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COLLEGE OF THE

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# HOLY CROSS



# 100 BOOKS

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**Holy Cross 100 Books Holy Cross 100 Books—Texts**

[The Bible](#)

[Homer, \*The Odyssey\*](#)

[Thucydides, \*History of the Peloponnesian Wars\*](#),

[Plato, \*The Dialogues\*](#)

[Vergil, \*The Aeneid\*](#)

[Ovid, \*Metamorphoses\*](#)

[Plutarch, \*Lives of Greeks and Romans\*](#)

[Saint Augustine of Hippo, \*The Confessions\*](#)

[Dante, \*The Divine Comedy\*](#)

[Geoffrey Chaucer, \*The Canterbury Tales\*](#)

[Niccolo Machiavelli, \*The Prince\*](#)

[Erasmus of Rotterdam, \*The Praise of Folly\*](#)

[Martin Luther, \*To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation\*](#)

[Francois Rabelais, \*Gargantua and Patagrue\*](#)

[Montaigne, \*The Essays\*](#)

[The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila](#)

[Miguel de Cervantes, \*Don Quixote\*](#)

[The Riverside Shakespeare](#)

[Daniel DeFoe, \*Robinson Crusoe\*](#)

[Jonathan Swift, \*Gulliver's Travels\*](#)

[Henry Fielding, \*Tom Jones\*](#)

[Jean-Jacques Rousseau, \*Confessions\*](#)

[Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, \*The Federalist\*](#)

[Jane Austen, \*Pride and Prejudice\*](#)

[Stendhal \(Hernii Beyle\), \*The Red and the Black\*](#)

[Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, \*Faust\*](#)

[Honore de Balzac, \*Pere Goriot\*](#)

[Alexis de Tocqueville, \*Democracy in America\*](#)

[Soren Kierkegaard, \*Fear and Trembling\*](#)

[Emily Bronte, \*Wuthering Heights\*](#)



Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles, *The Communist Manifesto*  
Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*  
Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*  
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*  
Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*  
Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species y Means of Natural Selection*  
Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*  
Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, *War and Peace*  
George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*  
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*  
Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*  
Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*  
Emile Zola, *Germinal*  
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*  
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*  
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*  
James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*  
Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*  
Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*  
Sigrid Undset, *Kristin Lavransdatter*  
Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*  
Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*  
William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*  
Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine*  
Franz Kafka, *The Trial*  
Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*  
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Richard Wright, *Native Son*  
Hermann Hesse, *Magisster Ludi, (The Glass Bead Game)*  
Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*  
Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*  
William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*  
Gunter Grass, *The Tin Drum*  
Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*  
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*  
William L. Shirer, *The Rise and the Fall of the Third Reich*  
Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*  
Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*  
Meriol Trevor, *Newman*  
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*  
Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*  
Alexander Isaiyevic Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*  
Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*  
*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
Morton W Bloomfield and Robert C. Elliott (eds) , *Great Plays*  
Michael Harrington, *The Accidental Century*  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*  
George Orwell, *Collected Essays*  
James D. Watson, *The Double Helix*  
Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*  
James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*  
*Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*  
*The Norton Anthology of Poetry*  
Ronald W. Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times*  
Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*  
James Thomas Flexner, *Washington, The Indispensable Man*  
Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of Cells*  
Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*  
Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*  
Frederick Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture*

Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*

Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes*

Karl Rahner, S.J., *Foundations of Christian Faith*

Flannery O'Connor, *The Habit of Being*

Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People*

Dumas Malone, *Thomas Jefferson and His Times*

Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh, *The Mathematical Experience*

Heinz R. Pagels, *The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature*

## Holy Cross 100 Books—Texts

### The Holy Bible

In Umberto Eco's medieval mystery, *The Name of the Rose*, an enlightened English Franciscan monk, William of Baskerville notes that “. . . the good of a book lies in its being read. . . Books are not made to be believed but to be subjected to inquiry.” Of no book are these statements more true than of *The Holy Bible*.

It is basic to the tenets of Judaism and to Christian belief that God is a personal God who has spoken to men and women and who has initiated a dialogue with them—a dialogue in which they are called to listen to God's words and to respond. God's words are revelation: the response of men and women is faith. *The Holy Bible* contains God's revelation in the form of a written record, and records human reactions to it, the expressions of human faith or the lack of it. In the *Old Testament* we encounter the rich narration of God's actions in human history: What He has done, is doing, and will do in the course of planning the salvation of the human race and preparing for the coming of Christ and the messianic kingdom. The *New Testament* provides us with the principal witness of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the permanent and unchanging witness of the apostolic generation. In *The Holy Bible* we have not merely superb literature and interesting history, but the revelation of God's action on our behalf.

The good of *The Holy Bible*, therefore, lies in its being read and subjected to inquiry—a rich and rewarding experience. For the reader of *The Holy Bible* there await joyful discoveries, learning, inspiration, encouragement, and help in coping with trials, problems and frustrations of everyday life. No wonder the prophet Isaiah was moved to exclaim

“Come, all who are thirsty,  
come to the waters;  
and you who have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
Without money and without cost.” [Isaiah 55:1]

JOHN E. BROOKS, S.J.

### Homer

#### *The Odyssey*

The *Odyssey* ought not to be read: ideally, at least, It should be heard. One of the great intellectual discoveries of this century is that the *Odyssey*, as well as the other Homeric epic, the *Iliad*, is part of the oral tradition of Greek literature. We now know that these works were written down—they underwent “recension”—only after a half-millennium of existence as oral poems.

By nature, oral poetry is never static, and the *Odyssey* too kept changing throughout its oral phase. Bards, who spent lifetimes learning and relearning their “songs,” imparted something new to the *Odyssey* with each recitation: they gave it finer subtleties, more vigorous language, deeper insights, more deft turns, more haunting

scenes, more exotic descriptions. Nothing could compare to poems like the *Odyssey* as forms of entertainment for the ancients. The best “singers of tales” acquired near-celebrity status and would be much sought after at various religious festivals during which an *Odyssey* or an *Iliad* was recited in an intensely convivial setting. How long the recitation of the *Odyssey* took—it is over 11,000 lines long—is not certain.

These festive occasions, according to the historian Thucydides, constituted an important “release” from the trials of everyday existence. Plenty of time, therefore, was allotted to the festivals, and six-day celebrations were not unusual. The ancient Greeks must have listened with rapt attention to Homer’s stories about a heroic age, when men lived in brilliant palaces and even spoke with the gods; they must have marvelled at the stories about one-eyed giants, the sorceress Circe, and the monsters Scylla and Charybdis; they must have rejoiced at the completion of Odysseus’ odyssey and at his reunion with the constant Penelope; and they must have shuddered at the stretching of the mighty bow and the ensuing slaughter of the suitors.

Modern readers, of course, have to make do with *reading* the *Odyssey*, either in Greek or in translation. But no matter, the greatness of the *Odyssey* transcends its original medium, the barriers of language, and even time. So read the *Odyssey* and expect to be awed, excited, and thoroughly beguiled by one of the earliest and surely one of the best works of Western literature.

BLAISE NAGY

## **Thucydides**

### ***History of the Peloponnesian War* (Fifth Century, B.C.)**

The decisive wars between Athens and Sparta, which closed out the fifth century B.C., and the “Golden Age of Athens, are the subject of Thucydides’ *History*. While even today it is an invaluable historical source, as well as often rousing reading, peppered with incidents of heroism, adventure and intrigue, it ultimately ascends to philosophical reflection and great drama. In Thucydides’ hands the Peloponnesian War becomes an occasion for a meditation on the problematic relations between power, interest and justice, and the story of a tragic fall of perhaps the greatest of the ancient heroes, democratic Athens.

Pericles’ funeral oration captures, in quasi mythic terms, the glories of Athens at the pinnacle of its greatness: a *polis* that was powerful but free and just, individualistic but patriotic, democratic but disciplined and led by the greatest of natural aristocrats; a complex, creative, well-rounded people of heroic proportions in both words and deeds. Yet this greatness was inescapably linked to an Empire that was becoming increasingly burdensome to the tributary states—and which ultimately corrupted Athens itself.

Can a democracy rule an empire? This question, in the case of Athens, is ultimately answered in the negative, but not for the reasons imagined by the demagogue Cleon who raises it. Precisely the ruthless pursuit of power Cleon recommends, the exclusion of restraint, sympathy and morality from foreign policy rots the foundations of Athenian virtue and democracy and finally, after the ill-judged colonial war in Syracuse, loses Athens not only its Empire, but its freedom. It is hard to read Thucydides today without thinking of Vietnam and wishing that policy makers had heeded not the specious and self-defeating logic of the Athenian envoys at Melos—“the strong do what they wish while the weak suffer what they must”—but Thucydides’ powerful warning against

entirely divorcing considerations of power and interest from the central political virtue of justice. No romantic or idealist, and not one to renounce either the burdens or benefit of international power, Thucydides nonetheless insists that true greatness—the immortal greatness of fifth century Athens—comes only when politics reconciles the irreconcilable; i.e., when freedom rules over power, and justice is fused with, but not corrupted by, interest.

JACK DONNELLY

## **Plato**

### ***The Dialogues* (Third Century, B.C.)**

One may disagree with A.N. Whitehead's aperçu that Western philosophy has been but footnotes on Plato, but one cannot deny that Plato's dialogues are works of world literature that have exercised a profound intellectual influence over more than two millennia.

Who would not be moved by Plato's *Apology of Socrates* or by the *Phaedo* which pictures Socrates in his death cell disputing with his friends matters of life and death and afterlife a few hours before his execution? And what student or parent of a student could fail to be challenged and alarmed by the Sophistic puzzle presented in the *Meno*, according to which neither teaching nor learning is possible and where yet the educational search for knowledge is not abolished?

And then *The Republic*, this work containing so many themes of Plato's philosophizing! Here we find Plato's theory of education, co-education of course, as well as summaries of his ontological and epistemological views in the famous divided-line simile and the celebrated cave analogy. Here we find his views on justice and social stratification together with his insistence on what strikes us as disturbingly strict forms of censorship and state control of all human affairs ranging from human love to commerce, traveling, and the fine arts. This work is the blueprint for virtually all utopian writings in Western civilization, and it is much more, as some of the topics indicate.

What can one in a few lines possibly say on Plato? The space does not even suffice to list all his works. Read them and perhaps engage in the intellectual adventure of studying these texts that provides interpretive help towards understanding them.

HERMANN J. CLOEREN

## **Vergil**

### ***The Aeneid* (First Century B.C.)**

As he lay dying at Brindisium in September, 19 B.C., Vergil was so dissatisfied with the work on which he had labored for the past ten years that he ordered the manuscripts destroyed. An order from Augustus to Vergil's friends Varius and Tucca saved the *Aeneid* from extinction. A failed poem became, by imperial decree, an instant classic. And so it has remained. Not for such titans as Dante and Milton only, but for countless generations Vergil has been like his legendary hero Aeneas, the Father of the West. T.S. Eliot, in a famous essay, called the *Aeneid* the unique and universal classic, the consciousness of Rome and the supreme voice of her language. Tennyson's well known tribute



I salute thee, Mantovano,  
I that loved thee since my day began,  
Wielder of the stateliest measure  
Ever moulded by the lips of man

sounds the Victorian's resonance with the theme of imperialism and manifest destiny. And indeed the *Aeneid* is at one level sublime Augustan propaganda. But modern scholarship has learned to detect the private beneath the public voice. The Olympian arrogance of *parcere subjectis et debellare superbos* is softened by the melancholy of *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangent*. Was the price too high even for Rome? Gate of ivory or gate of horn? It is the fascination of the *Aeneid* that it is still one of literature's great enigmas. No list is conceivable without it

WILLIAM H. FITZGERALD, S.J.

## Ovid

### *Metamorphoses* (First Century A.D)

Fortunately for the western world, although banished, banned and burned, the work of Ovid lives on. His masterpiece, the *Metamorphoses* (or Quick Changes), now a 300-page book, continues to enchant and fascinate readers today as it did on papyrus rolls, medieval manuscripts, Gutenberg incunabula or in Renaissance classrooms, and as it will no doubt on those new-fangled word-processors.

He traces the track record of love [or lust] from the mud of Chaos to the mirage of Caesarism. It was and is a new kind of history from a man who seemed to believe that love really did (does) make the world go round and round and round. Ten of the last twenty pages unveil the possibly religious heart of the work. There Ovid lets another exile, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras preach his "wiser but powerless" sermon on transmigration of souls, vegetarianism, the flow or flux of the natural world and the spinning wheel of history. The speech cleverly climaxes and encapsulates the whole shifting and sliding contents of the work and maybe of the world as we know it today.

Not only is the closing chapter a masterstroke, but each preceding page and paragraph leading to it is meticulously constructed as if by some omniscient spider. Nearly 250 favorite folk tales are told, each strung delicately and deliciously together with a slight of hand word-magicians ever since have envied and which has enchanted all lovers of well-told stories.

Some readers and scholars or, better, pedants, find Ovid too clever, too facile, too flip. Perhaps. Some readers may also find Ovid candid and comic, sensual and passionate, surprising and unrestrained. He may very well just have been too undignified for regal Romans and present day puritans.

No matter what today's students think of they can't deny he was a major Latin link to the middle ages and the Renaissance and made a global village of continental Europe and England. His influence flows across time and place from Dante and Boccaccio to Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, to Montaigne and Cervantes, to Bernini and Cellini and Rubens. Every civilized humane, literate, liberal artist knew and loved Ovid.

KENNETH HAPPE

## **Plutarch**

### *Lives of Greeks and Romans (Second Century)*

“If I were constrained to throw all the books of the ancients into the sea, Plutarch would be the last drowned.” So said Montesquieu about the writings of a Greek biographer who lived circa A.D. 50-120. Although by no means an original thinker, Plutarch was a tireless researcher and a charming writer. He composed more than eighty essays, collective entitled *Moralia*, but is best known and loved for his *Parallel Lives*, a series of twenty-three “paired” biographies in which an eminent Greek is joined to a Roman of similar endowments—for example, the orators Demosthenes and Cicero, the conquerors Alexander and Caesar. Four “unpaired” *Lives* bring the total collection to fifty biographies.

Plutarch’s literary interests clearly lie with public men, statesmen, men of the *polis*. He is moreover passionately interested in the moral dimensions of human behavior. Hence, his *Lives* tend to be “exemplary,” virtually constituting case studies of a hero’s virtue or lack thereof. From Plutarch’s point of view, sin and vice bring punishment in their wake. Beware the pitfalls of avarice, ambition, drunkenness, lust.

Plutarch’s readers must be eternally grateful for the ancient author’s stated conviction that human beings most often reveal their true characters through the little things they say and do. This belief has produced an abundance of memorable Plutarchan anecdotes and these vignettes are the highlights of Plutarch’s *Lives*. He is a master story teller.

We learn from Merle Miller (*Plain Speaking*, pp.68-69) that the father of President Harry S. Truman read Plutarch aloud to the future president when he was a boy. Truman believed that Plutarch “knew more about politics than all the other writers I’ve read put together.” No small endorsement here!

Complete English translations of Plutarch’s *Lives* (with the original Greek text on facing pages) may be found in the Loeb Classical Library series. Selected *Lives* in modern translations are available in several paperbacks, particularly those from Penguin/Viking. Investigation of the *Lives* might profitably and enjoyably commence with Plutarch’s *Alcibiades*, *Alexander*, *Antony*, *Marius*, and *Crassus*. There is much to learn—and a huge treat in store.

GERARD B. LAVERY

## **Saint Augustine of Hippo**

### *The Confessions (Fourth Century)*

A classic of religious literature by the most influential of western Christian writers! Writing at the end of the fourth century, a young Augustine relates the intellectual, moral and religious moments that make up the story of his self-discovery. *The Confessions* is not so much an autobiography as a creation story, for Augustine was fascinated with questions about the origins of things. Indeed we are treated with the memorable tale of a great conversion: we listen to Augustine’s prayer, we hear about those passions he found so difficult to tame, and we watch him outgrow his adolescent preoccupation with being

certain. He needed close friendships, he enjoyed solitude, and he enjoyed the life of the mind.

But it was creation that seized hold of his thinking. What is the nature of time? Where do rational beings come from? Why does a spiritual being fashion a material universe? How to interpret the Book of Genesis? What is meant by “the beginning”? Augustine searched his memory for traces of God, he grasped the wonder and the mystery of human freedom, and he discovered that he could never understand who he was without knowing the God who had been creating him. *The Confessions* moves from the making of Augustine to the making of the universe, from recalling one man’s moral weakness and the healing of his mind to acknowledging and confessing the truth and goodness of God.

*The Confessions* is not a simple book: it does not open itself to the impatient and unreflective read. Yet there is more to Augustine than his *Confessions*: one should consult the splendid biography of Augustine by Peter Brown. Someone handed me a copy of *The Confessions* shortly before I left for college, and it was on reading this book that I recognized for the first time the real difference between the adolescent mind and a mind which had come of age. To read Augustine is to step into the world of late antiquity and discover a Christian class. (*Translation: R.S. Pine-Coffin, Penguin*)

WILLIAM REISER, S.J.

## Dante

### *The Divine Comedy (14<sup>th</sup> Century)*

Dante’s voyage to God goes through the world first. The circles of hell, as conceived by the poet, are the scenes of human existence, but as they will be forever. The horrors of the world have to be experienced before one can move beyond them to the non-worldly joys of Purgatory and Paradise. All forms of incontinence and malice have to be known in their terrestrial settings before the voyager can move to the world beyond them.

Dante’s motif is one of the oldest in literature: a voyage through the world beyond the world. Homer narrates one in the *Odyssey*, and Virgil, too, in the *Aeneid*. The unchangeableness of human nature gives to the art of such major poets as Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare their permanent relevance. The great poet is perpetually modern.

Midway between Homer and Shakespeare, Dante wrote his *Divina Commedia*. The motives of his characters are analyzed from a special viewpoint: that of the Christian principles of right and wrong. Dante is more rigorously the poet-moralist than Homer or Shakespeare, but he is their equal in his use of strongly rhythmical language and in the creating of images.

Dante is, of course, Italy, and all of Italy, the dreams of man’s secular life that once was Rome; but he is also the promise of the Christian faith, and especially the belief of that faith and of all religions, that the spirit of each person who has lived is immortal. (*Translation: John D. Sinclair, Oxford*)

WALLACE FOWLIE

**Geoffrey Chaucer**  
*The Canterbury Tales* (14<sup>th</sup> Century)

*The Canterbury Tales* would be on anybody's list of medieval or comic or Christian English masterpieces. It is an unfinished collection of short narratives bound together by a framing narrative in which a number of "sundry folk" gather at a London inn on the eve of their departure on pilgrimage to Canterbury. The hearty host of the inn invites himself to accompany them on the journey and proposes a story-telling contest to while away the hours. The knight, as the most well-born of the group, presents an elegant and philosophical romance of love and war; the drunken Miller immediately replies with a ribald story of sex and violence, and the game is begun.

Chaucer delights himself and us with building ironic relationships between teller and teller, tale and tale, tale and teller, and these relationships in turn combine to create an overall pattern of meaning which includes a kind of medieval relativism within and an ultimate and loving over-view that is one and whole. Always poised between game and earnest, most serious perhaps, when he is most playful. Chaucer never allows the reader to enjoy the secure possession of a single perspective. We see through the eyes of his various characters, especially when they become narrators, and we see the intellectual and moral limits that shape their tales. We see more than they can see, the more their author also sees and the more that no author of his time could possibly have seen. Time itself, the six hundred years between our day and his, has provided a distance from which Chaucer, we know, would have enjoyed looking back at his world. He has anticipated the experience of such perspective and perhaps even surpassed it by making present to us the illusion, at least, of a view of eternity.

JOHN H. WILSON

**Niccolo Machiavelli**  
*The Prince* (1513)

An often misunderstood, if not maligned thinker, Machiavelli and his writings—especially *The Prince*—offer insightful illustration of the contradictions and societal ills of 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy. More than any other European country, Italy found itself ill-equipped to deal with the challenges and dictates of political modernity. It was a politically fragmented society, in which the worst forms of degradation and political corruption coexisted with a cultural and artistic climate which was uniquely brilliant and creative. Indifference to the use of immoral means for political purposes and the belief that government depended largely on force and cunning were prevailing characteristics of the period. Caught in a chaotic and decaying society, the individual, "masterless" and alone, seemed to be motivated only by his own egotism and by a pragmatic approach to life. These are the central themes of Machiavelli's writings.

*The Prince* is much more than what it is usually assumed to be, namely a handbook for aspiring autocrats or a set of guidelines for rulers interest in maintaining or expanding their power. It is both a testimony and a warning—a testimony of the unavoidable realities of political life, and of the need to separate political expedience from morality, by subordinating means to ends; and a warning against the dangers of leaving unbridled the profoundly aggressive and acquisitive nature of the individual.



