



Debra Ginsberg

About My Sisters
ISBN13: 9780060522032

Q: In *About My Sisters*, sometimes it appears you feel like the "other" with your sisters. Do you think that is because you are the oldest? Or because all writers feel a little bit on the outside?

A: I think my position as the eldest child has a lot to do with my occasionally feeling removed from my sisters, but a greater factor in this "otherness" is the fact that I am the only sister who has a child. All of the choices I make now—the way I plan for my future—are affected by my son and what I feel is best for him. Although my sisters are very close to my son, we don't share that experience of motherhood and that does set us apart.

Q: You have written three memoirs. Why do you prefer this literary form over others, such as fiction? Do you also write fiction, poetry, or other types of writing? If so, how is that experience different from memoir?

A: Before the publication of my first book, I thought of myself as a fiction writer. However, memoir is a very natural, comfortable form for me and, in one form or another, I've been writing it all my life. I've written two unpublished novels and have just completed a third, which will be published. The experience of writing fiction is both easier and more difficult than writing memoir. There is a certain freedom that comes with being able to imagine and create fictional plots and characters and not having to worry about whether I'm going to offend anyone or misrepresent the events I'm writing about. In that way, writing fiction is easier. However, when I'm writing memoir, the stories and characters are already there—in effect, the outline is already written. For me, memoir draws from observation and fiction from imagination. Both require creativity, but that creativity comes from different sources.

Q: How has the publication of this book affected your relationships with your sisters?

A: Right before publication, my sisters suddenly became nervous about what I was writing and decided that maybe a book about them wasn't such a great idea. Of course, by then it was too late. Maya has read the entire book and is comfortable with what I've written. Lavender has decided that it would be better for her not to read it and Déja has read bits and pieces. They've all heard feedback from friends who've read and enjoyed the book so they're happy about that. Our relationships have remained unaffected for the most part, but they have made me promise that I won't write about them again.

Q: Was the subject matter of *About My Sisters* more difficult or easier to write about than your other books? Why?

A: *About My Sisters* was the most difficult of the three memoirs to write. Part of the reason for this was that there was no clear structure in place. I didn't know how to convey the essence of our lives and all of our separate relationships without having a really fragmented, chaotic narrative. It took a long time to come up with a unifying structure for the book. What also made the writing difficult was the fact that I was writing about my relationships with my sisters in real time—as those relationships were growing and changing—so it was challenging to remain authentic both with my sisters and on the page, to just let the relationships be while I was in the process of interpreting them.

Q: How is your driving these days?

A: Unfortunately, my driving muse, Déja, got very busy in the middle of our lessons so we let them slide, and now I haven't been behind the wheel for over a year. This is one roadblock (to use a handy driving metaphor) that I just haven't been able to steer around.