



The Key Reporter

Phi Beta Kappa
Founded 1776

Fall 2004 Volume 69, Number 4

Phi Beta Kappa Selects Robert S. Wilson As New Editor of *The American Scholar*

Robert S. Wilson has been named editor of *The American Scholar*, the award-winning quarterly journal published by the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He was selected after a national search conducted by an ad hoc committee including members of the ΦBK Senate's Executive Committee and its Committee on Publications, as well as members of the *Scholar's* Editorial Board and others.

Wilson succeeds Anne Fadiman, who edited the *Scholar* from 1998 until this fall. The Winter 2005 issue will be his first as editor.

Alonzo Hamby, chair of the search committee and the Senate's Publications Committee, said, "Robert Wilson emerged from a highly competitive

selection process as the clear choice of the search committee. We are fortunate to have found a person so skilled and experienced. *The American Scholar* is once again in good hands. We can all look forward to a long and happy relationship with an extraordinary editor."

Wilson served six years as editor of *Preservation*, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Under his leadership, it won the National Magazine Award for General Excellence, two Folio awards, many prizes for design, and a special award from the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy. He was founding literary editor of *Civilization*, the magazine of the Library of Congress, which

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

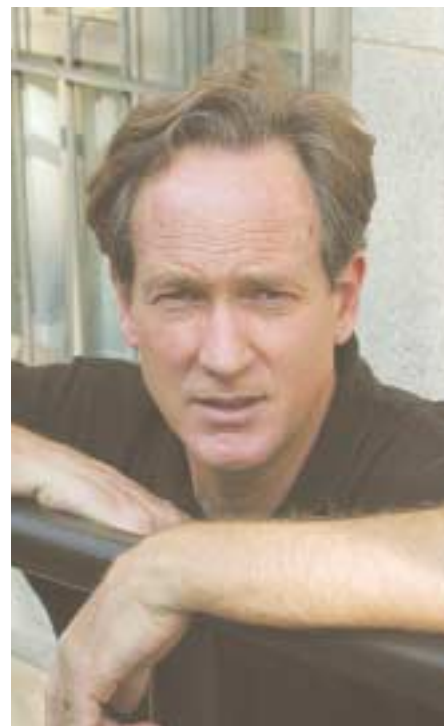


Photo by Maggie Gamba

Robert S. Wilson

In This Issue

From the Secretary	2
Lowcountry Association Initiative	3
Catherine Sims Boman Dies	3
Rob Slee on Philosopher Friends	4
ΦBK Initiation Speech:	
William A. Reiners	5
Among Our Key People:	
John Noble Wilford	6
Initiation Poem by Marie Terrone	9
From Our Book Critics	10
How Books Are Chosen	10
Letters to the Editor	12

ΦBK Establishes Couper Scholars Program

The Phi Beta Kappa Society has established a one-year program to sponsor visits by distinguished American scholars to colleges and universities that do not have ΦBK chapters. The 2004–2005 Couper Scholars Program is funded by a \$100,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation. It is named for Richard W. Couper, who was instrumental in helping the Society receive the grant. A longtime champion of the liberal arts and sciences, he is a former president of the New York City Public Library and the ΦBK Fellows.

Each Couper Scholar's visit, lasting two or three days, will include a lecture for undergraduates, informal discussions with students and faculty members, and a meeting with the dean of liberal arts and sciences.

Participating institutions are Colorado State University–Pueblo; Dillard University, New Orleans, La.; Hampton University, Hampton, Va.; Jackson State University, Jackson, Miss.; Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, N.C.; New Mexico State University, Las Cruces; North Carolina A&T

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



From the Secretary

What's It All About, Lord Russell?

