



Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Why Atheists Love Breasts

Rinth de Shadley

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Three Stars (out of Five)

From 2009 to her graduation in 2011, a young woman studying at Mount Holyoke College maintained a blog containing personal thoughts, opinions, and reflections. Using the pseudonym Rinth de Shadley (her real nickname, Rinth, and “Shadley” for South Hadley, home of Mt. Holyoke), she posted mini-essays ranging from the funny to the serious, garnering a bit of a following among her peers.

Here, Rinth de Shadley has gathered some of her favorite posts and published them in a volume called *Why Atheists Love Breasts*. The title comes from one of her blog posts but is also, she admits, “a shameless attempt to improve [her] book sales by mentioning two of the hottest topics in the world: atheism and breasts.”

There is little of great depth in de Shadley’s book, and it is hardly a timeless offering. In fact, much of what she writes here is already becoming dated, and soon, some readers will not understand all of her references. Still, it is a clever and well-written series of short essays representing one privileged and intelligent young woman’s perceptions of life as a member of Generation Y, or the Millennial Generation, during her final semesters of college. Overall, her messages are upbeat and exhibit an attempt to be helpful. What de Shadley offers here will appeal to older teens and her own twenty-something contemporaries, and it may even provide a few clues to parents who have been wondering what their kids are thinking.

The blog articles included in the book are grouped into categories ranging from “Silly Stuff” to “Dating, Sex, Parties and College Life,” “Feminism and Politics,” and “Deep Thoughts.” Yet even the more serious offerings are hardly earth-shattering. In the “Feminism and Politics” section, for example, de Shadley talks about the “good girl stereotype” and suggests, “Simone de Beauvoir nailed it in *The Second Sex*. We’re supposed to act a certain way because that’s how men like us.” For most female readers, this is probably not much of a

revelation.

Another entry, “How Dr. King Changed the World,” is almost frightening in its simplicity. The piece was originally a blog post, not a research paper, and Dr. King certainly deserves enormous credit for his contributions to the struggle for racial equality in the United States, but there is so much more to the Civil Rights Movement than “Dr. King led the movement” and “thousands of people ... followed him and fought beside him.” De Shadley’s tribute sounds almost hollow.

De Shadley is at her best when she speaks from personal experience and comments on her own relationships, triumphs, and foibles. “My Top 10 Lies of 2010” is comical and also truly relatable. “At Least Buy Me a Drink First” puts an amusing spin on TSA airport scanners and boyfriends who want to dabble in nude photography. The many posts about the TV show *Gossip Girl*, including plot summaries of certain episodes, may be a bit much, but at least she adds, “Sometimes thinking is required. Watching *Gossip Girls* isn’t one of those times.” For those who have never quite understood the show’s appeal, de Shadley’s comments won’t elucidate, but those who have followed the series since its first episode will be thrilled to read her opinions.

In short, *Why Atheists Love Breasts* is neither profound nor especially remarkable in its content. Even so, it is a revealing treatise on life as seen by one sharp young woman who has the potential to make a mark on her generation. De Shadley’s overall message is a positive one, and her final words, offered in the chapter “Valediction,” say best what she has tried to impart to her readers all along: “Be strong and fare well: the world needs you.”

Cheryl M. Hibbard