



On Strike Against God

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Joanna Russ's *On Strike Against God* is remarkable for its deft intertwining of many themes: not only the overt one of coming out, but many intricately (and inevitably) interlaced stories of alienation, a search for community and rebellion against how our society defines women.

On Strike Against God Details

Date : Published October 1st 1985 by Crossing Press (first published 1980)

ISBN : 9780895941862

Author : Joanna Russ

Format : Paperback 107 pages

Genre : Feminism, Fiction, Lgbt, Glbt, Queer, Lesbian, Womens, Science Fiction

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From Reader Review On Strike Against God for online ebook

Mely says

Reread 5/1/11. The sexy bits are amazingly sensual. I used to think Hugh and Ellen were disguised versions of Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm, I'm not sure why. Maybe because they were the only long-married writing-instructor pair I'd heard of? Does getting up at 4am to write show up in Wilhelm's memoir? Can't remember.

Abilouise says

I loved this book so hard! The first few pages were a little rough going, but like reading any Joanna Russ fiction, once I'm into it, her writing is some of my favorite. This was knowledgeable and sexy and angry and original, and how often do you get to say that about a romantic lesbian story you find at the library?

Adam says

Certainly not the usual sort of thing I read, but nevertheless I enjoyed it. Stridently feminist while being touching and funny at the same time. I could whine about the lack of any positive male characters, but the author has little time for "middle class white men who suffer." :-)

Jonathan Scotese says

I'd rate it lower, but it has some insightful bits and I am not the target audience.

The story just seemed very bland. An observant, feminist, lesbian with a strong imagination finds love, but life is complicated. For most of it I heavily identified with Esther, thinking that if she was closer to how I'd be if I was a woman than anything else I've read, but then the violent fantasies disabused me of that notion.

Still reading Russ, but bit by bit becoming convinced her value comes from literary criticism and not her actual stories. "How to suppress women's writing" is amazing, but everything else so far seems more interesting than good.

It could be that I am super wrong and this is working on multiple levels, that I am missing too much by lacking context and not reading deeply enough.

Sarahjane says

If even a tiny bit of you is still utopian, read Joanna Russ. If even a tiny bit of you is still afraid, Read Joanna Russ. Read Joanna Russ.

Jonathan says

Very good. A kind of transitional 2nd-3rd wave feminist love story of sorts, very well written. What critiques I might have of her stance some 30 years after the fact are pretty much irrelevant.

"Oh, Esther, I don't want to be a feminist. I don't enjoy it. It's no fun."

"I know," I said. "I don't either." People think you decide to be "radical," for God's sake, like deciding to be a librarian or a ship's chandler. You "make up your mind," you "commit yourself." (Sounds like a mental hospital, doesn't it?)

I said, "Don't worry, we could be buried together and have engraved on our tombstone the awful truth, which some day somebody will understand:

WE WUZ PUSHED." (37)

"What did we talk about?

I don't remember. We talked so hard and sat so still that I got cramps in my knee. We had too many cups of tea and then didn't want to leave the table to go to the bathroom because we didn't want to stop talking. You will think we talked of revolution but we didn't. Nor did we talk of our own souls. Nor of sewing. Nor of babies. Nor of departmental intrigue. It was political if by politics you mean the laboratory talk that characters in bad movies are perpetually trying to convey (unsuccessfully) when they Wrinkle Their Wee Brows and say (valiantly--dutifully--after all, they didn't write it) "But, Doctor, doesn't that violate Finagle's Constant?" I staggered to the bathroom, released floods of tea, and returned to the kitchen to talk. It was professional talk. It left me grey-faced and with such concentration that I began to develop a headache. We talked about Mary Ann Evans' loss of faith, about Emily Brontë's isolation, about Charlotte Brontë's blinding cloud, about the split in Virginia Woolf's head and the split in her economic condition. We talked about Lady Murasaki, who wrote in a form that no respectable man would touch, Hroswit, a little name whose plays "may perhaps amuse myself," Miss Austen, who had no more expression in society than a firescreen or a poker. They did not all write letters, write memoirs, or go on the stage. Sappho--only an ambiguous, somewhat disagreeable name. Corinna? The teacher of Pindar. Olive Schriener, growing up on the veldt, wrote one book, married happily, and ever wrote another. Kate Chopin wrote a scandalous book and never wrote another. (Jean has written nothing.). There was M-ry Sh-ll-y who wrote you know what and Ch-rl-tt-P-rk-ns G-lm-an, who wrote one superb horror study and lots of sludge (was it sludge?) and Ph-ll-s Wh--tl-y who was black and wrote eighteenth century odes (but it was the eighteenth century) and Mrs. -nn R-dcl-ff-S-thw-rth and Mrs. G--rg- Sh-ld-n and (Miss?) G--rg-tt- H-y-r and B-rb-r- C-rtl-nd and the legion of those, who writing, write not, like the dead Miss B--l-y of the poem who was seduced into bad practices (fudging her endings) and hanged herself in her garter. The sun was going down. I was blind and stiff. It's at this point that the computer (which has run amok and eaten Los Angeles) is defeated by some scientifically transcendent version of pulling the plug; the furniture stood around unknowing (though we had just pulled out the plug) and Lady, who got restless when people talked at such length because she couldn't understand

