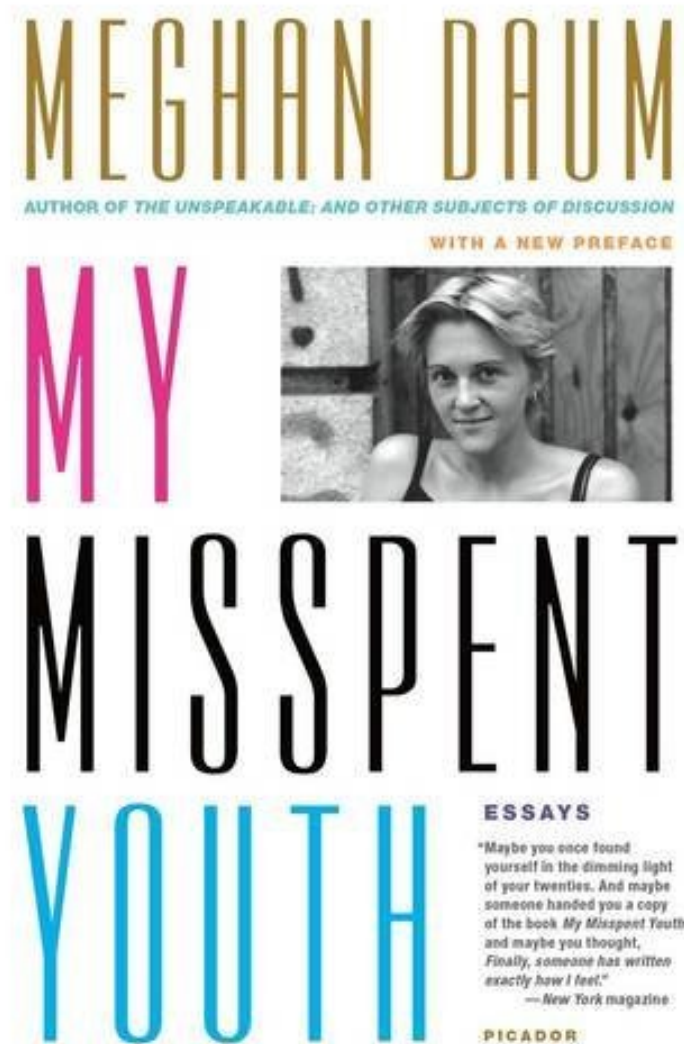


(Free read ebook) My Misspent Youth: Essays

## My Misspent Youth: Essays

Meghan Daum

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**Meghan Daum : My Misspent Youth: Essays** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised My Misspent Youth: Essays:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. She has an interesting perspective...By BdizzleThere are some points in this book when you would think that Megan is bipolar. She tears through people nuances ticks like a tornado, and then in the same breath admits the complete opposite of what she has just described. the beginning of the book had me interested, but near the end I felt her essays became mean spirited. It one thing to be perceptive and to admit things in your past you have done, but when there is no glimmer of enlightenment from these experiences within the prose it

comes off a bit sociopathic. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Reflections on lives as simulations By J. Grattan In this highly autobiographical and entertaining collection of essays, the author offers insight into American culture that both informs and questions. From a Gen-X perspective, she focuses on the changing cultural realities of the 80s and 90s that undermine long-held beliefs. In addition, she turns a critical eye on her affluent adolescence in suburban New Jersey. While it may be off-putting to some readers, it quickly becomes evident that the author approaches her subjects from a cultural elitist standpoint. She readily admits that she sought admission to Vassar to rub elbows with NYC elites to gain their cultural sophistication, as well as a sense of self-entitlement. In "Toy Children" she found the insistence that she play with dolls to be no more than an attempt to keep her in perpetual childhood. Forced by her musician parents to play the oboe, in "Music is My Bag" she grew to immensely dislike the nerdiness of the music culture. In an essay that overreaches, "Carpet is Mungers," wall-to-wall carpet, for the author, symbolizes everything ordinary - hence to be rejected. For her it is oak floors and Oriental rugs - or nothing. In a more practical offering, "My Misspent Youth," the author decries the fact that NYC has become virtually unaffordable for an aspiring cultural worker - editorial assistant, writer, etc. Yet, she admits that her feelings of entitlement led to her assuming a sixty-thousand dollar debt for a three year MFA program at Columbia. "Inside the Tube" captures the diminished status of airline attendants, yet, they are "in a sense, quintessential Americans. They are at once rootless souls and permanent fixtures, vagabonds who can't stay anywhere too long." Love and relationships are represented. She finds the members of the California-based Ravenheart polyamorous commune to be self-deluding to think that their multi-partner lifestyle verifies their self-proclaimed outsider status, being hardly different than common activities under other names. The author profiles the needy quest of the bland American blonde for Jewish men in "American Shiksa." In the most interesting essay of the collection, "On the Fringes of the Physical World," the author details her intense multi-month email romance that transcended any real-world relationships, only to have it all suddenly collapse after meeting. She sees that "our need to worship fuses with our need to be worshipped." As the author claims, these essays are commentary on the authenticity of American life, on the degree to which we live fictional narratives. The essays strike an idealistic tone, perhaps are a bit arrogant, but they are perceptive, entertaining, and even unsettling. They are easy to read. 18 of 22 people found the following review helpful. A Rising Star By C. Ebeling After reading just one essay by Meghan Daum when it first appeared in The New Yorker, coincidentally the title piece of MY MISSPENT YOUTH, I wanted more, more, more of her prose. So I was understandably thrilled when a recent web search turned up this first collection of her work and, having read it, I am even more thrilled. She is really, really good. She's so good, she's scary. Daum's pieces share in common what she calls a point, which someone else bent on stuffy superlatives might call an overarching theme. Either way, she's not imposing some pat formula on life but has pulled out a bona fide truth about the human condition in its many different circumstances, that we simultaneously operate in two worlds, one a concoction of dreams, prejudices and cultural conditioning, the other, reality. Each of her essays is a moment of reckoning, of understanding how the imagined world has tipped the real one, of having to bow to the real one. In unflinching prose that just sweeps along, she pursues truth as a player, occasionally as a witness. The quality of her work reminds me of what Carol Burnett said about having no choice but to become the star because she was a misfit in the chorus: Daum, incapable of following through on requests that she submit to puppy mill essaying on Gen-X preoccupations (she's about 31), has positioned herself in the territory of Joan Didion and our finest cultural commentators.

