursue justice the best way we can.***

Photo courtesy Ruven Afanador for the New York Times

Ginsburg acknowledges she has achieved such success in her career by standing on the shoulders of some very courageous, inspiring women, to name a few : Belva Ann Lockwood (the first woman admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court's Bar, 1897); Simone de Beauvoir, whose 1949 groundbreaking philosophical treatise, *The Second Sex* sparked the resurgence of a feminist movement in the USA in the 1960's; Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, her colleague and fellow subject of the dual -biography *Sisters In Law*; Gloria Steinem, the iconic feminist persona of the women's liberation movement for half a century.

My Own Words is a highly enlightening education that demonstrates the importance of a well- balanced SCOTUS that will address, redefine and evolve an 18th century Constitution with fair interpretation as our society and perspectives on life and humanity modernize and progress into the 21st century and beyond. My only dissent on this compilation is for the audiobook version which, upon listening to RBG painfully stumble over, and pause lengthily between, the words of her own speeches, made me conclude that a preceding nap would have served her "bigly."

At eighty-three years old, a cancer survivor and recently recovered from surgery for a coronary blockage, the notorious RBG has no plans to retire. Presently she stands with 2 other female Justices: Justice Sonia Sotomayer and Justice Elena Kagan. She has been asked when she thinks there will be enough women on the Court, to which she replies, with a mischievous gleam, **"when there are nine."**

Quite a provocative position to envision for the bench!

Lisa Montanaro says

Fascinating memoir/biography about the incomparable Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I thought I knew a decent amount about her but this book made me realize how little I really did. My knowledge of her just scratched the surface. I am in awe of her... as a person, lawyer, professor, wife, colleague, friend, trailblazer, researcher, feminist, and jurist. The body of work that she has contributed to our society, our law schools, our courts and our world is astounding. And she does it all with calm, grace, humor and an uncanny intellect.

I think this book appealed to me more than the average person as I'm a female lawyer that was obsessed with constitutional law during law school and in the decade that I practiced law. It is a dense book filled with select lectures, speeches, hearings and writings of Bader Ginsburg. It may be a bit too detailed for some reader's taste. But it is a rare treat to be able to go so deep into one person's body of work while she remains a member of the court. At 83 years old, Bader Ginsburg is still going. And I for one will be forever grateful that she rose to the level of Supreme Court Justice. What a legacy she will leave us! She is now one of my new personal and professional heroes.

From one opera lover to another... Brava Ginsburg!

Jean says

I heard an interview with Justice Ginsburg about her new book. Justice Ginsburg stated it was a collection of her writings and speeches since she was in the eighth grade. I have read a great deal by and about Justice Ginsburg over the years so was familiar with most of the material presented. Mary Hartnett and Wendy Williams of the Georgetown Law Center are writing Ginsburg's official biography which will not be released until after she leaves the Court. They wrote the opening introduction and an introduction to each chapter which including some of the materials they acquired from interviews while preparing the biography. This provides a bit more informative insights to the book.

Ginsburg discussed her relationship with Sandra Day O'Connor. She says O'Connor told her to "waste no time on anger, regret or resentment, just get the job done". She says that Antonin Scalia told her to "learn to attack ideas, not people." In reviewing her papers Ginsburg was an appellate attorney who specialized in gender equality and was a law professor.

She also talks about being Jewish and her enjoyment of the opera. She discusses, of course, gender equality and various topics all the way to how the Supreme Court works. She says she was happy she has lived long enough to see that half the students today in law school are women and 1/3 of the Federal Judges are women. As a history buff, I found it most interesting that she devoted considerable time discussing the history of the women pioneers in law as well as the wives of some of the Supreme Court Justices. This is a worthwhile read. This book works great in audio format as we can listen to Justice Ginsburg give her speeches.

I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. Linda Lavin does a good job narrating the book. Lavin is an award winning Broadway singer/actress and audiobook narrator.

