

Camus's Restless Ghost • Philosophy's Strain of Unevolved Thinking • The Poetic Mind

The Chronicle Review

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE OF IDEAS

The Chronicle of Higher Education • Section B • November 30, 2012



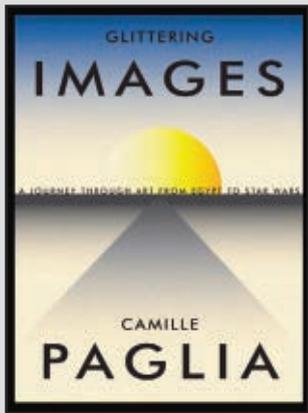
Looking at Lincoln

By LOUIS P. MASUR



New in Art History from Knopf Doubleday

PLEASE CLICK ON THE COVER BELOW FOR EXAM COPIES



Glittering Images

A Journey Through Art from Egypt to Star Wars
by **Camille Paglia**

From one of our most acclaimed cultural critics, here is an enthralling journey through Western art's defining moments, from the ancient Egyptian tomb of Queen Nefertari to George Lucas's volcano planet duel in *Revenge of the Sith*.

"A magisterial, poetically composed, and masterly study of 29 great works of Western art. . . . Paglia writes rhapsodically of art's power. . . . [She is] one of the most erudite public intellectuals in America." —*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Pantheon | Cloth | 224 pages | \$30.00

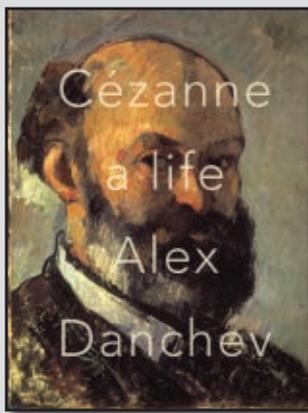
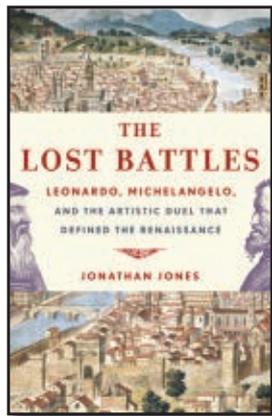
The Lost Battles

Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the Artistic Duel That Defined the Renaissance
by **Jonathan Jones**

The galvanizing story of a sixteenth-century clash of titans, the two greatest minds of the Renaissance, working side by side in the same room in a fierce competition: the master Leonardo da Vinci and his implacable young rival, the thirty-year-old Michelangelo.

"Recreates for us the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of 16th-century Florence. . . . Engaging and informative. . . . Illuminated but not overwhelmed by accurate historical detail that compellingly creates the world the two antagonists inhabited." —*The New York Journal of Books*

Knopf | Cloth | 368 pages | \$35.00



Cézanne

A Life
by **Alex Danchev**

Cézanne is not only the fascinating life of a visionary artist and extraordinary human being but also a searching assessment of his ongoing influence in the artistic imagination of our time.

"A major work of scholarship. With great sensitivity and genuine brio, Danchev paints a compelling portrait of the artist, who managed to overcome the demons that haunted him to transform himself into what many consider the greatest painter of his age. This is the best account to date of Cézanne's astonishing career—a book that will survive the test of time." —John Golding, author of *Visions of the Modern*

Pantheon | Cloth | 512 pages | \$40.00

Saul Steinberg

A Biography
by **Deirdre Bair**

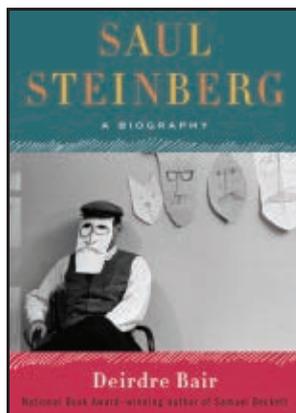
From National Book Award winner Deirdre Bair, the definitive biography of Saul Steinberg, one of *The New Yorker's* most iconic artists.

"[A] sensitive, stylish portrait of an American original. A rich, sparkling joy of a book."

—Stacy Schiff, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Cleopatra*

"The definitive portrait of an illustrator, an artist, who created some of the defining images of the 20th century. Bair has written the enchanting and illuminating biography that Steinberg always deserved." —Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, Pulitzer Prize-winning authors of *Van Gogh: The Life*

Nan A. Talese | Cloth | 752 pages | \$40.00



For desk and examination copies:

Visit: www.randomhouse.com/academic • Email: acmart@randomhouse.com

Write: Knopf Doubleday Academic Marketing, 1745 Broadway, 12-1, New York, NY 10019



THE
CONVERSATION
Opinion on ideas and higher education

Mainstream Melville

By **GEORGE COTKIN**

THIS MONTH, 161 years ago, on an icy day in much of the Northeast, Harper & Brothers released the American edition of *Moby-Dick*. Although published long ago, *Moby-Dick* breaches ubiquitous at this moment. Search for "Moby Dick Big Read" to find daily a project that features celebrities such as Tilda Swinton and Prime Minister David Cameron reading a chapter aloud.

Lynne Ramsay, who made the movie *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, will bring the story of Moby, Ahab, Ishmael, and company to film, this time with them somehow situated in outer space. Another filmmaker of note, M. Night Shyamalan, plans a television series about the book. Jake Heggie has an opera version. This is only the tip of the great white iceberg of *Moby-Dick* in popular culture.

Why, then, this immense interest in a novel and its characters, in a book that was composed in a fury in the mid-19th century by Herman Melville? A novel that initially

and opens with Ishmael's admission of suicidal thoughts, the book ends with the open, impressionable Ishmael as a survivor. Melville gives us plenty of heroism, insanity, and tomfoolery, but in the end, he leaves us with a lifeboat fashioned literally (in his wonderful manner) out of a coffin. He tells us that we are always aboard a ship that is in search of something, often leaking, sometimes under attack by threats real and imagined. We inhabit a world of tragic proportions but also of immense possibility.

Few writers worth their creative salt have failed to confront *Moby-Dick* as a model, both to emulate and to overcome. Novelists as varied as Norman Mailer, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, Charles Johnson, Cormac McCarthy, Chad Harbach, and China Miéville have begged, borrowed, and stolen from it. The poets Hart Crane, Charles Olson, W.H. Auden, and Dan Beachy-Quick have been inspired by it to ponder the power of nature and the depths of emotion.

Our cultural moment demands *Moby-Dick*, but that is not unusual. Whenever cultural creators feel that "damp, drizzly November" of the soul, when creativity is paltry and the outrages of insipidity drag them down, they pick up their copies of *Moby-Dick* and take to sea with it. They hope, as had Melville, to extend their own reach, to get to the meaning of America, both its past and present, and to punch through the ever-present "paste-board mask" of reality.

In the novel, Melville remarks, "Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand!" Let's hope that all creative artists dip into this inkwell of a novel. Bob Dylan, in his "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream," from 1965, invokes Ahab, who tells his crew to "forget the whale" as they alight upon the shores of a new land. Ishmael suggests they name it America, and the rollicking tune ends, appropriately, with "Good luck" as the American motto. So, good luck to all those at present and in the future embarking on their own Ahabian creative endeavors. ■

George Cotkin, a professor of history at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, is the author of Dive Deeper: Journeys With Moby-Dick (Oxford University Press).

For more, see
chronicle.com/conversation

lacked readers and became part of the literary canon only in the 1930s. Even today, *Moby-Dick* is considered by many as too bulky, sloppy, difficult (read the chapters on cetology), and gory.

Nathaniel Philbrick suggested in a lovely, slim volume, *Why Read Moby-Dick?*, that *Moby-Dick* is our literary "genetic code," presumably meaning that we return to the novel because we encounter ourselves and our national history through it. Understood in this manner, the novel is about race and imperialism on one level, and about the metaphysics of yearning for absolute knowledge on another. It is, then, relevant to both the daily grind of politics and the itching of existential longing. The critic Greil Marcus, with his ear always attuned to American culture, found *Moby-Dick* "the sea we swim in."

Certainly our culture needs Melville and *Moby-Dick* now more than ever. We live in a culture drowning in the shallow waters of reality television, steamy soft-core-porn novels, and tepid politics. Although the novel flirts with apocalyptic visions

The Chronicle Review

November 30, 2012

FEATURES

Lincoln at the Movies

Steven Spielberg rehumanizes an icon, and rescues political hope from cynicism.

By Louis P. Masur B6

Camus's Restless Ghost

The French author's political legacy remains volatile.

By Robert Zaretsky B9

The Flickering Flame of Verse

When the power goes out, the poetic mind kicks in.

By Catherine Robson B11

CONSIDER THIS

A Strain of Unevolved Thinking

Why does so much analytic philosophy shrug off science, particularly Darwinism?

By Michael Ruse B4

BOOKS & ARTS

NOTA BENE

Thirst for Knowledge

An archaeologist considers mankind's water-scarce future in light of our ancient past.

By Peter Monaghan B13

NEW SCHOLARLY BOOKS B14

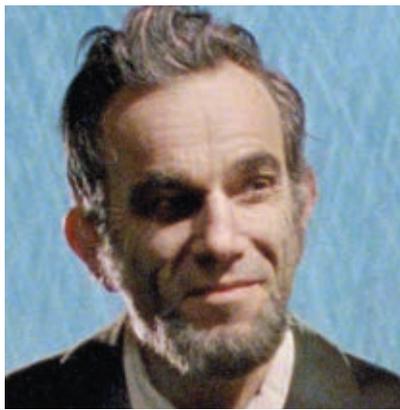
OBSERVER

About a Boy—Philosopher

There's no better professional preparation than a childhood spent considering life's meaninglessness.

By John Kaag B16

THE CHRONICLE CROSSWORD B15



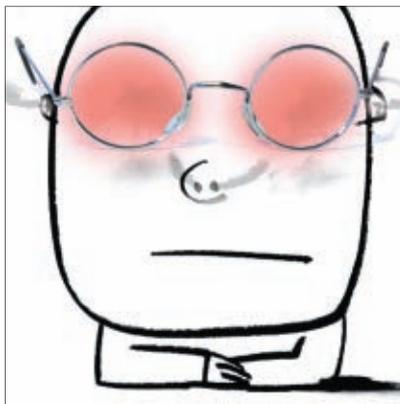
B6



B9



B11



B16

Cover illustration by Jason Holley for The Chronicle Review

chroniclereview.com

THE CHRONICLE REVIEW, SECTION B OF THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, VOLUME LIX, NUMBER 14 IS PUBLISHED AT 1255 23RD STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037
TELEPHONE: (202) 466-1000. E-MAIL: EDITOR@CHRONICLE.COM. COPYRIGHT © 2012 BY THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INC.

TITLES of INTEREST

from Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Reading African American Experiences in the Obama Era: Theory, Advocacy, Activism

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Shanesha Brooks-Tatum
PB | \$36.95 | 978-1-4331-1125-9

In *Reading African American Experiences in the Obama Era*, young African American scholars and researchers and experienced community activists demonstrate how to encourage dialogue across curricula, disciplines, and communities with emphases on education, new media, and popular culture.

Between Worlds: An Anthology of Contemporary Fiction and Criticism

Deborah Poe and Ama Wattley
PB | \$36.95 | 224 pp | 978-1-4331-1157-0

This volume offers excerpts from novels and short stories by some of the most important and established contemporary writers: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Rebecca Brown, Ana Castillo, Michelle Cliff, Edwige Danticat, Rikki Ducornet, Louise Erdrich, Maxine Hong Kingston, Ha Jin, and Helena María Viamontes.