By John Churchill

Secretary, The Phi Beta Kappa Society

T.S. Eliot told a story about an exchange in a London taxicab, perhaps in the late 1940s. (It is recounted by John Naughton, as quoted in John D. Barrow's "The Artful Universe.") Eliot climbed into the taxi, and the cabbie recognized his fare as the great poet. Telling Eliot he had an "eye for celebrity," the cabbie said he'd had another famous man in his cab only a few nights before. The previous fare had been one of the best-known English philosophers of the first half of the 20th century: Bertrand Russell, who—having inherited an earldom—was Lord Russell.

The cabbie, eager to learn what the great philosopher had concluded about the meaning of life, posed the question: "Well, Lord Russell, what's it all about?" "And do you know," he told Eliot, "he couldn't tell me!" That in itself became the story worth telling: The great philosopher can't tell you what it's all about.

Russell, of course, would have been a poor bet for this task at any time. He was a fox, not a hedgehog. I recount this vignette to bring up the imperative that those of us who have delved deeply, and know a lot about a little, have a right—and a responsibility—to contribute to the conversation that we all share.

In the contemporary world, we are practitioners of methods of analysis that go back to Bacon and Descartes. Of course, there is no end of analysis, and while the answers to small questions accumulate, the questions multiply. So every advance of knowledge, expanding our comprehension like an inflating sphere, simply brings us into contact with more and more that we do not know.

That metaphor of a sphere is misleading, as if we could glance about and see the work of our confreres. We are more like miners, burrowing away from our once-shared central galleries, down shafts of our different devisings,

pulling away more and more ore peculiar to our own digs. And we are not at all sure where one set of workings stands relative to another: convergent, parallel, divergent. This is not to say that there is something wrong with the process of research: We need the ore that researchers mine. But we also need to be able to talk about the relationships among our efforts. Let me assert the claim that what may be at stake is the survival of democratic culture.

Last year, ΦBK asked hundreds of members of the Society to come together in their communities to discuss the social value of the liberal arts and sciences. They told us that they valued most highly the skills of deliberation and communication they had gained through their education. But what is the connection between these outcomes and the claim that ΦBK's historic mission, to honor and advocate excellence in the liberal arts and sciences, is somehow important to the survival of democratic culture?

The urge to reduce custom to method has run amok in our culture. Every skill of life has been codified as a technique. Whereas once we learned of fit and ill behavior by contemplating Antigone and Creon, Scout and Boo Radley, now we have Ph.D. programs and departments and majors in technical-sounding disciplines that purport to do the same more systematically.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



Photo by Mary Drabkin

Ron Chernow, left, author of the best-selling "Alexander Hamilton," is greeted by Murray Drabkin, center, president of the Fellows of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and Joel Conarroe, a Fellows director. Chernow presented the Richard W. Couper Lecture at the Fellows' fall meeting in New York City. He discussed Hamilton's life and his impact on U.S. history.

Corrections

ΦBK Senator Pauline Yu's last name was misspelled on page 1 of the Summer *Key Reporter*. She serves on the Senate's Executive Committee and the Committee on Visiting Scholars, and she chairs the Senate's Committee on Committees. *The Key Reporter* regrets the error.

In "ΦBK in Popular Culture and Literature" in the same edition, the correct title of Tom Brokaw's book is "A Long Way from Home." (Thank you to Hershey Julien of Palo Alto, Calif.)

South Carolina Association Members Promote ΦBK at 15 High Schools

Editor's note: *David Churchill is treasurer of the Lowcountry ΦBK Association in South Carolina. He lives in Summerville, S.C.*

By David Churchill

The Lowcountry Phi Beta Kappa Association is working this year to enhance ΦBK's visibility among selected public and private high schools within the Charleston, S.C., metropolitan area. This initiative was made possible by a \$300 grant from the Society's South Atlantic District.

In accordance with its grant proposal, the association prepared a special presentation for National Honor Society (NHS) members at 15 target schools. These schools were chosen because their students' SAT scores are above average, and they send a high percentage of their graduates to four-year colleges. Scheduling arrangements were handled by the schools' NHS advisers.

The presentation's objectives are to inform academically advanced students about ΦBK's history, mission, and criteria for membership; to en-

courage students to apply to colleges and universities that can offer membership in the Society; and to motivate students to aspire to membership and accept an invitation to join if offered.