Now back in print, author of The Unspeakable Meghan Daum's acclaimed cult classic that revitalized the personal essay for a new generation of writers Meghan Daum is one of the most celebrated nonfiction writers working today, widely recognized for the fresh, provocative approach with which she unearths hidden fault lines in the American landscape. From her well-remembered New Yorker essays about the financial demands of big-city ambition and the ethereal, strangely old-fashioned allure of cyber relationships to her dazzlingly hilarious riff in Harper's about musical passions that give way to middle-brow paraphernalia, Daum delves into the center of things while closely examining the detritus that spills out along the way. She speaks to questions at the root of the contemporary experience, from the search for authenticity and interpersonal connection in a society defined by consumerism and media; to the disenchantment of working in a "glamour profession"; to the catastrophic effects of living among New York City's terminal hipsters. With precision and well-balanced irony, Daum implicates herself as readily as she does the targets that fascinate and horrify her. In this stirring and surprising collection we see the emergence of a talented new voice in American writing.

From Publishers Weekly Essay lovers can take heart. There's a new voice in the fray, and it belongs to a talented young writer. In this collection of (largely previously published) on-target analyses of American culture, Daum offers the disapproval of youth, leavened with pithy humor and harsh self-appraisal. In each essay, she sustains interest with a good story and pricks the reader's conscience with observations that reverberate personally, whether about the secret desires of Christian women or the stunning ease of accumulating debt while existing unluxuriously in New York City. Publishing veterans will be amused and chagrined to see their profession skewered in "Publishing and Other Near-

Death Experiences"; and for a hard take on one's responsibility for mourning, there is the book's best work, "Variation on Grief." Daum's decidedly agnostic outlook sometimes makes for easy moral outs, and time may render her phrasings cute. While her main premise that many Americans live "not actual lives but simulations of lives... via the trinkets on our shelves" leaves room for disagreement, on the whole, readers will enjoy an edgy read. (Mar. 15)

Forecast: Daum's pieces have appeared in traditional magazines like the New Yorker, as well as in cutting-edge venues like Nerve, and have earned her a considerable reputation as a sharp Gen-X voice. attention and good word-of-mouth should earn this book brisk sales. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

This eclectic collection of essays delves into the corners of contemporary life, ferreting out the eccentric as well as the ordinary. Readers can identify with Daum's disdain for carpeting or her difficulty living within her means on New York's Upper West Side while working at a low-paying publishing job. On a less familiar note is an essay exploring the lifestyle of a group in California who call their communal way of life "polyamory," a brand of free love reminiscent of the 1960s. Not shy about implicating herself, Daum plunges into such thorny issues as an Internet romance and her inability to mourn a friend's death, along with her irritation at his superficial, enabling parents. A regular contributor to National Public Radio, Daum writes essays and articles appearing in major publications including The New Yorker, Harper's, New York Times, GQ, Self, and Vogue. Her work demonstrates honesty and an ability to look perceptively at herself and contemporary life. Daum's is a provocative and refreshing new voice. Recommended for larger public libraries. Nancy R. Ives, SUNY at Geneseo Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. Maybe you once found yourself in the dimming light of your twenties. And maybe someone handed you a copy of the book My Misspent Youth and maybe you thought, Finally, someone has written exactly how I feel. New York Magazine

An empathetic reporter and a provocative autobiographer ... I finished it in a single afternoon, mesmerized and sputtering. Caleb Crain, The Nation

Throughout this book, there are a surprising number of moments when your jaw just drops in amazement at what [Daum is] saying. Even when she's being funny, her writing has a clarity and intensity that just makes you feel awake. Ira Glass

Meghan Daum is not an eccentric exhibitionist or a self-indulgent memoirist. Her world is suburban New Jersey girlhood, Vassar, publishing, and the disillusionment that results when the reality of one's life falls short of expectations. Daum approaches the first lesson of adulthood--that the prosaic will intrude on the fantastic every time--without ever dissolving into cynicism. The New York Times

Book People I know still talk about Meghan Daum's 2001 debut essay collection, My Misspent Youth. Nobody writing about her generation was more incisive or entertaining than she. Sigrid Nunez