(This is why *The Prince* should be read together with Machiavelli's *The Discourses*, in which the author's sincere enthusiasm for popular government and for a system of checks and balances emerges in full).

Deceptively simple in its thematique and structure, *The Prince* is indeed a most complex work, rich in themes and nuances, which make it indispensable reading for anyone interested in politics. The student of international relations will find in it the first comprehensive elaboration of the tenets and assumptions of *realpolitik*—a way of looking at international politics as the interplay among unified, self-reliant nations, each pursuing its self-interest and bent upon self-aggrandizement. Historically, all other theories of international relations have been forced to cope with the Machiavellian conception of power politics.

For the political philosopher, *The Prince* is, among other things, the work which breaks away from the idealism of ancient philosophy, by looking at political life as *it is* rather than at what *it ought to be*. In this respect, Machiavelli can be considered to be the first modern thinker in that he brings politics down to earth. The historically-minded student will regard *The Prince* as much more than an enticing photograph of 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy; he will see in it a movie which captures the dilemmas and hesitations of a society in transition, hesitantly feeling its way towards modernity. (*Translation: Leo Paul DeAlvarez*)

MAURIZIO VANNICELLI

### **Erasmus of Rotterdam** ***The Praise of Folly* (1511)**

Crossing the Alps in the summer of 1509 after an extended stay in Italy, Erasmus, the greatest of the Northern humanists, conceived the idea of a mock-praise of folly. He wrote it down in a few days, dedicating it to his friend Thomas More, not without good-naturedly teasing him with a pun on his name (*moriae encomium*).

The basic literary device of Erasmus's ironic-satiric masterpiece is simple enough: from a pulpit Lady Folly delivers a praise of herself and her accomplishments to an audience of faithful followers: flattery, deception, and self-love—all manifestations of folly—are the vital forces that keep the fabric of society intact and sustain man in his search for happiness. To prove her point, Folly parades and endless variety of professions and social classes before our eyes, ranging from beggars to kings and monks to bishops and cardinals, whose pomp and ostentation she never tires of contrasting with the simplicity of Christ and his apostles.

No one north of the Alps could write a livelier, wittier and more elegant Latin than Erasmus. After almost 500 years, *The Praise of Folly* has lost nothing of its freshness, humor and wit.

And Lady Folly still reigns supreme. (*Translation: Clarence Miller, Yale University Press, 1979*)

ECKHARD BERNSTEIN

## **Martin Luther**

### ***To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (1520)***

Recognized as a great religious thinker by Protestants and Catholics alike, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had an incalculable impact of Christianity, going far beyond the borders of his own country.

A prolific writer until his death—the Weimar edition consists of more than 100 volumes—Luther set down his principal ideas in three pamphlets published as early as 1520, *The Freedom of a Christian Man*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and his address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. Of these I recommend especially the latter because it articulates most concisely Luther's main aims. Ethics, politics, history, economics, doctrine, all play a role in this work.

Starting with his theological premises [priesthood of all believers, man's justification by faith alone and the centrality of the Gospel, Luther develops a comprehensive reform program that is essentially two-pronged: the emancipation of the state from the authority of the Church and the purification of the Church itself. His numerous detailed recommendations include abolishment of pilgrimages and many church rituals, permission for priests to marry and the end of the "intolerable taxing and fleecing of Germany by Rome."

Luther's treatises, written with eloquence and frank outspokenness, were greeted with hearty applause in German. The pope, on the other hand, was less enthusiastic about this bold challenge to his authority. Luther was excommunicated, and a year later, in 1521, summoned to the Diet of Worms. Refusing to recant, he was put under the ban of the Empire. The fateful split into a Protestant and Catholic church had begun. (*Three Treatises*, Fortress Press, 1960)

ECKHARD BERNSTEIN

## **Francois Rabelais**

### ***Gargantua and Patagrue* (1533-35)**

Janus-faced, Rabelais was rooted in the Middle Ages by early background but turned with great enthusiasm to the new learning of the Renaissance, to the culture of the Ancients, their scientific knowledge and philosophy. First a Franciscan Friar, he was forced to find refuge in the Benedictine Order when his superiors considered him heretical because of his passion to learn Greek. Rabelais then studied medicine at the famous faculty at Montpellier, was secularized and served as a physician at the main hospital in Lyons. About this time (1530) he began his career as author and would write four novels: *Pantagrue*, *Gargantua*, the *Third Book*, and the *Fourth Book*.

In these works (the first prose novels written in French), Rabelais celebrates the new scholarship, moral concerns, and spirit of the early Northern Renaissance and reveals himself in the process to be, along with More and Erasmus, one of the period's foremost humanists. In his plots Rabelais creates as protagonists a family of princely and "part time" giants whom we follow through a comic prose epic concerning the birth, education, and exploits of Gargantua and his son Pantagrue.

Hidden under these ribald and burlesque situations, however, there is a very serious core of meaning. The giants, in fact, personify their author's ideals in action and word. *Gargantua*, for example, could be subtitled "The Education of a Christian Prince,"

since it forwards Rabelais' striking avant-garde views on education; it also expresses in the Abbey of Theleme episode his fervent belief in the natural goodness of man (provided he be humanistically trained).

Rabelais must be read in order to appreciate the debt we owe Renaissance humanism for so many of our modern attitudes on such matters as war, tolerance, sexual freedom, belief in natural goodness, and aversion to authoritarian systems or dogmas of any kind. He also richly deserves our attention as one of the greatest geniuses of language usage; he has much in common with Joyce in this respect. His prose is peppered with all levels of speech, with *argot*, *patois*, striking neologisms, folk sayings, parodies and delicious (if somewhat obscene) puns. Through his magnificent and unbridled outpouring of language, Rabelais has come to represent, in fact, the very life principle itself and the contrary to all that is sterile or restrictive. Read him as an antidote to the spiritual and intellectual anemia which surrounds us on all sides today.

THEODORE P. FRASER

## **Montaigne**

### ***The Essays (1550-88)***

Since their initial publication over four-hundred years ago, Montaigne's *Essays* remain the most remarkable and successful experiment in the investigation of the self. When, at the ripe old age of thirty-eight, Montaigne retired from his legal duties to the solitude and tranquility of his tower-library near Bordeaux, he would never cease to pursue this aim: "I study myself," he declared in an early essay, "more than any other subject. It is my metaphysics, it is my physics."

As he expanded the scope of his "essays" (by this he meant the "tests" or "trials" that his mind set out to explore), he became convinced that his views did not reflect himself alone but were truly representative of all humanity. He therefore dramatically amplified the earlier assertion, "I am the groundwork of my book," with the claim: "Each man bears the entire form of the human condition." It is by this process of self-analysis through his musings and writings and their subsequent application to all of mankind that Montaigne created the freest and most intimate of literary forms—the essay—and set the mold for all future attempts at self-portraiture.

The products of a supremely intelligent and sensitive moralist as well as a human being intensely interested in all aspects of life, *The Essays* encompass an astonishing variety of topics. Nothing in fact was too insignificant or personal not to become grist for Montaigne's mill. As moral probings *The Essays* teach us to respect the amazing complexity and diversity of human nature; at the same time they encourage us to learn to recognize and value what each of us possesses (the "forme maitresse" or individual pattern that distinguishes us essentially from one another). And they are among the most precious and cogent documents ever written in defense of the notion of the individual conscience.

*The Essays* have been read as a kind of moral breviary by famous and important people through the centuries. Be warned in advance, however, that reading them will not be easy. As with anything that is worthwhile, they do not yield their treasure without effort. They are not to be read at one sitting but should be meditated upon, chewed, digested. Above do not read them if you fear to grow in moral perception and self

knowledge. They are infectious and you will never be the same after your first immersion.

THEODORE P. FRASER

### **The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila (16<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Are you aware of the strong and persistent tradition of mystical experiences in the Catholic Church? Do you know that such experiences are not confined to those choosing to live life in total isolation, and that the effect of authentic mystical experiences is not to make one withdraw from an active Christian life? Do you know first-hand accounts of such experiences need not be remote, abstract, or oblique?

Do you think that humility is a virtue whose time has gone? Is daily prayer something that doesn't quite fit into your life? Do you think that an annual two-week vacation is one of the necessities of life? Does the idea of self-sacrifice seem pointless to you? Do you think any account of a saintly life must be inevitably boring and irrelevant? Do you think that the agitation of an entire town and the reformation of an international organization by a single, strong, intelligent woman could only happen in this century? Would you like to get to know Christ better?

If your response was no to the any of the first group of questions or yes to any of the latter two groups of questions then you should begin to read *The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila* and let her words work on you. Teresa wrote this autobiography only because of the insistence of her confessors, so the book is not a polemic, is not deliberate propaganda, and definitely not sentimental nonsense. She describes the halting progress of her spiritual life, her mystical and ecstatic experiences of Jesus, her feelings of inadequacy before the heavenly gifts she receives, and her beleaguered efforts to reform the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Carmelite order, all in an engaging, direct, and open manner. In addition to her autobiography, Teresa also wrote two other excellent discussions of spiritual growth: *The Way of Perfection* and the *Interior Castle*. In addition to Teresa's works there are numerous other first-hand accounts of mystical experiences and intense spiritual lives, including those of Catherine of Genoa, Catherine of Sienna, and John of the Cross (*Translation: A.E. Allison Peers, Image*)

ROBERT H. GARVEY

### **Miguel de Cervantes**

*Don Quixote (Part I: 1605; Part II: 1615)*

One uneventful day, a middle-aged gentleman decides to arm himself as a knight errant and leave the comforts of his household in La Mancha for the uncertain world of adventure on the dusty plains of Castille. This decision, strange because the age of knight errantry had long passed, is made less bewildering by our knowledge of the gentleman's peculiar madness: Don Quixote has lost his wits through an immersion in novels of chivalry and, thus, he reinterprets the world about him according to his understanding of the fictitious chivalric world.

If this brief description suggests the making of a parody, it is because *Don Quixote* begins as a loving parody of a literary genre which, for Cervantes, was utterly unrealistic. The parody in *Don Quixote*, however, is the kernel of a much grander creation. *Don Quixote* is, among many other things, the portrayal of man's striving to live



a meaningful life in a world of illusory perceptions and deceit. It is also, as we learn from Sancho the squire, an acknowledgement that life's meaning may ultimately reside in the very act of striving for a purposeful existence.

Philosophical implications notwithstanding, *Don Quixote's* universal appeal for almost four centuries stems chiefly from Cervantes's ability to render basic concerns of humankind through an intensely engaging story and compelling characters. Moreover, his ability to sustain the illusion of life, while richly endowing the book with multiple meanings, bespeak a mastery over novelistic technique unprecedented before his time. Not surprisingly, Cervantes has come to be acknowledged the creator of the modern European novel. (*Translation: Ormsby, Norton*)

JORGE H. VALDES

### **The Riverside Shakespeare**

*The Riverside Shakespeare* contains everything a reader needs in order to understand and relish the plays. Perhaps most immediately useful are the glossaries; the footnotes are ample aids to word meanings. Each play is introduced by a prominent scholar's discussion of the date and integrity of the text, the sources of the story, and—most important for the reader—a critical analysis of the play which can guide one to deeper understandings. Harvard's Harry Levin has written a generous and engaging general introduction to the book. And, very helpful for those who visualize the plays in the theatre are the copious illustrations in color and black and white.

But the treasures of the book are the plays—patterns of human action and so mirrors of our lives. Contemplation of them, whether in the theatre or on the page, enlarges our spirit, brings it closer to full humanity by forming it on the greatest theatrical mind the world has known.

If you are new to Shakespeare, start with a few scenes just to get the hang of it. Approach a scene as if you were acting one of the roles; break down each sentence till you can say it as if it were your own. Here are some scenes to try; they are all about love.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II, scene ii, lines 35-

65 (a young couple is about to sleep in the woods);

*Twelfth Night*, Act III, scene I, lines 95-164 (Viola is disguised as Cesario, a young man; Countess Olivia is in love with him/her);

*Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, scene v, (Romeo and Juliet meet);

*Hamlet*, Act III, scene I, lines 89-161.

When you have mastered some scenes—or if you didn't need the exercise—start reading the plays.

Begin, perhaps, with *Hamlet*; the language is accessible, the story is exciting, and finding the meaning is challenging. *Twelfth Night* laughs at love and accepts the ambiguity of our life. *Richard III* is one of the great villains of the theatre. And we understand Romeo and Juliet—and their families—immediately.

Once you've read that much, you have a lifetime access to the stage/world of Shakespeare's imagination.

EDWARD J. HERSON

**Daniel Defoe*****Robinson Crusoe* (1719)**

*Robinson Crusoe* should intrigue any fiction reader since it is the first example ever in the English language of the form that in our time dominates literature: the novel: *Robinson Crusoe*'s self-advertising as a conventional travel book of adventures (chronological, topical, no overall informing idea or theme) sets up its ulterior purposes. Each of Robinson's experiences is presented carefully in relation to several patterns of meaning. First, the book plays against the tradition of Puritan spiritual autobiography, in which it is each person's duty to record his life's events so that he may study their individual meaning in relation to Scripture and gauge God's satisfaction with his progress. However, autobiography is perhaps the least objective literary mode; autobiographers inevitably (often unconsciously) tend to shape the events of their lives to fit whatever meaning now seems most gratifying or significant. It is fascinating to watch Robinson sculpt complex, and partly arbitrary, patterns of meaning from the often shapeless realities of his experience.

Second, Robinson's religious stabilizing procedure is constantly economic as well. Crusoe represents capitalism, with its incessant transformations (Robinson can't stay still, before, during, and after his stay on the island), and with its diminishing of social relationships in favor of self-sufficiency, acquiring material objects and then protecting them. (Alone, on a desert island, Robinson builds a walled fortress; when, after many years, Crusoe establishes a social relationship with Friday, the relationship is inevitably master and servant.) This particular myth of the economic self has been one of the most powerful in western culture. Though initially he is hamstrung by dilemmas—morality *versus* economics, submission to God *versus* self-assertion for survival and prosperity—ultimately Crusoe develops techniques to concretize a specifically Puritan doctrine: that God wants good men to prosper; that moral behavior is also good economic behavior; that submission to God leads to survival and prosperity. His success in accomplishing this has entered permanently into our cultural subconscious.

RICHARD H. RODINO

**Jonathan Swift*****Gulliver's Travels* (1726)**

*Gulliver's Travels*, a prose satire in four books, is the most shining gem of the greatest age of European satire: 1660-1740. Its targets are partly specific—belligerent European politics, English oppression of Ireland, foolish scientific experiments—and part general—the preposterous pride of human beings in their own worth, the dangers of indulging the mind in irrational fancies and imaginings. To these ends, in the first two books Swift powerfully dramatizes the concept of scale: how do men and the world look when much smaller than usual? And what unpleasant new truths may you see when the world appears six times larger than usual? Gulliver's character is the key to these two books, since all of our information comes from his sensibility, and even after 250 years of discussion, many questions remain about Gulliver. Do Gulliver's inadequacies represent the (dismal) best that human nature is capable of? (The way he actually prides himself on

his meanspiritedness mirrors uncomfortably well our own everyday behavior.) Or is Gulliver himself the unwilling victim of Swift's satire, bumbling about, congratulating himself, airing his own pettiness for us to scorn?

Books III and IV return us to the world of "middle status," but leave most readers highly uncomfortable with that status. Book III takes Gulliver to a grotesque nation of pure empirical science; Book IV insinuates that animals, which are not naturally destructive, cruel, or filthy, are probably preferable to men and women, who are all those things.

One endlessly intriguing aspect is this book's attack upon its own reader. It is unwilling to allow readers a privileged position in the literary experience, sitting back, unthreatened, merely witnesses characters undergoing the story's events. As you read *Gulliver's Travels*, you will find your expectations aroused precisely so that they can be teased or disappointed; your confidence in Gulliver and your willingness to see the world through his eyes will endure a kind of roller-coaster ride. In fact the best critical discussions of *Gulliver's Travels* in the last ten years have stressed that the satire of its own readers is a crucial part of Swift's attack on our complacency and self-satisfied detachment. The "Good Physician" gives pain, so that he may cure.

RICHARD H. RODINO

### **Henry Fielding** *Tom Jones (1749)*

Fielding's *Tom Jones*, declared Coleridge, is one of the three perfect plots in all Western literature (*Oedipus Rex* and Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* are the others), and observation the more remarkable because *Tom Jones* was one of the very first novels ever written in the English language. Fielding, you might say, perfected the form of the novel while inventing it.

*Tom Jones*'s structure has an architectural perfectness: for six books the hero lives at Squire Allworthy's estate; when he is exiled for a minor offense, he spends six books in literal and metaphorical transition on the road, involving sundry adventures; the final six books are devoted to his escapades in London. (This three-part structure has reminded many readers of a Palladian bridge, the eighteenth century's most familiar and significance-loaded architectural feature of transition). Moreover, this symmetry is rendered conspicuously and emphatically, seeming to advertise the narrator's confident understanding of characters and events along with a festive sense of the predictableness of human affairs.

There's the first rub, for Fielding pointedly disliked the calm orderliness of Palladian design and made sure to give it a swipe in *Tom Jones*. In many other ways, Fielding insinuates the sheer ambiguity of human doings, the artificiality of contrivances, the unrealness of safety and orderliness.

In other words, *Tom Jones* is full of contradictory signals, relentlessly structured and orderly (Tom's return to his birthright and the attendant restoration of social stability seem fairy taleish in their inevitableness), yet also inclined to chip away at its own certainty and apparent cheerfulness. For example, most important characters are tagged with names that seem easy clues to their traits but often these clues are deceptive or at

least pointedly inadequate. Squire Allworthy, for instance, thought generally a paragon, is peculiarly short-sighted and critically weak-willed in the clutch.

Furthermore, *Tom Jones* places high demands on its readers. Most of its books begin with Fielding's famous disquisitions on the Art of the Novel, which sometimes contradict, other times accord with Fielding's actual practice in the books action. Moreover, Fielding's narrator makes a point of addressing the reader directly, though often disingenuously, in a way that is sometimes called "outreach"—he refuses to allow his readers the safety of third person existence; he constantly pull them into the book, blurring the ordinary distinction between the reading experience and the reality outside the text. This novel requires full participation from its reader in the making of meaning. In the "Man of the Hills Tale," for example, in a remarkable act of self-consciousness, Fielding makes the Man a surrogate for his own principal narrative voice while Tom and his companion Partridge parody our own roles as the readers of *Tom Jones*; it is a marvelous episode, stunningly evocative of very recent experiments in fiction by Nabokov, Barth, Irving, yet even perhaps more sophisticated than anything these post-modernist writes have yet achieved.

RICHARD H. RODINO

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**  
*Confessions* (1784)

Rousseau's *Confessions* are less the story of his life than the story of his emotions and of his soul; some have called them an indecent exposure of his soul because the author did not disdain demonstrating a certain exhibitionism, spiced with eroticism. Yet his *Confessions* are a masterpiece of psychological analysis, as well as an eloquent and passionate attack, very frequently unjust, against his enemies. The virtues and the vices he describes about himself were congenial to much in the spirit of the age, and produced a powerful effect on the reader. His lyricism is the element that captivated the later adherents to the Romantic Movement; and because of it Rousseau became master of sentimental literature. Goethe will drink at its font; so will Wordsworth, Chateaubriand, and a thousand others. The *Confessions* reveal the spiritual wealth of man, as well as the treasures of his interior life, pointing to the latent powers that can be found in the human person. Here we have Rousseau the individualist, who preaches the values of the individual. The essayists and the novelists of the Romantic Movement were to imitate Rousseau slavishly.

ALFRED R. DESAUTELS, S.J.

**Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay**  
*The Federalist* (1788)

*The Federalist* originated as a set of essays published over the pseudonym "Publius" in various New York newspapers in 1787-1788 with the expressed intention of persuading votes to favor the ratification of the United States Constitution. Yet its authors also had a further end in view: to provide an authoritative exposition and explanation of the fundamental principles underlying that document, and reasons for its particular provisions, to which later generations of citizens might refer in order better to understand



the nature of the American regime and hence to guide the future development of the republic in a manner consistent with its Founders' intention. *The Federalist* contains classic discussions of such principles as the separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, representation, judicial review, and the advantages of an extended republic in generating a multiplicity of factions whose mutual checking action would serve to protect individual rights against the danger of government tyranny. But while elucidating the various safeguards relied on by the Founders to prevent government arbitrariness, the authors also stress the necessity of making government adequately strong and energetic to enable it to secure the liberty of the individual against domestic and foreign threats.