Conor says

It's not an exaggeration to say that I fear the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg more than I do nuclear war. I feel like the country could possibly recover from the latter, but I'm really not sure about the former. This says a lot about the character of the Court in modern times--its politicization, the wisdom of having life tenure, the desecration of Gorsuch's confirmation, and not a small bit about how lucky we are to have such a brilliant, pioneering, charming person anchoring the liberal wing of the Constitution. But let's focus on her life and not her death, shall we?

This book isn't the biography I had hoped for: it's a pastiche of opinions, speeches, op-eds, and a smattering of life details, not really in the proportions I wanted. But it's probably the easiest way to slap together a biography-manque when your cultural profile is at its zenith.

Ruth is a champion of women, and she has shaped all of our lives thereby. But she shaped mine in a special way. My first job after law school was at the Women's Rights Project of the ACLU, which she founded way back when. The Women's Rights Project still exists, and my fellowship allowed me to fight discrimination against pregnant women in the workplace (and men! Side note: RBG had the amazing foresight to understand that women won't be equal in the workplace or society until we stop seeing pregnancy/reproductive discrimination as a "women's issue" and sought to represent men/fathers thereby. Notably, she is very good about attributing political victories and changes in opinion to women *and* men. I think this is important, not because men deserve to be thanked in the same breath as women but because men's egos--especially those of allies!--are often quite fragile and it's easier to laud than worry about salving a spurned ego). Impact litigation wasn't for me, but I admire and respect the hell out of what they do there, and while I was reading this I even referred a client there who had been fired the day after announcing a pregnancy--this is still happening in 2018 in California, so one not only wonders how much further we have to go, but where we might be without the trailblazing of incomparable warriors like RBG.

Aside from her raw, awesome intelligence, what comes across so clearly in this book is RBG's humanity. She seems like a genuinely kind person, thankful for her blessings and still passionate about the people on behalf of whom she takes up legal battles. I wish I possessed her hope that recent disturbing judicial trends were just blips, or that the Court can remain a bulwark against the political pathologies of the Executive and Legislative branches... but as long as she's alive there's hope!

Jen says

This book gives samples of RBG's writing- from 8th grade, court cases, lectures, opinions and dissents. I adored her before reading this, but this reading has garnered even more respect and admiration after reading her relentless work. She is brilliant, thought provoking, and grounded. Added benefit: my vocabulary expanded tenfold. :)

Jean says

When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been asked when there will be enough women on the Supreme Court, her eyes twinkle as she responds, "My answer is, when there are nine."

My Own Words is much more than a biography or a memoir. It is also a collection of lectures, writings, and Court decisions by one of only four female justices in the history of the United States Supreme Court. I didn't find it to be an easy read, even though it is not filled with difficult legal language. It does contain weighty, substantial stuff, and I often found myself re-reading paragraphs, even whole pages, to understand their importance. I didn't breeze through this book. I took my time and balanced it out by reading other novels concurrently. I never once considered setting it aside, however. Justice Ginsburg impressed me first of all from early childhood with her intelligence and her desire to learn and to make a difference. The more I read of her speeches and opinions, the more awed I was of her wisdom, her practicality, and her passion.

