Clarion Review

Essays

Solitary Thoughts: A Series of Subjects Addressed
William Goff
Trafford
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Four Stars (out of Five)

William Goff's debut book, *Solitary Thoughts: A Variety of Subjects Addressed*, introduces readers to his opinions about society today through a series of short essays on many topics, including hate, obesity, and capitalism. Goff deplores the rampant consumerism of the present, something, he maintains, that has led to ugliness, shallowness, disconnection from others, and general depravity.

Although often condemnatory and pessimistic, Goff states his opinions in ways designed to make his audience stop and think. Whether or not one agrees with him, the author's bold assertions will surely elicit paradigm shifts. The essays are largely written for those who relish contemplating why the state of things is the way it is. Even as his answers to these whys are quite often pessimistic, the author presents his arguments in digestible chunks. Each of the essays could easily stand alone, which allows readers the option of beginning one at random rather than feeling they must read the tome from beginning to end.

Though one does not have to read *Solitary Thoughts* straight through from cover to cover, delving into the whole book is recommended in order to appreciate the subtle nuances and striking observations in the text. While Goff often discusses various facets of society's downfall, the viewpoint with which he approaches the subject differs among essays, enabling the audience to appreciate the author's multi-layered perspective. With each subsequent essay, Goff's opinions grow clearer to readers, and by the end of the book, many of his arguments dovetail to convincingly illuminate the reasons for the decay of humanity.

The few essays that are optimistic and the ones that read like theatrical monologues provide a welcome change of pace from Goff's main theme. In these gems, one sees that Goff is capable of poetic prose as well as the literary trope of the unreliable narrator. One would think such devices would be impossible to pull off given the brevity of the author's writing, but Goff

disproves this assumption with results at once surprising and delightful. These more playful jaunts are just as thought provoking as their more serious counterparts.

The elements that prevent this book from being completely accessible are lengthy sentences and stilted phrasing. Because of these, the essays in *Solitary Thoughts* must be reread to glean the meaning from wordy statements and awkward passages. Those who take the time to reread the essays, however, will not want to keep their thoughts about Goff's writings solitary; the collection is sure to ignite discussion among philosophy lovers.

Jill Allen