Contrary to the claims that are sometimes made today by conservative and neo-Marxist scholars, it is not the case that the American Founders were hostile to democracy. Rather—as *The Federalist* makes evident—they viewed popular government as a form of rule having its own peculiar weaknesses, for which the architects of such a regime—no less than the founders of a monarchy or aristocracy—must devise remedies in advance. The authors of *The Federalist* claim, and demonstrate, that the remedies the Founders devised for the diseases to which republican government is prone are themselves wholly consistent with republicanism. The historically unparalleled liberty, prosperity, and civic peace that Americans have enjoyed for over two centuries attests to their success in that endeavor. Yet the continued maintenance of that heritage depends on the education of each successive generation in the principles on which our regime rests, and education for which there is no better single source than *The Federalist (Mentor)*

DAVID L. SCHAEFER

### **Jane Austen**

#### ***Pride and Prejudice (1813)***

*Pride and Prejudice* was written between 1809-12 out of a rejected work entitled *First Impressions* produced in 1796-97. It has become the most read and reread of Jane Austen's six finished novels.

While each of novels is very different, *P&P* shares with Austen's other "two inches of ivory" (her metaphor) a number of characteristics. "Three or four Families in a Country Village" provide the *dramatis personae* and setting for her comedy in which intimate observations of character, social foibles and vulgarities are self-revealed and delicately satirized. Austen's exploitation of the popular conventions of 18<sup>th</sup> century romances is evident everywhere: the plot is a variant Cinderella tale; the hero is tall, dark, princely stranger (but at the ball he won't smile, talk or dance); the heroine (who none but the author and the reader know is quite superior) has the allure of lynx eyes and a sharp tongue; the villain Wickham; the action includes balls, verbal duels, and rescues; the wicked and silly are foiled; proposals, separations and reunions follow in proper time and order. And everywhere the pressure of conventions transformed generates its realism, its humor, wit, and wisdom.

The history of the gradual union of Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy, one held back by unconquerable pride and the other by prejudice, is propelled by engaging characters in pursuit of pleasure, estate, marriage and love. And while the action has the symmetry and attire of a formal dance and the prose is exuberant and epigrammatic, it is

not always “too light, and bright, and sparkling” or innocently romantic; rather, it is a furious and often cruel ritual chase: *et in arcadia ego*.

Despite the pride, prejudice, hypocrisy and sheer “follies and nonsense” which taint and disorder the social fabric, the marriage of hero and heroine demonstrates commitment to ideal social values. The union affirms and renews traditional moral and social structures. As her hero and heroine provide for their requirements for happiness by validating social obligations, Austen discloses her ethical kinship to Fielding.

Austen also anticipates some of the technical and thematic grounds on which George Eliot and Henry James later flourished. In *P&P* she begins to develop (it is fully realized in *Emma*) what James would later call the central intelligence, the narrative strategy which emphasizes the heroine’s perspective and which records the growth of her perception: Austen’s heroines are endowed with the ability and responsibility to choose. Austen’s dramatic dialogue has seldom been equaled (*P&P* has been successfully transcribed to the stage, film and television); its wit bristles with ironies and reverberates with ambiguities; she is able to keep in the air both what is said and what is not said, to represent thoughts without words. (*Vintage*)

MAURICE A. GERACHT

### **Stendhal (Henri Beyle)**

#### ***The Red and the Black* (1830)**

*The Red and the Black*, taken as a historical novel, is the requiem for an heroic age: the Napoleonic era when the slogan “careers open to talent” was in effect, and when men of energy, courage and honor, wearing the red uniform of the *Grande Armée*, extended the French Empire across the continent of Europe. For Henri Beyle (Stendhal), France of the Restoration was only a shadow of its former self; terrified by the specter of its revolutionary past, it was once again ruled by a narrowminded, soulless, and grasping aristocracy of wealth.

Into this climate so admirably recreated in the novel, Stendhal places his *enfant terrible*, the projection of all his deepest psychological desires of fulfillment, Julien Sorel, who from the very lowest echelon of society (he too is a carpenter’s son), will make war against the hated conspiracy of bureaucrats, parvenus, and aristocratic snobs. Julien is indeed worth of the task and becomes one of literature’s most accomplished rakes. (Or is he a rake *manqué*?) With a career in the military (the red) no longer open he gravitates stoically to one as a priest in the church (the black) which he discerns (correctly) as the institution now wielding the power through its undivided support for the restored monarch.

Stendhal has his little Goth at the gate ascend the ladder to success with a dizzying rapidity leading him from the provinces, to the seminary (a kind of French West Point of hypocrisy in this period), to the most aristocratic Parisian salon. The principal key to success is, of course, Julien’s handsome eyes and charm with women. He seduces Mme de Renal and Mlle de la Mole, the first a loving maternal sort, the other a steely-eyed feminist before her time. In each instance he emerges unscathed and one more step up the ladder because, like his hero Napoleon, he has an iron will and extraordinary power of analysis.

Julien's ascent to the top is disastrously checked in the end and the reader is forced to assume the fascinating task of analyzing the motives which have led the hero to attempt murder, renunciation of driving ambition, and kind of moral suicide as he offers his head to the very ruling class that he has scorned and contested. If, as I strongly believe, the ultimate test of any great literary characterization is an opacity that prevents the reader from making a facile analysis of motivation of conduct, then Julien Sorel passes with flying colors. I leave to future readers the challenge of forming their own opinions on Julien's motives.

This novel is one of the great psychological masterpieces of all times; and it presents for the first time in literature the modern "alienated" hero in the character of Julien who, refusing to compromise his inner integrity to fit into an ugly, sordid, and immoral society, makes of his death the ultimate protest. Small wonder, then, that *The Red and the Black* is often used as assigned reading in a variety of courses at Holy Cross. (Penguin)

THEODORE P. FRASER

### **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

*Faust* (1832)

One of the great literary monuments of Western Civilization, *Faust* is like a great cathedral, a hodge-podge of conflicting styles and structures, which somehow miraculously blend into one magnificent artifice because of the great unifying idea behind it. Goethe began work on *Faust* in his early twenties, finishing it a year before his death at 82. Intended more for reading than for performance, the play is the repository of the wisdom of a great mind accumulated over a lifetime.

Faust is the representative modern man, the great individual who through constant striving attempts to become like God. His adventures lead him from the "little world" where he seduces an innocent girl, to the "great world" of the emperor's court and an encounter with the shade of Helen of Troy. Despite his pact with diabolical powers, however, Goethe's hero is not damned. Instead he is redeemed through the two forces which for Goethe infuse human existence with meaning: love and man's desire to excel.

A massive work, and treasure trove of romantic art, music, and literary imitation, *Faust* is difficult for English readers because it is a German verse play. Manifold classical allusions in Part Two make an annotated edition desirable. No English version is entirely successful; however, the best modern edition, with commentary is the Norton. (Translation: Walter Arndt, Norton)

WILLIAM L. ZWIEBEL

### **Honore de Balzac**

*Pere Goriot* (1834)

One of the 97 "scenes" or views of French Society that Balzac offered in his grandiose fresco entitled the *Comedie humaine*, the novel *Pere Goriot* is certainly the best introduction to the literary universe of this brilliant novelist and visionary. Written in the early 1830s when Balzac was living in a Paris garret and working around the clock to keep his creditors at bay, the novel portrays modern society and Paris as its center with

unmitigated harshness. Society is viewed in biological-ecological terms as various groupings of zoological “types” battling to survive with only the strongest and most wily achieving survival. As the site of this struggle Paris is described as a kind of jungle, a “mud hole,” a moral slough peopled by modern Iroquois.

Once this moral climate has been described, Balzac places in this teeming “ocean” of striving his alter-ego, a young, proud, and aristocratic Southerner from a ruined but noble family who, like the author, sets out to make his way in Paris as a law student. At this point in the novel Balzac’s supreme talent as a great visionary writer comes to the fore as he charts the course of Rastignac’s progress in Parisian society. Using demonic inflation he elevates his major characters to the level of great moral forces. The enigmatic jack-of-all-trades and ex-convict Vautrin and the pathetic retired pasta merchant, Goriot—both lodgers with Rastignac in the dingy and smelly Pension Vauquer—are gradually made to undergo brilliant apotheoses: Vautrin, literature’s first major homosexual character, is unveiled as a modern Mephistopheles, an arch demon who tries to corrupt Rastignac and get him into his net; Goriot, one of Balzac’s great monomaniacal “types” (a kind of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Bourgeois King Lear) is revealed to be “the Christ of Paternity” who is ravaged by the incredible greed and cruelty of his two atrocious daughters.

And even a century later, the novel still retains its strange power of evoking in graphic terms many of the moral dilemmas and choices encountered by young men and women out to “make their way” in society. I personally view Balzac’s *Comedie humaine* with *Pere Goriot* as the opening chapter of a modern *Inferno*.

THEODORE P. FRASER

### **Alexis de Tocqueville**

#### ***Democracy in America (1835-1840)***

Alexis de Tocqueville—French aristocrat, lawyer, political leader, and man of letters—traveled to the United States in 1831 with his friend Gustave Beaumont. His account of American society based on this trip, published as *Democracy in America* in 1835 and 1840, is a brilliant example of social analysis and, perhaps, the greatest interpretation of American culture ever written.

De Tocqueville’s writing arises out of a deep moral and intellectual concern with the profound social, economic, and political revolutions of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. To understand this transformation, de Tocqueville turned to the United States, that society in which social equality and political democracy had reached their most complete development, and remarkably, to de Tocqueville, their most viable forms. How, de Tocqueville asked, had America, unlike France, been able to create political institutions that protected liberty as well freedom in a society without traditional restraints on human behavior? His answer—the American values and the pluralism of its institutional life created and alternative basis for social and political order—provides theoretical insight into the social foundations of democracy and the particular structure of American political life.

De Tocqueville’s inquiry into the character of American society also explores many other facets of American life. He analyzes the effects of social equality on values, documenting and American emphasis on individualism and change, on practicality and

materialism. He situates American manners, education, and literature in the context of the emerging middle-class society. And yet, through all, he remains sensitive to the limits and contradictions of American society: the enslavement of American blacks, the dilemmas of majority rule, and the ominous power of the emerging industrial “aristocracy.”

To understand yourself, as an American, and the society in which you live, read *Democracy in America*.

DAVID M. HUMMON

**Soren Kierkegaard**  
*Fear and Trembling (1843)*

One task only occupies the author of *Fear and Trembling*. That task is to bring thought face-to-face with faith in God. The task is not to place thought next to faith in order to compare the two; nor is it to replace faith by thought. The task is rather to think what the idea of faith in God means and to do so without substitutions, with additions and without deletions.

To concentrate on this thought, Kierkegaard invites the reader to focus his attention on Abraham who became the father of faith by his willingness, in faith, to kill his son Isaac. Unlike many contemporary thinkers, Abraham did not seek to be beyond faith; what could that have meant to Abraham? Unlike many contemporary thinkers, Abraham did not believe in this world but believed in God *for* this world; his faith showed itself only after the infinite resignation which enabled him to let go of everything. For Abraham faith was no spontaneous movement of the heart. He traveled *four days* with his son whom he planned to kill when they reached Mount Moriah—four days of fear and trembling during which the mind of Abraham was made to “shudder” by the thought of the horrendous deed he was contemplating.

Kierkegaard asks only one thing of his readers—that they have “the courage to think a thought whole.” *Fear and Trembling* is a small book but quite large enough for anyone who is drawn to think wholly the one thought that it raises. (*Translation: Walter Lowrie, Doubleday, Anchor, 1954*)

CLYDE V. PAX

**Emily Brontë**  
*Wuthering Heights (1847)*

She produced one book of poetry and one novel. The poetry is largely unread. The novel has been a household word ever since its publication a year before her premature death at 30. Generations have read the novel as simply a gothic romance, replete with ghosts, fantastic landscapes, doomed families, swarthy lovers and pale heroines. But for every thousand gothic romances ever written and still being written today, there is no novel competing for the stature of *Wuthering Heights*.

Writing long after the vogue of gothic fiction had died out, Bronte deals with the nature of passion in conflict with human reason. She is a post-Romantic writing a romantic novel to examine and criticize romantic love. Focusing on passion that defies human convention, amoral passion that runs its course, confronting ultimately the dark



mystery of the human spirit, the novel is like a Greek tragedy in that the fatal love between Cathy and Heathcliff, the darkly handsome gypsy foundling, cannot spend itself until they are everyone around them are maimed or destroyed.

The masterful narrative structure leads the reader, and the naïve narrator, Mr. Lockwood, out of the world of ordinary events into one of darkness and ambiguity. Each part of story is pieced together from various narrative voices, including a dead woman's diary; and, yet, no voice is completely unbiased or trustworthy. Here we see life as a continuous series of violent confrontations—total disorder in the midst of elaborate visible order. At the end we are tempted to think of Hamlet's words: "There are more things in heaven and earth. . . than are dreamed of in your philosophy." Or, perhaps, like the dazed listener to supernatural events in Coleridge's poem, we turn away "A sadder but wiser man."

PHILIP C. RULE, S.J.

### **Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels**

#### ***The Communist Manifesto (1848)***

The English edition of 1888 contains a most useful Preface by Engels which gives an account of the genesis of the *Manifesto* and something of its subsequent history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The *Manifesto* is by every criterion a living classic. It presents concisely, yet with precision, in eloquent language easily grasped by even the most rudimentarily educated, the essence of a highly sophisticated *Weltanschauung*. This world view, more fully elaborated and developed by Marx and Engels in the 35 years following the publication of the *Manifesto*, and for an additional 12 years by Engels after Marx's death, is today truly cosmopolitan. Literally hundreds of millions, from lowly peasants to skilled workers to learned scholars and professionals have been attracted to it and live by its principles.

As in every classic work, the *Manifesto* contains a timeless message within a dated setting. Yet a special caution must be exercised in the reading of the work. The historical nature of knowledge and truth is central to the thought of Marx. Once the knowledge of the Marxist world-view has been arrived at in the progression of history, the development of this truth, that is, the theoretical evolution of Marxist doctrine, is to come about for Marx through the concrete historical practice and struggles that have occurred *since* the writing of the *Manifesto*. The timeless message itself develops with the passage of time through the course of history and its ongoing class struggles.

GEORGE H. HAMPSCH

### **Charles Dickens**

#### ***David Copperfield (1850)***

*David Copperfield* was Dickens' "favourite child" among his fourteen completed novels. Partly autobiographical, long and leisurely, somewhat loosely plotted, overpoweringly nostalgic and preoccupied with the theme of memory, it brilliantly reveals what this most popular of all great novelists has to offer. *David Copperfield* succeeds wonderfully in simulating the passage of years, seemingly of lived experience. The novel evokes that

sense of a mysteriously linked past and present which defines what one is. Thus its great length is no drawback but a virtue, and most are sorry to see the book end. “Parts of it seem like fragments of our forgotten infancy,” said novelist-critic G.K.Chesterton. But *David Copperfield* also offers two other distinctive Dickensian qualities: haunting evocation of place, and gallery of living characters who have escaped their author and passed into the Western literary imagination. Who forgets the sylvan “Rookery” of David’s childhood, the charming boat-house of his friends the Peggotys, the sadistic Mr. Creakle’s dingy school, the labyrinthine back streets of squalid underworld London, the funereal and villainous Murdstones, the floridly optimistic Mr. Micawber, the loving but aggressive eccentric Betsy Trotwood, the slimy hypocrite Uriah Heep forever declaring how “humble” he is”

Whether you seek the essence of Dickens’s imagination, or one of literature’s finest evocations of childhood lived and retold, or a family of places and people who will always haunt those of us who have met them—*David Copperfield* is indispensable.

JOHN D. BOYD

**Nathaniel Hawthorne**  
*The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

One reason why *The Scarlet Letter* has attracted so many readers over the years is that there are so many ways to read it. It can be read, though admittedly not very fruitfully, as a sort of Puritan New England soap opera replete with its unfaithful wife, her mysterious lover, her vengeful elderly husband, and a meddling and censorious community.

It can be read far more fruitfully as a collage of three unforgettable portraits: the conscience-stricken Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, consumed by the shame and secret guilt from which he lacks the moral stamina to purge himself; the scholarly Roger Chillingworth, a man gradually transformed by his curiosity and by his quest for revenge into a monstrous function of his victim’s diseased conscience; and the passionate and proud Hester Prynne, a young woman who is the victim of a rigid and righteous establishment determined to reduce her to a mere emblem of her “sin..”

For the modern reader, especially for the reader with an interest in feminist issues, *The Scarlet Letter* can be read as a sensitive and sympathetic consideration of a woman driven to radicalism by a draconian male-dominated society. “Before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position,” Hester finally realizes, sounding for all the world like a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Gloria Steinem, “The whole system of society is to be torn down, and build anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified.”

Finally, and above all, *The Scarlet Letter* can be read as the agony of a creative spirit in the clutches of a fearful and repressive community threatened by nonconformity and bent upon expunging it. But no matter how *The Scarlet Letter* is read, it behooves the reader to be alert to the care with which Hawthorne has constructed his tale and the skill with which he manages his narrative in the creation of this enduring classic. (*Riverside*)

JOHN E. REILLY

**Herman Melville**  
*Moby-Dick* (1851)

Read principally for its story line, *Moby-Dick* can be a genuine bore. It seems to wander aimlessly or to lie endlessly becalmed while our chummy but garrulous narrator (that man called Ishmael) lectures us in infinite detail not only on whales, the furniture of whaling, the styles of whaling, the peculiarities of whaling vessels and their equally peculiar crews, but on subjects far more abstract and with far less apparent relevance to the novel as a story.

The “hero” of *Moby-Dick*, “crazy” Captain Ahab, does not put in his first appearance until Chapter XXVIII, and Melville withholds the “villain” of the piece (if we can assign that role to “the great white whale”) until Chapter CXXXIII. Only at that point does the pace of the narrative finally quicken through the closing two chapters to the calm of the brief “Epilogue.”

But *Moby-Dick* must be read as far more than just a “tale.” It is a thoughtful and articulate consideration of issues which not only troubled Melville and his contemporaries but which trouble each of us today, issues such as the limits and reliability of our knowledge, the responsibilities of power, and our need to recognize that even though our lives may appear to be absurd or mean or meaningless, we must nonetheless govern them with generosity and love. As Ishmael realizes, a realization that is literally the source of his salvation, “There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness,” that madness which undoes Captain Ahab. Melville has embodied these things, and a good deal more, in a book that is as intricate as it is patterned, that is peopled with a cast of memorable characters, and that is delivered in prose which stands among the most stunning in the language. (*Bobbs Merrill*)

JOHN E. REILLY

**Henry David Thoreau**  
*Walden* (1854)

Few books have been more persistently misrepresented than Thoreau’s *Walden*. It has been called a text on natural history. It has been called the chronicle, the diary, the journal, the narrative or story of a man who withdrew from human society to live alone in the wilderness and who urges his readers to pattern their lives after the way of life he pursued at Walden Pond. But *Walden* is none of these things.

Above all, it does not advocate that we accept Thoreau’s way of life as a model: “I would not have anyone adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, besides that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible but I would have each be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father’s or his mother’s or his neighbor’s instead.”

It is his pursuit of one’s own way that is the subject of *Walden*: the need for all of us to make a deliberate effort to discover just who we are in terms of the world in which we exist and to fashion our lives, to adjust our values, accordingly. To move us to do these things, to awaken our spirits from their deep and desperate slumbers, Thoreau will crow “as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake his

neighbors up.” His clarion, in *Walden*, is a rousing call, a wry, graceful, witty, poetic song that translates his experience at the Pond to a summons to all of us to renew ourselves by “simplifying” our lives, a summons assuring us that in proportion as we do, “the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. (*Riverside*)

JOHN E. REILLY

### **Gustave Flaubert**

#### ***Madame Bovary (1857)***

Requiring almost seven years of unremitting labor and anguished revisions of text, *Madame Bovary* has frequently been described by critics as perhaps the most artfully crafted (one could also say the best engineered) novel every written. It is also a ground breaking work containing as it does innovations in theory and technique which have profoundly affected the novel in our own century.