Six association members are making high school visits this year. An outline of a suggested presentation is available to them, and feedback will be solicited after the initial visits are completed.

David Cordts, associate director at National Honor Society headquarters in Reston, Va., is familiar with the ΦBK program. He supports efforts by the Lowcountry Association to increase awareness of the Society among students who are potential candidates for initiation.

Based on results of visits to six of the target schools last spring, the association offers these suggestions for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

THE KEY REPORTER

*Volume 69, Number 4
Fall 2004*

Editor: Barbara Haddad Ryan
Consulting Editor: John Churchill

The Key Reporter (ISSN: 0023-0804) is published quarterly by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1606 New Hampshire Ave. NW Washington DC 20009. Periodicals postage is paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional addresses. IPM #1213423

This newsletter is distributed free each quarter to every contributing member of Phi Beta Kappa. The winter and summer editions also are sent free to every ΦBK member for whom we have a current address. All four issues are posted on the Society's website.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editors or the officers of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Circulation for this issue: 58,571.

For nonmembers, single copies are available for \$2; one year's subscription is \$5. Design by A&L Communications. Printed by Cadmus Specialty Publications, Richmond, Va.

Copyright © 2004 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society. All rights are reserved. The Phi Beta Kappa name, key, and *The Key Reporter* name are registered trademarks of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

Postmaster: Send change-of-address notices to: *The Key Reporter*, Phi Beta Kappa, 1606 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington DC 20009.

<http://www.pbk.org>



David Churchill spoke last spring to members of the National Honor Society chapter at Stratford High School in Goose Creek, S.C. The chapter president is Kelly Stewart, and the adviser is Jim McBride.

Catherine Sims Boman Dies in Atlanta

Catherine Sims Boman, the president of Phi Beta Kappa in 1982–85, died Sept. 15 in Atlanta. She had twice been named the city's Woman of the Year, once in education and again in civic service.

An honors graduate of Barnard College, Boman studied at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. Later she earned a master's degree and a doctorate at Columbia University, specializing in British parliamentary history. In 1939 she joined the faculty of Agnes

Scott College, where she taught history and political science. She was vice president and dean of the American College for Girls in Istanbul in 1960–63. In 1965 she became dean of Sweet Briar College, where she remained until her retirement in 1974.

Boman served on the ΦBK Senate for 18 years. She was among four women who have been the Society's president. The others were Marjorie Hope Nicholson, 1940–46; Rosemary Park, 1970–73; and Joan M. Ferrante, 1991–94.

Old Philosophers Offer New Insights On Explaining Modern U.S. Markets

Editor's note: Rob Slee was elected to Φ BK at Miami University, where he graduated in 1980 with a major in history. He manages an investment banking firm in Charlotte, N.C., and is the author of "Private Capital Markets," published this year by John Wiley & Sons.

By Rob Slee

At the dawn of the 20th century, students at Miami University and elsewhere were educated in the classics. This entailed studying ancient languages, the humanities, a smattering of physical sciences, and history. Over the past hundred years, however, higher education forever changed as specialized training in education, business administration, and hard sciences fought their way onto the curricula. The move away from a liberal arts foundation has progressed sufficiently to cause many to ponder the once unthinkable: Does a focused study of history provide any value to the student?

There are tired yet true answers to this question: The past is predictive; historical analysis builds communication skills; a well-rounded education

needs no apology, and so on. In today's globalized, geometrically changing world, certainly there must be more tangible benefits from a liberal arts education than the old answers suggest. In fact, there are. Even understanding the history of an idea can be useful in the present, as illustrated by the following experience.



Rob Slee

We might collectively refer to historic players in the world of ideas as voices from the past. These voices have something to say. As proof, I offer my own experience in the last four years. In the final days of the last millennium I decided to write a book. My goal was

nothing less than to create a new field of study, one that benefited from my prior 15 years as an investment banker. Finance, as currently written about and studied, concerns itself only with the behavior of large public companies. Yet these comprise less than one

percent of the businesses in the United States.