Women Lead: Career Perspectives from Workplace Leaders

Tracey Wilen-Daugenti, Tracey L. Vien, and Caroline Molina Ray
PB \$36.95 978-1-4331-2115-9

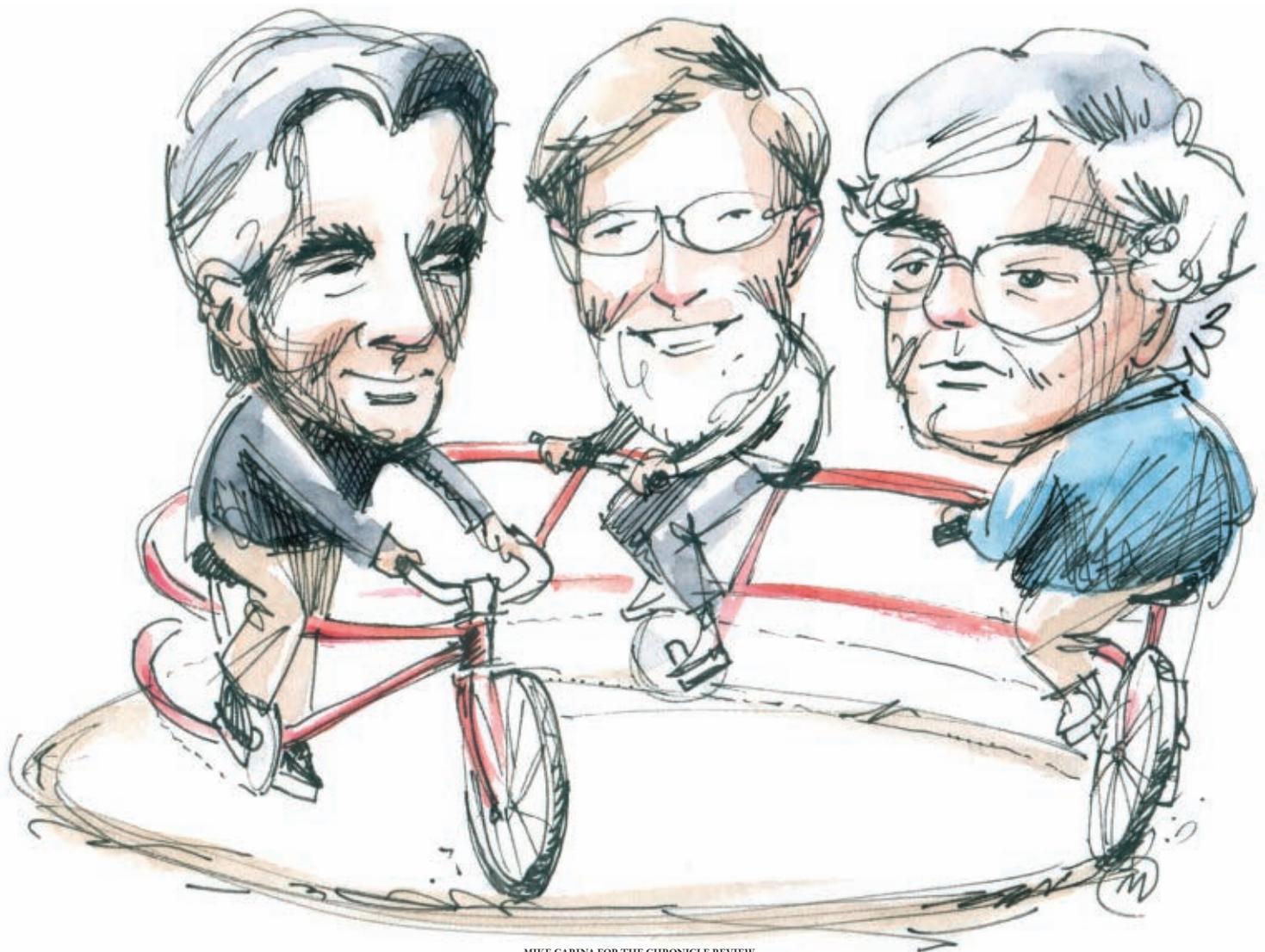
Drawing on interviews with nearly 200 women leaders, and survey responses from more than 3000 male and female managers, the book explains 21st-century career trends and provides practical advice to help women excel in the new world of work.

DESK COPIES
AVAILABLE!



Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

[w] peterlang.com
[e] customerservice@plang.com
[p] 800.770.LANG (US) or
212.647.7706 (non-US)
[f] 212.647.7707



MIKE CARINA FOR THE CHRONICLE REVIEW

Philosophy's Strain of Unevolved Thinking

PLATO, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant. Any field that stars such men has to be doing something right, and only a fool could think otherwise. That holds true even if the foolishness is circumscribed and comes from a brilliant physicist, like Freeman Dyson, the latest tin-eared, distinguished scientist suggesting, in a recent *New York Review of Books* essay, that only empirical investigators can discover anything important.

In a review of Jim Holt's *Why Does the World Exist?: An Existential Detective Story* (Liveright/W.W. Norton, 2012), Dyson says of 20th- and 21st-century philosophers: "Compared with the giants of the past, they are a sorry bunch of dwarfs."

"They are thinking deep thoughts and giving scholarly lectures to academic audiences, but hardly anybody in the world outside is listening. They are historically insignificant. At some

time toward the end of the 19th century, philosophers faded from public life. Like the snark in Lewis Carroll's poem, they suddenly and silently vanished. So far as the general public was concerned, philosophers became invisible."

I reflexively and smugly curl my lip in disdain of such blanket nonsense. And yet, in my heart of hearts, while cuts like Dyson's are clearly lunacy when applied to philosophy generally, I wonder whether they don't apply after all to some Anglophone analytic philosophers. Did the founders of this tradition, people like Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore and above all Ludwig Wittgenstein, put us on the wrong path? If not entirely set against science and empirical investigation, did they not

turn their backs on the most fundamental discovery of the 19th century, Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection? And in so doing, did they set modern philosophy on a course toward irrelevance?

The American Pragmatists realized that being the end result of a long, slow, directionless process of natural change rather than the miraculous creation by a beneficent God on the Sixth Day simply had to have implications for knowledge (epistemology) and morality (ethics). But the analytic philosophers dismissed Pragmatism as immoral and Darwin as beside the point. They didn't actually deny evolution, but they sure didn't want anything to do with what is today one of the brightest jewels in the crown of science, obsessing instead over language, logic, and consciousness.

This awful tradition continues, in fact flourishes, in the hearts of today's philosophy departments, especially distinguished philosophy departments in America. First there was Jerry Fodor of Rutgers and his emphasis on "language of thought" and functionalism. Then there was Alvin Plantinga of Notre Dame (now back at Calvin College), arguing that religious belief is a fundamental aspect of humanity requiring no justification. Now there is Thomas Nagel, the Harvard-educated professor at New York University who says that objective scientific knowledge is inadequate to a fundamental understanding of ourselves.

All three dismiss Darwinism on grounds that could best be described as skimpy. They shelter the totally refuted, religiously inspired fantasy of intelligent-design theory as one to be taken seriously, if not actively embraced. Like virgins defending their honor, they scream that natural selection will never lay its

filthy, contaminating hands on human minds and thinking.

IT IS HARD TO KNOW where to begin with Nagel's recent book, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford University Press). But let me focus on three problems.

First, the denial of the basic science of Darwinian evolutionary theory. "The world is an astonishing place, and the idea that we have in our possession the basic tools needed to understand it is no more credible now than it was in Aristotle's day," Nagel writes. If you are going to make an audacious claim like that then, with respect, the reader is entitled to a detailed and careful critical examination of the theory being rejected. There is absolutely nothing of that kind in Nagel's slim book. Nothing of the work of contemporary evolutionists—Francisco J. Ayala on molecular evolution, David Reznick on animal evolution, Spencer Barrett on plant evolution, and Carl Woese on the tree of life—gets a hint of a mention. All we get are the Christian apologists Michael Behe and Stephen C. Meyer.

Second, the obsession with the origin of life. Let it be stated clearly that today no one can put forth a full and detailed and confirmed account of life's origins, presumably from nonorganic materials. But to pretend that it is a complete mystery, no more understood than in the time of Aristotle, is ludicrous.

Huge amounts of work have been done on the basic molecules of life—the ribonucleic acids—and how they are formed and how they might have started functioning. Even more

CONSIDER THIS

By MICHAEL RUSE

Michael Ruse directs the program in the history and philosophy of science at Florida State University.

work has been done on the conditions on earth when life is supposed to have started and whether or not they were propitious for such an event to have occurred. In Nagel's book, I search in vain for discussion of deep-sea vents and the possibility that the right kinds of energies and substances might have been available to kick-start the process.

Third, consciousness. At a personal level, let me say that I don't think the phenomenon of consciousness has been explained, and frankly I am getting to the point where I wonder if it ever will be. (In the lingo of the trade, that makes me a "new mysterian.") In other words, I don't agree with people like Paul and Patricia Churchland and Daniel Dennett that consciousness can be reduced to a matter of molecules in motion. I agree that consciousness is a matter of molecules in motion, but I think there is more to the story of why and how that molecular motion becomes thought. More important, I fail to see why an antireductionist view toward consciousness might be considered a refutation of Darwinism. Suggesting that Darwinism cannot explain everything doesn't make Darwinism false.

On the one hand, Darwinism surely does explain a lot about consciousness: why it is a useful adaptation and why it takes the form that it does. Evolutionary psychologists have shown us a great deal about the nature of logical inference, linguists about language acquisition, and behavioral ecologists about sociality and morality.

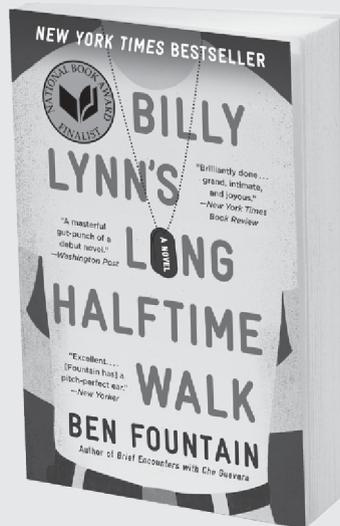
On the other hand, why should Darwinism be expected to explain consciousness? It doesn't explain why water is made up of two hydrogen atoms to one oxygen atom. It uses the properties that emerge from that conjunction—why most life cannot survive in boiling water, for instance—but the water itself is a given. The same for consciousness.

As best I can make out, although an atheist, Nagel would have us embrace a quasi-Christian or perhaps neo-Aristotelian teleology, where everything is seen to be directed toward ends, presumably ultimately toward the end of human consciousness. That would be the kind of position embraced by someone like L.J. Henderson at the beginning of the 20th century. And I can only reply that the approach was tried for 2,000 years, has been rejected for the past 500, and has no merits that would justify its revival.

Darwinian evolutionary theory is not a theory in crisis. It is a theory that is being constantly refined and extended. That is the mark of a successful theory, not a failure. Thomas Kuhn taught us that problems to be solved are a mark of strength not weakness.

I can only conclude that what drives some of today's philosophers, apart from ignorance, is either arrogance or fear. It is not so much a matter of the Fodors and Plantingas and Nagels being wrong—all of the great philosophers listed up top were wrong about one thing or another—but of their being willfully pathetic. And though the Freeman Dysons of the world are surely unfair to my discipline, I will concede that certain practitioners within it incline me to hang my head in shame. ■

NEW IN PAPERBACK

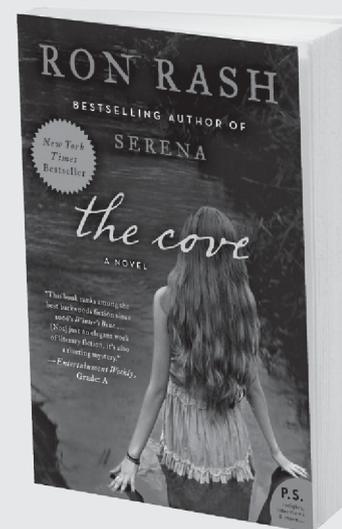


Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk: A Novel Ben Fountain

"[An] inspired, blistering war novel. . . Though it covers only a few hours, the book is a gripping, eloquent provocation. Class, privilege, power, politics, sex, commerce and the life-or-death dynamics of battle all figure in Billy Lynn's surreal game day experience."