Important as these considerations surely are for the critic, they pale in comparison with the significance of the novel’s theme and contents. *Madame Bovary* in fact explores one of the most fundamental problems to assail all human beings at one time or another during life: the struggle between illusion and reality and the stubborn, even perverse tendency we all have upon occasion to allow our judgment to be affected not by fact but by our wishes and dreams. Accordingly, in what he clearly intended to be a 19<sup>th</sup> Century French *Don Quixote*, he wove the following simple plot: a young woman living in the provinces (Emma Bovary), whose mind has been addled by the insipid convent education then given to women and whose judgment has been severely impaired by the romantic sentimentality that engulfed France and the rest of Europe during the 1830s and 1840s, contracts a disastrous marriage with a plodding and decidedly unexciting Norman country doctor. Unable to divest herself of the illusion that, in the place of her cloddish husband, the perfect lover must exist for her just around the corner, Emma throws herself into two adulterous affairs with weak men distinctly unworthy of her. When both liaisons fail, she seeks solace in suicide.

Henry James declared that far from being immoral (a charge brought against it in a public trial), *Madame Bovary* could be profitably read as a moral tract against sexual misconduct by a Sunday School class. Even more effective, in my opinion, is its potential as a great work of art to demolish the “Somewhere over the rainbow mentality so rampant in our own age which foolishly confuses authentic human love with the flimsiest forms of sentimentality—hence the cloying vogue of TV soaps and pulp romances which control the emotional lives of millions of present-day Emma Bovarys of both sexes.

THEODORE P FRASER

### **Charles Darwin**

#### ***On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (1859)***

Acceptance of evolution as the explanation for organic diversity necessitated a conceptual revolution—one which would overthrow the Platonic concept of eternal, immutable species and view species as dynamic entities, variable over time and space. This seminal work by Charles Darwin started that revolution.

Pre-Darwinian biologists were local naturalists entrenched in a creationist model of species. Viewed from the non-dimensional perspective of the local naturalist, species are clearly distinct with no intermediaries between them. How could such discontinuous units arise if not through an act of special creation? Darwin's five-year voyage around the world on *H.M.S. Beagle* gave him a variation of species that convinced him that species could change. Later, in a rare moment of creative insight, he developed a mechanism to explain species change—natural selection.

*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* is not an outdated, historical landmark, but rather the intriguing account of the genesis of an idea which is, to this very day, a focal point of controversy both within and outside the scientific community. Darwin's logical presentation, masterfully documented with facts, opened the door for the acceptance of evolution, now a cornerstone of modern biology. More importantly, this book is a milestone in intellectual history; it launched biology into the mainstream of science, which since the 18<sup>th</sup> century had abandoned divine intervention as a necessary explanation for natural events, and freed the process of life from the shackles of mysticism.

WILLIAM R. HEALY

### **Victor Hugo**

#### ***Les Misérables* (1862)**

Very few people read *Les Misérables* any more. It seems, moreover, that those with any familiarity at all with the work are more often than not the survivors of required French courses in generations past who were led through a watered-down version of one of its most moving episodes, that of "The Bishop's Candle Sticks." Such a trivialization of Hugo's massive novel is most unfortunate. For aside from its historical importance as a moving presentation in fictionalized form of the social criticism and reformist ideals of Proudhon, Fourier, and other French socialist and Utopian thinkers of the last century, the novel compares favorably with *War and Peace* and *Germinal* (both published in roughly the same period) in its vast scope, tragic dimension, and universal theme.

Written by Hugo during his exile (1851-1870) on the Island of Guernsey, where he had been driven because of his opposition to Louis Napoleon's coup d'état, the novel is nothing less than a huge epic dedicated to the common man. The plot revolves around the fortunes of a representative of this class, Jean Valjean, a man laid low, in fact victimized by the injustices of the social order. When we first meet him, he is a convict returning from a 20-year sentence to the galleys (he has been condemned for stealing a loaf of bread to feed needy relatives). A vindictive society has reduced him to a subhuman level and hatred is the only emotion that he has been allowed to understand. Yet it is Hugo's contention that this potentially decent and generous human being would have been a good person *except* for the vicious effect of human laws. True Christian charity accorded to him by the saintly priest of the candlesticks (Bishop Myriel) triggers a stunning metamorphosis. The rest of the novel is then woven about the theme of Valjean's moral rehabilitation drawn through a number of intricate identities and experiences and his frantic attempts to evade the hot pursuit of the work's evil nemesis Javert, the very incarnation of the brutal and unfeeling "law and order" policeman.



In this ungenerous age of Reaganomics and American corporatism triumphant (a la Michael Novak, David Stockman, and of course William Buckley), the point that *Les Miserables* makes is so important and convincingly presented that parts of the novel could well be required reading. That is to say, in any social system justice must be more than remuneratory and has the larger obligation of promoting the dignity of the human being.

THEODORE P. FRASER

**Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy**  
*War and Peace* (1866)

The history of mankind, as a chain of two different types of alternating links, is made of wars and peace. A pair of such links is the subject of this crowning novel with no superiors in the realm of literature. But the main substance of these links is people: men and women, aristocrats and simple people, generals and soldiers, winners and losers....And people live and die, give birth and kill, love and hate....

On one hand the novel depicts Russia between 1805 and 1820, with a special emphasis on the political and military events in Europe caused by the Napoleonic Wars. The invasion of Russia in 1812, as the most climactic event of the Wars, is given the most time and space.

On the other hand the novel is a family chronicle of three upper-crust families, the Bolkonskys, the Bezukhovs, and the Rostovs. Natasha Rostov, a genuine woman in the process of growth from early childhood to maturity, from hide-and-peek to first torments of love, marriage, and childbirth, is the central character of the work.

There are 559 characters in the novel, and the author portrays with equal intensity Napoleon Bonaparte, the Emperor of France, and Platon Karatev a simple Russian peasant. Tolstoy gives equal time and attention to the dilemmas of General Kutuzov, the commander-in-chief of the Russian Army, and to the teen-age Natasha's lovesickness.

This outstanding work, an ultimate union of history and fiction, of knowledge and art, is a commanding masterpiece of Russian and world literature. It leaves the read with the feeling of an intellectual accomplishment and in a state of perfect satisfaction.

GEORGE N. KOSTICH

**George Eliot**  
*Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1871-72)

*Middlemarch* is George Eliot's (pseud. of Mary Ann Evans) major achievement. In this, the sixth of her seven novels, she returns to the Warwickshire locale of her early life, and as in *Adam Bede* (1859), *Mill on the Floss* (1860), and *Silas Marner* (1861), renders remarkable pictures of English provincial life. It is in this intimately known pastoral setting that she shows how ambitious petty jealousies and major conflicts make up the warp and woof, the moral "web" (Eliot's image) of society.

*Middlemarch* is constructed from the symmetrical interweaving of the lives of her central characters: Dorothea Brooke is a determined young woman who through suffering develops from an idealistic provincial resolved to sacrifice herself for abstract values to a mature woman who learns that devotion to intellectual and moral truth does not mean the

necessary suppression of feelings and personal happiness; Lydgate dreams of heroic contributions to the science of medicine and discovers his aspirations narrowed by self betrayal, an inappropriate mate, restricting social strings and limited ability: Casaubon's later marriage confronts him with the knowledge that his lifelong labyrinthine pursuits, his scholarship, have been denials of life, and his account "Pangs without birth, and fruitless Industry." The structure also juxtaposes histories of several love affairs, marriages, families (aristocratic, merchant, farming), ambitions, careers; the narrative includes political backbiting on small and large scale, questions of reform (medical, economic, political), a murder, and election, the coming of the railroad, the history of England 1828-1831. The minor figures in *Middlemarch* are extraordinarily vital and felt; the Garths, Vincys, Farebrothers and Bulstrodes would, in any other novel, be major characters.

Eliot's narrative presence is one of the riches of the novel. Although some readers have found her voice intrusive, its sympathy and understanding give meaning to the most ordinary of human activities, redeem struggling and erring human weakness and suffering, and often ennoble common gestures. Never far from ethical and psychological considerations, the narrator can by turn be witty, ironic, satiric, humorous, solemn, nostalgic, elegiac, passionate, always actively provocative, always seeking to rouse "the nobler emotions" and "enlarge sympathies" There are few novels of equal sweep and scope; few linger in one's imagination as vividly and as long (*Riverside*)

MAURICE A. GERACHT

### **Fyodor Dostoevsky**

#### ***The Brothers Karamazov*(1881)**

This novel is generally considered the author's masterpiece. Dostoevsky, a re-born Christian never ceased analyzing his religious doubts. In this book we see some facets of his struggle with disbelief: the attraction of relationalism, of materialism, of determinism. The self-sufficiency of science, and the nihilism of the reigning philosophy during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all this tempted him: but they would have annihilated his Christian principles, and these he found impossible to surrender.

So he argued against his age. Ivan embodies all these temptations but he found it impossible to harmonize his philosophy with the yearnings of his heart. On the other end of the spectrum stands Christ, who invites man to accept his message, to act freely and to live lovingly. Alyosha accepts this invitation and embodies the Christian answer. But in the midst of all this there is the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, the Cardinal who accepts the offers of atheism, but who masks them to his followers; who accepts his freedom of action, but encourages his followers to surrender it to the magistrates of the Church. Dostoevsky was haunted by the principles of the Grand Inquisitor but remained unconquered by them. But in the struggle, his head was bloody though unbowed. This novel is extremely long but high rewarding. Even the atheist Andre Gide held it to be a masterpiece of dialectics and of superior psychological value.

ALFRED R. DESAUTELS, S.J.

## **Henry James**

### ***The Portrait of a Lady (1881)***

James was the most cosmopolitan writer in the history of fiction. It was his “complex fate” (his phrase) to be heir of American English and continental traditions. The natural nobleman of American literature, from Cooper through Twain, escaped from structured society and sought worlds which would favor their ideal self-conceptions; their English cousins, from Richardson through Eliot, sought to both realize their individual aspirations and to be included in the social structure; on the continent, from Sand and Balzac to Zola, the overriding concerns were how the material and moral environment conditions the individual, how the “social center” functions in developing awareness of the sensuous surface as well as the self. The conventions and forms of each of these traditions were functions of their visions. James drew from these traditions and synthesized, distilled, and transformed them to create a vision and art uniquely his own.

In his most typical work, James’s idealistic albeit inexperienced Americans reach for “the requirements of their imagination,” seek to “live all they can,” and hope “to be better than they are” in a Europe of fairy-tale. There, they encounter a rich structured culture, through experience and suffering acquire knowledge and self-awareness, and risk corruption and destruction. Over-simplified, this is the “international theme” of “Daisy Miller” (1879), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904)

James’s sixth novel, *The Portrait* helped establish his international reputation and is a keystone of James’s house of fiction. It is the consummate achievement of his “early period” and it marks the beginning of his “middle years.” In many respects, it typifies Jamesian themes and methods constant throughout his career. In addition to the “international” element, *The Portrait* shares such characteristic Jamesian interests as the impact of European culture on Americans, the moral opportunities and dangers offered by material wealth, the difficulties of personal relationships and marriage, the problem of freedom, the price of experience.

The novel is primarily a portrait of Lady Isabel Archer, the young heiress of the ages and Diana’s American votary, created and discovered as we read even to the last period. Settings (Albany, Gardencourt, London, Paris, Florence, Rome), her fairy godcousins (the Touchetts) her suitors (Goodwood, Lord Warburton, Ralph Touchett, Gilbert Osmond), her friends (Henrietta Stackpole, Madame Merle), the incidents (her quest to “confront her destiny,” her marriage, her struggles) all function primarily as the lines, shapes and hues of James’s central picture. The vitality (and difficulty) of the work are derived from the techniques James created to objectify and analyze Isabel’s limited point of view. The center of everything is Isabel’s consciousness. (*Norton*)

MAURICE A. GERACHT

## **Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain)**

### ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884)***

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the quintessential American novel. Since its publication in 1884, more than a million copies have been sold and it has become an integral part of every American’s mythical childhood. It is the dream of idyllic youth in a

barefoot world of continual Summer. Although Mark Twain intended to merely write a sequel to his popular and highly successful *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, he produced his own greatest work and one of the masterpieces of American literature. Subsequent writers as diverse as Hemingway and Faulkner have expressed their debt to his influence.

Like *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn* is a novel that can be read by all ages for pure enjoyment. Unlike *Tom Sawyer* it carries a much deeper and sometimes darker message. The same Mark Twain who could weave a delightful adolescent tale was equally capable of the most sardonic social criticism. In *Huckleberry Finn* he sets the wonderful raft adrift on the Utopian River as counterbalance for his often caustic comments on the conventional world. The foibles, the outright depravity and the corruption of society are encountered by Huck and Jim each time they venture ashore. When they return to the raft they regain a mini-society of peace and harmony that transcends age, race and class.

Like other literary classics, *Huckleberry Finn* lends itself to multiple readings, each bringing renewed pleasure and delight from the story, its characters and their expertly captured southern frontier speech. Though nearly a century old, Twain's narration and dialogue remain fresh and alive. His insights into our humanity with all its failings and pretensions, sadness and happiness never fail to please enlighten and reward the reader. (Norton)

JAMES E. HOGAN

### **Emile Zola**

#### ***Germinal* (1885)**

Born in 1840 and orphaned at an early age, Zola became one of the most successful journalists of his age. Beginning in 1868, he began to construct the history of a fictional family, the Rougon-Macquart, of which *Germinal* forms a chapter. Recognized as the most influential of the "naturalists" with the publication of *L'Assommoir* in 1877, he demonstrated both his anti-clericalism and his sympathy for the lower classes in his story of the laundress Gervaise and, later, in the story of her son Etienne, the hero of *Germinal*.

*Germinal* powerfully evokes the struggles of a mining community against poverty, and was based upon the important strike of miners in Anzin in 1884. Zola's preoccupations with the socialist ideologies of Fourier, Proudhon, and Marx are evident in the novel, as is his profound belief in the possibility of human progress.

*Germinal* provoked significant controversy at the time of its publication, yet it enjoyed enormous popular success and continues to be widely read.

THERESA A. MCBRIDE

### **Friedrich Nietzsche**

#### ***Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886)**

It is a commonplace of our time to say that all thought is historically "relative," meaning that man can never achieve "objective" knowledge—and hence no moral code, in particular, can be said to be objectively valid. Nietzsche is one of the few men ever to have thought through and confronted the radical implications of this assumption.

Presupposing that all thought is historically conditioned or "perspectival," he endeavors to give that assumption an ennobling interpretation, one that can stimulate

mankind to new heights of achievement, rather than issuing in a degrading nihilism. His concern for the enhancement of the human species leads him to launch a profound attack against the leading political dogmas of “enlightened” modernity—democracy, humanism, egalitarianism, socialist, libertarianism. He endeavors to generate a new aristocracy that will consciously create “values” demanding the utmost struggle and striving on the part of mankind—in place of the debasing modern morality that honors only freedom, comfort, and mutual accommodation.

The very immoderation of Nietzsche’s rhetoric is the source both of the greatest appeal of his thought, and of its greatest danger: one of the most terrible tyrannies in human history claimed to derive its inspiration and justification from Nietzsche. That that claim involved a considerable distortion of Nietzsche’s teaching, and that Nietzsche himself would doubtless have despised such tyranny, cannot entirely absolve him from the responsibility of having indirectly encouraged it. Yet no one who aspires to be liberally educated can afford to ignore Nietzsche’s deeply philosophical critique of the cherished assumptions of modern liberalism. Of all his works, *Beyond Good and Evil*—intended by him as an elucidation of his teaching in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*—provides the most accessible summary of his thought in its most comprehensive and mature form. (*Translation: Walter Kaufmann, Vintage*)

DAVID L. SCHAEFER

**Joseph Conrad**  
*Heart of Darkness* (1902)

One of the most complex and compelling novellas ever written *Heart of Darkness* is Conrad’s probing study of moral degradation and cultural collapse in the depths of the primeval jungle. Based partly on Conrad’s experience in piloting a wretched steamer up the Congo into the heart of the dark continent, this journey of awareness is a terrifying exploration as well of the darkness within ourselves, and of our own potential for corruption. It remains one of the masterpieces of modern literature by a man renowned as one of the most deeply psychological and complex of the experimental novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Few works can be read so rewardingly on so many different levels—as an attack on the hypocrisy and presumption of civilization, an assault on colonialism and capitalist development, a repudiation of the idea of progress, a satanic inversion of the theory of evolution, a terrible revelation of the vulnerability of idealism, an excoriation of economic greed and exploitation. Here the imperialist dream becomes nightmare, then revealing vision through Conrad’s systematic reversal of the values associated with our conventional images of light and dark, black and white, civilized and savage, good and evil.

Civilization—superior, white, Western, idealist, exploitive—enters the jungle to enlighten it, subdue it, and loot it. But the jungle strikes back at this fantastic invasion, and corrupt ends twist men and means: machines rot, workers collapse, purpose flags, logic fails, absurdity prevails. In this ironic fable of evolution and progress, we journey through this modern Inferno with the seeker Marlow as our guide and see through his eyes what greed can do to man, what man can do to nature, and what nature can do in vengeance.



As we move physically down the coast, then up the snake-shaped river, we move physically from outer to inner, and morally from absurdity to perversity. Outer exploitation produces inner decay and collapses: the blacks, natural and robust in their white civilizers. Kurtz is the blatant exemplar of the jungle's vengeance upon the exploiters, as he is swallowed up in the corruption, then reduced to a wraith barely able to pronounce his repudiation at "the horror" of it all. But with all Europe in his background he clearly is all of us—and his fall is our fall. Marlow identifies with Kurtz, crawls with him in degradation, and tells us his story so that we may see and be enlightened. But in this world in which everything turns upside down, the light we see is an immense darkness—about us all. (*Riverside*)

JOHN T. MAYER

### **Max Weber**

#### ***The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1904-1905)***

A quintessential "universal scholar," Max Weber has made an unsurpassed contribution to our understanding of the political, spiritual, and sociological forces at the heart of capitalism, the economic system which has become identified with our Western tradition. While *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* represents only a fragment of Weber's monumental scholarly output, and it deals only with some of his inquiries, it is a book which captures the essence of his thinking and it represents, in most respects, his most original work.

To be sure, Weber was neither the first thinker to engage in an in-depth study of capitalism nor did he produce the most compelling insights. The German world, from Marx to Brentano, abounds with thinkers whose scholarly concern was to understand the roots, dynamics, and consequences of capitalism. What makes *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* an indispensable book to the student of modern politics is the original focus of Weber's research, and the conclusions that he draws.

For Weber, capitalism is more than an economic system which has, more or less inevitably emerged out of the process of industrialization and modernization in the Western world. It is also a system of values, largely of a religious derivation, which has set the stage for, if not facilitated, the birth and expansion of industrialism in Western societies. In order to understand capitalism, therefore, it is necessary not only to place it in a historical context but also to look "inside" it, by singling out those ethical values and sociological patterns of relations among groups and socioeconomic strata which maintain capitalism in life and create the cultural environment conducive to the rigors and dictates of modern industrial life. In the portrayal of capitalism developed by Weber, economic-historical forces stand in a mutually-reinforcing relationship to sociological-spiritual forces. The vital nerve of capitalism is the synthesis between these two forces, a fusion in which the protestant ethic becomes submerged by the more materialistic "spirit" of capitalism.

Writing as a *fin-de-siecle* German witnessing the convulsive growth of German industrialization, and deeply steeped in the central European philosophical-cultural tradition, Weber left out of his inquiry questions which are increasingly relevant today. For instance, the question concerning the universal applicability of his synthesis, especially with regard to the necessity of a protestant ethic as the prerequisite for a successful development of capitalism. Far from detracting from the importance of his

work, the present crisis of capitalism in the West and the spread—tentative at times and unflinchingly arduous—of industrialization to the developing countries, makes a re-reading of Weber an urgent necessity.

MAURIZIO VANNICELLI

**James A. Joyce**

***A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916)***

Joyce's 1913-1914 reshaping of an earlier abortive attempt at an autobiographical novel in the 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalistic tradition, *Stephen Hero* (fragments published in 1944). This later version is a carefully wrought novel of esthetic complexity displaying a strong influence of Italo Svevo and the European novelists, artistic theorists, and psychologists of the early modernist movement. Perhaps of equal importance is the ironic distance Joyce is able to establish between writer and central character, Stephan Dedalus, who, between the ages of six and twenty, finds his vocation to become the high priest of art. Despite the light satire Joyce uses to portray the youthful pretensions, he is in no way unsympathetic with the hero in his battle with the ignorance and bigotry of his conservative, late 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish-Catholic environment. This could well be the most important Bildungsroman of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*Viking, 1964*)

EDWARD F. CALLAHAN

**Henry Adams**

***The Education of Henry Adams (1906-1918)***

*The Education of Henry Adams* is an American classic, a work about many things. First, it is a story of Henry's life. Despite marked reserve, it reveals much about this grandson and great grandson of presidents. What emerges is a consummate commentator on his nation and the world: brilliant, egotistical, cynical, a rebel against a society that seemed to have bypassed both him and his class. As an Adams, he considered himself entitled to national power. Only a dated and inferior education precluded this.