Born into a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York, in 1933, Joan Ruth Bader learned about prejudice at an early age. World War II brought with it the realities of Hitler's terrible hate crimes. Her mother died of cancer just before her high school graduation, which Ruth did not attend. She went on to attend Cornell University, where she met her future husband, Martin Ginsburg on a blind date. Not long after graduation, she and Marty were married. (He died in 2010.) The couple had a daughter and a son. Ginsburg's trailblazing did not begin with SCOTUS. When she was admitted to Harvard Law School in 1956, she was 1 of 9 women in a class of 500, and two years later, she was 1 of 12 women in her Columbia Law School class and she graduated first in her class. She taught as a professor of law at Rutgers and later at Columbia University; she pioneered courses in gender equality, which later proved to be a mainstay in her judicial career. Some called her the "Thurgood Marshall" of the women's movement. But she has stood up not just for women's equality, but for men also. She partnered with husband Marty, a tax attorney, argue a case for fair treatment for a husband in an IRS case. Some twenty years later, in 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, and in 1993, at the age of 60, she was picked by President Bill Clinton for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ginsburg recalls a very charming story about meeting President Clinton prior to being confirmed. It seems they were each impressed with the other. Clinton is quoted as saying, "Every judge needs to have both the intellectual capacity to deal with the incredible variety and complexity of the issues and an instinctive and immediate understanding of the human implications of the decisions being made...it was way more than just an intellectual concern of hers. She got the actual human impact of these decisions." The Senate Judiciary Committee confirmed her with a vote of 18-0, and the Senate voted 96-3 to confirm her as the second female Supreme Court Justice. I couldn't help but wonder if we will ever see that kind of vote again.

Ginsburg speaks to both style and substance on the bench. Over the course of her tenure on the bench, Justice Ginsburg has proven herself to be fair, to have diligent work habits, and to have a very human side. Her approach to the Constitution is that it is a living document. She also favors harmony and cooperation among members of the court because this encourages better decisions and also enhances public respect. I am amazed at her friendship with Justice Antonin Scalia, a man whose interpretation of the Constitution is the polar opposite of hers. When they would differ on an opinion, he would urge her to let it go, to basically leave it at the office. They shared a love of opera, an appreciation so great that a one-act comic opera was written about the two. Ginsburg was deeply saddened by Scalia's death last year. Of note, she quotes other Justices, historically and in recent times, but she makes very few personal comments regarding others she's served with on the Court.

Regarding substance, she says judges "play an interdependent part in democracy, participating in 'a dialogue with other organizations of government, and with the people as well.'"

In the later chapters that reveal her decisions, both majority and dissent, Ginsburg continually expresses her strong beliefs in equality of all people, regardless of race, religion, or gender. She points to cases that preceded her time on the Court, such as *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, *Brown v. The Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade*, and she makes numerous references to Title VII, which was the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

I learned so much! One of my favorite tidbits was the value of the dissenting opinion, which comes from Chief Justice Hughes in 1936: "A dissent in a court of last resort is an appeal...to the intelligence of a future day, when a later decision may possibly correct the error into which the dissenting judge believes the court to have betrayed." Justice Ginsburg has proven herself to be both outspoken and sensible when authoring the dissenting decision.

My Own Words is one justice's experiences on the Supreme Court. We get a small sampling of her childhood, education, and pre-court career. She gives us a history lesson, too, about some of the early traditions of the Court. But the real value lies in what Ginsburg tells us about herself – her values, her ideals, her interpretation of the law. She is a woman of passion and compassion – passion for the law, compassion for those who need justice. She has intelligence, energy, and wit. It is no wonder that she is much loved, sort of a cultural idol. I laughed out loud when I read about the preschoolers from a synagogue in Texas who named their pet fish "Ruth Beta Ginsburg." That sounds like a pretty high honor to me!

4 stars

Alison Tyne says

Well, I gave it a good old try. Tried to read it three separate times, both in book form and via audiobook, and couldn't get more than halfway through. Considering this book read. I'll just wait for the memoir.

James says

Let's start with the common sense of Justice Scalia, "I attack ideas. I don't attack people. Some very good people have some very bad ideas. And if you can't separate the two, you gotta get another day job" (41). My next step is the Scalia/Ginsburg: A (Gentile) Parody of Operatic Proportion. While in law school, the composer Derrick Wong heard music while studying the Supreme Court opinions entitled "Scalia J Dissenting." Unfortunately, my thoroughly enjoyable read of these initial pages of her memoir slid downward inversely with the rise of judicial presentations of support on one side or the other. Overall, legal eagles will appreciate My Own Words more than I.