—*New York Times*

Ecco: 978-0-06-088561-8 (pb)
\$14.99 (\$16.99 Can.) • 320 pages

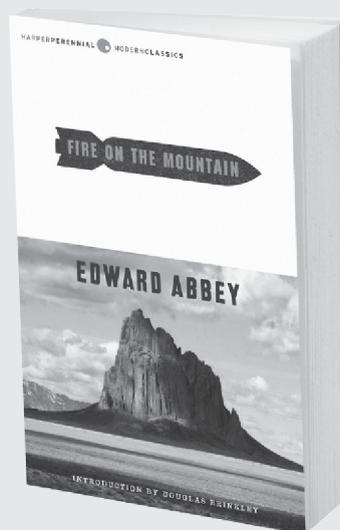


The Cove: A Novel Ron Rash

"Rash develops his story masterfully; the large cast of characters is superbly realized, as is the xenophobia that accompanies the war, and Rash brings the various narrative threads together at the conclusion of the novel with formidable strength and pathos."

—*Library Journal* (starred review)

Ecco: 978-0-06-180420-5 (pb)
\$14.99 (\$16.99 Can.) • 272 pages



Fire on the Mountain Edward Abbey

Introduction by Douglas Brinkley

"Abbey can attain a kind of glory in his writing. He takes scenes that have been well-traveled by other writers, and re-creates them as traditional American myths."

—*New York Times Book Review*

Harper Perennial: 978-0-06-219390-2 (pb)
\$14.99 (\$16.99 Can.) • 208 pages

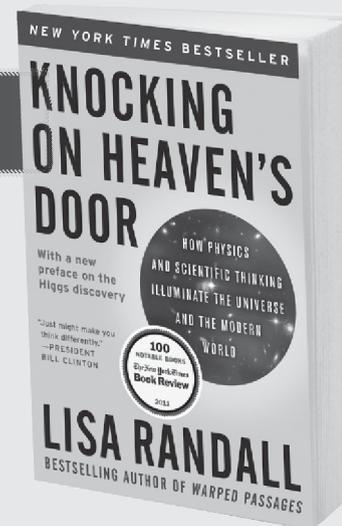
With a new preface about the discovery of the Higgs boson

Knocking on Heaven's Door: How Physics and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the Universe and the Modern World Lisa Randall

"Many books call to mind superlatives, but this one has them all. . . Read this book today to understand the science of tomorrow."

—Steven Pinker

Ecco: 978-0-06-172373-5 (pb)
\$16.99 (\$18.99 Can.) • 480 pages



HARPER PERENNIAL

www.harperacademic.com

ECCO



Lincoln at the

WHEN JOHN FORD first asked Henry Fonda to play Lincoln, the actor said no. “I can’t play Lincoln. That’s like playing God,” he explained. “You’re thinking of the Great Emancipator,” responded the director. “This is the jack-legged lawyer from Springfield.” Fonda relented, and the result was *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), the best film ever made about Lincoln—until now.

Steven Spielberg’s *Lincoln* both overturns a century of cinematic portrayals of the 16th president of the United States and challenges a decades-long scholarly, if not popular, vision of him as halfhearted and reluctant in his efforts to eradicate slavery. Daniel Day-Lewis doesn’t just portray Lincoln, he inhabits him, giving us not a stick figure but a beleaguered leader whose crafty political genius leads to passage of the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery. The film restores for our time a vision of Lincoln as a tireless opponent of slavery and, in the process, speaks to the political problems we face as a nation today.

The most important films on historical topics have always been tied to cultural moments, shaping and revealing assumptions about the past. None, of course, has been more controversial than *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), D.W. Griffith’s silent film about the Civil War and Reconstruction. President Woodrow Wilson supposedly described it as like “writing history with lightning.”

That film is remembered for its second part, which made heroes of white Southern Klansmen “protecting” themselves against radicals and blacks. The less frequently discussed first part offers a portrait of Lincoln (played by Joseph Henabery, who had a long career as a director). There is no reference to Lincoln as an emancipator; rather, he is a friend of the South, whose assassination, depicted in the film, removes his

“fostering hand” from the process of Reconstruction.

Griffith came back to Lincoln 15 years later for *Abraham Lincoln* (1930). It remains the only biopic that attempts to cover the president’s life in its entirety. Played by Walter Huston, from a script co-written by the poet and novelist Stephen Vincent Benét, Lincoln is a man of great physical strength, self-deprecating humor, paralyzing melancholy, and deep ambition. Much is made of his early life, particularly his love for the doomed Ann Rutledge. Once we arrive at the Civil War, slavery is barely mentioned. The theme of Lincoln’s life is that the Union must be preserved, an aphorism stated repeatedly. Griffith reprises the vision of Lincoln as great reconciler. As the war nears its end he says, “I shall deal with them as if they had never been away.”

Griffith was from Kentucky, and his nostalgia for the Old South fit with a general shift in historical literature focusing not on the moral issue of slavery but on the lost glory of Southern life. Sympathetic to the South, some scholars, like Charles W. Ramsdell, blamed Lincoln for starting the war.

But in the popular imagination during the 1930s, as Americans suffered through the Depression, Lincoln was seen as a man of the people and became an object of veneration. President Herbert Hoover, another Republican, invoked Lincoln repeatedly, but so too did President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat, who used Lincoln to remind Americans of the challenge to preserve “a people’s government for a people’s good.” Carl Sandburg’s four-volume *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, which appeared in 1939, portrayed a folk hero whose uncanny leadership maintained American democracy through unprecedented conflict, a message not lost on Roosevelt as he faced a mounting crisis in Europe.



DREAMWORKS PICTURES, TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX, THE KOBAL COLLECTION AT ART RESOURCE, NY

Daniel Day-Lewis turned down the part of Lincoln until he felt he could overcome his reverence for the man enough to portray him.

Lincoln is “in one of his gloomy moods,” someone says. “I want to be left alone,” the man himself declares.

AND SO HE WOULD BE, for the most part, until now. To be sure, cultural depictions of Lincoln have remained omnipresent. They include the television miniseries *Sandburg's Lincoln*, in 1974, which featured Hal Holbrook as Lincoln (in Spielberg's film, Holbrook plays Francis Preston Blair Sr., an adviser to the president known as “Lincoln's conservative”), and *Lincoln*, in 1988, with Sam Waterston in the title role. Anyone who came of age in the 1980s is likely to recall the Lincoln who appeared in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989) and declares at the end, “Party on, dudes.” Yet neither those television shows nor the assorted other sightings of Lincoln in popular culture did anything to restore the president to the prominence he held in the 1930s as an exemplar for the times.

The decline in interest can be attributed to several factors. The civil-rights movement focused attention not on emancipation but on the disappointing results of freedom: poverty, disenfranchisement, segregation. Martin Luther King Jr. paid homage to Lincoln at the beginning of his “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered in 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial, but lamented that a century after emancipation, “the Negro still is not free.” Others were less generous to the Great Emancipator. In a magazine article in 1968, and again in his 2000 book *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*, Lerone Bennett Jr., executive editor of *Ebony*, denounced Lincoln as a racist and white supremacist whose actions against slavery were dilatory and halfhearted at best.

Parallel to the civil-rights movement was a shift in scholarly focus away from elites and toward the social history of ordinary people. Historians examined the lives of the enslaved and began to grasp the role they played in shaping their own destiny. That trend culminated in the 1990s with the Freedmen and Southern Society Project, which began in the 1970s and, over the decades, has unearthed tens of thousands of documents and published multiple volumes that have revolutionized our understanding of the lives of African-Americans in slavery and

freedom. The voices of the supposedly inarticulate were being heard.

By LOUIS P. MASUR

As the focus shifted to slaves and their experience in the Civil War, Lincoln and the role of political elites came under new scrutiny. Some scholars argued that Lincoln did not free the slaves; rather, the slaves emancipated themselves by taking advantage of the chaos of war and running away. Lincoln, the story emphasized, issued an Emancipation Proclamation that applied only to those slaves who had not been reached by Union armies and that did not touch slavery in areas under military control, nor in the four slave states that remained in the Union. That was taken as proof of his lack of conviction. Furthermore, the document was stingy in its expression of abolitionist faith.

Criticism of the proclamation's prose was present from the start: One official in 1862 said it was “written in the meanest and most routine style.” On the cusp of the civil-rights movement, the condemnation returned: The historian Richard Hofstadter proclaimed that the Emancipation Proclamation “had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading.”

And so the powerful story of Lincoln and emancipation dwindled, a casualty of changing times as well as shifting assumptions.

Only recently has the narrative regained vitality. The years leading up to and following the Lincoln bicentennial, in 2009, yielded a wealth of new studies that provided fresh perspectives. Gone was the hagiography that characterized much of the writing of earlier generations. Instead, a more fully realized Lincoln emerged, one that emphasized the man's greatness.

Doris Kearns Goodwin's 2005 *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (the basis for Spielberg's film) highlighted Lincoln's leadership and skill at bringing his competitors into his cabinet. James M. McPherson's *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (2008) offered new insights into the president's development as a shrewd military man. Harold Holzer co-chaired the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and brought out a steady stream of books, includ-

Continued on Following Page

Movies

Filmmakers and playwrights, however, avoided Lincoln's years in the presidency, choosing instead to allude to cultural anxieties over democracy and totalitarianism indirectly, through reverence for a Lincoln who fought for justice.

The genius of Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*, justly celebrated as a masterpiece of American cinema, is visual as much as narrative. As the critic Geoffrey O'Brien observed a few years ago, “Ford seeks a cinematic language fit for democratic myth.” Of less importance than what Henry Fonda says as Lincoln is how he looks, how he is framed by the camera. He always seems alone, even when in a crowd. He stares away, but viewers cannot take their eyes off of him. This is Lincoln as icon, foreshadowing Lincoln as monument. The film ends with a portent of what is ahead as Lincoln walks up a hill through a lightning storm toward his destiny.

Although *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940), based on a Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Robert E. Sherwood, also stays grounded in New Salem and Springfield, Ill., it is the first film to deal with slavery directly. Lincoln denounces the “monstrous injustice of slavery” and delivers his “House Divided” speech (“a house divided against itself cannot stand”) at the state Capitol as he accepts the Republican nomination to run for the Senate against Stephen A. Douglas. He is shown declaring that a nation cannot permanently endure “half-slave and half-free”—and also, in debates with Douglas, arguing against racial equality.

Raymond Massey's performance is not nearly as compelling as Fonda's, but it also conveys the dualism of Lincoln's character: mirth and misery. Despite some well-composed scenes by the director, John Cromwell, the effect is achieved here not by showing but by telling:

Spielberg's Lincoln fits with our cynicism about politics, but it redeems the enterprise by suggesting that battles can be won, agreement can be reached.

Continued From Preceding Page
ing *Lincoln President-Elect: The Great Secession Winter 1860-1861* (2008), which illuminated Lincoln's political craftiness. Allen C. Guelzo also produced numerous books, including *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (2004) and *Lincoln: A Very Short Introduction* (2009), which reemphasized Lincoln's antislavery credentials. Eric Foner's *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (which won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for History) explored how Lincoln's views of slavery changed—and steadily grew closer to that of the Radicals. All helped restore Lincoln to a position of prominence.

But he has also remained a target. Libertarian pundits have denounced Lincoln as a dictator and a tyrant who abused the authority of his office and ushered in the bureaucratic, regulatory state they despise. Works by the economists Thomas J. DiLorenzo (*The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War*, 2002) and Charles Adams (*When in the Course of Human Events: Arguing the Case for Southern Secession*, 2000), for example, have sold well and appeal to those less interested in the problem of emancipation than in the problem of big government.

