



Compass Rose

Literature and Art Journal

Interview with James McBride

Compass Rose:

As you were developing as a writer, were there any artists you tried to emulate?

James McBride:

Toni Morrison, Harper Lee, James Baldwin, though none can be emulated.

CR:

How did that affect your work?

McBride:

Don't know. It generally never pays to ape anyone.

CR:

How do you approach a new piece?

McBride:

I say three Hail Marys and sit at the desk till something happens.

CR:

Explain how you deal with criticism.

McBride:

I don't read reviews. I don't associate with writers. They're generally boring and gossip behind each other's backs too much.

CR:

What methods do you take to support yourself through your writing?

McBride:

The breathing method.

CR:

Do you have a history of writers in your family?

McBride:

No.

CR:

If not, how did you know you wanted to become a writer?

McBride:

I didn't want to become a writer. Writing happened to me, in a sense.

CR:

What reactions do you aim to extract from your readers?

McBride:

I don't know. The best reaction is the one where they feel my work is good enough so they'll sacrifice the cost of two Starbucks Café-de-latte-mocha-chocas-Grand-a's to buy one of my books.

CR:

What type of writing do you enjoy doing the most?

McBride:

Letter-writing. Anything else involves sweating bullets and should be avoided at all costs.

CR:

Describe your writing process.

McBride:

I put the words on the page one word after other till the end comes.

CR:

How do you decide when your work is done?

McBride:

It's never done, really.