As an observer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Henry had few peers. A magnificent mind, gifted prose, superb education, and unmatched family tradition and connections assured this. His reflections on the English attitude toward the Civil War made while secretary to his father, minister to Great Britain, 1861-1865, are unequalled. And this is but a fraction of the intellectual, social, and cultural smorgasbord that one enjoys while ranging over such topics as his comments on world personalities, Harvard College, Darwinism, the dynamo, history and education.

Indeed, the entire "autobiography" concerns education, and one is able to attain much of that elusive commodity by following the author down its tortuous path. Among his many memorable remarks: "A teacher affects eternity." "No man can instruct more than half-a-dozen students at once." Cost is the problem. And, because of the dogmatism engendered by these professions, "no man, however strong, can serve ten years as schoolmaster, priest, or senator, and remain fit for anything else."

*The Education of Henry Adams* is a brilliantly written work of universal excellence. Students of the American experience cannot afford to miss this. Adams is at home with both the unity of Christianity and modern multiplicity. His appeal is cosmic.

Devotees of Aquinas and stained glass windows can embrace him as readily as critics of present society.

JOSEPH J. HOLMES

### **Sigmund Freud**

#### ***A General Introduction of Psychoanalysis (1920)***

The students approaching Freud for the first time can easily be intimidated by the massiveness of the twenty-four volume *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. The search for an appropriate introduction can lead to no better starting place than *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. This work consists of three series of lectures that Freud delivered to a general audience at the University of Vienna from 1915 to 1917. In an almost conversational style the founder of psychoanalysis presents his ideas as they stood at the time of the first world war. Developing his arguments with clarity and persuasiveness, Freud gently leads the reader through the most basic aspects of psychoanalysis and then on to the complexities of neurosis and its treatment. In the process, we learn not only the fundamental propositions of psychoanalysis, but also the essence of the psychoanalytic style of thought.

One of the most fascinating aspects of psychoanalysis is its claim that there is meaning in what initially appear to be meaningless phenomena. Freud explores the implications of this view by examining mental events common to us all. His analysis of errors and dreams puts us on notice at the outset that psychoanalysis finds hidden meaning not only in the behavior of emotionally disturbed individuals, but also in the daily actions and fantasies of each of us. In the Freudian view, the mind of the “normal” as well as the neurotic “is made up of contradictions and pairs of opposites (p.80) that are constantly locked in battle. Dreams, errors, and neurotic symptoms alike are the result of these conflicts between opposing intentions and meanings. Although the concepts Freud employed to describe the notion of mental conflict continued to evolve after the appearance of *A General Introduction*, there is no clearer explanation of this central idea anywhere in Freud’s writings.

The newcomer to Freud should be forewarned that, although the first two series of lectures presuppose no prior knowledge of psychoanalysis, the third series on the neuroses is more advanced. However, the basic model of the mind that Freud develops earlier in the book is the key to understanding his theory of neurosis, and if you master this you will find your way through the complexities of the final lectures. And it will be worth the effort. (Note: In the *Standard Edition* of Freud’s works, the title of this book is given as *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*.)

STUART G. FISHER

### **Thomas Mann**

#### ***The Magic Mountain (1924)***

This novel, by Germany’s greatest writer in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is superficially an historical depiction of upper middle class European society before World War I. On a higher plane it presents a *Bildungsroman*, a typically German form treating an individual’s preparation for life. Primarily, it is an allegorical novel of ideas. Hans

Castorp, a young German of modest means and intellect, visits an alpine sanatorium where his cousin is recuperating from tuberculosis. His two weeks stay lengthens to seven years. On the mountain Castorp encounters a microcosm of the forces seeking domination in European civilization at the turn of the century, all engaging in conflict for his soul as well: liberalism, authoritarianism, democracy, communism, mysticism, realism, idealist, literature, music, gallic rationalism and teutonic hothouse romanticism. The pervasive symbol of the latter is the hospital itself, where death is a way of life, exerting a fascinating influence on the hero, who like his creator, must overcome a predilection to reject vitalism for the spiritually refined realm of the intellect and death.

A mammoth book, by turns challenging, stimulating, exasperating and sometimes even boring, for those with *Sitzenfleisch* it offers copious insights into the problems, hopes, intellectual and cultural forces still contending for Western Civilization today. A good warmup is *Buddenbrooks*, treating similar problems in a more lyrical form.  
(Translation: H.T. Lowe-Porter, Modern Library)

WILLIAM L. ZWIEBEL

### **Sigrid Undset**

***Kristin Lavransdatter* (1927)**

This Nobel Prize-winning trilogy about the life and death of a medieval Norwegian woman has the timeless quality one expects of a masterwork. It is a richly textured presentation of a deeply lived life which melds the outlook, theology, and way of life of 14<sup>th</sup> century Scandinavia with the universal needs and passions of the human experience. The work has an integrity and a wholeness which is especially striking in view of the many levels of thought and intensity present in the writing.

Undset's *Kristin* is an "average" woman of her time; she is also strong, true to herself, and in fact heroic. That we do not see her as a figure from an alien time is a reflection of the author's skill at leading us to an acceptance of the notions of sin and redemption as understood by the medieval mind. The sense of reality that pervades the novel is accentuated by Undset's remarkable ability to make us *see* faces and landscapes, glowing and luminous as in a painting—one thinks of Rembrandt and Turner. The book, which originally appeared as three separate volumes published between 1923 and 1927, is huge and requires time and patience for the reflective reading it deserves. It is an outstandingly powerful excursion into another place, another time, another life.

(Translation: Charles Archer, Bantam)

PATRICK SHANAHAN

### **Erich Maria Remarque**

***All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)**

In World War I the horror and obscenity of modern warfare were new enough to be truly shocking and spiritually deadening to the young men called by their governments to give up their history, heritage, and their lives in the "war to end all wars." Written shortly after World War I, Erich Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* conveys the sense of horror, shock, and loss in a manner which is effective even to a post-Vietnam generation of readers.

The novel's narrator is a young German who, at the urging of a school teacher, enlisted along with all his classmates in the army early in the war. There is no character development, no subtly changing perspective, and no innovative use of language in this book. The novel's narrator has already lost his innocence, his past, and his future before he begins telling his story; yet, the book has a power and an impact which are lasting and wrenching. The matter-of-fact descriptions of naked, headless upper halves of bodies lodged in trees where the explosions of artillery shells have left them, the virtuoso description of the frenzied hand-to-hand combat in the trenches, and the chilling encounter in a shell crater between the narrator and a Frenchman he has mortally wounded are just some of the episodes which stay with one long after the initial reading.

The novel depicts a war where glamour, bravery, and cowardice are practically irrelevant concepts. The only important parameters in the trenches are surviving, avoiding pain, and the simple camaraderie of men who share this bitter, pointless experience. The narrator asks often what will become of his kind after the war, how will they be able to live after living through such savage godless times. We, the children and grandchildren of such men must answer these questions.

ROBERT H. GARVEY

**Ernest Hemingway**  
*A Farewell to Arms (1929)*

In Hemingway, the line between life and art is thin, and most of his novels are the condensed, imaginative tips of the iceberg of his experience. On one level, *A Farewell to Arms* is a love story drawn from the young wounded Ernest's infatuation with his nurse during World War I; and the "farewell" becomes not just a goodbye to lost love but a flight from both the horror of war, to an imagined "separate peace," and, at the same time, from moral responsibility. On another level the book becomes, as Robert Penn Warren said, "the great romantic alibi for a generation," and attempt to explain the cynicism and materialist of the age by the "unfairness" of fate.

If we have gone beyond the Hemingway cult of swaggering masculinity and the shallowness of his moral vision, we can still always learn from his style. *A Farewell* begins:

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the River and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. The troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J.

**William Faulkner**  
*Absalom, Absalom! (1936)*

As Faulkner's masterpiece, *Absalom* belongs to world literature, and justifies the compliment paid this Southern Nobel laureate by existentialist Gabriel Marcel, who once matter-of-factly, called him the American Aeschylus. Undeniably dense and complex, the



novel's 375 pages should ideally be read at a single sitting, as a novel of immersion, the book is a dramatic tour de force which in the final pages stuns the reader into a sense of self-recognition—that he shares with the narrator and the story's hero the inclination to deny man's own tragic experience of life. Often described as a perfect meshing of content and form, *Absalom* details the story of Thomas Sutpen, whose tragedy is the he futilely sought to make life ideal rather than real, preferring his vision of life to his own flawed experience of it. On a concrete level, the interracial son Sutpen denies comes to haunt him in a Gothic revenge plot of incest and miscegenation.

The primary narrator, Quentin Compson, recounts the story of Sutpen's denial of his roommate at Harvard as a way of explaining the South's refusal to accept Civil War defeat. In the narration, that denial also becomes a secular metaphor for the renunciation of the biblical fall of man. Because Quentin's narrative sources are so diffuse and contrary—ambiguous historical documents; biased first-and second-hand witnesses; speculation; even the roommate conjectures part of the plot!—it becomes clear the act of narrating is itself a futile ideal that ever fails to capture the true reality of the past. To wit, the assertion of anything in life as an absolute denies the finite nature of everything man touches. Hence, the narrative method of the novel duplicates the tragic denial of the story's content, trapping Quentin on the final page in a denial much like Thomas Sutpen's. Likewise, the reader, whose ideal goal is to comprehend the problems of Sutpen, Quentin, the South, and salvific and secular history, arrives only at the frustrating knowledge that his own understanding of the universe is indeed flawed. For the patient and discerning reader who itches to know how King Lear might fare on the antebellum plantations of Mississippi, *Absalom* is just the thing. (*Modern Library*)

PATRICK J. IRELAND

**Ignazio Silone**  
***Bread and Wine* (1936)**

*Bread and Wine* is the fictionalized account of the crisis in belief and subsequent loss of faith in international communism suffered by the Italian political activist Silone (pseudo. for Secondo Tranquillo) in the 1920s. Indeed, his is not an isolated incident; a fascinating book still in circulation—*The God that Failed*—provides moving testimonies by Silone, Gide, Koestler, and other European writers and intellectuals to the widespread disillusionment among “believers” in the movement during the period when Stalin was cynically subverting it to his own chauvinist ends.

In the novel, Silone traces the evolution of a fugitive political revolutionary, Pietro Spina, who worn out in soul and body, returns to a fascist Italy to go into hiding. To better elude the authorities he dons the attire of a secular priest and, in a mystical transference, assumes despite himself the moral responsibility and teaching authority that the priestly garb has conferred on its wearers throughout the centuries.

Newly armed with the philosophy of love, dedication to justice, and concern for the poor taught by Christ, Spina so effectively practices his counterfeit identity that he builds around himself a community of “new Christians” similar to the neophytes of the primitive church.

As the novel ends with Spina's little flock either dispersed or executed by the fascists, Silone's message is simple and disturbing. No solution to the terrible scandal of injustice can be provided, he believes, by modern political systems or institutions, be they religious or secular since, for reasons of expediency or survival, they have placed doctrines and empty formulas above concern for the individual. The true follower of Christ, then, is one who without institutional ties or at least dependency on them, directly transforms his principles into action and, if necessary, puts his life on the line.

Christ's magnificent legacy becomes for Silone a pure form of socialism, a terrestrial Communion of Saints concerned with justice here and now which will remake the face of the earth with a new spirit ignited from the still glowing coals of primitive Christian charity. Very few novels which I have taught have so consistently moved students as this one. Please read it!

THEODORE P. FRASER

**Franz Kafka**  
*The Trial (1936)*

"Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without his having done anything wrong, he was arrested one fine morning." Thus begins one of the most bizarre yet significant novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As its title implies, Kafka's novel deals with guilt. Joseph K. has seemingly transgressed against a law whose nature is unfathomable; its regulations and procedures a jumble of self-abrogating contradictions. Everything the accused learns, as he becomes more and more involved in his case, indicates that regardless of his attempts to prevent it, the essence of the court is to proceed, relentlessly carrying out his trial in inaccessible realms, leading inevitably to a guilty verdict and execution. Unwilling to accept such a necessity, Joseph K. dies at the end, "like a dog."

In *The Trial* Kafka seems to have created a modern allegory of the individual faced with the riddles of existence and death in a world devoid of meaning. Whereas traditional Judeo-Christian views justified mortality as part of God's plan, Kafka's work suggests that human life is under an incomprehensible death sentence, implying inexplicable guilt against some remote and inscrutable authority. Yet this is only one interpretive possibility; it lies within the nature and fascination of every one of this writer's works, that they are ultimately enigmatic. (*Translation: Willa and Edwin Muir, Schocken*)

WILLIAM L ZWIEBEL

**Georges Lefebvre**  
*The Coming of the French Revolution (1939)*

A brilliant and synthetic analysis of the causes of the French Revolution of 1789, this work by French historian Georges Lefebvre is one of the classics of modern historical writing. This small volume recounts the events of the first year of the Revolution, ending with the Declaration of the Rights of Man in October of 1789. Though it treats only the advent of the Revolution, most of the issues and dynamics of the whole revolution are

presented clearly. In particular, the activities and attitudes of each of the social classes is nowhere set forward more clearly and succinctly.

Although Lefebvre was himself a Marxist, his treatment of the Revolution is open-handed, sympathetic in its complexity, and in no way reductionist or narrowly doctrinaire.

Lefebvre's vision of the Revolution demonstrates that it produced a universal philosophy in which all human beings were equal, at least in principle, and a model for future struggles for political freedom elsewhere.

THERESA M. McBRIDE

### **John Steinbeck**

#### ***The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)**

While Steinbeck is perhaps the least stellar of our Nobel Laureates, the literary achievement of *Grapes of Wrath* is that it manages to transcend the limitations of quickly dated social criticism in such a way as to address a more permanent and universal audience. The first significant "migrant worker" novel, it created a sensation at the end of the Depression, as did its filming two years later—allegedly the Hearst papers sought to prevent the film's release on the grounds that the work's content was inflammatory.

Steinbeck, like many American writers, is schizophrenically torn between the naturalistic defeatism of experience and the romantic idealism of the human spirit. His resolution of this inevitable mix is often sentimentally disaffecting at the same time it is pragmatically realistic. The novel traces the migration of the Joad family from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl of the 1930s to the great California farm fields. The plight of the dispossessed and their subsequent exploitation by both commercial and government authorities represents Steinbeck's social indictment of American democracy on the grounds that it is primarily a capitalistic economic system with little democratic concern for the rights and welfare of the great unwashed.

As the family disintegrates, their identity is born again as the family of man. Thematically, they learn the gospel of "the whole shebang. . . one big soul ever'body's part of." It is a brotherhood-of-man philosophy that must be learned, not seen, that "you got to find out" from experience. Interestingly, this share-and-share-alike gospel, the novel makes realistically clear, will not necessarily save the masses from physical starvation, but will save them from spiritual narrowness and stinginess. Accordingly, Tom Joad becomes a rebel, not because free enterprise is evil or because its social and economic effects are unethical or immoral, but rather, because the plight of the Okies menaces the general health of the nation, spiritually confining the rich to their monetary self-interest and the desperate poor to an insular clannishness, thus depriving both of a broader, selfless experience in human affairs. As the much-celebrated Rosasharon episode demonstrates, the unity of mankind Tom seeks is effective only when that selfless insight, once perceived, is translated into action, in unspoken, thankless gesture. (*Penguin*)

PATRICK J. IRELAND

**Richard Wright**  
*Native Son* (1940)

*Native Son*, published in 1940, is a powerful novel about the hatred, fear and violence bred by racial oppression. Richard Wright's first novel—very likely his greatest and certainly his most memorable work— was one of the first major artistic and popular successes by a black American writer. The literary lineage of *Native Son* has been traced most often to earlier American naturalism, especially Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, after which Wright may have modeled his use of criminal violence as a dramatic device. For his psychological probing and the main character's search for self-realization, in the face of doom, Wright also been compared to Dostoevsky. But beyond such comparisons, *Native Son* stands as a celebrated point of departure of black protest fiction because of its vivid and uncompromising portrayal of the brutality of racial oppression.

On a literal level, *Native Son* is the story of Bigger Thomas, a resident of Chicago's South Side slum during the Depression. Fear evoked by oppression drives Bigger to violence and carries him to an inevitable fate. Yet the real subject of the book is the meaning of the black experience in America, as revealed by Bigger's violent acts. These acts shock the reader into an awareness of the social circumstances out of which they were created. We see the damaging psychological consequences of Bigger's brutally restricted world and gain a sociological perspective on racism, with its link to economic exploitation. More than this, however, the reader of *Native Son* will find an intensely gripping narrative pace, a dynamic foreshadowing of events, and a rich symbolic texture.

ROYCE SINGLETON, JR

**Hermann Hesse**  
*Magister Ludi* (*The Glass Bead Game*) (1945)

Imagine a country run by a monastic-like order rejecting all association with the everyday world, devoted solely to scholarly pursuits, whose paramount interest is a wholly intellectual and abstract game. This is *Castalia*, the land created by Hesse in this strange novel of the life of Joseph Knecht.

As his name suggests, Knecht's destiny is to serve. Singled out at an early age, he attends Castalia's elitist schools, advancing slowly through ever-increasing responsibilities. At the same time, he is tested, and must defend the Castalian way of life against the demands of the outer world. Nevertheless, he pursues his vocation with single-minded devotion, finally becoming "Magister Ludi," Master of the Game and head of the order. In the end, however, Knecht leaves Castalia. Warning of the sterility of pure intellectualism, he abandons the *vita contemplative* for the *vita active*, choosing to become a young man's mentor. The reader will have to decide the meaning of Knecht's death for himself.

In this difficult, slow-moving, often abstruse novel, Hesse developed several of his most important themes to their highest, but not necessarily clearest point: service to the ideal, the life of the mind, the conflict of intellect and life, fulfillment of the self, and the necessity of coming to terms with reality. Some will find the book insufferably

boring; for others it will offer a world of meaning. (*Translation: Richard and Clara Winston, Bantam*)

WILLIAM L. ZWIEBEL

**Albert Camus**  
*The Plague (1947)*

Albert Camus joins Sartre and Kafka as a fitting representative of the Literature of the Absurd. Whether one reads *The Plague* or *The Stranger* by Camus, or whether one prefers instead Kafka's *The Castle* or Sartre's *No Exit*, the philosophical presuppositions underlying all this literature deny to life any ultimate meaning. One might even conclude that suicide is the most meaningful of human acts.

I was a sophomore in college when I first read *The Stranger*, and I was both horrified by its content and fascinated by its power: "Mother died today, or maybe it was yesterday. . ." How could a caring human being not know? And yet, this reflection was strangely symbolic of the whole. Did it matter, really? Did anything really matter?

My first reading of *The Plague* was somewhat similar. How could anyone write three hundred pages of fiction about a plague? Thomas Mann had written *Death in Venice* but there was less emphasis in that story on the plague itself than on the characters, on how the immanent arrival of the plague was denied by one whose sense of reality was blurred by intense loneliness and emotional involvement. But *The Plague* has been written about a plague, or so it seems, about its setting, its origin, its development, its culmination, its wane, and finally, its termination. Character development seems subservient to descriptions of fear and panic, of pain and death, of burial and cremation. But then one asks, "Is this the story of a plague, or alienation, or of life itself, as Camus understands it?" Just as hell is other people for Sartre (*No Exit*), is life a plague for Camus?

Each of us has a plague within him; no one, no one on earth is free from it. And I know, too, that we must keep endless watch on ourselves lest in a careless moment we breathe in somebody's face and fasten the infection on him. What's natural is the microbe. All the rest—health, integrity, purity (if you like—is a product of the human will, of a vigilance that must never falter. . . One this earth there are pestilences and there are victims, and it's up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences. (p. 229)

Camus demands our hearing and our respect. He doesn't shrink from the struggle with life's deepest questions. There is much in *The Plague* that is worth pondering (*Translation: Stuart Gilbert, Modern Library*)

ALICE L. LAFFEY

**Hannah Arendt**  
*The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951)*

A work which combines inspiring scholarship and thought-provoking analysis, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is an attempt, monumental in its scope and

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structure, to understand the hidden mechanisms of anti-semitism, imperialism, and totalitarianism—three phenomena which, because of their horrifying consequences and resilience, have loomed large in the tapestry of modern political life. This book is both an expression of profound despair about the human condition in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a statement of optimism about the individual's potential capacity to overcome his environment and to prevail over the forces of doom and horror which on the surface at least, appear to be eternal and inevitable.