What about the other 99 percent? I was convinced that a unique body of knowledge existed to explain the private company market. Further, this body of knowledge seemed to have a triangular interconnection among valuation, capitalization, and business transfer. In an effort to confirm my suspicions, I unwittingly set off on a conceptual Lewis and Clark-like survey, not knowing what was on the other side of the next hill.

I soon learned that the first person to walk through a conceptual woods has a special responsibility: He or she must map the journey and provide markers for others to follow. Theoretically speaking, this person must structure and organize a body of knowledge. And this is no small task. In a dire moment, I was fortunate to discover that I could rely on the professorial talents of Shriver, Baird, Yamauchi, and others to set the proper course. I knew what else I had to do: Call on some old friends.

Of course Aristotle spoke first. After yet another reminder that contemporary America's best intellectual day does not rise to the level of ancient Greece's worst, he offered empiricism as a logical starting point. "Certainty is possible only through a combination of observation and reason," he intoned. Not to be outdone, the rationalists spoke next. Descartes espoused his single ideal, logic; Leibniz declared that pure reason is the basis for all knowledge. A good start, I thought, but something more concrete was needed. Kant saw his opening and rebutted reason: "Reason cannot tell us about external reality because it deals only in definitions." More confused than helped, I decided to seek someone more familiar—at the least, someone who spoke English.

Help came in the forms of Whitehead and Russell. They assured me that "Set Theory" would help me organize the primary concepts of a discipline. Although I was now far from the kingdom of business, I was onto something. The ever-insightful Kuhn, coiner of the overused phrase "para-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Members Can Update Addresses On Line

Φ BK members are encouraged to go on line to update their addresses in the Society's records.

The first step is to go to <http://www.pbk.org/members/info.htm>. You will be asked for your logon name, which is the six- or seven-digit number on your *Key Reporter* address label. Then add your password, which consists of your first and last names and the last two digits of the year you were elected to Φ BK, with no spaces in between. For example, if your name is Mary Jones and you were elected in 2001, your logon name is maryjones01. If your last name is hyphenated, include the hyphen.

Members with questions may contact Camilla Smith at info@pbk.org or call her at (202) 265-3808.

Thoughts on Facing Life's Challenges While Practicing Sound Leadership

Editor's note: *William A. Reiners is director of the Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center and a professor in the Department of Botany and Geography at the University of Wyoming. Here are excerpts from his address to new ΦBK members at the university.*

By William A. Reiners

According to the Phi Beta Kappa literature, "this Society has recognized and fostered excellence in the liberal arts and the sciences." John Churchill, the secretary of Phi Beta Kappa, goes on to say: "As we celebrate the complexity and diversity of the contemporary world, in which individuals and societies struggle to cope with bewildering change, we may also find daunting the task of promoting knowledge, tolerance, respect, and reflection."

This introduction seems particularly appropriate, given the events of Sept. 11 and the sense that nothing will ever be the same again. If we take seriously the responsibilities that come with recognition of our merit, we are faced with a challenge to do something positive with our abilities. How do we gain the abilities to which Churchill must be alluding, to address this "daunting task"? I contend that you individually must go beyond your liberal education to Churchill's daunting task. There must be a self-dedication to what you will do with your life, based on your own moral judgment. If the dedication is based on the determination of others, you have not fully benefited from your liberal education. Self-dedication must be a judgment made by you alone.

What do we mean by a liberal education? One meaning is to be "liberating" with respect to captivity by the fixed ideas of your peer group, parents, cultural-economic subgroup, age, class, nationality, the set of ideas and attitudes that is your culture. And even your largest membership group—*Homo sapiens*, because our health is partially dependent on the health of "the others" on this planet. This liberation comes at a price. We are bur-

dened as well as enlightened with awareness of doubt in comfortable old ideas, with the realization that there will always be ambiguity, and we will have to live with paradox.