Daniel Chaikin says

I got about 2/3 through on audio (over 8 of 13 hours). It was worth the time I put into it, but there were large sections that were essentially repetitive or that didn't add much and that weren't necessary that interesting the first time. So, I decided to move on to another book.

Ginsburg is very interested in women's rights and in women becoming a growing part of the legal field and of the judges. She sees her life where the country went from having almost no female judges to having three on the supreme court (about 1/3 of all judges are women) as sign of progress.

From the basis of her speeches and writings, I'm kind of left with the impression that she keeps things simple. That may be an aspect of the presentation. She is brief, clear and to the point, and this is precisely

what she values in a judge.

Among the oddities here was her very close friendship with Antonin Scalia, who was, of course, diametrically opposed to her ideologically. It was also interesting to get a little insight into what Bill Clinton liked about her when he nominated her. He chose her after going through and discarding many other names. His intuition seems to have played a significant part.

Vanessa says

Absolutely phenomenal. Inspiring and life affirming for a girl who chose to pursue the law as not only her career but her life calling. Many many great speeches and decisions in here from Ruth that really showcase what groundbreaking justice she has been and will continue to be.

Heather says

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is an American hero. Not only is she brilliant, she's also very good at expressing her views and explaining legal issues in terms everyone can understand. This book is a fascinating overview of her important work as a professor, lawyer, judge, and Supreme Court justice, particularly her advocacy of gender equality and civil rights.

Carolyn says

A balm. Especially recommending the audiobook...you get to hear RBG speak!

Kelsey Manahan says

I cannot express how much I loved this work. The closest I can get is when I die I'd like to be buried with this book. Despite the fact that she's been around & doing extremely important work for decades, Ruth Bader Ginsburg has only recently become this huge cultural icon, which I can't complain about. Which explains why it seems there's a bit of disappointment with this work; rather than a straight up biography it's a collection of her writings from the 8th grade up until July of this year that frame the timeline of her life and career. I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed the work as it is, a biography of Justice Ginsburg the jurist. I doubt we'll ever see a full autobiography from her, it doesn't seem like something she's interested in, which is okay.

I thought the sections where she discussed the day to day in the life of the court ("Workways of the Supreme Court" and "The Lighter Side of Life at the Supreme Court" in particular) were absolutely fascinating. I feel that we rarely hear about her early work in the gender equality movement (also, there's a really good tidbit about why she uses "gender discrimination" instead of "sex discrimination") so learning more about her work on *Reed v. Reed*, *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, *Frontiero v. Richardson* was of great interest to me. Her perspective of the history of the court & the legal field as a whole in respect to women made up of some of the best parts of this book ("Belva Lockwood", "Women's Progress at the Bar and on the Bench", "Three Brave Jewish Women", "Remembering the Great Ladies: Supreme Court Wives' Stories"). I feel like I have

to add here that you shouldn't be afraid of being bogged down by legal jargon in these writings, they read extremely well and are really a delight to read.

So, in sum, if you're interested in a detailed biography of Ruth Bader Ginsburg you'll most likely be out of luck for the time being. If you're interested in looking at the career of one of the most admirable women and jurists of our time through her writing, please go read this book because it is so so so good.

Una Tiers says

As a long time fan of Justice Ginsburg, I enjoyed much of this book. Who knew she was a supernumerary in operas and that she and another justice wrote one.

Her accomplishments are almost alarming. Highly recommended, but if parts don't suit, skip because there are treasures within.

Jayme says

I think it is a great concept, but I would've preferred more of a biographical style. Legal decisions don't make for a quick read, though it was worthwhile.