Arendt's analysis and implicit prescriptions are at times perplexing and unsatisfactory, particularly her appraisal of the evolution of capitalism and her tendency to lump together all forms of totalitarianism. Yet, one cannot avoid being fascinated and enlightened by her scholarly voyage through the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially her attempt to place the roots of anti-semitism in a comprehensive, historical, philosophical, and economic context.

The questions underlying Arendt's work are questions which anyone attempting to understand the development of modern history is forced to confront. Why have the individual and individual life become so seemingly irrelevant and dispensable in modern politics? What happens to the policy when the primacy of the individual is undermined by the rise of the "masses"? What are the consequences of the decline of traditional nationalism and of its degeneration into xenophobia and racialism? And, finally, what are the effects of the disintegration of the stable self-contained communities of pre-modern Europe?

Above all, Hanna Arendt's book is an act of courage. By attempting to illustrate and dissect the forces of Evil in modern political life, she forces us to confront the realities of our history. Her urging is compelling in its simplicity: we must relive the atrocities of our recent past—its repeated violations of human dignity, its manifestations of sophisticated oppression, and its flirtations with "the banality of evil"—in order to avoid the alluring nostalgia for a lost past or the self-indulgent, passive expectation of a better future. For Arendt, the task, often Sisyphean, of the modern individual is, therefore, to improve his lot in world in which the forces of Evil and Good often derive from the same political processes. (*Meridian*)

MAURIZIO VANNICELLI

### **Dorothy Day**

#### ***The Long Loneliness (1952)***

On May 1, 1983, Holy Cross marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Catholic Worker movement with a major symposium which brought together long-time Worker activists, and young people presently performing the works of mercy and justice in Houses of Hospitality in Worcester, Boston, New York and Washington.

Dorothy Day was the heart and soul of the movement from the launching of the *Catholic Worker* paper until her death in December, 1981. By training and by temperament she was a writer, her journalism the outstanding feature of the paper, her books an inspiration to people around the world. The best of her books is the autobiographical *The Long Loneliness*, published originally in 1952. It is a remarkable story of spiritual transformation and growth. Born in Brooklyn and raised in Chicago, she

dropped out of the University of Illinois to join the pre-World War I literary and political underground that was reshaping American culture. She joined socialist protests, worked for the radical journal *The Masses*, was jailed for participation in a suffragette demonstration and was part of a Greenwich Village set that included Eugene O'Neill, Malcolm Cowley, and John Reed. Always she was haunted by a life-long spiritual hunger and, in 1927, when she gave birth to a daughter by her common law husband, she joined the Catholic Church.

In the Church Dorothy Day found the union with God she had been seeking since childhood. But there was a price, for she was abandoned by her man and thought she was abandoning her commitment to the poor. Although she regarded Catholicism as the church of the American poor, rich in charity, she thought it “did not set its face against a social order which made so much charity necessary.” It was not until the winter of 1932 that she learned from Peter Maurin that the Church, too, had its social message, one more radical than the communists’, which summoned her members to serve the poor and struggle for a new society.

With Maurin she launched the paper, and Houses of Hospitality sprang up across depression America as young men and women came to practice voluntary poverty, provide food, clothing and shelter for the poor, (“Christ among us”), and study and pray that she might learn how to renew the face of the earth. When war came, Miss Day and her followers refused to support it, and Catholic Worker support diminished; its pacifist stand ran directly counter to the militancy of most Catholics during World War II and the Cold War. When *The Long Loneliness* appeared, many Catholics preferred Senator Joseph R. McCarthy to Dorothy Day; the thirty years since have raised more than a few questions about who was right.

The radical vision of Christian truth put forth by Dorothy Day provides one of the central strands of contemporary Catholicism. Every Catholic college graduate should be familiar with Miss Day; whether they accept in full her understanding of Christ and the Church is less important than that they are connected through her and her movement to the challenge of the Gospel, a challenge Dorothy believed represents the Christian response to the long loneliness of modern humanity: “We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love.” At a time when love seems to have little to do with the real business of life, including study, it may be well to think about that claim.

DAVID J. O'BRIEN

### **William Foote Whyte**

#### ***Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum (1943-1955)***

*Street Corner Society* is a classic sociological study of an Italian neighborhood in Boston called “Cornerville.” William Foote Whyte came to Cornerville in 1936 fresh out of Swarthmore with interests in economics and social reform and a flair for writing. Under the auspices of the Society of Fellows at Harvard University, he lived there for three and a half years. He learned Italian, became an accepted member of the second-generation informal groups, and generally acquired an intimate knowledge of local life. The result of his research was an astounding work, elegantly written, which traces the structure of a

slum community through its pattern of relations among “corner boys,” racketeers, politicians, and police. Nearly as important as the original is a lengthy appendix published with the enlarged edition in 1955, in which Whyte gives a detailed description of his research procedures and his own metamorphosis as a sociologist.

*Street Corner Society* has had a broad and profound impact on sociology. As a study of community and deviance, Whyte’s depiction of Cornerville’s vital social organization, with its almost bureaucratized extra-legal activities contrasted with earlier sociological and literary interpretations that tended to portray slum districts as disorganized centers of crime. As a study of small groups and leadership, Whyte broke new ground with his description of the structure and activities of two streetcorner “gangs,” showing how group position and prestige affected each group member’s behavior. And as an early example of participant observation, *Street Corner Society* is still a major reference in this ethnographic tradition. Whyte’s immersion into the community, his participation in its activities, and ultimately, his ability to convey streetcorner life from an insiders view make this work lively reading and a masterpiece of sociological research.

ROYCE SINGLETON, JR.

### **Gunter Grass**

#### ***The Tin Drum (1959)***

“Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital.” With these words, spoken by Oskar Matzerath, the dwarf narrator of Grass’s masterful novel, begins his account of his life, evoking with his constant companion, a child’s red and white tin drum, thirty years of German history.

Born with an adult intelligence and wisdom, Oskar at age three, refuses to continue growing, rejecting thus the adult world and with it any responsibility. From his knee-high vantage point he henceforth observes the rise and fall of the Third Reich in his native Danzig, and the emergence of West Germany’s “economic miracle.” Avoiding any ideology and moralizing, he recalls for us the spirit, perverseness, and infantilism of an entire epoch. Though generally more of an observer of his contemporaries rather than a participant, Oskar does, on occasion, get involved, as when he torments the adults with his glass-shattering scream or when he breaks up a Nazi rally by hiding beneath the speaker’s platform and beating out a waltz on his drum as a counter-rhythm to the martial tunes of the Nazis.

Rich in comic invention, full of extraordinary scenes and eccentric characters and written in a Baroque exuberance unmatched by any contemporary German writer, Gunter Grass’s *The Tin Drum* remains the best and most highly acclaimed German novel since the war. (*Translation: Ralph Manheim, Random House, 1961*)

ECKHARD BERNSTEIN

**Viktor Frankl*****Man's Search for Meaning (1946, 1959)***

A few years ago millions of Americans watched aghast and unbelieving as thousands of Jews walked heedless to the gas chambers and oblivious to impending death in the mass burial pits of German concentration camps. How could they be so uncaring? Why didn't they resist? The award-winning television series *Holocaust* gives only partial answers to these questions.

A more penetrating answer comes from Viktor Frankl, a Viennese physician who survived one of history's most shameful hours. How did Frankl come through the torture and humiliations he shared with millions of other Jews? He had to decide for himself—will he succumb or survive? Frankl chose survival, and he did so by giving meaning to the degradation he bore. If he had to suffer he would place that suffering in a context and in a perspective. How he did so is the substance of his book.

Published originally in German in 1946, it was translated into English in 1959 under the title *From death camp to Existentialism* (Beacon Press). Subsequent printings—of which there have been many—appear under the title above.

The impact of this book, whose value lies well beyond the story of a man's tenacious grasp of his human dignity, was felt in psychology from its first appearance and added immeasurably to the then growing emphasis in psychotherapy on man's seeking, searching, being, and becoming. The field of humanistic psychotherapy is richer by a large measure for its depth.

The "meaning" (Frankl's *noesis*) of life and tragedy and suffering is a way of being which we all possess—if only we would reach more deeply into ourselves. His book stands as a monument to the human spirit, just as the wings of our library pay homage to those who did not survive the *Holocaust*.

RUDOLPH L. ZLODY

**Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*****The Divine Milieu (1957-1960)***

*The Divine Milieu* introduces the reader to one of the great intellectuals certainly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, many would claim, of all time. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit priest, paleontologist, philosopher, poet, and mystic explains in *The Divine Milieu* his own world view, or more accurately his view of the cosmos, and the central role of Christ in its convergent evolution toward the "Omega Point." He believes intensely that spirit and matter are two aspects of the same cosmic stuff and that God permeates every point of the universal milieu. He sees humanity achieving greater and greater unity as it progresses toward higher levels of consciousness and complexity—Man is becoming one with the All. Although seemingly pantheistic, Teilhard's model allows for, and, in fact, insists on ever increasing individuality in this process of unification; and both phenomena are sustained by a universal Christ.

Critical of the view held by many Christians that life is but a vale of tears to be endured for the sake of individual salvation, Teilhard argues that "it is a truly Christian duty to grow, even in the eyes of men, and to make one's talents bear fruit even though they be natural." He wants us to push on to the limits of our humanity and to experience

the “intoxication of advancing God’s kingdom in every domain. I want to dedicate myself body and soul,” he says, “to the sacred duty of research We must test every barrier, try every path, plumb every abyss.”

One can understand why Teilhard, who died in exile in 1955, caused deep concern among authorities within his own Church. In fact, much of his professional life was spent under censure from his superiors and in exile in China and the United States. Through all of this and in spite of his criticism of certain trends and positions taken by his Church, he remained steadfast in his obedience to and respect for its authority.

Many themes Teilhard wrestled with abstractly in the first part of the century and touched upon in *The Divine Milieu* appear to be materializing today: a new respect for, if not spiritualization of, the earth; and alliance between science and religion; increased complexity and consciousness of society leading to greater unity in spite of temporary setbacks; a positive contribution by mankind to the evolutionary process.

*The Divine Milieu* and most of Teilhard’s other published works do contain passages that are difficult to comprehend when approached analytically, but these often convey bits and pieces of a spiritual mosaic that can make the heart leap when the reader recognizes a shared image. Furthermore, much of the book is clear and provides concrete advice on living the good life—one which contributes to a more rapid convergence of the cosmos.

Other books by Teilhard particularly appealing to Holy Cross students might be *How I Believe, Science and Christ* and *The Future of Man*.

PETER PERKINS

### **William L. Shirer**

#### ***The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (1960)***

The passage of time has transformed this book into a period piece whose value lies more in its reflection of postwar American popular attitudes regarding the nature of the German character than as a lasting historical account of Nazi Germany. Its author was a professional journalist who, during the 1930s, covered the Nazi story and whose account, *Berlin Diary* (1941), was a popular best seller. Modeling himself on Thucydides, whose classic history of the Peloponnesian War was based on personal participation, Shirer likewise set out to expand upon his prewar experiences with the aid of captured German documents. The documentation notwithstanding, Shirer remains always the journalist eschewing intellectual analysis and focusing on the “inner story,” or human interest, such as devoting five pages to Richard Heydrich’s plan for using German soldier dressed in Polish uniforms to create an incident that would justify the invasion of Poland in 1939.

While Shirer’s account is thus entertaining, it is not rewarding intellectually. This is because Shirer lacks a grand sense of history that would permit the classification of events and personalities with a historical philosophy. The result is that we are left with no sense of the larger meaning of the Nazi experience. Nowhere, for example, do we find Shirer seriously attempting to explain why the German people were so willing to follow the fuhrer, except the conventional explanation that the German people are temperamentally suited to it. It is equally wrong to compare Hitler with Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon. The latter three left a legacy with Western Civilization whose future



was shaped by their conquests. Apart from the degradation and destruction (vividly described by Shirer) visited upon civilization by Hitler and his perverted followers, the Third Reich left no lasting monuments. Neither as a biography of Hitler (which this book quickly becomes) does Shirer's book present new intellectual or historical insights, despite the documentation. The picture of Hitler's end in his Berlin bunker simply follows the account by H.R. Trevor-Roper in his *The Days of Hitler*, published in 1947. In sum, those embarking upon a serious study of Nazi Germany should be cautioned that Shirer's account is far from being the definitive work claimed by its publisher.

Robert L. Brandfon

**Thomas S. Kuhn**  
*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962)*

According to the author, a physicist turned historian, reports of scholarly work in a mature discipline should not be comprehensible to the layman. If this is the case we can conclude that the study of scientific history has not yet come of age. Kuhn's purpose in this essay is to present an original explanation of how scientific theories are rejected and ultimately replaced. In presenting his argument he discusses topics which can be understood and appreciated equally by all members of the Holy Cross community. Many of his statements and conclusions will surprise and occasionally elicit a smile from the casual observer of science as well as from the true "addict."

As an introduction, consider just a few of his points which I found to be delightfully controversial.

1. Scientists should not be trained to critically evaluate the foundations of their discipline. This would be both counterproductive and excessively expensive.
2. Scientists should not consider the problems and needs of society when selecting research projects. Excessive social concern might induce the scientist to select a problem which he could not solve.
3. Scientists are almost always guilty of rewriting their history, both in their research reports and their textbooks. Although this may confuse the study of history it is essential for the efficient educating of scientists.
4. Ultimate truth is not an appropriate concern of the scientist. This is better left to philosophers who are better left alone.

I think that the reader will enjoy Kuhn's explanation of these and other gems. Finally, I would probably not have recommended this essay if I did not feel that it made the scientific community look good in spite of numerous characterizations which taken alone could be construed as damaging.

MAURI A. DITZLER

**Jorge Luis Borges**  
*Labyrinths (1962)*

A fine poet and wide-ranging essayist, Borges is best known in this country through *Labyrinths*, an English-language collection featuring short stories from his best-known

work, *Ficciones*. The trademark of a Borges story is a good tale, encapsulating an intriguing idea, told in remarkably economical, pellucid prose, and with just a hint of an impish grin in a wry twist that brings the philosophical point home. Borges complete concentration on short forms, the ever present undercurrent of ironic humor, and an unconcealed joy in ideas and the mystery of human experience, make his work a unique delight. While ranging in content from tales of gaucho knife fights to stories that have been anthologized as science fiction, one recurrent theme is the subtle, and fragile, relationship between ideas, art, perception and the “external” world.

“Tlon, Uqbar Orbis Tertius” is a story of a scholarly hoax, the encyclopedia of an imaginary world that comes to be believed—resulting in the laws of nature coming to conform to the bizarre rules of the encyclopedia; or so we are told by someone who “knows” that this world isn’t [wasn,t?] “real.” If there is an “objective” material world for Borges it is hostile, overwhelming chaos, as in “Funes the Memorious,” a brilliant send up of the empiricist dogma of immaculate perception. Into this chaos comes the artist, like the dreamer in “The Circular Ruins,” creating order, and even substance, and yet ultimately the pawn of unknowable forces of incredible power. “The truth,” if it “is” anything for Borges, is the unique and creative interplay of individual experience and the so-called external world. What is “the truth” in “Theme of the Traitor Hero,” where the revolutionary leader falls heroically in action—executed as a traitor by his comrades? Even his own life itself is essentially art for Borges, not just in the “biographical” details he delights in inventing for interviewers, but at a more fundamental level in profound irony of this most booking of authors having been blind now for decades, and thus an avatar of the preliterate archetype of the divinely inspired blind poet. Whatever the subject, in Borges’s hand the tale, just a “good story,” becomes both an impenetrable puzzle and an illumination, an excursion into the infinitely elusive mysteries of time, perception and the mind, the labyrinth of human experience.

JACK DONNELLY

### **Merior Trevor**

*Newman (Two Volumes, 1962)*

John Henry Newman’s *Idea of a University* still stands as a premier statement of Catholic university education, its ideals alive in colleges like Holy Cross. Even more surprising, Newman himself appears today, a century after his death, as the most significant English-speaking intellectual of modern times. His ideas misunderstood and unfairly criticized during his lifetime, have become central to post-Vatican II renewal. The Church is attempting the project Newman made the work of his life, to build a solid middle ground between a conservatism which stands only in negative judgment on contemporary life and a modernism which surrenders crucial areas of faith to achieve a temporary acceptance. For those concerned about the relationship between faith and reason, between history and doctrine, between personal authenticity and intellectual integrity, Newman remains a vital model and sure guide.

Born and educated an Anglican, Newman was the inspirational center of the Oxford –movement, which led to significant reform in that church and a major stream of conversions to Rome. He became a priest of the oratory, living most of his Catholic life

in a working class district of Birmingham. His sermons, both Anglican and Catholic, are widely recognized as models for preaching. Newman's journals and letters fill dozens of volumes offering the opportunity to engage an alert mind and a generous compassionate spirit.

Finally, Newman may well have been a saint. Many who knew him well thought so; even his enemies felt guilty for opposing his ideas. The cause of his canonization is moving slowly forward and recently an organization has been established in this country to work and pray for its success. To know something of Newman there is no better starting place than Meriol Trevor's masterful biography, written with an elegance and grace worthy of its subject. All who should like to be intelligent Christians and faith-filled scholars should know Newman; Meriol Trevor provides a pleasant and rewarding way to meet him.

DAVID J. O'BRIEN

**Rachel Carson**  
*Silent Spring (1962)*

*Silent Spring* was the first book to bring ecological concerns before a national audience. The author, Rachel Carson, was trained as a biologist and she had the ability to combine a scientist's precision and a journalist's feel for style and pace with a deeply felt concern for the earth and all its inhabitants.

The book deals primarily with the ravaging effects on animal and human life of the indiscriminate short-sighted use of chemical insecticides and herbicides. Although the book was written in 1962, the issues raised in it and even the chemicals discussed are unfortunately very much with us today. In readily understandable language, Rachel Carson examines the ways these chemicals act on living organisms and the sometimes subtle and always unforeseen hazards which arise from their widespread use.

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of *Silent Spring* is the author's awareness of and eloquent description of the tragic delusion we have that we can control the environment however we wish and that somehow we can stand apart from the world of nature and be unaffected by the technical havoc we wreak in that world. *Silent Spring* is the ideal book to begin with to learn of how we, in this century, are so arrogantly and foolishly tampering with the environment.

ROBERT H. GARVEY

**Richard Hofstadter**  
*Anit-Intellectualism in American Life (1963)*

Conceived in response to the political and intellectual climate of the 1950s when the attacks of Senator Joe McCarthy smeared so much of the academic world as "soft on communism" and when the Democratic Presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956, Adlai E. Stevenson, was derided as an "egg-head" when he promised to "talk sense to the American people" rather than appeal simplistically to our emotions, this Pulitzer-prize-

winning historical analysis of American “resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind” is essential for understanding ourselves as students, teachers and Americans today.

In brief, the enemies of a healthy national intellectual life have been those who have offered simplistic dogmatic answers to questions that have no simple answers or power-holders threatened by new ideas: religious fundamentalists, revivalists, anti-reform machine-bosses, “self made” big businessmen and educationists who geared the high school system to “lay foundations of good citizenship” rather than develop the mind.

Hofstadter’s most important point for us: his description of the true intellectuals as those dedicated to ideas, to the life of the mind as if to a religious commitment, as those who “serve as the moral antennae of the race,” for whom meaning of “life lies not in the possession of truth but in the quest for new uncertainties.” Thus, the real intellectual is not necessarily the brightest or most educated man or woman, but the one most likely to keep learning from reading and experience.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J.

**Alexander Isaiyevich Solzhenitsyn**  
*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1963)*

This short novel of less than 200 pages is a sober presentation of one man’s struggle to survive a day, and wake up the next morning alive. The day in the life of Ivan Denisovich Shukov is not an extraordinary day in his existence, the way we understand the word “extraordinary”—he wasn’t shipwrecked, wasn’t chased through the jungle by a band of cannibals, and he wasn’t in the vicinity of Mount Saint Helens when it shattered the world with flame, dust and lava. The day in the life of Iv. D. is extraordinary because he survived an “ordinary” day in the most dehumanizing, and dehumanized establishment in the history of the modern world—a Soviet prison camp.

Ivan Denisovich was accused of treason. His crime was that he was captured by Germans during WW II, and after a couple of days, got away and back to the Soviet lines. For the Soviet Army interrogator the fact that made it and came back alive was clear proof that he has fixed his escape with the Germans and was a traitor. Ivan Denisovich, therefore, as millions of Russians before him and after, had to sign a “confession” of his crime.

The way Shukhov figured, it was simple. If he didn’t sign, he was as good as buried. But if he did, he’s still go on living a while. So he signed.

