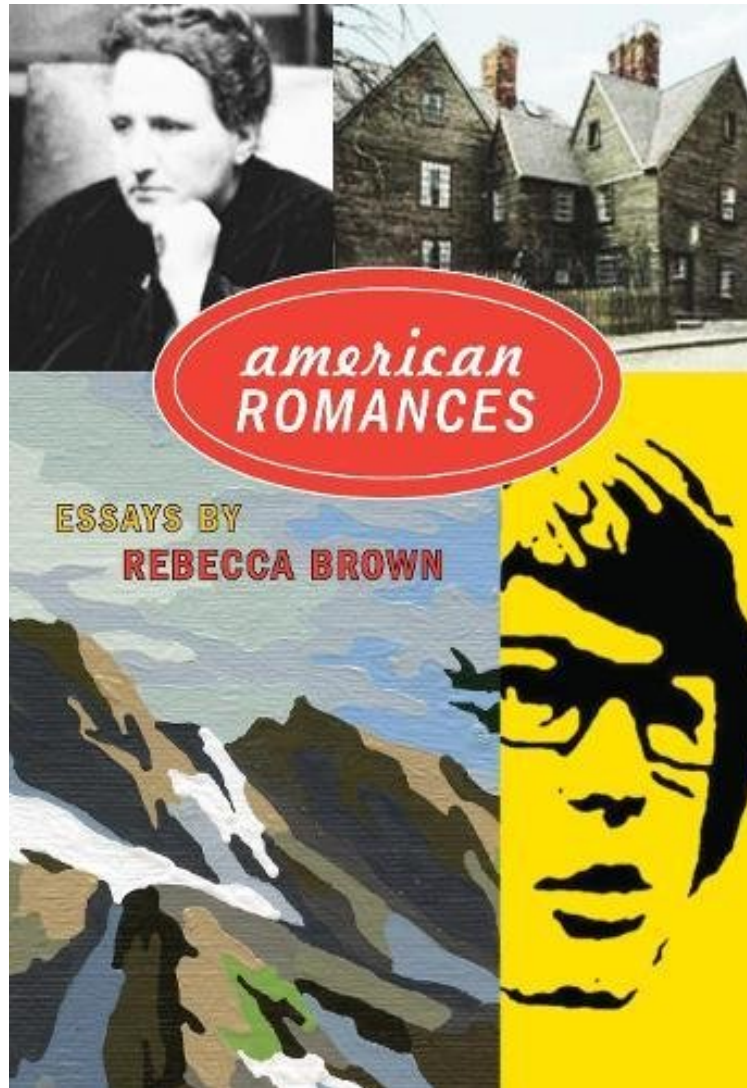


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## American Romances: Essays

*Rebecca Brown*

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**Rebecca Brown : American Romances: Essays** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Romances: Essays:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Reading For The Undernourished By E. Georgiou I just assigned the essay, "Extreme Reading," from American Romances to my graduate writing students and--as I had hoped--it inspired so much vibrant thought and discussion. I am about to assign it again to a new batch of grad students in a week or so. I love this book, especially this essay, because it makes you think seriously about reading as you are reading. I think it should be put on some kind of compulsory reading list for the world. There are many brilliant moments in it,

like:Every time you read a book you read what you desire.Every time you read a book you make that book your own.This book is about many things--the book cover blurbs list the icons--Gertrude Stein, Brian Wilson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and America. And all this is true; it is about all these things. But since she goes to lengths to point out thatEvery time you read a book you read what you desireEvery time you read a book you make that book your ownthen, this book, for me, is about the long search for faith. Reading is Brown's faith. Writing is her faith. Not the kind of faith that enters your life as a Divine--untouchable, unknowable, unheard--Presence. It is a faith that you take into your body from the outside--a Eucharist--something with texture, heart, and sound. This book presents reading as something magical, mystical, and relevant. It is the opposite of academic. It makes reading come alive. It makes the reader interactive. I highly recommend it.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Unique perspective and observations from a talented author.By Bob LindSimultaneously deeply twisted and brilliantly incisive, Ms. Brown provides a cornucopia of intelligent essays filled with seemingly random references to pop culture (old western movies, the Beach Boys, old B movies, etc.), classic literature, and religion (reflections on her experiences on her school's fundamentalist "God Squad", and earlier experiences "playing priest" and dispensing Necco wafers), interspersed with (and somehow managing to relate to) her childhood of random vague memories while moving around with her mother and father, a career military man. I could definitely relate to her analogy of reading a book being similar to eating, as you take the "nourishment" you need and pass on the rest you don't need. And her comments about organized religion, in the context of looking at the Inquisition, are nothing short of brilliant. It all sounds very disjointed, but it is actually a very entertaining and enlightening read, although a bit short at 163 pages. May not be everyone's cup of cocoa, but I give it five unique stars out of five.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. My Romance with American RomancesBy AmyThis book is a gem. A beautiful triangle of cake you can eat and keep. No, an energy bar for the mind studded with the world's best figs, plump and seedy and full of sexy nutriment. In short, if the USDA assigned values to literature, reading these words would be very, very good for you.Read these pieces slowly. Savor them. The way the words and ideas are stacked is astonishing, making an absurd sense I didn't think a book liked to make. The logic here is indirect. Connections span galaxies, as in the first essay, which links Brian Wilson and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Lo and behold, the leaps work. They work very well.

