



American Audacity: In Defense of Literary Daring

William Giraldi

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One of the most gifted literary essayists of his generation defends stylistic boldness and intellectual daring in American letters.

Over the last decade William Giraldi has established himself as a charismatic and uncompromising literary essayist. *American Audacity* gathers Giraldi's fierce and witty considerations of American writers and themes, including a never-before-published appreciation of James Baldwin and an introductory call to arms for twenty-first-century American literature. With deep seeing and enormous learning, Giraldi considers giants from the past (Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Harper Lee), some of our great living critics and novelists (Harold Bloom, Cynthia Ozick, Allan Gurganus, Elizabeth Spencer), and those cultural-literary themes that have concerned him as a novelist (best-selling books, the problem of Catholic fiction, and his viral essay on bibliophilia). Demanding that literature be urgent and audacious, this book is itself an act of intellectual and stylistic daring. At a time when literature is threatened by ceaseless electronic distraction, Giraldi reaffirms the pleasure and wisdom of literary values.

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Holly Lofgreen says

This is a silver-tongued, deeply imaginative collection of essays embracing the cosmos of American Literature. Giraldi's conviction shines when he emphasizes the weighty charge to critics to rise to the meaningful craftsmanship we exalt in writers; he believes analysis should be a beautiful response to beauty itself, should creatively elaborate upon the transcendental statements of art in the most imaginative way. To be an intermediary between art and culture, good criticism is an act of love, in reciprocity to the upwelling consciousness in the best literature that is itself love:

"The critic's chief loyalty is to the duet of beauty and wisdom, to the well made and the usefully wise, and to the ligatures between style and meaning."

The section he devotes to fellow critics—a series of essays where he explores the genius and the mistakenness of a number of luminaries—was edifying and intellectually thrilling.

Highly recommended for those who wish to hear literature's sublime holler to our porous, open-ended, everyday selves—vocalized via the megaphone of plot and language—and to those who want to glory in linguistic vitality and the profound sanity of an excellent essayist's mind. Giraldi's book is a marriage of word and deed—an exceptional take on many topics, containing a challenge to literary standards that is by itself audacious and beautiful.

Stefanie says

This was all kinds of fantastic! Gerald is the kind of critic who is smart, insightful, and is not afraid to have an opinion. He makes you want to be a better reader. Get ready to add more books to your TBR!