There were eight years or 3,653 days in his sentence, with three extra ones because of the leap years, all to be spent in Siberia, in polar cold, hard labor, dirt, sickness, perpetual undernourishment, without any contact with his family, and in constant presence of armed guards and their dogs.

The book is a kit for physical and spiritual survival in the environment of tyranny of a totalitarian society. One must read it, one owes it to the million who didn’t survive it, and millions of those who have been struggling to survive it. . . . (*Bantam*)

GEORGE N. KOSTICH

**Carl G. Jung**  
*Memories, Dreams, Reflections (1963)*

This book is an unusual autobiography in that it does not trace the external or public events of the author's life. Instead, Jung tells a story of personal events; he traces the development of his psyche through an exploration of memories, dreams or reflections. He describes this project in the prologue: "My life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole. I cannot employ the language of science to trace this process of growth in myself, for I cannot experience myself as a scientific problem. . . Thus, it is that I have now undertaken, in my eighty-third year, to tell my personal myth. I can only make direct statements, only 'tell stories.' Whether or not the stories are 'true' is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is *my* fable, *my* truth." Jung, 1875-1961, a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, was Freud's student, colleague, and personal psychiatrist. In 1913 he split from the psychoanalytic movement and began to develop analytic psychology which incorporates both the personal and the collective unconscious as well as personal aspirations into a vision of human behavior. The concept of extroversion and introversion as applied to personality were posited by Jung. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* overwhelms the reader with honesty of self-inspection, and, to a certain extent, it teaches this honesty. Jung is best described as wise.

ROBERT M. FISHER

**The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1964)**

Created from a series of interviews with Alex Haley, later author of *Roots*, the story of Malcolm Little, later known as Detroit Red and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz—the name changes symbolizing his transformation from a street hustler to an international leader—is, like other great American autobiographies, like *The Education of Henry Adams* and Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull House*, a conversion story.

On one level it is, like other black classics—Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*—about a black man's struggle with the illusion of the American Dream. But, more fundamentally, it is a religious story about a man who transcended racism (ours and his own) and discovered the possibility of universal brotherhood because he was constantly open to experience and not afraid of change. (*Ballantine*)

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

**Morton W. Bloomfield and Robert C. Elliott (eds)**  
*Great Plays (1965)*

Before you dip into any play anthology or try to fill your gaps in theatre history, you'd do your best first to devour *How not to Write a Play* by Walter Kerr, and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

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After reading Kerr, see 20 live theatrical productions of any nature whatsoever: comedy, drama, musical, mystery, high school, collegiate, community, professional—whatever—but SEE them because seeing (as the Greek root of the Greek word *theatron* implies) is essentially what theatre has mostly been about.

In *Great Plays*, the collection of 11 plays suggested to lead you into the world of theatre, you will find a multicolored spectrum of dramatic genres, arching over 2000 years from the Greek of Sophocles to the German of Brecht, who, coincidentally, in 1948 wrote his own adaptation of *Antigone*, set in post WW II Berlin.

Like the ribbons of color in a rainbow, each play shares shades of the adjacent plays but still maintains its own true hue.

The austere, almost severe structural simplicity of *Antigone* is mirrored in the virtually classical build of *Othello*: after a first act set in Venice (about 20 percent of the play), the rest of the action takes place in Cyprus over one and a half days, which is practically Spartan playwriting for Shakespeare whose *Antony and Cleopatra* sprawls over three continents and ten years.

Some sixty years after Shakespeare, the theatre came in out of the rain and women began to tread the boards (although all actors were still excommunicated by the Catholic Church in France). Two great satirists were writing just a generation apart across the English Channel: first Moliere flayed the social hypocrisy of Parisian high society, then William Congreve lashed the scandals of a restored if not reformed London. 1660-1700 is a period of such luxury, elegance and refined manners, many relaxed and casual Americans at first have a hard time relating to the theatre of that period.

The language of Congreve, although less metaphor-packed than Shakespeare, is awash with witty word-play. His plots, like any good farce, are even more so. In *The Way of the World* the promiscuous relationships on the page seem unscrambleable; on the stage, distinctive costumes and faces help. The anthology's editors suggest a second reading may be necessary to unravel the knotted plot points, but a second reading of almost any work of art well rewards the expended effort.

Moliere's *Misanthrope* is equally daunting, but for different reasons. It is not typical Moliere. It is bitter, almost bleak, and the exact point of the play has split critics for near 300 years. Moliere skewers his high-tone contemporaries as deftly as Congreve, while the later Anglo-Irish writer Bernard Shaw needles his philosophical enemies in the only other comedy in the collection, *Arms and the Man*, a look at romantic notions of war.

Shaw, like the earlier satirists, believed in message plays, a trait he shared with an admired Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen, whose *Hedda Gabler* is another of the four plays selected from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, all of which were written in a twelve-year period from 1888 to 1900.

All four have as their central characters women: in fact, still another way to look at all the collected plays would be to examine the image of the female projected by the 11 playwrights—all male.

“Tortured and torturing” might be one glib label to apply as we leap from the frozen wastes of Russia and Scandinavia, looking at Julie in Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. Hedda; the three sisters (and one sister-in-law) in Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*: to the hot tenements of St. Louis and meet Amanda and Laura in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*. At the center of Bertold Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* stands

the heroic Grusha, surround by music and chorus and amid the disaster of war—not unlike Antigone in her classical orchestra.

After the realism of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, the expressionism or impressionism of the three 20<sup>th</sup>-century plays chosen provide readers with yet another contrast.

All in all, the eleven great plays, chosen from the tens of thousands written, are an excellent starting point at which to begin to explore the many faces of the art and craft of theatre. (*Holt, Rinehart and Winston*).

KENNETH F. HAPPE

### **Michael Harrington**

#### ***The Accidental Century (1965)***

Since it is strange for a writer to review one of his/her own books, I might as well begin unconventionally by saying what was wrong with *The Accidental Century* and then go on to explain why, nevertheless, it strikes me as worthy reading today.

The book commits a most typical error of radical criticism: it speeds up time. Marx thought in 1848 that socialism would come in two or three years; by 1850, he realized that it might take a half a century more; and we now know he was utterly optimistic in his revision. I thought that automation would rapidly transform the occupational structure of the United States and necessitate immediate basic changes. In fact, it—and micro-processors and all the rest—has slowly transformed that structure. We are only now approaching the situation which I thought was imminent in the Sixties.

But if events moved more slowly than I thought they would, they have taken more or less the direction in indicated. And that gets to why I still like the book. (I am writing from Paris where twenty years ago I was working on it.) The crisis in which we live is not simply economic, political or social; it is culture, the question of civilization rather of a “mode of production.” All faiths, I am convinced, are in trouble: Judaeo-Christianity, atheism, capitalism, socialism, Communism, etc. And part of their crisis is the absence of common transcendental values which emerge naturally out of daily experience of our societies. I knew that twenty years ago, vaguely. I have just written a new book about it, entitled *The Politics at God’s Funeral*. And I think the worth of *The Accidental Century* is that, in relatively simple and straightforward fashion, it saw our problems in our literature and religion as well as in our Gross National Product and unemployment rate.

I, of course, know much better what went wrong, than how to make it right. But, as Hegel understood, the work of the negative comes first and, in any case, the hopes of *The Accidental Century* are, I think, still valid.

Michael Harrington, ‘47

### **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

#### ***One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967)***

“*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is not a history of Latin America it is a metaphor for Latin America,” states Gabriel Marquez of the book which won him the 1982 Nobel Prize for Literature. The Colombian author’s narrative begins with the founding of

Macondo, a remote Latin American village, at a time when “the world was so recent that many things lacked names.” At the center of this tale we find six generations of Buendia family as they endure such calamities as the banana fever, the insomnia plague, thirty-two civil wars, revolution, strikes, a rain that last several years.

Narrated in a style in which the fantastic and the mythical are skillfully blended with the everyday, this book exudes joy, sadness, loneliness, and social injustice. The perils of the Buendias not only represent a scathing commentary on centuries of colonialism, civil war, and political chaos, but also these events illustrate the multifaceted nature of myth. The Buendia’s saga, with its juxtaposition of imagined and real events, speaks of the inadequacy of documentary history and the need to take into account that which is considered oral history: the superstitions, dreams, and imaginations of the Macondians.

Near the end of this magic tale, a character finds a parchment manuscript which contains the “history” of Macondo. This document “had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant.” By chronicling its own history, the novel invites the reader to reflect on the elusive boundaries which separate art from life as well as to question the uncertainties of his own reality. Thus Garcia Marquez, with Cervantes and Borges as intellectual forerunners, creates his own “metaphor for Latin America,” a mythical portrait which simultaneously partakes in aesthetics, philosophy and social consciousness. (*Translation: Gregory Rabassa, Harper & Row 1980*).

ISABEL ALVAREZ-BORLAND

### **George Orwell**

*Collected Essays (1968)*

“What I have most wanted to do,” states Orwell in “Why I Write,” “is to make political writing into an art.” He succeeded. Reading Orwell’s essays in the four-volume *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World) helps focus the turbulent social context that engages Orwell’s attention in 1920-1950; some of the finest essays are also collected in more compact editions. Orwell’s essays rank with the best in English literature, combining moral imagination, political engagement, and stylistic mastery. Orwell unites personal experience and social commentary, notably in the famous “Shooting the Elephant” and in his superb demythologizing reports on life and death among the poor. Pugnaciously independent, Orwell fights to purify language into an instrument of truth (classically expressed in “Politics and the English Language”). This concern produces essays examining the implications of how language functions in works ranging from boys’ magazines to Kipling to Dickens, as well as in overtly political speech.

Characterizing Dickens, Orwell describes a face that could be his own: “A man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.” Now as when he lived, Orwell’s

voice attacks our dishonesty and complacency, encouraging us not to assent to our own servitude.

MARION F. MEILAENDER

**James D. Watson**  
*The Double Helix (1968)*

In the spring of 1953 at the Cavendish Laboratory of Cambridge University, England, James Watson and Francis Crick were celebrating victory in their attempts to explain the molecular structure of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). This molecule is the genetic substance of all living cells. It contains all the information for the functions and developments of life. Discovery of the DNA structure was *the* major scientific breakthrough which led to the understanding, at the molecular level, of the way in which genetic information is duplicated and transmitted to living cells. This discovery spawned research which has clarified our view of the genetic code and genetic mutations and which, today, is concern with genetic engineering and recombinant DNA.

In *The Double Helix*, Watson presents an autobiographical account of these events, personalities, conflicts, triumphs and disasters during this period. He provides insight into the efforts in scientific discovery and the inner world of the scientific community in Europe and the United States. Watson gives the layman an intimate view of how science is done. One experiences the enthusiasm, when a new idea emerges, and the despair, when it is shown to conflict with experimental data. Yet, in this tale, told with a brash, opinionated style, the main characters are human beings interest in women, parties, afternoon tennis, English sherry hours and pub lunches.

Watson and Crick know the reward for success is a Nobel Prize and that the brilliant Linus Pauling at Cal Tech is one of their competitors. That the DNA molecule should have such a simple structure which easily explains its biological function provides a satisfying conclusion.

MELVIN C. TEWS

**Erick H. Erikson**  
*Gandhi's Truth (1969)*

Mahatma Gandhi is the father of militant nonviolence. Yet he could be described as: “the man who has stirred three hundred million people to revolt, who has shaken the foundations of the British Empire, and who has introduced into human politics the strongest religious impetus of the last two hundred years.” His influence has extended around the world, informing leaders like Martin Luther King and Caesar Chavez. While there are many biographies and books about Gandhi, none is more challenging than *Gandhi's Truth*. A leader in the field of psychoanalysis and human development, Erik Erikson has attempted a psycho-history of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi is dead, the events which would lead not only many Indians, and others around the world to revere him as a holy man and a social reformer have passed. Can we recapture his presence and understand the motivations and meanings behind his *satyagraha* (Truth-force) movement? While you may find yourself disagreeing at times with Erikson's psycho-historical method, this volume does reveal the struggles, virtues and vision of Gandhi. It

challenges the reader, in an age in which conflict resolution and nuclear arms are all too common parts of our political vocabulary, to consider and understand the force behind militant non-violence. Finally, *Gandhi's Truth* reveals how a very human person was able to reinterpret traditional Hindu beliefs and values in such a way as to father a “non-violent” political and social revolution. This was Mahatma Gandhi, a man who for many came to manifest the divine, to embody “The Truth,” and is remembered as *mahatma*,” the “great souled one.” (*Norton*).

JOHN L. ESPOSITO

**James MacGregor Burns**

*Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (1956)*

*Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom (1970)*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt dominated the last half century of American life. His domestic programs reshaped American government and American Society. His foreign policy created the world we live in. One cannot understand our nation, our society, our world without some understanding of this man.

James MacGregor Burns describes his work as a “political” biography: its central theme is Roosevelt as political leader, first of a nation seeking to throw off the consequences of the Great Depression and later of a nation as the front of a world coalition against the Axis powers. In each case there was an enemy to be fought, a coalition to be shaped, a goal to reach and, necessarily, some concept of a world to follow.

Roosevelt’s great strength lay in his ability to master the process of politics; to capture the spirit of the day, to articulate the people’s hopes, to frame the goal, but equally to strike the deal, to retreat before the impossible, to see what can be done as well as what must be done.

Burns’s work serves not only as the chronicle of the public life of an extraordinary American; it is an essay in political leadership in its American form. Burns’s two volumes are a fine introduction to the nature of this nation’s politics and society and its role in the contemporary world.

JOHN B. ANDERSON

**The Norton Anthology of Poetry (1970)**

No one can write, of course, with enthusiasm of an anthology. But, given the constraints of “100” books, the huge number of poetry books which could be chosen, and the cost of individual volumes of poetry, an anthology becomes a “necessary evil.” And the *Norton Anthology of Poetry* is good on a number of counts: the book presents British and American poetry from before Chaucer to the present; the poems/poets are presented in the best and simplest manner—chronologically; and the book gives a more ample than usual selection of the poets it contains.

Anthologies are “guilt-free”; no one ever reads them from cover to cover. Self-indulgence is best: either open the book and start reading, or begin from a title which



seems to strike a particularly resonant chord. Anthologies can also be used to disguise ignorance—when someone mentions (superiorly) their intimate knowledge of Yeats’s “Leda and the Swan,” you can no knowingly, then go off and look it up (secretly) in your *Norton*.

A word finally about the poems themselves. Don’t approach them as mystical incantations known only to initiates (i.e. your teachers). Or as Ideas. Poems need to be read first the way any other writing is read—for the sense of the *sentence* (not the line). Read sentences which follow the same rules as any other sentence, poems will make themselves more available—they demand attention, but no special knowledge. Like all writing, poems arise from the real need to make sense of the world, and as such, an anthology becomes the record of our human attempts to understand our lives. (*Eds. Allison, Blake, Carr, Eastman, and English. Revised edition*)

ROBERT K. CORDING

### **Ronald W. Clark**

***Einstein: The Life and Times (1971)***

Einstein’s achievements in science are as fundamental and revolutionary as those of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton. Moreover, much of his research in later years was never finished and it too has the profoundest implications for the future development of physics. One thinks of his enduring belief in causality and his rejection of what he called “the dice-playing God” of Born, Bohr, and Heisenberg. There was also his surprising belief that the laws of nature cannot be obtained from experience, but must be freely invented. An attitude reminiscent of Plato, to whom he has been compared. Indeed, because of his love of music and geometry (which he revolutionized), and the schools of thought which he founded he might even be compared to Pythagoras.

Given Einstein’s gigantic intellectual stature, it may be centuries before scholars will be able to fully assess his ideas, scientific theories and their historical influence. Ronald W. Clark’s *Einstein: The Life and Times* bravely attempts to not only give us the man as well as the scientist, but to discuss in common language (albeit it well over a thousand scholarly page notes at the end of the text) Einstein’s numerous discoveries including their historical context. Thus he covers Brownian motion, the photo-electric effect, the special theory of relativity (including historical issues) the principle of equivalence, the general theory of relativity (albeit it without a clear explanation of why the apple falls according to Einstein), the pioneering work in relativistic cosmology with its closed universe that has overtones of Aristotle’s universe, the quantum theory of radiation (which underlies Planck’s law of black body radiation and the theory of the laser), quantum statistics (such as Bose-Einstein gas), and a brief but intelligible discussion of the Einstein-Podolski-Rosen paradox that challenges the completeness of quantum mechanics. Regretably absent, however, is a reference to his collaboration with Grommer (1927) and later with Infeld and Hoffmann at Princeton (1938) to show that the gravitational field equations yield the Newtonian equations of motion to a first approximation. Finally, there are an extensive bibliography of books and publications dealing with Einstein and his theories and a scholarly list of many of Einstein’s major publications.

In his treatment of Einstein the person Clark gives us detailed, provocative and even controversial portraits, such as the youthful patent clerk in Berne and visionary founder of the Olympia Academy, to the majestic world figure who had become a refugee in Princeton not just to escape Nazi Germany and persecution of the Jews, but to be in a position to warn and protest against it.

There is still another important side to Einstein and that is his love of children. Thus Clark reports that when Einstein was a member of the Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, “he spent much time discussing how the prospects of peace in the future might be increased by school education in the present.” More recently, Gerald Holton in a centennial essay (1979) points out that Einstein’s conversations with the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget served to stimulate the remarkable book *The Child’s Conception of Time (Le Developpement de la Notion de Temps chez l’Enfant*, France, 1946).

One should therefore look upon Clark’s book not an end in itself, but as a fascinating gateway to continued learning about Einstein and his time. (*Avon*)

FRANK R. TANGHERLINI

**Maxime Rodinson**  
*Mohammed*(1971)

Political events in the Middle East have made us more aware of the 800 million Muslims that constitute the second largest of the world’s religious communities. Understanding the increasing number of attempts from North Africa to Southeast Asia to establish more Islamically oriented states and societies, requires knowledge of that “ideal” which is a source of inspiration and guidance to Islamic activists. For Muslims the Quran, God’s final and perfect revelation, as well as Mohammed, and the early Islamic community/state provide the norm that is to be implemented. Because Mohammed embodied the Islamic ideal, he is the model upon which all believers are to pattern their lives.

In *Mohammed*, Maxime Rodinson combines the best of scholarship with the ability of a story teller. In this popular biography, we see the interpenetration of the sacred and the profane, of religion and the state that epitomizes the Islamic ideal. Mohammed was an ordinary man: caravan leader, caring husband, loving father. He was also prophet-statesmen of the Muslim community/state: religious guide, head of state, military commander, chief judge. If in the West Islam has been “the misunderstood religion,” Mohammed has been the most maligned of prophets. Rodinson combines objectivity and empathy. He has told the story of Mohammed and the Islamic state in an engaging introduction to Muslim belief and practice. (*Vintage*)

JOHN L. ESPOSITO

**James Thomas Flexner**  
*Washington, The Indispensable Man* (1974)

One of the disadvantages of being 20 today is never having had a President of the United States who was a moral inspiration. Another is the impoverishing effect of history text

books, as Frances Fitzgerald spells out in *America Revised*, on history teaching. A fine introductory course would be ten biographies, starting with this one, a completely rewritten version of a four volume work, of our founding father, who, 184 years after his death, still has the strength to inspire.

A highpoint is what Flexner calls “probably the most important single gathering every held in the United States,” the meeting Washington called of his rebellious officers at Newburgh, New York, on March 15, 1783. His reasonable arguments were failing to win them over when he took from his pocket a reassuring letter from a Congressman. But, as the soldiers leaned forward, he stared at the paper in helpless confusion. Then, embarrassed by his weakness, he pulled out his eyeglasses which his followers had never seen him wear. “Gentleman,” he said, “you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown grey but almost blind in the service of my country.” The hardened soldiers wept. And today’s readers may well weep in admiration for the man so guided by a deep respect for human nature, who said at the Constitutional Convention, “Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair.” (*Mentor*)

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

### **Lewis Thomas**

#### ***The Lives of a Cell (1974)***

Far from being a treatise on cell biology as the title suggests, *The Lives of a Cell* is a collection of 29 short essays that recount the imaginative musings of an eminent physician on the subject of life and scientific research. The topics range widely (music, language, insect societies, the search for extraterrestrial life, medical research and death, to name just a few) but seem to focus on the theme that life represents and assemblage of interacting units driven by evolution toward greater interdependence. Crisscrossing the line between reductionism (the whole is nothing but the sum of its parts) and holism (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). Thomas builds a case for the overwhelming importance of symbiosis in the evolution of diversity and questions the meaning and existence of autonomous individuals.