LINCOLN the statist plays an important role in Spielberg's film. The president justifies the use of war powers that give him broad authority to act, and he will stop at nothing in his relentless effort to win passage of the 13th Amendment. "I am the president of the United States, clothed in immense power, and you will procure me these votes!" he demands at one point. Tony Kushner's screenplay brings Lincoln to the edge of tyrannical rule (his Democratic opponents certainly view him as a dictator) but then pulls back. Sandburg famously described Lincoln as a "man of both steel and velvet." There is plenty of steel to go around in the film, but it is the velvet that captivates.

Lincoln is nothing if not a Shakespearean tragedy. (Lincoln himself, a great admirer of the Bard, would have appreciated that.) We get not only a doomed, ambitious hero with whom we identify, but also domestic drama (Sally Field captures the often difficult yet sympathetic Mary Todd Lincoln, an "anti-Lady Macbeth," as one reviewer calls her) and well-timed comic interludes (James Spader plays the political operative W.N. Bilbo, a Falstaffian character).

Daniel Day-Lewis was initially offered his part in 2003 and kept turning it down until he felt he could overcome his reverence for Lincoln enough to portray him. The wait was well worth it. The actor summons Lincoln from the dead. His high-pitched tenor captures the voice described by contemporaries, as do the sadness in the eyes and the grin when he tells yet another story. This Lincoln is simultaneously melancholy and merry, despairing and determined. This Lincoln is fully human.

No actor has done more than the British-born Day-Lewis to bring American historical characters, fictional and real, to life on the screen: Hawkeye in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), Newland Archer in *The Age of Innocence* (1993), John Proctor in *The Crucible* (1996), Bill (the Butcher) Cutting in *Gangs of New York* (2002), and Daniel Plainview in *There Will Be Blood* (2007). But Lincoln was something different. "I never, ever felt that depth of love for another human being I never met," Day-Lewis recently told an interviewer.

But for a contrived opening scene (white and black soldiers reciting the Gettysburg Address to the president) and an inability to decide where to end (there are at least four denouements), Spielberg's directorial vision has never been more spare and precise. The film conjures Lincoln's world, down to the ticking of his actual pocket watch as recorded at the Smithsonian's history museum by the film's sound designer. Spielberg manages to avoid the sentimentality that characterizes many of his other films. Each scene is a tableau that allows personalities to emerge

merely from their physical relation to one another. There are moments that pay cinematic tribute to Ford, even occasionally to Griffith: Lincoln wrapped in a shawl; Lincoln in his stockings; Lincoln photographed from behind, forever moving away, ghostlike, just out of reach.

It was shrewd of Spielberg to focus on the final four months of Lincoln's life and to make the fight over passage of the 13th Amendment in the House of Representatives the centerpiece of the film. This is politics as hand-to-hand combat, and it portrays Lincoln not as idealist or moralist but as pragmatist and realist. Doing so does not diminish him but elevates him. It is a portrait that fits snugly with most recent scholarship, which should come as no surprise, since Goodwin, McPherson, and Holzer, among others, were consulted.

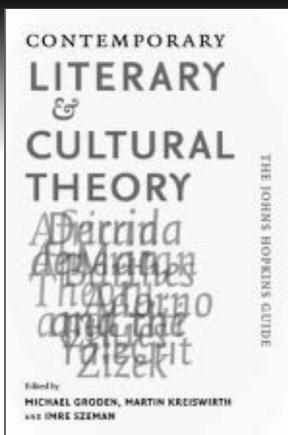
This Lincoln fits with our own cynicism about the political process. But it redeems the enterprise by suggesting that hard-fought battles can be won, that bipartisan agreement can be reached, even over the most intractable issues.

Perhaps that is why Spielberg delayed release of the film until after the presidential election. Lincoln shows that one person can indeed make a difference, but only when working with others—and only when willing to compromise. In a crucial scene, the Radical Republican Rep. Thaddeus Stevens (played brilliantly by Tommy Lee Jones) restrains himself from calling for equality for blacks, something he has agitated for his entire life, in order to hold on to the Democratic votes and abstentions necessary to pass the bill and abolish slavery. It is a hard lesson in political reality.

Spielberg's Lincoln is a politician for our time. The film restores his reputation as an emancipator, someone who was always antislavery and who even endorsed limited black suffrage, privately in 1864 and publicly a few days before his assassination. It does so by reiterating a faith in process, in slow, deliberate, incremental transformation, in proceeding on an issue only when the time is right, and then pouncing.

More important, the film serves to restore our faith in what political leaders, under the most trying of circumstances, can sometimes accomplish. In October, Spielberg donated \$1-million to the super PAC Priorities USA, which supported President Obama's re-election. Now that Obama has won, the gift of this film may prove even more valuable. ■

Louis P. Masur is a professor of American studies and history at Rutgers University at New Brunswick. His most recent book is Lincoln's Hundred Days: The Emancipation Proclamation and the War for the Union (Harvard University Press, 2012).



Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory

The Johns Hopkins Guide

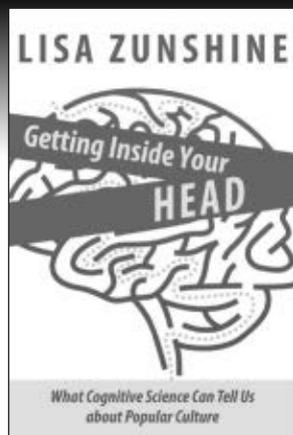
edited by Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman

The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism is the definitive resource for students and scholars of literary theory and for philosophical reflection on literature and culture. This mini-guide consists of entries from the *Guide* and newly commissioned articles that focus on contemporary topics and figures.

"This comprehensive and easily understood reference book will serve as an indispensable guide for helping students or scholars assess and discuss an overwhelming body of material, especially such 'buzz' topics as multiculturalism."

—*Bloomsbury Review*, reviewing *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*

\$45.00 paper



Getting Inside Your Head

What Cognitive Science Can Tell Us about Popular Culture

Lisa Zunshine

Cognitive scientists have a special term for the evolved cognitive adaptation that makes us attribute mental states to other people through observation of their body language; they call it theory of mind. Lisa Zunshine uses research in theory of mind to look at movies, musicals, novels, stand-up comedy, mock-documentaries, photography, and reality television.

"This is the cutting edge of literary scholarship . . . Presents a rich array of innovative approaches to textual analysis for the researcher wishing to explore the cognitive revolution."

—*Cognitive Cultural Studies Review*, reviewing Zunshine's *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*

\$29.95 cloth



THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS

1-800-537-5487 • press.jhu.edu



HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON, MAGNUM PHOTOS

Albert Camus

“Even my death will be contested. And yet what I desire most today is a quiet death, which would bring peace to those whom I love.”

ALBERT CAMUS’S PREDICTION has been borne out—but not his hope. As France approaches next year’s centennial of the French Algerian writer’s birth, controversies have crackled over the meaning of his life and work. These battles, which have swept up intellectuals and politicians, have as much to do with France’s troubled past—in particular its ties with its former colony Algeria—as they do with our own troubling present.

Camus was remarkable witness to his times. Like George Orwell, he was right about the plagues of the era—totalitarianism and Communism. Also like Orwell, Camus’s lucid gaze, blunt honesty, and persistent humanity have made him as discomfiting and indispensable since his death in 1960 as he was during his short life.

Over the past couple of years, official efforts to commemorate Camus have faltered. In 2009, then-President Nicolas Sarkozy’s proposal that the writer’s remains be moved to the Panthéon, the neo-Classical pile dedicated to France’s “great men,” was assailed by critics, outraged that the conservative president was trying to yoke his name to a writer who had spent his life on the political left. While Sarkozy believed that he needed Camus, concluded Camus’s biographer Olivier Todd, “Camus has no need for Sarkozy.”

More recently, ideological and political collisions have capsized plans for a grand centennial exhibition in Aix-en-Provence, home of the Camus archives. Two exhibit directors, Benjamin Stora, a historian of French Algeria, and Michel Onfray, a popular philosopher (and author of a controversial biography of Camus), were toppled by political foes.

By **ROBERT
ZARETSKY**

The Stranger Who Resembles Us

The result has been paralysis. Officials in Aix insist that an exhibit, though more modest given Paris’s refusal to subsidize the event, will nevertheless be held. The title of Stora’s torpedoed exhibit, “Albert Camus: The Stranger Who Resembles Us,” has never seemed truer.

FEW WRITERS WERE MORE CONFLICTED over personal and national identity than Camus. He was a *pied-noir*, the moniker given to immigrants who came to French Algeria during the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of them came from elsewhere in Europe, becoming citizens of a nation, France, whose language they did not speak, whose history they did not know, and whose soil they did not set foot on.

Algeria was nevertheless considered part of France, even with several million Arabs and Berbers who were denied the rights of citizenship. By the 1950s, Camus resembled one of his mythic heroes, Prometheus, chained not to a rock but to the impasse of Algeria’s resistance to a foreign occupation—a French occupation. He labored for a solution that would satisfy the imperatives of justice for both Arabs and *pieds-noirs*, risking his life in pursuit of an impossible peace.

Continued on Following Page

Continued From Preceding Page

Camus's efforts failed, and he fell silent—a public silence that began in 1956 and remained almost unbroken until his death, four years later. One of the two notable interruptions was the publication, in 1958, of *Chroniques algériennes*, the collection of Camus's articles on Algeria. (In May, Harvard University Press will publish Arthur Goldhammer's masterly translation.)

The second exception was Camus's controversial reply, in Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957, to an Algerian student who was hectoring him for his public silence. Camus reminded the student that he had long denounced the political and economic repression of Arabs and Berbers, but that he also condemned the use of blind violence by Algerian nationalists: "People are now planting bombs in the tramways of Algiers. My mother might be on one of those tramways. If that is justice, then I prefer my mother." If that doesn't sound quite right, it is because the familiar quotation—"I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice"—was the invention of the French newspaper *Le Monde*, which sympathized with the cause of Algerian nationalists and cordially despised Camus. *Le Monde* published a correction three days later.

After the so-called second Algerian War, or "black decade" of the 1990s, which pitted the government against Islamic fundamentalists, leaving more than 100,000 civilians dead, several Algerian writers discovered Camus as one of their own. Secular, moderate, and French-speaking, these Algerians saw a parallel between their own embattled identity vis-à-vis Muslim fundamentalists and Camus's insistence on the Algerian identity of the *piets-noirs*.

These Algerian writers are drawn to Camus first because of his Algerian roots but also because his writing evokes universal values. That is perhaps why his spirit has hovered over the Arab Spring. Yesterday it was Camus, today it is Bouazizi, a Tunisian intellectual recently affirmed, referring to the young man whose suicide ignited the liberation movement in Tunisia and much of the rest of North Africa. "He is perhaps no longer part of our world, but he is not silent. ... His cry is primal: He demands the right to dignity, to work. He demands the right to enjoy the rights all humans should enjoy." The words are redolent of language from *The Rebel*.

Camus wrote against the deadly sophistries of communism and its penchant for rationalizing mass murder and political repression, but his lucid analysis also applies to the autocratic states of North Africa, which had long emphasized order over democracy, the status quo over the uncertainties of change. We were asked to overlook the corruption and brutality, to excuse it in the same paternalistic terms—the people are not ready for democracy—that Arab leaders used even as they were being pushed out the door.

In *The Rebel*, Camus described revolt as the response of human beings who, pushed too far, reject "the spectacle of irrationality, confronted with an unjust and incomprehensible condition." For young Egyptians under an octogenarian *rais*, propped up by a murderous police force and billions in American military aid, for young Tunisians under a kleptomaniac ruler whose family turned the nation into a warehouse to pillage, and for young Libyans under a lunatic whose rule rivaled Caligula's over Rome, the moment finally arrived, as Camus put it, that "the outrage be brought to an end."