Feisty Harriet says

I waffled between 3 and 4 stars, this is not the memoir I was hoping for. It is, instead, a collection of writings, briefs, official SCOTUS opinions, and transcripts of speeches from RBG throughout her professional life, with a little biographical information in the chapter headings and a few pages of photos. Some of the writing is fairly dense, official opinions and briefs from the Supreme Court are not exactly light reading. The span of RBG's career is covered, her work at the ACLU and her methodical and carefully planned assault on gender discrimination laws in the United States. It's all there, but it is there in very official and professional terms and writing. A few of the speeches and addresses are a little less formal, especially the few excerpts from people who worked with and for RBG, notably her husband who contributes a few fabulous remarks, and President Clinton, who nominated RBG to SCOTUS in 1993.

To date, the book I've liked best about Ruth Bader Ginsburg is "Notorious RBG" by Irin Carmen and Shana Knizhnik (but my next is specifically about her time fighting for women's rights at the ACLU...so that is probably going to be a solid contender).

Matt says

Biographies of strong women are greatly appealing to me, which led me to acquire and commence this book by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, supported (and likely guided) by Mary Hartnett and Wendy W. Williams. It was only after I began reading that I realised that I was again not receiving a memoir or biography, but a

compendium of thoughts and reflections by a female Justice of the US Supreme Court, known in the vernacular as the Notorious RBG. The reader attentive to my reviews will likely shake a shameful finger at me for not checking ahead of time, as I fell into the same pit when I tried a recently read by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Still, in pushing through this collection by Justice Ginsburg, I found myself pleasantly surprised and felt that these entries did provide a biographical account of her life, as well as some key moments in her judicial career. Hartnett and Williams did a masterful job of pulling things together and have, as is pledged in the preface, commenced work on an actual biography of Justice Ginsburg. A great piece to complement my earlier read of the aforementioned Justice O'Connor book, which provides strong arguments for equality and gender parity in America, as well as showing how legal matters are a quintessential part of the everyday lives of those who live in democratic countries. Curious and legal-minded readers will likely enjoy this piece as they take Justice Ginsburg's own words to portray the state of American (and world) jurisprudence into account.

Born to a Jewish family in Brooklyn, Ruth Bader became highly interested in the law at an early age, or perhaps the idea of equality, watching news of the Second World War fill headlines on a daily basis. The book offers a brief biographical background before presenting some public school publications the precocious Bader prepared, discussing the importance of the Rule of Law and how it promotes equality for all. Moving onto university and into law school, Bader (who would marry and become Ginsburg) showed her aptitude not only for equality, but promoted the idea of sex and gender parity in the United States. Attending law school at a time when she was still in the significant minority (both for her being a woman and Jewish), Ginsburg forged onwards and left with no job offers, even though she achieved high marks and showed great promise. Serving as an academic, Ginsburg fought tirelessly to put women on the map and promoted their equal protection under the law, as guaranteed in the US Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, though she was sometimes forced to wage war against the Almighty Congress and its many laws. Hartnett and Williams exemplify Ginsburg's views in many speeches and summaries of key cases she fought, some reaching the Supreme Court, while never giving up in her attempt to push for complete equality amongst those who sought remedy. When elevated to the US Court of Appeal for the DC Circuit, Ginsburg took a different approach, defending the rights rather than advocating for them in numerous decisions (and dissents) from the bench. It was here that she met and fostered an early friendship with Judge Antonin Scalia (Nino), who may have been diametrically opposed to her ideological stance, but respected her a great deal. Their friendship continued through the years and the ideological clash resumed when Ginsburg became a Supreme Court Justice in 1993. The authors show how Ginsburg supports the varied sentiments of Justices on the Court, but remains firm of the collegial nature of the nine on a daily basis. Dipping into the appointment process to become a Justice of the Court, Ginsburg recounts the nervousness she felt and the smooth sailing she received at the hands of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Once on the bench, she began the role as junior Justice, guided by Justice O'Connor, who had paved the way for much success and injected that fresh perspective on the bench and in chambers. From there, Ginsburg schools the reader on some of the many quirks of the Court, including its procedures and its place in the larger international realm of judicial interpretation. Ginsburg does not seek to knife anyone in the back, but she does not deny the ideological divisions on the Court throughout her tenure that have pushed interpretations in many directions, including in the areas of abortion, affirmative action, campaign spending, and healthcare. The latter portion of the book focusses on some key dissenting opinions, particularly since the Roberts Court came to fruition, and she, Ginsburg, became the senior 'liberal' justice. Ideal for those who want a sneak peek into what might be to come in the biography, Hartnett and Williams provide the reader with a highly comprehensive piece that offers a wonderful examination of the life and legal thoughts of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