"Everything and nothing is sacred in Rebecca Brown's essays. Tongue, word, thought, and intellect all conspire in a free language love of living history, divination, sex, solitude and amusement. She is America's only real rock n' roll schoolteacher. Lessons layered with profundity and protracted parallels. Where old world religion, Gertrude Stein and Oreo cookies co-exist in an actual and mystic world of wonder." --Thurston Moore, Sonic Youth"If Rebecca Brown's talent for prose were any tighter, it would be a lyric -- to a pop standard. An homage -- a menage -- to America, exposing what's laid bare in a comic tragic redux. I laughed till it hurt." --Van Dyke Parks, Composer/Arranger"Anyone who can get from the Eucharist, to a Necco Wafer, to the goo between the Oreo wafers, to the Inquisition, to the goo between the legs of excited young women is a distant sibling of mine. She can dash and she can drift and she is not much interested in the really bad parts that might qualify as confession. She likes the float of quotidian living and I like to read the words upon which she floats." -- Dave Hickey, author of Air GuitarThe impulse to tell our worst to a bunch of strangers has been fueling American self-hood for 300 years: there's a direct line from the Puritan confession narrative to today's lurid, inescapable exhibitionism. But whose stories are we telling?This collection of mordant, poignant, and playful essays shows Rebecca Brown at the height of her imaginative and intuitive powers. A wry, incisive social and literary critique is couched in a gonzo mix of pop culture, autobiography, fiction, literary history, misremembered movie plots, and fantasy that plays with the notion of what it is to be American. Fantastical connections and unlikely meetings span the course of Americas cultural history in a manic remix, featuring appearances by Brian Wilson, Gertrude Stein, Nathaniel Hawthorne, the Invisible Man, the Abligensian Crusade, John Wayne, Felix Mendelssohn, JFK, Shane, and God.Rebecca Browns books include: The Gifts of the Body, The Last Time I Saw You, The Haunted House, Terrible Girls, and The End of Youth.

From Publishers WeeklyBrown's first work of nonfiction poses an irreverent challenge to American exceptionalism and the romantic premise of life, liberty, and happiness. A patchwork investigation into our passionate self-fictions and their roots in American culture and history, Brown's essays make a jazz-like assembly, riffing on sex, war, religion, slavery, abusive fathers and Abu Ghraib-attempting a super-narrative that encompasses all manner of American sins. The books strongest sections are it's more personal and sustained, following Brown's romantic idealization of her own deteriorating family, and the religious salvation she sought to escape her pain. As intriguing as her observations can be, however, Brown plays fast and loose with her subjects and doesn't always convince with her far-flung historical comparisons-the Salem witch trials and Iraqi prisoners, the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson and Nathaniel Hawthorne, etc. Brown (The Gifts of the Body) tells us that her essays are romances-elastic, unconventional narratives that allow the impossible to take shape-but as capsule analyses of the American character, they largely avoid the real complexity of history and context. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Rebecca Brown's newest collection of short fiction pulses with desires that cannot be attained--

knowledge, understanding, quiescence, and love. . . . The straightforward prose style belies Brown's penchant for brilliant narrative, which at any moment can turn from the gentle and intimate to the violent and bizarre." - Utne Reader "She is one of the few truly original modern lesbian writers, one who constantly pushes both her own boundaries and those of her readers." - San Francisco Chronicle