Before our age of social networks, Camus understood that rebellion swells from an individual to a collective response. "In our daily trials, rebellion plays the same role as does the '*cogito*' in the realm of thought. ... I rebel—therefore we exist." Something has been violated in the individual that "does not belong to him alone, but which is common ground where all men—even the man who insults and oppresses him—have a natural community." For that reason, the rebel does not deny the humanity of his master; he denies him only as master. In order to exist, "man must rebel, but rebellion must respect the limits it discovers in itself—a limit where minds meet and, in meeting, begin to exist."

Therein lies the potential tragedy of the Arab Spring. The rebels in Tunisia and Egypt were acutely aware of the limits their humanity imposed, but the growing influence of Islamist parties, and their questionable adherence to the values that propelled them to power, threatens to transform spring into winter.

Far from meeting, minds instead verge on colliding. In *The Rebel*, Camus depicts rebellion, grounded in our shared humanity with others, including our foes, as modest and bounded by self-imposed constraints, while revolution, bound to abstract goals, is totalizing and without limit. Camus had in mind the Terror of the French Revolution and the gulag of the Soviet Union, but he would not have been surprised by, say, the Iranian revolution of 1979 or the path that the Arab

Spring may take. Now, as then, "triumphant revolution" reveals itself "by means of its police, its trials, and its excommunications."

Are all rebellions fated to take this path? Must they be unmade by the very same dynamic that led to their making? Camus places a desperate wager on the rebel's persistent humanity, but he does not explain how rebellion can be maintained without spilling into either revolution or reaction. At times he even seems to suggest that rebellion is, by its very nature, a noble but impossible ideal. For Rieux, the taciturn hero of *The Plague*, resistance against disease amounts to little more than "a never-ending defeat." For that reason, Camus insisted that there was no reason for hope but little reason for despair—a sentiment perhaps better suited for the ancient tragedians than modern political theorists, but one whose hard-won wisdom will always abide.

CAMUS'S CHRONIC INABILITY to be lulled by the rationalizations we give for our own or others' actions, his infernal gift for forcing not just his own self, but also those around him, to reconsider deeply held beliefs, makes him our contemporary. Though we no longer face the threats of Nazism or Communism, we will always face a different kind of threat—the temptation to avert our eyes from our own age's man-made plagues, whether global warming or civil wars. Herein lies Camus's abiding significance. He had a habit, as Tony Judt wrote, of looking "in the mirror of his own moral discomfort." His work and life, in turn, hold that same mirror up to rest of us.

For Judt, Camus was, in a way, a Gallic George Orwell. The comparison is not unique to Judt but has been proposed by many writers and public figures, from Susan Sontag to Newt Gingrich.

The resemblances are, in fact, riveting. Both men were committed antifascists but also committed antitotalitarians; both risked their lives in the struggle against fascism (Orwell in Spain, Camus in occupied France); both were journalists and essayists as well as novelists (Camus the better novelist, Orwell the more skilled essayist); both, though despised by many on the European left, never surrendered their identification with the values of socialism; both, equally hostile to the imperial policies of their respective nations, lived parts of their lives in the colonies and refused to simplify their complex reality. Both men were also inveterate smokers, tubercular, and dead at the age of 46.

Most important, both men were moralists. While a moralizer has the answer before he is asked the question, a moralist has only questions after he hears the available answers. Defending *Animal Farm* against left-wing critics, Orwell declared: "Liberty is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." Around the same time, Camus vowed: "What belongs to the concentration camp, even socialism, must be called a concentration camp. In a sense, I shall never again be polite." Like Orwell, Camus condemned himself to a solitary public existence but always insisted on solidarity with the oppressed. For both men, this engagement amounted to a form of ethical exigency.

Obviously, the comparison goes only so far. While Camus read and admired Orwell's writings, the Englishman seems to have been unaware of Camus's work. One can, as a result, only imagine Orwell's response to the urgent tone and existential tension of, say, Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus." Yet the author of *1984* would perhaps have applauded his contemporary's claim: "Judging whether or not life is worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy." The value of that life depends on the lucidity and honesty with which we live it, our suspicion of abstractions and ends, our embrace of details and means, and our certitude that answers must always be provisional.

There is one last, mostly overlooked quality shared by Camus and Orwell: They both loved nature. Orwell's attachment to the countryside undoubtedly contributed to his early death; his stay on the island of Jura, off the west coast of Scotland, weakened his tubercular lungs. And the iconic black-and-white images of a pensive existentialist make us forget that Camus loved life and nature—and never accepted the label of existentialist.

In *The First Man*, his unfinished autobiographical novel, which was published posthumously, Camus recalls a childhood game he played at school. On windy days, the boys gather palm branches, rush to the terrace that overlooks the desert plains, and face the wind while gripping the branches. "The branch would immediately be plastered against them, they would breathe its smell of dust and straw. ... The winner was the one who first reached the end of the terrace without letting the wind tear the branch from his hands, then he would stand erect holding the palm branch at arm's length ... struggling victoriously for as long as possible against the raging force of the wind." Perhaps that is the image of Camus to which we should cling. ■

Robert Zaretsky, a professor of French history at the University of Houston Honors College, is the author of *Albert Camus: Elements of a Life* (Cornell University Press, 2010). His next book, *A Life Worth Living: Albert Camus and the Quest for Meaning*, will be published next year by Harvard University Press.



JONATHAN TWINGLEY FOR THE CHRONICLE REVIEW

Why Memorize a Poem?

By CATHERINE
ROBSON

THE POWER'S STILL OUT. You have a supply of batteries and candles, but you're not sure you want to spend the whole evening pointing a flashlight at a book or reading by the light of a solitary flame. What might you do instead?

How about spending the next hour or so with a single poem? Somewhere on your shelves, there's probably an anthology or two, or a slim volume of verse; maybe you have cellphone reception, so you could take a moment to pull some poetry off the Web. The poem doesn't need to be very long, but choose something that's complete in itself, not an extract. Find a poem that the poet fashioned to be its own world, and then start to make it part of yours.

Because you are not only going to read this poem—you are going to repeat it out loud, line by line, until you know it by heart. After a while, you'll turn off the flashlight or blow out the candle and say it all the way through once, twice, three more times. And then you'll stop and think. This is where it starts to get interesting. And then you'll recite it again.

Perhaps you went for a sonnet. There's something very satisfying about those little rooms built of 14 lines of iambic pentameter, whether they are constructed in the Petrarchan pattern (an octave

and a sestet) or the Shakespearean shape (three quatrains and a final, clinching, couplet). Or perhaps you were pulled into the orbit of an apparently simple little poem with short lines, a driving rhythm, and a steady sequence of strong and definite rhymes.

Perhaps you chose some verses by William Blake or Emily Dickinson. You noted how the regularity of the poem's form and the simplicity of its words made memorizing it relatively quick and easy, but at the same time, you were proud and pleased with your achievement, and so you said it over, for fun, some four or five times. And then you stopped and thought. Only then did you realize what had happened. You were riding in a chariot of fire. You were carrying a loaded gun. The next time you said the lines, they exploded in your head. Neither you nor the poem would ever be the same again.

Or maybe I have been wrong to think that on this dark evening

Continued on Following Page

Continued From Preceding Page

you decided to find a poem that was new to you. Perhaps you broke the silence in your room by giving voice to lines you learned long ago, lines you were once required to learn at school or in college, or which you decided to memorize one day because you were in love, or in pain, or simply caught up by a skein of language that demanded you make it your own.

What happened when you recited that long-held poem tonight? Did it bring back memories of the time when you first committed it to heart, or other occasions on which you said it out loud for others or silently just to yourself? Did your tongue falter in the places that always used to catch you out, or had new chasms opened up in your memory of its landscape? Or were you gratified to discover that word followed word and line followed line without obvious effort, that the whole poem seemed to have been resting quietly inside you all these years, just waiting for the moment when you would call its measured tones back into being?

Did you find yourself thinking about it differently this time around? Were you drawn to stretches in its fabric that you once ignored or never really understood? Which had changed: the poem or you? Or both?

For the most part, English speakers no longer live in societies that require memorization of poetry in their elementary-education systems. Yet we have a hazy sense that things were different way



When everything else has been taken from you, a memorized poem remains.

back when. We are pretty sure, for instance, that in this country, all children used to regularly stand up in class and recite a piece. Some of us even recall occasions when older relatives summoned up evidence of that lost world by polishing off a dusty gem and bringing “Thanatopsis” or a piece by Longfellow

back into the light.

In contrast, our personal experiences of reciting poems from memory are probably much more random and idiosyncratic—outcomes of individual whims or those of an inspiring or exacting instructor. (Professors of medieval literature have been especially assiduous in this respect. Quite a few of us who were English majors in the past half-century still have some portion of the first 20 lines of Chaucer’s prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* rattling around in our heads: “Whan that April with his shoures soote ...”)

Every so often, there is a new burst of enthusiasm for a more general restoration of the practice—galvanized, for instance, by the former poet laureate Robert Pinsky’s Favorite Poem Project in the late 1990s, or the NEA-instituted Poetry Out Loud recitation contest for high-school students that has received generous support from the Poetry Foundation since 2005. But a large-scale return to the recitation culture of the past seems highly unlikely.

Numerous and at times complex factors enabled the rise of the memorized poem in the public-education systems of the 19th century. But the single most significant reason for its huge success is easily stated. In those learning environments, rote memorization was the dominant method of teaching all subjects, including read-

ing, and poetic material worked especially well in that form of instruction.

As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, attacks on the mindlessness of this teaching mode grew in number and vehemence, but by this point rote learning’s most prestigious variant, verse memorization, had lodged itself firmly in the DNA of elementary education. The force of tradition played the major part in keeping it there, but supporters of the exercise were also adept at finding a wide range of justifications for the memorized poem’s central place in the curriculum.

OVER TIME, however, three key areas of thought developed such profound differences, both from one another and from their 19th-century counterparts, that they no longer shared enough common ground to support the continued presence of recitation in schools. Views of juvenile education shifted dramatically. Beliefs about the needs and abilities of the individual child changed beyond recognition. And perceptions of the function of poetry, and its relationship to society, were utterly transformed. For all those reasons, a phenomenon that for many years had been a regular feature of mass experience was demoted to the status of an optional pursuit.

It may be tempting to lament the passing of an era when one and all were seemingly united by a joint stock of poetic knowledge stored inside their heads, but the once-mandatory exercise was not universally beloved. For some, standing tongue-tied in front of mocking classmates and a threatening teacher when the words wouldn’t come was a hated and humiliating ordeal. For others—perhaps for the majority—it was just something to get through, a practice that meant little at the time, and still less later on.

But there’s a world of difference between being forced to memorize a poem and choosing to do it off one’s own bat. The pleasures of this exercise are many: It can be amusing or moving, challenging and satisfying, simple or profound. And sometimes it provides much more than pleasure.

Clint Eastwood’s 2009 movie, *Invictus*, dwells upon the strength that Nelson Mandela drew from his memory of W.E. Henley’s poem during 27 years of captivity. And one of the most devastating chapters in *If This Is a Man*, Primo Levi’s account of his experiences in Auschwitz, records the moment when the author recites the Ulysses canto from the *Inferno* to a fellow inmate and understands for the first time the terrifying implications of Dante’s words. There are memoirs aplenty about the degradations of life in the Soviet gulag, in which survivors give thanks for the saving grace of Pushkin’s poetry committed to memory in happier days.

When everything else has been taken from you, a memorized poem remains. It is there to remind you of who you once were, who you are now, and who you might be. It is there to remind you that there is a world beyond the self, a world in which someone once joined word and word and word to make something that had never existed before, a world in which the possibility for change, for seeing differently, is always there. It is there to remind you that you are not alone. When you recite a poem, you are in conversation with another.