I feel that I can justify this piece as part of the biography marathon I am undertaking, as there is a degree of wholeness to its narrative. Using speeches and comments made directly by the Justice, Hartnett and Williams paint the most honest and comprehensive view of the legal flavour of Ginsburg's thought processes. While it

is impossible to offer a complete view, the cross-section on offer and the variety of topics provide the reader with a great insight into this most interesting woman. However, as some others have brought to my attention, while the book is well constructed, repetition occurs and proves somewhat of a thorn in the side of effective flow. Speeches from an early chapter prove to have the same ideas and quotes embedded in later narratives. Some cases receive the same stress throughout the book, leaving the reader to ponder skimming to get to new and meatier subjects. That said, the impact is felt and the overall presentation is thoroughly captivating and sound in its foundational approach.

While I do not usually do this, I could not deny myself the right to comment on the different formats of the book. I listened to the audio version and thoroughly enjoyed it. What added to the experience was that the speeches and actual verbal delivery moments were captured, where possible, within the recording. Justice Ginsburg speaking to a group, delivering a dissent, or even offering a bench opinion. These 'real life' moments thickened the delivery and made it all the more powerful. I suspect that simply reading them on the written page might lessen the impact or leave the reader feeling out of touch with the delivery. The book is called MY OWN WORDS, so why not capture that by listening and hearing them as they came to pass?

Kudos, Madams Hartnett and Williams (alongside Justice Ginsburg herself) for this insightful piece. I cannot wait for the full biography to see more of your sentiments. Recent clashes with certain candidates and eventual victors will certainly add more spice and flavour to what you have already said.

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com>

Jessica says

I can't believe I'm going to say this, but I'm kind of disappointed. I don't think I'm going to rate it at all because my disappointment primarily stems from the fact that I expected this to be an actual memoir when it's really a collection of old writing and speeches, edited and introduced by official biographers. It's interesting enough, but I didn't get as much from it as I wanted because it was significantly less personal than I expected.

BrokenTune says

Before you start throwing things at me for giving this book such a low rating, let me make one thing very clear: The two stars are no reflection on Ruth Bader Ginsburg's writings or thoughts. If there was any reason I devoured this book, it is because I quickly became a fan of RBG when reading about her broad-mindedness and her passion for equality and her efforts to bring both into the shaping US jurisprudence. I would love to read more about her and her legal opinions, but not in this book.

This book, My Own Words, not exactly what the title promised. My Own Words was not as I expected a book written by RBG, but was merely a collection of articles about her, speeches by her, and some legal options that were superficially annotated by two other authors. This resulted in a hodge-podge of pieces that at times had no train of thought -especially the beginning of the book.

It took about 80 pages to get to a part of the book that presented RBG's involvement in matters of law, which

is the part I was most interested in reading about. Yet, even once the book got going (so to speak), the structure of the book would not allow to develop a point or to give enough information to fully understand what was being commented on in the excerpts of RBG's speeches or opinions.

Especially in the instances where the book presented RBG's opinions on judgments, the book was disappointing in that the annotation tried to summarise cases but often failed to present the legal arguments that were being debated. So, when the book presented RBG's words on the matter, it often read like an opinion that had no relevance because it seemed to be an answer to which there was no question.

I had to research some of the cases to fill in the missing background, and this is something that I would have expected that the book would provide. I am no stranger to reading case law, some of which can be convoluted, but I would rather read the actual judgments and corresponding law reports than this book.
