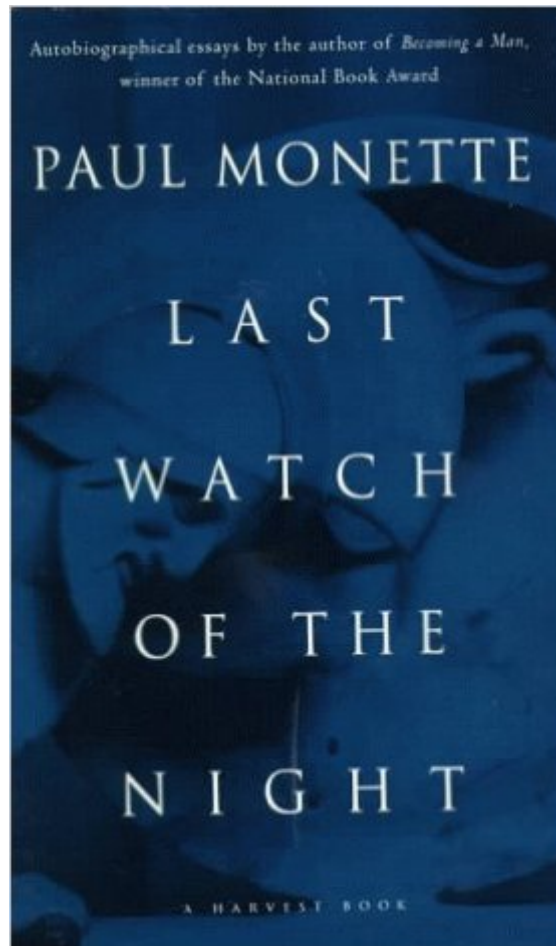


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Last Watch Of The Night: Essays Too Personal And Otherwise



Synopsis

With *Borrowed Time* and *Becoming a Man*-the 1992 National Book Award winner for nonfiction-this collection completes Paul Monette's autobiographical writing. Brimming with outrage yet tender, this is a remarkable book • (Philadelphia Inquirer).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Last Watch of the Night" gets unjustly forgotten in the light of Monette's more famous "Borrowed Time" and "Becoming a Man," but this collection of essays is a better book than either of them. This is what should have been up for the National Book Award, not "Becoming a Man." The flaws in the book: some of the essays, especially near the end, seem to drift, and are not particularly engaging. These include the soporific "Sleeping Under a Tree." Also, Monette's observations about graves of famous people in "3275" are not even close to as important and insightful as his look at his lovers' and friends' plots. However, the majority of the book shines true. Alternately bitter, angry, hopeful, and amazed, Monette's words have tremendous emotional force. He is at his best in "The Politics of Silence" and "My Priests," sometimes combining all these emotions in a single paragraph. He sees the dying all around, but can still find glimmers of hope in the conduct of those fighting AIDS. His depictions of the "last watch of the night," where he cares for his sick lover, are heart-breaking. Although Monette does tend to go off on rages or streaks of uncontained sentimentality, something which marred some otherwise stellar poetry in his book "Love Alone," most often he controls his use of language to the extent where he is able to use forceful emotional

passages without drowning his readers. He does this especially well in his essay about his lover's dog, "Puck." "Last Watch of the Night" stands with his volume of poetry, "Love Alone" and non-fiction, "Borrowed Time," as essential texts of both Paul Monette and the AIDS crisis.

This is simply a replacement copy of this book. I don't think my library would ever feel complete without having a copy of this, and *Borrowed Time* and *Becoming A Man*, in it. *Last Watch of the Night* is a requiem for a time many gay men have moved out of, but that still continues to affect us. I came of age in the earliest times of AIDS, when my every coming out speech was met with "well, you're going to die"; said sometimes with glee, sometimes with sorrow, but never not said. Later on, Monette's books helped me understand the things I didn't understand, and helped me find my own way. Fortunately, in case it's not apparent, I didn't die, and fortunately, my personal experience is relatively unscathed by the scourge of the disease. These books help me understand not just the times and the horror, but also how very fortunate I really am.

Why did I not know about this author? I am in rapture reading his books. This is my second - first being *Borrowed Time*. I cannot believe the way this man's writing draws me in and entrances me. Beautiful, stunning and heartbreakingly tender - I feel like he is in the room, much like Lillian Hellman had invited me into her room. I, an Evelyn Woods super fast reader, slow to a crawl to not miss a word, a nuance. I cannot think of another writer who has done this to me. How I wish he was still here to write more but alas, gone now for 15 years. Do not miss this book or his two other memoirs. Unless your heart and head are missing, you may find yourself enthralled and sitting with Paul, holding his hand as he weaves his life stories to you.

This book represents one of the finest collections of essays I have ever read. Incredibly moving and filled with the intense passion of a man dying and yet gripped by life, this book has blown me away every time I've read it -- and that's been several times. I'm not sure which essay I like best but at the moment "My Priests" stands out, as it certainly ties in to certain news regarding the Catholic clergy. I wonder what Paul Monette would have had to say about it. Absolutely a must read for anyone with a feeling heart.

I read Monette's *Borrowed Time* in 1992 a few months before my partner died from AIDS, so had a powerful sense of connection with the prolonged slow torture of Roger Horwitz he described so frankly, and the journey to the abyss they made together. I think it was the sense of absolute

truthfulness without embellishment that gave Borrowed Time its undoubted emotional impact. Maybe it's the distance of time that gives me a different perspective towards Last Watch of the Night, written in an unrelentingly bleak period for Monette after the death of his second partner from AIDS related illness. The truthfulness is still there, but there is also a cold hardness to the prose that perhaps reflects how he was being worn down by the disease and its cumulative impact. I think all of us who lived through that time maybe reached that same emotional state - unable to grieve any further, worn down by the struggle - but I was never as acutely aware of it as reading these essays and short biographical stories so many years later. Last Watch of the Night has an important place on my bookshelf, along with Becoming a Man, but I don't want to revisit it too often as it takes you to a place that I still raw.

I first read Monette's books back in the early '90s, when they first came out. Revisiting them now brought back the horror of the time, but also the hope of living into one's real identity. Such moving writing. Worth a second read -

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