You don’t need to be in desperate circumstances to appreciate the power of the memorized poem. You don’t even need a power cut. Go on, try it. Consider beginning with a poem written in the first person—perhaps Thomas Hardy’s “I Look Into My Glass,” Dickinson’s “I dwell in Possibility,” or those famous 16 lines by Henley. And then ask yourself: Where does the “I” of the poem end and your “I” begin? ■

Catherine Robson is an associate professor of English at New York University. She is the author of Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem, just published by Princeton University Press.

A Million Men With Teaspoons

HYDROLOGISTS expect that by the middle of this century, three-quarters of the world's population will suffer shortages of fresh water. Already, Steven J. Mithen writes in *Thirst: Water and Power in the Ancient World* (Harvard University Press), the numbers of thirsty and unwashed are "horrendous."

As his title suggests, the British archaeologist's focus is not on the modern era, but rather on the struggles of ancient civilizations to secure adequate water supplies. A professor at the University of Reading, he also asks, however, whether modern nations can learn from the ingenious feats of hydraulic engineering that the ancients performed to quench their thirst and irrigate their crops.

His account begins with the prehistoric communities of the Levant—part of the modern-day Middle East—where farming societies first arose, around 9500 BC, followed by the first urban communities, some six thousand years later. Mithen asks: Was it water management that allowed Neolithic peoples to advance from stone to metal tools and weapons during the Bronze Age?

Apparently it was, judging by schemes in Mesopotamia and South America that took shape between 6000 and 4500 BC.

Mithen traveled to see the ruins of grand projects. In the Americas he pondered how the Hohokam people, of the area near Phoenix today, and the Incas, particularly at Machu Picchu, secured their supplies.

The author details other examples of the ancients' genius for hydraulics. In 1500 BC the inhabitants of the Mycenaean city of Tiryns diverted a river to save their crops from flooding. Around 530 BC, when access to a spring was blocked, engineers on the Greek island of Samos excavated a tunnel right through a mountain. In China, the 1,000-mile Grand Canal transported goods and troops in the seventh century AD. Joseph Needham, a renowned archaeologist of ancient China, referred to its builders as "a million men with teaspoons."

Impressive, too, were the baths and fountains of ancient Rome, along with the Emperor Augustus's *naumachia*, an artificial lake built in 2 BC for the re-enactment of naval battles, and Augustus's own ostentatious way of demonstrating the nexus of hydraulic engineering and power.

In Cambodia Mithen visited the West Baray, a six-square-mile reservoir built in the 11th century AD at Angkor Wat. "When I saw it from the air, I thought it was a sea!" Mithen says by phone from Reading. "What surprised me most about these projects, much more than I anticipated when I started my research, was the sheer scale of the projects these ancient civilizations had taken on."

Thirst marks a shift in Mithen's research. His previous work focused on earlier periods, when humans evolved as hunter-gatherers. In his best-known book, *The Prehistory*



STEVEN MITHEN

of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion, and Science (Thames & Hudson, 1996), he developed his theory of "cognitive fluidity": *Homo sapiens*'s ability to integrate thoughts and perceptions, while the cognition of such other hominids as Neanderthals and *Homo erectus* took place in separate compartments—the social, the material, the technical, the natural.

Mithen hopes *Thirst* will help remedy the mixed record of research into ancient hydraulics. Although evidence "may be partial and biased," he writes, "its recovery and interpretation have been one of the great achievements of archaeology." Yet a key conclusion of his study is not how much we know but how little.

"Excellent work has been done in the past, but little of

it was archaeological work, as opposed to theoretical," he says. A celebrated example is a 1957 volume by Karl Wittfogel, a historian and Sinologist. In *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, he speculated that large-scale water projects must have begun when despots established "hydraulic empires," in which complex bureaucracies commanded forced labor and harshly suppressed dissent.

Some scholars have not been persuaded by Wittfogel's hypothesis, including Mithen: "It remained prominent for 30 or 40 years

before people began questioning whether the evidence stands up for it in such locations as the Near East and Meso-America." The theory ignores the histories of many small communities in which irrigation began from the bottom up, he says.

Given "a few million pounds," Mithen says, he would mount a much larger research project, one that would employ teams of postdoctoral researchers. In China, for example, an extensive literature exists that could be mined, "but I was only able to write about aspects for which there are readily available English translations." Extensive use of such modern tools as remote sensing would help.

He is interested in the implications of his research for today's environmental challenges: "People are tired of reading doom and gloom about the modern day. I thought that if you could do a book where you could use the water projects of ancient civilizations to bring attention to the present day, it would be a worthy thing to do."

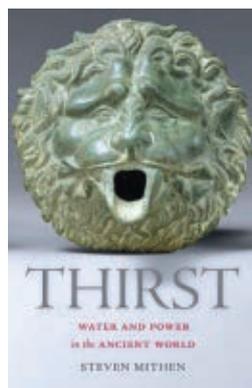
As global warming progresses, competition over water supplies will intensify. "Large areas of the globe may become uninhabitable, such as parts of the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. The scale of human migration may be substantially increased," Mithen says.

"The future looks bleak," he writes in *Thirst*. "Will we reach a threshold of water demand that even our most sophisticated systems of hydraulic engineering cannot satisfy?"

—PETER MONAGHAN

A bridge at Kursunlugerme, in Turkey, carried a Roman aqueduct, built in the fourth century AD, to Constantinople.

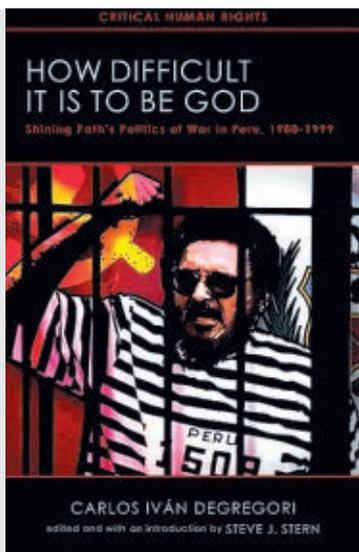
NOTA BENE



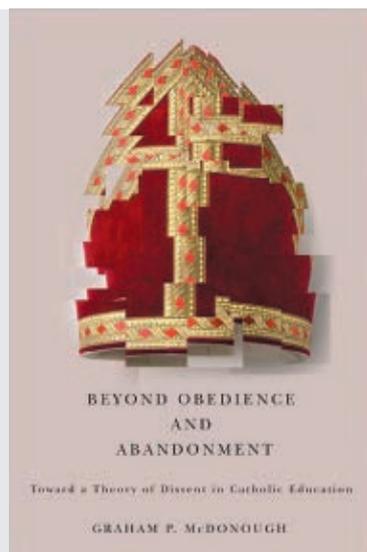
New Scholarly Books

Compiled by NINA C. AYOUB

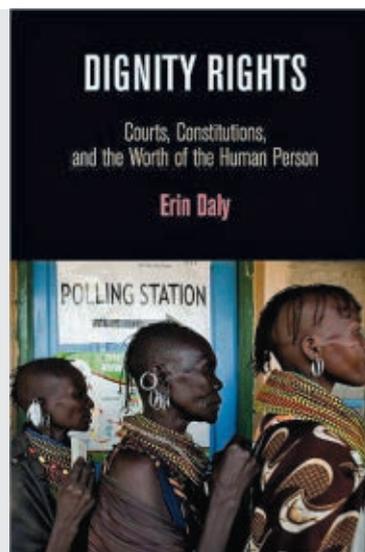
For additional books this week, go to chronicle.com/books



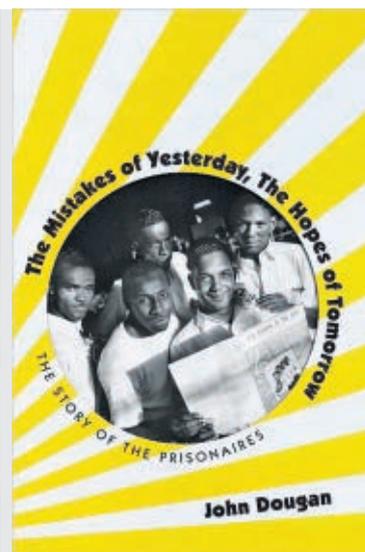
Anthropology



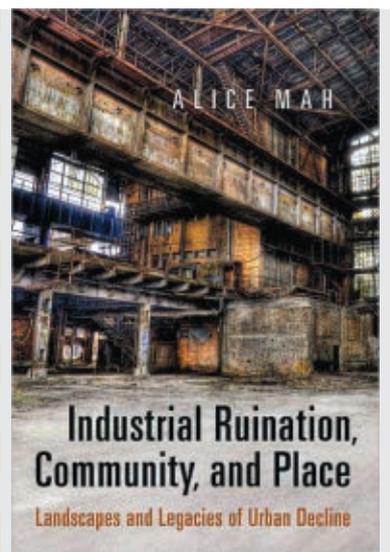
Education



Law



Music



Sociology

The following list has been compiled from information provided by the publishers. Prices and number of pages are sometimes approximate. Some publishers offer discounts to scholars and to people who order in bulk.

ANTHROPOLOGY

HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO BE GOD: SHINING PATH'S POLITICS OF WAR IN PERU, 1980-1999, by Carlos Iván Degregori, edited by Steve J. Stern (University of Wisconsin Press; 232 pages; \$29.95). Translation of a Peruvian anthropologist's study of the Maoist insurgent group.

ISLANDS OF LOVE, ISLANDS OF RISK: CULTURE AND HIV IN THE TROBRIANDS, by Katherine Lepani (Vanderbilt University Press; 264 pages; \$79.95 hardcover, \$34.95 paperback). Combines scholarly and personal perspectives in a study of tensions between public-health messages and the ritualized traditions of sexual freedom among the Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea.

KNOWING HISTORY IN MEXICO: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CITIZENSHIP, by Trevor Stack (University of New Mexico Press; 168 pages; \$45). Draws on fieldwork near Guadalajara in a study of links drawn in Mexico between knowing history and being a person of authority and a good citizen.

MADE IN MADAGASCAR: SAPPHIRES, ECOTOURISM, AND THE GLOBAL BAZAAR, by Andrew Walsh (University of Toronto Press; 128 pages; \$24.95). A study of the Ankarana region of northern Madagascar.

ARCHAEOLOGY

BECOMING WHITE CLAY: A HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF JICARILLA APACHE ENCLAVEMENT, by B. Sunday Eiselt (University of Utah Press; 320 pages; \$45). Combines archaeological and ethnohistorical data in a study of Jicarilla strategies of survival in New Mexico following their expulsion from the Plains.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ'S EARLY PAINTINGS AND THE CULTURE OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SEVILLE, by Tanya J. Tiffany (Penn State University Press; 256 pages; \$79.95). Topics include how the painter engaged the concerns and debates of the Andalusian city where he spent his formative years.

NO INNOCENT BYSTANDERS: PERFORMANCE ART AND AUDIENCE, by Frazer Ward (Dartmouth College Press/University Press of New England; 208 pages; \$85 hardcover, \$29.95 paperback). Explores the troubling relationship of the spectator vis a vis performance art; artists discussed include Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, and Marina Abramovic.

PLOTTING THE PRINCE: SHOTOKU CULTS AND THE MAPPING OF MEDIAEVAL JAPANESE BUDDHISM, by Kevin Gray Carr (University of Hawai'i Press; 264 pages; \$40).

Explores art from the 10th to the 14th century in a study of conceptual maps of the world created through the telling of stories about a prince (circa 573-622) credited with founding Buddhism in Japan.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LIFE: ISOCRATES AND THE PHILOSOPHERS, by Tarik Wareh (Center for Hellenic Studies, distributed by Harvard University Press; 264 pages; \$24.95). A study of Plato, Aristotle, and their contemporaries that documents the role played by their rival Isocrates and his approach to rhetorical education.