it, stuck her head out from under the couch, looking for things to herd. We had talked for six hours, from one in the afternoon until seven; I had at that moment an impression of our act of creation so strong, so sharp, so extraordinarily vivid, that I could not believe all our talking hadn't led to something more tangible--mightn't you expect at least a little blue pyramid sitting in the middle of the floor?"

"That not all men are piggy, only some; that not all men belittle me, only some; that not all men get mad if you won't let them play Chivalry, only some; that not all men write books in which women are idiots, only most; that not all men pull rank on me, only some; that not all men pinch their secretaries' asses, only some; that not all men make obscene remarks to me in the street, only some; that not all men make more money than I do, only some; that not all men make more money than all women, only most; that not all men are rapists, only some; that not all men are promiscuous killers, only some; that not all men control Congress, the Presidency, the police, the army, industry, agriculture, law, science, medicine, architecture, and local government, only some.

I sat down on the lawn and wept." (32-33)

Charlene says

To-read for this quotation:

"Oh, Esther, I don't want to be a feminist. I don't enjoy it. It's no fun."

"I know," I said. "I don't either." People think you decide to be "radical," for God's sake, like deciding to be a librarian or a ship's chandler. You "make up your mind," you "commit yourself." (Sounds like a mental hospital, doesn't it?)

I said, "Don't worry, we could be buried together and have engraved on our tombstone the awful truth, which some day somebody will understand:

WE WUZ PUSHED." (37)

l. says

Back and forth on this one between four and five stars. The way she uses civil rights movement to talk about women's lib is annoying but it's such a smart, sharp book w a lesbian heroine

Xandra says

I found in this book, for the first time in my life, an accurate description of an aspect of my childhood I had been afraid of because I didn't understand it until I found it in this book.

Fishface says

A memoir-cum-manifesto of women's liberation as experienced by Joanna Russ.

Moir Russell says

One of the best books I've ever read.

Pamster says

I am so frustrated by not taking note of, or action on, this at the time, but I read something the other day that referenced something being "catty," in a "second wave feminist" way. What the fuck. How can I not remember where I read something so appalling? This book is Joanna Russ's only non-sci fi novel. It's subtitled, in some places, "A Lesbian Love Story," which it both is and isn't. It is a lesbian love story, a coming out story, and a look inside the mind of a brilliant second wave feminist who is really fucking angry and funny. And it is so relatable to me in so many parts, just trying to be out socially and going fucking nuts inside your head about every single sickening dynamic and then having the choose whether or not to "ruin" everyone's "good time" by talking about those dynamics. And all that kind of bullshit. And she's funny funny funny. And I read a bit of criticism about how this book works as an alternative to the 2 stories that are always told about women, we either Find Love or Go Mad. And both are themes referenced throughout, played with, and then a third way is found. Loved it. I've loved 2 of her SF novels that Tish loaned me, loved this, and will be reading all her stuff. How the fuck is this out of print? And how the fuck has second wave feminism gotten such a bad name, beyond legit criticism to referencing it as a TYPE OF "CATTINESS?" This book was so relatable and made me think how much we need to keep reading this stuff, and what a crime it is to have this propaganda infiltrate the popular imagination, propaganda that serves to separates us from our very recent history and make us think it's boring or yucky to read 1970s/80s feminist stuff. YAY JOANNA RUSS.

dara says

This book might deserve more time than I gave it, but I was enjoying myself so I breezed through it. I was reading for pleasure, in any event, and didn't feel up to academic-like scrutinizing. I enjoyed the inner dialogue and feminist frustration. I even laughed aloud several times. How sad though that I can sympathize so much with the protagonist's plight 26+ years later. So much for women's progress.