What makes this book a delightful excursion into biology is Thomas’s choice of facts and his intriguing perspective. Are cells the product of cooperative ventures by primitive bacteria? Are ant colonies giant brains who nerve cells we squash on our kitchen floors? Is disease the panic-stricken and unreasonable reaction of otherwise quiescent cells to a non-threatening stimulus? Is the sky a giant membrane which traps energy and turns chaos into order? These are but a few examples of the perspective with which Thomas skillfully weaves a tapestry of wonder out of the threads of fact and hypothesis.

*The Lives of a Cell* transforms the data of biology, from biochemistry to ecology, into a provocative, albeit speculative, attempt to find direction in evolution: it rewards the reader with fascinating information and the mystique of biology that is all too often choked by the entangled weeds of textbook fact.

WILLIAM R. HEALY

**Paul Johnson*****A History of Christianity (1976)***

It is probably impossible to write a one-volume history of Christianity which would satisfy church historians and address every major fact in the historical development of Christian faith. However, for the average reader looking for a reliable and lively account of the Christian idea and deed over the course of twenty centuries, this book is well worth the investment. Johnson likes to unearth the underside of history, taking notes of people, circumstances, and events which straight-minded histories tend to downplay or ignore. Why men like Cyril of Alexandria or Pius X have been officially numbered among the saints, while people like Origen and Erasmus, who did so much more for the good of Christianity, were so terribly misjudged by the Church, remains an institutional embarrassment.

Johnson occasionally indulges in a public washing of some ecclesiastical laundry, and his book is open to the charge of a certain anti-institutional bias. But he cares about the Christian faith and understands its ideals, and this exposes the reader to the disappointment an historian might experience when writing about the failure of the Christian churches to realize their evangelical possibilities. For the book is really the story of a Church caught between the ideal and the practical, between the Gospel and politics, between weak-minded ecclesiastics and the believer's birthright to intellectual freedom and the unfettered pursuit of God. From New Testament times through the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and into John XXIII's *aggiornamento*, it is also the story of a Church gradually outgrowing the intellectual, economic, and cultural strictures of Western civilization.

*A History of Christianity* is informative, thought-provoking, and frequently irritating, yet it leaves the reader with an odd sort of confidence that the story of Christianity is largely unfinished, and this in itself is a welcome sign.

WILLIAM E. REISER

**Hans Küng*****On Being a Christian (1976)***

Despite its size (the English edition runs to 720 pages), this book probably had the widest reading public of any religious book in Europe since World War II. The reason for this is not hard to discover.

In a style that is clear and non-technical, Küng provides *for people who are completely part of the present-day world* an intelligent presentation of Christianity. He avoids none of the real questions that Christianity faces today; he makes no superficial claims for Christianity's superiority as a religion or as a wisdom: he recognizes the historical mistakes and weaknesses of Christians and of their Church. At the same time, he is profoundly Christian in his own outlook and witnesses to his own acceptance of Christianity's millennia-old tradition of belief in Jesus as the Christ.

While *On Being Christian* is really a “summa” of Christian beliefs, it is what the title suggests, a book about what it means to be a Christian. It situates the Christian believer in his or her world today, a world of widespread agnosticism and social upheaval and critical knowledge and emphasis on being authentically human, and shows how both the faith and the practice of Christianity can make sense in that world.

This is a book to be read by anyone who wishes an adult and more accurate understanding of Christianity.

BERNARD M. COOKE

### **Frederick Hartt**

*Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture* ( 2 vols. 1976)

There are a number of surveys of art in convenient paperback form: Jansen has written *Key Monuments in the History of Art*. Gardner ( in edited versions) has produced a popular text call *Art Through the Ages*. My personal preference is for a two-volume work by Frederick Hartt called *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture* {Prentice Hall). Volume I covers pre-history to the Middle Ages (known to initiates as “from caves to cathedrals”). The second volume deals with art from the Renaissance through our own time. Both works are substantial—over 500 pages in each volume, each conveniently divided into sections according the historical succession; for example, volume I deals with the historic period in a section called “Art Before Writing,” then “Egypt through the Roman World” and finally “The Middle Ages.”

A survey book can function as a good reference but it can never take the place of the firsthand experience of an original work of art. All of these surveys should be used as a supplement to one’s own looking and critical evaluation. A text such as Hartt’s, however, enables one to locate a specific style or image.

In a lucid and admirably well-presented format, the book gives an historic overviews of each period, complete with maps and numerous black and white illustrations. The book also contains high-quality color plates. The value of a survey book is in its comprehensiveness and its even-handed treatment of all works under discussion. Hartt presents each period with equal discernment and sympathy, surveying the full gamut of artistic expressions: sculpture, architecture, mural painting, manuscripts, pottery, metal work, panel and easel painting, and prints.

I studied with Hartt in a summer course and was immediately impressed with his attention to the continuity of styles from one period to the next. In no way does he present artistic forms as existing in rigidly fixed time zones. He shows rather that artists (and their patrons) rejected or accepted previous traditions depending on their perceived relevance: for example, Rodin’s use of the forms and subject matter of Michelangelo.

Hartt appears particularly at ease when describing Christian context, probably one of the reasons he is to be recommended to this audience. One might cite his treatment of the Ebbo Gospels made in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century for the archbishop of Reims. The Evangelists hovering over their work are some of the most compelling images every to grace a Christian text. Hartt writes:

Matthew has suddenly been seized as if by the *furor divinus*. He bends over as he writes, clutching his quill

pen, his eyes almost starting out of the sockets with excitement, his drapery dashing madly about his form, the very locks of his hair on end and writhing like serpents. Not only the figure, but also the quivering landscape seems to participate in his emotion recalling the words: “The mountains skipped like rams and the little hills like lambs.” (Ps. 114.4)

Although Hartt sees the great force of Western art as being indissolubly linked with Christian tradition, he is no superficial apologist. He interprets Christian tradition as eagerly embracing the material world and transforming it with the same impetus with which the Divine brought that world into being. He shows with great sensitivity the continuity in artistic expression from pre-Christian images of anthropomorphic gods to the struggle to picture “God” in the first centuries of our era. He does not separate Medieval from Renaissance traditions and sees common themes progressing even to the present. To Hartt, a work is good and therefore meaningful insofar as it reflects a purposeful relationship between artist and society.

Subject matter, material, skill and placement all contribute but are never “justifications” of value: a painting of an escalator by Richard Estes, a prehistoric fertility figure, a stained glass window, all contain meanings for their societies and for us. In a lecture I have heard him state that Vincent Van Gogh expressed more of a religious attitude by painting an apple well than the church painter who, without conviction, copied an image of a saint. It is this breadth of vision and, I think, compassionate understanding of the artist’s inspiration that distinguishes this survey text.

VIRGINIA C. RAGUIN

### **Stephen B. Oates**

*With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln (1977)*

Who needs another Lincoln biography! Understandably this might be the response to any suggestion that Stephen B. Oates’s 1977 biography of our Civil War president, *With Malice Toward None* is worth reading. Even a cursory examination of the book, however, dispels this initial reaction. Although he offers little in the way of new evidence or original interpretations, Oates’s monograph is comprehensive. He provides us with a broad, felicitous rehearsal of the principal evidence and standard readings of Lincoln with emphasis on the Civil War years. And, despite the familiar ground, one is rarely bored and is anxious to read on. The prose is compelling.

One of Oates’s principal objectives is the portrayal of Lincoln as an ordinary man who is heir to all mankind’s weaknesses. He succeeds but not without difficulty. What biographer would fare better in attempting to divest the emancipator of America’s slaves and the martyred savior of the Union of the legendary and epic aura which envelopes him. If, as Robert Penn Warren suggests, the Civil War was our Homeric period, Lincoln was its foremost hero.

Skillfully, Oates pictures the human Lincoln: the grating Indiana accent, bawdy jokes, polemicism, the ungallant tirade against Mary Owens, blatant politics, moods and depression, rejection of his family, advocacy of the hair-brained colonization scheme and willingness to compromise on slavery to save the Union. But whether considering these



frailties in the context of his God-like sentiments at Gettysburg or his superhuman strength in the months preceding Antietam and the election of 1864, one cannot escape the heroic legend.

JOSEPH J. HOLMES

**Steven Weinberg**  
*The First Three Minutes (1977)*

The first three minutes of what? Why, of the *universe*, of course. One might be inclined to regard the title as merely an astonishing piece of effrontery, but the arguments which physicist Steven Weinberg marshals in his exposition of the early history of the universe are based on solid scientific observations. Reasoning from the present state of the universe backward toward the “big bang,” the explosive beginning of space, time and matter which occurred somewhat less than 20 billion years ago, he is able to provide a description of the probable state of affairs from the first one-hundredth of a second onward.

Three distinct elements are encountered in his analysis.

First, there is a vast amount of information obtained during the past three centuries of telescopic observations. Galileo’s discovery of the moons of Jupiter, the perception of the milky way as evidence that our sun is part of a disk-shaped group of hundreds of thousands of stars, the understanding that certain fuzzy star-like objects were actually galaxies similar to our own—these were but a few of the many achievements of optical astronomy which led to our present understanding of the place of the earth in the universe.

Second, the discovery made during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of the famous “red shift” enables one to deduce that the universe is expanding, and that the further a stellar object is from us, the greater is its velocity away from us.

Finally, there is the quite recent discovery that the universe is filled with an all-pervasive background of radiation—a kind of universal static. The static, which is equivalent to heat radiated from an object whose temperature is a mere three degrees above absolute zero, is thought to represent the dying glow of the original explosion.

Professor Weinberg’s book is a fine example of scientific exposition for the educated non-expert. Mathematical arguments are relegated to an appendix, and a determined reader who *expects* to comprehend this intelligent discussion of the beginning moments of our universe will not be disappointed.

PATRICK SHANAHAN

**Karl Rahner, S.J.**  
*Foundations of Christian Faith (1978)*

This book may well be the most up-to-date scholarly summary of Christian belief now available. Rahner ranks among the top five theologians in the Church, Catholic or Protestant; and this book, written near the close of his amazingly productive career brings

together in relatively simple form his views on the fundamental mysteries of Christian faith.

Much of the book's value comes from the integration of Rahner's own understandings. This book is not a cataloging of doctrines; it is a synthesis of educated Christian belief.

At the heart of this distinctive synthesis lie Rahner's view of "grace" and his emphasis on the role of the Church as sacrament of God's saving presence in human history. For this reason, Rahner's approach can justifiably be called "anthropological"; at the same time, his focus is clearly on the self-revelation of God in the mystery of Jesus as incarnated Word. Rahner's theology is situated, therefore, at the very center of today's discussion about the religious function of religious language and symbol; and this volume provides an excellent entry into Rahner's thought.

BERNARD M. COOKE

**Flannery O'Connor**  
*The Habit of Being (1979)*

Flannery O'Connor is, of course, best known as a writer of fiction. This collection shows her also as a master of the dying craft of letter writing. These selected letters span the years 1948 to 1964 when she died at age 39 of a long-standing illness.

The letters were written to people as diverse as critics, well known writers, her literary agent, students, English professors, and an anonymous woman known simply as "A."

The collected correspondence of this talented writer, like the sketch books of a great painter, shed much light on O'Connor's artistic development and help explain her natural attitude and point of view. It is clear from the letters that these latter qualities were strongly shaped by her abiding faith and by her strong sense of regionalism. She always remained at heart both a southerner and a person wary of intellectual pretensions. For all of that, she also emits a sense of universality and a close familiarity with the essence of both traditional and contemporary thought. Confined by her long illness, she had more than ample time to satisfy her wide-ranging reading tastes. She confides in us, as twice-removed recipients of her letters, her often harsh opinions of some of her contemporaries and her respect and debt to literary craftsmen of the past. The letters reveal O'Connor as a writer whose stories and characters were sharply influenced by her Catholicism. Yet she is never affected or sentimental. She accepted her faith (which she always felt one had to earn) and her fate in a matter-of-fact manner. Lastly, these letters can also be fun. Somewhat like Mark Twain, O'Connor could turn a terse phrase, illustrate a serious point with a funny story, and poke fun at those critics whom she felt looked too deeply into her work. This is a book that should provide pleasure to O'Connor fans as well as encourage those not overly familiar with her work to read more of this gifted story teller.

JAMES E. HOGAN

**Penny Lernoux**

*Cry of the People (1980)*

In Lent of 1981, an anonymous American priest working in Bolivia published an article in the *National Catholic Reporter* about the plight of the Catholic Church in Latin America. He preferred to remain anonymous in order to prevent reprisals against himself and those with whom he works. He cried out from his heart to his fellow Christians in the United States, begging them to listen and to seek understanding. He wrote:

What we see is this. The documents of the Latin American bishops' meetings at both Medellin and Puebla. . . .condemn "liberal capitalism" by name along with atheistic communism and ideologies of national security. Neither the U.S. Catholic bishops or priests, with rare exceptions, teach the implications of this doctrine in the ethical formation of U.S. Catholics. We think this is a grave dereliction of duty which has terrible human consequences.

We see these consequences every day. Assassination, physical and psychological torture and rape are the ordinary judicial means of inquiry in our countries. These intelligence skills have been taught for 35 years to more than 80,000 Latin American military and police forces as counter-insurgent and anti-terrorist tactics to keep the "Communists" from invading our economic sphere of influence. You want proof? Get names and addresses from the bishops of Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, etc., as well as from Amnesty International.

Latin Americans do not want to be satellites of the super-powers, neither of Russia nor the United States. They want to be free of economic and political colonialism. And they are not permitted to be. By force and physical violence, every normal avenue of social and political change is closed to them.

For the first time in their tortured history, Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, Peruvians, Brazilians, etc. want the right to be themselves. They want the right to make their own mistakes in their own path to maturity as a people with identity and responsibility. No one can stop this march of history. . . . ("A Cry for Latin America," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 17, 1981)

Where is Latin America? What is Latin America? What is happening to the Catholic Church in Latin America? What is the violence there all about? Does the Church support revolution in Latin America? Why does this anonymous priest speak to us as he does? What is the "theology of liberation"? And what is the meaning of talk about being both

Marxist and Christian? How do Latin American Christians think politics and religion go together?

Penny Lernoux's book, *Cry of the People*, is an enthralling answer to these questions, and a disturbing description of the war between the Church and State in Latin America over human rights. One part of the story involves the persecution—even the torture and murder—of bishops, priests, sisters, and lay people who have challenged the right-wing totalitarian governments of the region. Another part of the story is the verified role of the U.S. Defense Department, the C.I.A. and some transnational business corporations in the perpetuation of this totalitarianism. Most of all, it is the story of how the Catholic Church in Latin America, which had previously worked hand in glove with the ruling class, has made a “preferential option for the poor,” acting vigorously now in defense of their rights.

It is a story we must read, for by the year 2000, Latin America will have 500 million people, half of them under 21 with explosively creative energy and youthful aspirations. Will North Americans continue to be ignorant of them and indifferent to their aspirations? Ms. Lernoux's book provides an excellent introduction to the people and Church of Latin America, and those who read it will never again be able to pretend not to understand the impulses and reasons behind the revolutionary movements there.

(*Penguin*)

ROBERT E. MANNING, S.J.

### **Dumas Malone**

*Thomas Jefferson and His Times* (six volumes, 1948-1981)

History by apprising them (youth of Virginia) of the past will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experiences of other times and other actions; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men. . . .

Thus did Thomas Jefferson describe the value of studying history in the only book which he wrote, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1782). For Jefferson history meant ancient Greece and Rome, with dates and places coming to life in the pages of Livy, Tacitus and Plutarch. Little did Jefferson realize that his own historian Dumas Malone, would devote more than a half century of study to Monticello's famed proprietor and eventually write a six-volume opus which discusses, in penetrating detail, the triumphs and failures of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century America, and describe Jefferson's participation in that exciting era on equal footing with that of the giant historical figures of Antiquity.

Beginning in 1948 with the publication of volume one, *Jefferson the Virginian*, Malone presents in thoroughly researched detail and in highly readable prose, a picture of Thomas Jefferson as an American legend whose multiple interests and talents grow to a near overwhelming swell with the publication of each volume, of which the first five were awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1975. Malone's biographical page unveils Jefferson the humanitarian, the farmer, the dedicated statesman, the political visionary, the educational theorist, the fine arts advocate, the inventor, the moralist and the tender, devoted family man who continually longed for repose at his beloved Monticello. The affection and admiration of the author for his subject are nowhere more apparent than when the eighty-

nine year old Malone writes in the introduction to his final volume, *The Sage of Monticello*, of the life of a fellow octogenarian: “It has been my great privilege as a biographer to be intimately associated with this extraordinary man for many years. At the end of my long journey with him I leave him with regret and salute him with profound respect.” Thomas Jefferson was indeed an extraordinary man whose interests, personality, and intellectual genius can be more fully appreciated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of Malone’s biographical classic.

WILLIAM J. ZIOBRO

**Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh**  
*The Mathematical Experience (1981)*

“Statesmen despise publicists, painters despise art critics, and physiologists, physicists, or mathematicians have usually similar feelings; there is no scorn more profound, or on the whole more justifiable, than that of the men who make for the men who explain. Exposition, criticism, appreciation, is work for second-rate minds.” So wrote G.H. Hardy at the beginning of *A Mathematician’s Apology*, one of the most beautiful books in or out of mathematics, and a book in which a first-rate mind turned his attention to exposition, criticism, and appreciation of mathematics. Since that time, fortunately, other first-rate minds have been drawn in the same direction, exposing many different views of the nature of mathematics. The latest effort along these lines, by Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh, is perhaps the most ambitious and best of all in describing what mathematicians really do. Let me state plainly at the outset that every student of mathematics will find this book valuable, and that Davis and Hersh, who write as one, doubly deserve our gratitude.

What is mathematics, and what manner of spirit animates its study? That, of course, is a philosophical question. One of many favors done by Davis and Hersh is to clear the air a bit by pointing out that the so-called philosophies of logicism, formalism, and intuitionism are not and never have been philosophies of mathematics. Their focus, of course has always been on the foundations of mathematics, and they became known as “philosophies” only because there was a period in the early part of this century when almost all work in the philosophy of mathematics was work in foundations. Despite its great importance, the study of foundations is only one of a multitude of interesting aspects of mathematics.

In fact, the diversity of interesting aspects is bewildering, as we find ourselves saying that mathematics is like X, like Y, and like Z, when X, Y, and Z themselves are quite dissimilar. Davis and Hersh give us a number of arguments, each well done, from the totality of which we must conclude that mathematics is like an ideology, a religion, or an art form, and is thus a humanistic study, “one of the humanities”; and yet mathematics has a science-like quality in that “its conclusions are compelling, like the conclusions of natural science.”

“Mathematics, being a human activity,” they say, “. . . profits greatly from individual genius, but thrives only with the tacit approval of the wider community. As a great art form, it is humanistic; it is scientific-technological in its applications.” Mathematics is thus caught in the struggle between the individual and society as well as the struggle between the arts and sciences. In the arts-science tension there is nothing

which would surprise us. Mathematics draws vitality from being stretched on one side toward beauty, form, and vision; on the other toward utility, function, and rationality.

Davis and Hersh discuss the nature of the creative act of the individual, but they appear to prefer to emphasize the role played by mathematicians collectively. This emphasis is probably justified in view of the relative lack of attention given, until lately, to the collective or social role. *The Mathematical Experience* comes to a close by leaving us in the cultural heights of the conscience collective.

LEONARD C SULSKI

**Heinz R. Pagels**

***The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature (1982)***

*The Cosmic Code* is a thorough and surprisingly up-to-date description of what contemporary physics takes reality to be. The first part of the book is a brief description of the sometimes bizarre and paradoxical concept physicists have had to develop in their efforts objectify the microscopic world of the atom and the cosmic world of space and time. Although the historical perspective of this discussion is rather shallow, this section is well worth reading for the care and intelligence with which the author, a theoretical physicist, has explained these developments in physics. The sections here on randomness and statistical mechanics are particularly worthwhile for the author's discussion of the connections between the physics of the microworld and that of the macroscopic world of our experience. The author emphasizes the important but often neglected point that the world of everyday life *cannot* be derived from the physics of the atom and its constituents. In the first part of the book the author has some inept comments concerning what God can and cannot do, but even these are of interest as they show the inadequacy of a god who is confined to the role of subject or object.

The second part of *The Cosmic Code* is splendid. Here the author discusses in non-mathematical, but also in non-simplistic, terms the recent successes physicists have enjoyed in linking three of the four fundamental forces of physics. Here, gauge field theories, photons, quarks, gluons, and leptons are brought together in a heady brew in exciting, thoughtful, and non-condescending prose. *The Cosmic Code* offers its readers a grand view of physics in the 1980s. (*Bantam*)

ROBERT H. GARVEY