COMMUNICATION

MEDIA CAPITAL: ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS IN NEW YORK CITY, by Aurora Wallace (University of Illinois Press; 192 pages; \$80 hardcover, \$25 paperback). Explores the architecture of corporate headquarters in a study of the city's rise as a media center since the mid-19th century.

ECONOMICS

FROM MIRACLE TO MATURITY: THE GROWTH OF THE KOREAN ECONOMY, by Barry Eichengreen, Dwight H. Perkins, and Kwahno Shin (Harvard University Press; 250 pages; \$39.95). Combines quantitative and qualitative analysis in a study of economic growth in South Korea.

RECONNECTING TO WORK: POLICIES TO MITIGATE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES, edited by Lauren D. Appelbaum (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research; 179 pages; \$40 hardcover, \$20 paperback). Writings by scholars in Europe and North America on the economic and psychological consequences of long-term detachment from the workforce, and the policies that might address lengthy unemployment.

EDUCATION

BEYOND OBEDIENCE AND ABANDONMENT: TOWARD A THEORY OF DISSIDENT IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION, by Graham P. McDonough (McGill-Queen's University Press; 320 pages; US\$95 hardcover, US\$34.95 paperback). Defends what is termed a "productive dissent" for Catholic schools.

HISTORY

THE BAPTISM OF EARLY VIRGINIA: HOW CHRISTIANITY CREATED RACE, by Rebecca Anne Goetz (Johns Hopkins University Press; 240 pages; \$55). Explores white notions of "hereditary heathenism" in regard to Africans and Indians in 17th-century Virginia.

BUYING THE FARM: PEACE AND WAR ON A SIXTIES COMMUNE, by Tom Fels (University of Massachusetts Press; 240 pages; \$80 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback). Combines scholarly and personal perspectives in a study of Montague Farm, a back-to-the-land ex-

periment founded in 1968 and enduring for 35 years.

THE FISHING CREEK CONFEDERACY: A STORY OF CIVIL WAR DRAFT RESISTANCE, by Richard A. Sauer and Peter Tomasak (University of Missouri Press; 256 pages; \$35). Documents serious opposition to the draft in Columbia County, Pa., which led to military intervention in the region after a Union lieutenant was shot confronting draft evaders.

A GOY WHO SPEAKS YIDDISH: CHRISTIANS AND THE JEWISH LANGUAGE IN EARLY MODERN GERMANY, by Aya Elyada (Stanford University Press; 280 pages; \$60). Discusses Christian Hebraism and other motivations for Christian engagement with Yiddish from the 16th to the late 18th centuries.

INVISIBLE AGENTS: SPIRITS IN A CENTRAL AFRICAN HISTORY, by David M. Gordon (Ohio University Press; 384 pages; \$32.95). Explores the intertwining of religion and political action in Zambia in the 19th and 20th centuries.

ONE WORLD, BIG SCREEN: HOLLYWOOD, THE ALLIES, AND WORLD WAR II, by M. Todd Bennett (University of North Carolina Press; 384 pages; \$39.95). Documents Hollywood's role in building solidarity in the Grand Alliance: Britain, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

OYSTERS, MACARONI, AND BEER: THURBER, TEXAS, AND THE COMPANY STORE, by Gene Rhea Tucker (Texas Tech University Press; 216 pages; \$34.95). Explores labor, management, and commerce in a town once wholly owned by the Texas and Pacific Coal Company.

RITUALS OF PROSECUTION: THE ROMAN INQUISITION AND THE PROSECUTION OF PHILO-PROTESTANTS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY, by Jane K. Wickersham (University of Toronto Press; 440 pages; US\$80). Analyzes four inquisitorial manuals from the Counter Reformation period.

TO LIVE AN ANTISLAVERY LIFE: PERSONAL POLITICS AND THE ANTEBELLUM BLACK MIDDLE CLASS, by Erica L. Ball (University of Georgia Press; 175 pages; \$69.95 hardcover, \$22.95 paperback). Examines the ideals put forth by Susan Paul, Frederick Douglass, and other black writers on how free blacks should live.

HISTORY OF MEDICINE

COMMUNITIES OF LEARNED EXPERIENCE: EPISTOLARY MEDICINE IN THE RENAISSANCE, by Nancy G. Siraisi (Johns Hopkins University Press; 176 pages; \$45). A study of the Latin letters of mid- and late-16th-century German and Italian physicians.

HISTORY OF TECHNOLOGY

ATOMIC TESTING IN MISSISSIPPI: PROJECT DRIBBLE AND THE QUEST FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS TREATY VERIFICATION IN THE COLD WAR ERA, by David Allen Burke (Louisiana State University Press; 216 pages; \$39.95). Discusses testing done in the

mid-1960s, 3,000 feet below the state's Tatum Salt Dome, a site in a densely populated area.

THE LOGICIAN AND THE ENGINEER: HOW GEORGE BOOLE AND CLAUDE SHANNON CREATED THE INFORMATION AGE, by Paul J. Nahin (Princeton University Press; 228 pages; \$24.95). A dual biography of the mathematician and philosopher (1815-64) who gave the name to Boolean logic, and the electrical engineer and information theorist (1916-2001), who advanced that work.

LAW

DIGNITY RIGHTS: COURTS, CONSTITUTIONS, AND THE WORTH OF THE HUMAN PERSON, by Erin Daly (University of Pennsylvania Press; 272 pages; \$69.95). Explores legal notions of dignity, a right that has been enshrined in many constitutions.

LITERATURE

CAVE CULTURE IN MAGHREBI LITERATURE: IMAGINING SELF AND NATION, by Christa Jones (Lexington Books; 203 pages; \$65). Discusses the cave as a political, religious, and cultural metaphor in Francophone North African literature, including works by such authors as Yamina Méchakra, Georges Buis, and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE: BOTANY AND ROMANTIC CULTURE, by Theresa M. Kelley (Johns Hopkins University Press; 400 pages; \$55). Explores the representation of plants in literary, scientific, and other texts; authors include Barbauld and Wollstonecraft.

THE DECADENT REPUBLIC OF LETTERS: TASTE, POLITICS, AND COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITY FROM BAUDELAIRE TO BEARDSLEY, by Matthew Potolsky (University of Pennsylvania Press; 256 pages; \$59.95). Traces the political engagement of decadent writers, including ideas of beauty as civic virtue.

FACES OF DISPLACEMENT: THE WRITINGS OF VOLODYMYR VYNNYCHENKO, by Mykola Soroka (McGill-Queen's University Press; 272 pages; US\$45). Examines how emigration and exile shaped the worldview of the Ukrainian writer (1880-1951).

LA FOLIE BAUDELAIRE, by Roberto Calasso, translated by Alastair McEwen (Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 337 pages; \$35). Explores Baudelaire and his Paris, including painters Ingres and Delacroix about whom he wrote.

LAW AND HISTORY IN CERVANTES' "DON QUIXOTE", by Susan Byrne (University of Toronto Press; 256 pages; US\$55). Argues that the novel highlights the inconsistencies of both realms.

NEW YORK-PARIS: WHITMAN, BAUDELAIRE, AND THE HYBRID CITY, by Laure Katsaros (University of Michigan Press; 152 pages; \$50). Compares the poets' representations of the mid-19th-century city.

POE'S PERVERSIVE INFLUENCE, edited by Barbara Cantalupo (Lehigh University Press; 161 pages; \$65). Essays on the writer's influence on other authors, including Edogawa Rampo, Gogol, Fernando Pessoa, and Lu Xun.

THE RHETORIC OF REDEMPTION: CHESTERTON, ETHICAL CRITICISM, AND THE COMMON MAN, by Alan R. Blackstock (Peter Lang Publishing; 135 pages; \$70.95). Uses Chesterton's literary criticism from 1902 to 1913 to explore the English author's claim to be writing for the "common man."

SHAKESPEARE'S COMMON PRAYERS: THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER AND THE ELIZABETHAN AGE, by Daniel Swift (Oxford University Press; 289 pages; \$29.95). Discusses the 1549 Protestant text as a touchstone for the playwright in *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, and especially *Macbeth*.

SOLAR FLARES: SCIENCE FICTION IN THE 1970S, by Andrew M. Butler (Liverpool University Press, distributed by University of Chicago Press; 302 pages; \$99.95). Topics include how sci-fi writing, film, and television reflected the class, racial, and other tensions of the decade.

WOMEN'S POETRY OF LATE IMPERIAL CHINA: TRANSFORMING THE INNER CHAMBERS, by Xiarong Li (University of Washington Press; 236 pages; \$70 hardcover, \$30 paperback). A study of how female poets transformed what had been the male fantasy of the inner chambers of traditional Chinese households.

MUSIC

GOthic MUSIC: THE SOUNDS OF THE UNCANNY, by Isabella van Elferen (University of Wales Press, distributed by University of Chicago Press; 229 pages; \$120 hardcover, \$35 paperback). Explores music and sound in relationship to the gothic in literature, film, television, and video games, as well as the Goth subculture.

THE MISTAKES OF YESTERDAY, THE HOPES OF TOMORROW: THE STORY OF THE PRISONAIRES, by John Dougan (University of Massachusetts Press; 144 pages; \$80 hardcover, \$22.95 paperback). A study of a quintet formed by five inmates at the Tennessee State Penitentiary at Nashville, who

had a single hit single with "Just Walkin' in the Rain."

PALEONTOLOGY

THE GREAT FOSSIL ENIGMA: THE SEARCH FOR THE CONODONT ANIMAL, by Simon J. Knell (Indiana University Press; 440 pages; \$45). Traces a 150-year dispute over the nature of the organism behind the tiny fossils known as conodonts.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

MUGABE AND THE POLITICS OF SECURITY IN ZIMBABWE, by Abiodun Alao (McGill-Queen's University Press; 280 pages; US\$95 hardcover, US\$29.95 paperback). Analyzes President Robert Mugabe's manipulation of security policy for his own gain.

PHANTOM MENACE OR LOOMING DANGER: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING BIOWEAPONS THREATS, by Kathleen M. Vogel (Johns Hopkins University Press; 384 pages; \$60 hardcover, \$30 paperback). Argues for greater focus on the social and political contexts of threats; includes case studies of Soviet anthrax weapons development, Iraqi mobile bioweapons labs, and two synthetic genome experiments.

SOLDIERS, SPIES, AND STATESMEN: EGYPT'S ROAD TO REVOLT, by Hazem Kandil (Verso; 303 pages; \$26.95). A revisionist study of the origins of the revolution that views it as the latest element in a power struggle among three components of Egyptian authoritarianism.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: THE POLITICAL POWER OF WEAK INTERESTS, by Gunnar Trumbull (Harvard University Press; 264 pages; \$49.95). Documents how "weak interests" often carry the day in policy battles through processes of legitimization, particularly those that tie their aims to a broader public interest; examples include efforts to influence agriculture in Europe and pharmaceuticals in the United States.

ZION'S DILEMMAS: HOW ISRAEL MAKES NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY, by Charles

D. Freilich (Cornell University Press; 336 pages; \$49.95). Combines scholarly and practitioner perspectives in a critical analysis of Israeli strategy.

POPULAR CULTURE

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMICS: LIFE WRITING IN PICTURES, by Elisabeth El Refaie (University Press of Mississippi; 192 pages; \$55). Draws on a study of 85 works from North America and Europe.

RELIGION

THE INVENTION OF RELIGION IN JAPAN, by Jason Ananda Josephson (University of Chicago Press; 387 pages; \$90 hardcover, \$30 paperback). Argues that the category of religion did not exist in Japan before its confrontation with the West in the 1850s; traces the defining and boundary drawing that occurred after.

RHETORIC

THOMAS DE QUINCEY: BRITISH RHETORIC'S ROMANTIC TURN, by Lois Peters Agnew (Southern Illinois University Press; 192 pages; \$35). Argues that Quincey as rhetorician has been overlooked; topics include his irony and humor in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821).

