

Not That It Matters: But I Thought You Might Like to Know Anyway: Stories and Essays of Dubious Consequence

John E. Budzinski

BookLocker

(261pp)

978-1-958889-85-5

Emphasizing the importance of appreciating that which makes life worthwhile, the pieces collected in John E. Budzinski's Not That It Matters are celebrations of everyday experiences.

John E. Budzinski's *Not That It Matters* is a collection of good-humored stories and essays whose topics are drawn from daily life.

Across more than fifty short pieces, many previously published in periodicals, Budzinski brings his experiences as a photographer, newspaper columnist, and information technology professional to bear on topics including friendship, the internet, home maintenance, travel, and dating. Some pieces in the collection are anecdotal, while others are opinion based. Many blend the two approaches, like those that fall into the category of cultural criticism.

The collection is organized into topical chapters, including "Politics" and "It's All About Me, Isn't It?" Still, most are connected by themes of general appreciation—of moments like sharing a laugh with a friend or observing a beautiful element in nature. In "What Are the Goals of a Lifetime?", the process of appreciation is linked to paying attention and taking the time to get to know people and places. A goal for feeling at home in one's neighborhood is expressed as "I want to know all the cracks in the sidewalks and all the trees by name." Keen awareness of details and careful descriptions make these small moments easy to imagine. Still, the book's repetition of many such small moments is also a reminder of how mundane such details can be.

The book also seeks to excavate universal elements from Budzinski's personal experiences, employing self-deprecating humor in discussing human foibles. But it is sometimes too grounded in the twentieth-century mirage of a homogeneous America to accomplish this, as when it claims "Our lives are more similar than you might suspect." And it includes dated references to AOL, warnings about artificial intelligence, and deliberate disconnections from contemporary popular culture that stand to limit its audience further, as with its unoriginal rants against new technologies and trends. Its friendlier, more welcoming pieces stand to generate more sympathy, as do its folksy, conversational addresses to the audience. And while the prose is pleasing in general, mixing short and long sentences to good effect, there are instances of omitted words and malapropisms that undermine its delivery.

Not That It Matters is a welcoming collection of short prose works about daily life, written in an affable, colloquial style.

MICHELE SHARPE (August 9, 2023)

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