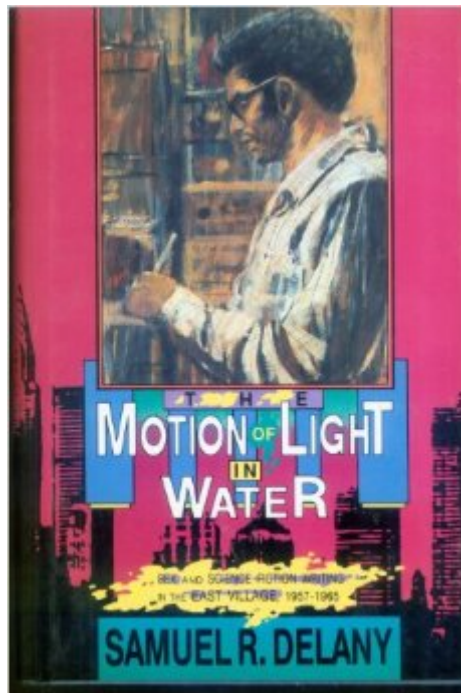


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The Motion Of Light In Water: Sex And Science Fiction Writing In The East Village, 1957-1965



Synopsis

Book by Delany, Samuel R.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This memoir of an important time in the life of Delany has a vivid sense of life being lived I find remarkable. I have read it half a dozen times over the years, not because I have all that much in common with Delany, because I don't, but because the very best memoirs share a quality of time passing, of the simple human desires to love and be loved and make something valuable of one's time. I see this memoir grouped with those of other African-American writers, or gay writers, or science fiction writers, and it's startling how this 'progressive' identification of human individuals with their groups comes off as some scifi nightmare world's typing of individuals by characteristics which are ultimately of limited use. Would someone who enjoys the work of Alice Walker enjoy this book because of Delany's skin tone? I think someone who enjoys Jack Kerouac would enjoy this book, not because Delany has much in common with Kerouac but because both were people who lived their lives outside the norm and who didn't try to tell others how to live and did their own things. That seems far more important when trying to categorize Delany than the gender of partner he prefers. I've gone off but not on a tangent, because that's the essence of this book. Delany doesn't whine, doesn't list every wrong by every PC villain, but he isn't wishy washy about the life he led. Yet it was a joyful life, from glancing encounters with Bob Dylan and Albert Einstein, to a more substantial relationship with W.H. Auden. Delany's wife, poet Marilyn Hacker, is there on almost every page, and she comes across as very much her own person. There is a touch of sadness

about their marriage, a sense that it will not last (something that could be said of some? most?)

Admittedly I went into "Motion of Light in Water" not knowing what to expect, and I would reason that is the case for most readers. Having read Patti Smith's transcendent *Just Kids* I somehow thought that "Motion.." would give me more insight into what it was like to live in NYC's bohemian communities back in the 1960s, which it certainly does to varying degrees. Smith came along a few years after Delany and much of what they relay here is the same...NYC was a much smaller, more community based place then, and it was surprisingly easy to meet and get to know luminaries like W. H. Auden, Albert Einstein, and others in Delany's case. Delany accepts but also questions labels that were appropriate for that era...black, gay, dyslexic, and others, that most people today would reject in favor of inclusiveness, but this is a recollection of an earlier time and place, hence more appropriate. What I found myself pondering here is the confusion people may feel entering into this realm as they likely came here for different reasons. Fans of Delany's science fiction wanting likely will read this wanting more insight into his growth and development as an author as well as the sources of his inspiration. Many of them may be put off by his recollections of his mildly graphic homosexual encounters, but perhaps not. LGBT readers hoping for insight into an under-recognized pre-Stonewall part of the community may find themselves bored with the passages relating to his science fiction work or disturbed by his promiscuous nature at the time. Indeed there is almost sort of a "Mad Men" era to everything here.

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