SOCIOLOGY

BUOYANCY ON THE BAYOU: SHRIMPERS FACE THE RISING TIDE OF GLOBALIZATION, by Jill Ann Harrison (Cornell University Press; 208 pages; \$69.95 hardcover, \$19.95 paperback). Examines the struggles of Louisiana shrimpers in an industry where imports from Asia have come to dominate.

INDUSTRIAL RUINATION, COMMUNITY, AND PLACE: LANDSCAPES AND LEGACIES OF URBAN DECLINE, by Alice Mah (University of Toronto Press; 240 pages; \$55 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback). A comparative study of urban decline in Niagara Falls

(Canada and the United States); Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Britain; and Ivanovo, Russia.

LIFE AFTER DEATH ROW: EXONEREE'S SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY, by Sandra D. Westervelt and Kimberly J. Cook (Rutgers University Press; 296 pages; \$72 hardcover, \$25.95 paperback). Examines the post-prison lives of 18 people who were sentenced to death in the United States and later exonerated and released.

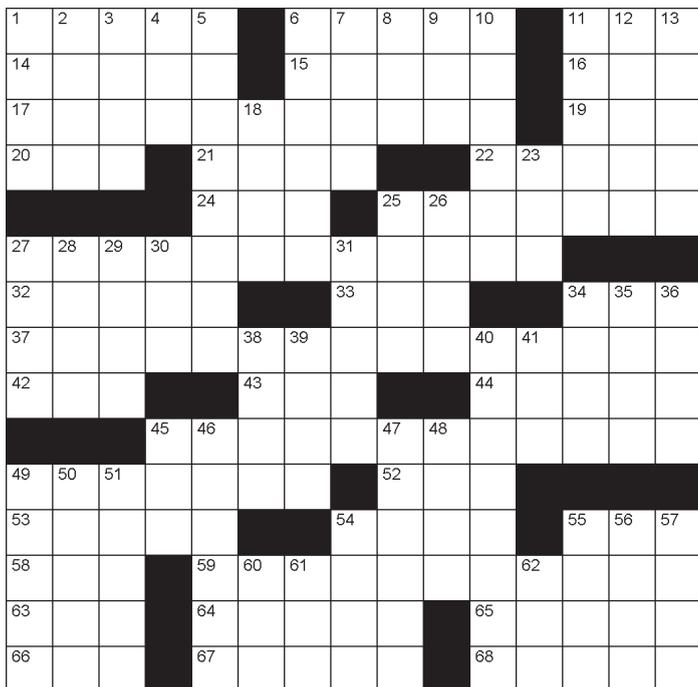
MAKING TEA, MAKING JAPAN: CULTURAL NATIONALISM IN PRACTICE, by Kristin Surak (Stanford University Press; 272 pages; \$85 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback). Traces the tea ceremony's changes through history and the "nation-work" that make it emblematic of Japan; draws on 10 years of training.

PUBLISHERS FEATURED HERE

AND ONLINE: Cambridge U. Press, Continuum, Cornell U. Press, Edinburgh U. Press, Edward Elgar, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Harvard U. Press, Indiana U. Press, Johns Hopkins U. Press, Peter Lang, Lehigh U. Press, Lexington Books, Liverpool U. Press, Louisiana State U. Press, McGill-Queen's U. Press, Ohio U. Press, Oxford U. Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Penn State U. Press, Princeton U. Press, Rutgers U. Press, Southern Illinois U. Press, Stanford U. Press, Texas Tech U. Press, U. of Chicago Press, U. of Georgia Press, U. of Hawai'i Press, U. of Illinois Press, U. of Massachusetts Press, U. of Michigan Press, U. of Missouri Press, U. of New Mexico Press, U. of North Carolina Press, U. of Pennsylvania Press, U. of Toronto Press, U. of Utah Press, U. of Wales Press, U. of Washington Press, U. of Wisconsin Press, U. Press of Mississippi, U. Press of New England, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Vanderbilt U. Press, and Verso.

THE CHRONICLE CROSSWORD

Do the Math By JIM HOLLAND | Edited by PATRICK BERRY



ACROSS

- 1 Home of *Face the Nation*
6 Conspiratorial group
11 Set (upon)
14 Superior to
15 Dispense with the ceremony, say
16 Down Under runner
17 Nerd cheers the team on?
19 Musical discernment

20 Medium quality?

- 21 Every family has one
22 Hurricane concern
24 "___ Believer" (1966 hit song)
25 Takes a shot in the dark
27 Abbie Hoffman inks a book contract?
32 Very serious
33 Fab alternative

DOWN

- 1 Job for a gumshoe
2 Summer gatherings, for short
3 Liquid lunch?
4 New Deal agcy. of 1933
5 Intersection points
6 Life in a box?

- 34 Print-quality stat.
37 Religious symbol pops up in more and more places?
42 Final word of Joyce's *Ulysses*
43 Pipe fitting
44 Garlicky spread
45 Jet airliner does some reckoning?
49 Liquor in a paloma
52 *Corrida* cry
53 Hit the roof
54 Sonoma County's Santa ___
55 Early follower of Muhammad
58 Dainty dish in "Sing a Song of Sixpence"
59 Conservative group goes fishing?
63 Curling surface
64 First name in cosmetics
65 Thoroughly wreck
66 Troublesome orphan in *Little Men*
67 Negative campaigner's tactic
68 Add fuel to

- 7 Moisturizer additive
8 Negative reaction
9 Quick on the uptake
10 Cut back
11 Prophets
12 PR man's concern
13 Salts one's meat, possibly
18 Humorist Bombeck
23 ___ *Constitution*, nicknamed "Old Ironsides"
25 Shiny coat
26 Unfortunately named fruit
27 A bit blue
28 Plot unit
29 Not-so-big bands
30 "___ You" (song from *The Music Man*)
31 Philadelphia's La ___ University
34 Chanel rival
35 "The King of Football"
36 Goddess symbolized by a throne
38 Set of courses
39 Radius neighbor
40 Contests with fair competition?
41 Actress Lucy of *Elementary*
45 Litter member
46 British gas-pump measures
47 Manuscript information line
48 Iconic Casablanca role
49 Decidedly unenthusiastic
50 Journalist Hill
51 Promoted pawn, usually

- 54 Second-largest Saturnian moon
55 Vocal range for both sexes
56 Breach of security
57 ___ of Man
60 Moral ending
61 Phone co. of yore
62 Picked up

Comments? Write to crosswords@chronicle.com

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE



The Making of a Philosophy Professor

By JOHN KAAG

This is what happens when your older brother, home from college, leaves his copy of Plato's 'Apology' on the back of the toilet.

“THE UNEXAMINED LIFE is not worth living.” What Socrates failed to tell us is that the examined one isn't a whole lot better.

So he wasn't the wisest of all men. Or if he was, he was a patronizing jerk. When I grew up, I thought to myself, I wouldn't be a patronizing jerk. I'd tell people straightforwardly, without irony or obfuscation, what a pathetic ruse life was. I'd tell them that living was a euphemism for dying slowly, that life was an incurable disease that was ultimately fatal. So what if I was only 12?

This is what happens when your older brother, home from university, leaves his copy of Plato's *Apology* on the back of the toilet. He goes on to become the doctor that he's supposed to. And you become a philosophy professor.

I'm sure that I wasn't alone in my understanding of life's meaninglessness, but I remember being surprised that more kids didn't seem affected by it. Maybe they, like Socrates, just didn't want to talk about it. Did they not experience the monotony of class and lunch, class and lunch, day after day? Did they not experience recess as a sadistic lie? Sadistic because it was either too painful or too short (you pick), and a lie because it was meant to provide some respite from the monotony. If they did, they weren't saying.

I sort of hoped that was the case. I hoped that my classmates silently worried about the bus crashing, or about getting hit by it, or about the monosodium glutamate in their ham sandwich, or about the pig that went into making the ham.

I did.

Bedtime involved an extended ritual that had to be performed with extreme care—a type of penance for the pig and everything else I felt guilty about. Exactly six—not five or seven—trips to the bathroom had to be made. Three ice cubes had to be placed into one glass of water, which was placed on one white washcloth on the right bedside table. One set of eyeglasses had to be set on that table and pointed toward the door. And that door had to be propped open exactly two inches (the width of my 12-year-old hand). That measurement had to be checked at least twice, although one was allowed to check more often, depending on what he had eaten for lunch.

I hoped that this ritual would somehow keep my universe intact. That hope, on most nights, let me get some sleep.

Let me be clear: I had a very pleasant childhood. My anxiety did not have any particular cause, which amounts to saying that it was true anxiety. Sure, my father drank too much (I am not divulging any secret here) and was generally negligent (again, not a secret), but he left when I was 3. So let's not blame him. That would be too easy. Even at 12, I knew that no discrete situation could warrant the fear and trembling of my bedtime ritual.

My mother, like any good mother (she was great, by the way), was worried. Indeed, she worried about me almost as much as I did. She worried that my monkey mind and nighttime prowling would leave me tired the next day, and that if I was tired, I wouldn't be able to make friends, and that if I didn't make friends, I'd get depressed, and that if I got depressed, I'd lose interest in school, and that if I lost interest in school, I'd never get a job, and that if I didn't get a job, then I couldn't have a family, and that if I didn't have a family, I'd be miserable.

At least her worries were reasonable.

And so she was terrified when I announced—at the age of 15—that I was going into philosophy. She knew me well enough to take me seriously, and philosophy well enough to know that it would not ease my mind. As usual, she was right.

Graduate school taught me two things. First, it taught me that I had been justified in feeling bad about that pig. (Thanks, Peter Singer.) Ham sandwiches would henceforth be placed on a long list of things that merited guilt and penance. Second, it taught me that I could do nothing about the suffering of the world; one could neither adequately atone for one's existence nor make a meaningful attempt to escape it.

Unless you consider Camus, of course.

“There is but one truly serious philosophical question, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.” If the answer to that question seems obvious to you, you're lucky: You're not a philosopher. Camus postulates only two possible answers, neither of which is much fun. He takes as a given that we live in a world that is completely indifferent to our human purposes.

For a long time, I was inclined to answer Camus in the negative: Life in a meaningless world was not worth living. But I realized that such a conviction would have pesky consequences. Answering in the affirmative was no walk in the park, either. It meant that you affirmed that life was an incurable disease, but that you had decided, resolutely and freely, to suffer through it.

Resolutely and freely. As a rule, philosophers are not dauntless. They talk a big game but are generally too worried about screwing up to actually do much of anything. Deciding to act resolutely and freely, therefore, is probably the least philosophical thing I've ever done. No, that isn't quite true. Acting resolutely and freely is the least philosophical thing I've ever done.

So I stopped eating ham sandwiches. Maybe becoming a vegetarian doesn't seem that significant to you, but it turns out that a little resolve can go a long way.

It also turns out that ham sandwiches come in many forms—living in an unhappy marriage; the desperate attempts to meet the expectations of friends, family, and colleagues; the impossibility of meeting your own. Of course, sometimes a ham sandwich is just a ham sandwich.

In any event, I stopped eating all of them.

When anxiety leaves you, or you decide to leave it, it's very much like losing a certain kind of old friend—one whom you have come to hate. You still remember it in vivid detail, how it humiliated you, how it kept you up at night, how it wasted your time. But now it is gone. And suddenly you're well rested, and you have lots of time.

My mother was right. She told me long ago that if I got enough sleep, I could make friends, and if I had friends, I wouldn't be so depressed, and if I wasn't so depressed, I'd do better in school, and if I did better in school, I'd get a good job, and if I had a good job, I could have a happy family, and if I had a happy family, I wouldn't be miserable.

But here's the thing about not being miserable.

Life is still a pathetic ruse: either too painful or too short. You pick. ■

John Kaag is an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

SERGE BLOCH FOR
THE CHRONICLE REVIEW