For example, we now know that we are products of our genes and environment, and we cannot know where the boundary lies between these determinants and our free will. One of life's paradoxes is that we must live as though we have free will, even while we aren't sure whether that is possible. Another burden of a liberal education is that it has set you up to question sooner, rather than later, the meaning of life. The only meaning in your life is what you give it. A liberal education should have better equipped you to find that meaning and the tools for acting on it. Two traits associated with a liberal education are tolerance and an open mind. And there are dilemmas for which there are no ideal solutions. I give these examples:

Should we have educational systems that maintain self-esteem at the cost of self-realization?

Should we have wilderness areas that can be entered only by the extremely fit?

Where do we set limits on personal freedoms and establish expectations for community responsibility?

Where do we find the right response in helping others, when direct help only makes the situation worse in the long run?

When is it realistic to expect free enterprise to resolve social-economic problems, and when is it necessary for government to provide regulation?

What is the merit of having a common body of ideas from Western culture in a core curriculum, versus emphasizing multicultural ideas about life and society?

Where does tolerance for others' ideas end and a responsibility for articulating judgment of those ideas begin?

All of these problems can be classified within one of four dilemma paradigms: truth versus loyalty; individual versus community; short term versus long term; justice versus mercy. Solutions have to be found through analysis and balancing. Acting on compassion alone rarely solves a problem in the long run. Nor does acting on universal rules you may have been taught or heard from friends and in the media.

We live at a time of powerful propaganda and sophistry. Our senses are battered by self-serving rationalization. It is not just a matter of many mixed messages: The messages themselves are disturbing. One thing we do not teach well at universities is that we hear fundamentalism from all sides, not just the conservative sides. I wonder whether we do as good a job of teaching open, analytical thinking as we do of counter-indoctrination.

The most limiting resource in a free society is leadership. Leadership takes different forms: intellectual, interpretive, organizational, and moral. These can, of course, be combined. By assessing multiple points of view, and producing a lucid analysis of an intellectual problem, you are practicing intellectual leadership. By using interpretive abilities in combination with sensitivity to events, one can produce an evocation of an event that will bring richer, clearer meaning and inspiration to others.

Organizational leadership combines intellectual and interpretive traits, and sometimes moral considerations, into making social systems work. You know good and bad leaders through your own experience in voluntary groups like churches, student organizations, athletic teams, and government at all levels. Moral leadership is the implementation of what an individual, group, political party, or nation determines is ethically right or wrong. It can represent the highest form of leadership as practiced by Martin Luther, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. Or it can represent a terrible form in the leadership as recorded for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



Among Our Key People

John Noble Wilford's adventures make Indiana Jones look lazy. He has flown into hurricanes, helped map the Grand Canyon, dived to the ocean floor in a submarine, searched for dinosaur bones in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia, survived a wilderness survival school, patrolled icebergs off Greenland, run the Colorado River rapids, and participated in lunar-landing simulations. He has traveled all over the United States, Europe, and the former Soviet Union, as well as to Canada's Northwest Territories, Easter Island, Turkey, China, North Africa, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Amazon River in Brazil, and the Pacific atolls of Eniwetok and Bikini.

That career has produced award-winning journalism in *The New York Times*, where Wilford has been on the staff since 1965. Twice a Pulitzer Prize winner, he served with distinction as the newspaper's science editor for four years. During that time he directed the launch of its weekly science section, which covers developments in science, medicine, and technology.

Today the *Times's* senior science writer, Wilford reports on space exploration, astronomy, paleontology, archaeology, and other fields. He also writes books that are translated into many languages. But he is far from jaded. When he addressed new members of ΦBK at Wofford College in 2002, his theme was "The Uses of Informed Wonder."

"Informed wonder," he told the students, "is imagination. But that word carries connotations of fantasy, fiction, unbridled dreaming. Informed wonder is imagination modulated by reality—knowledge, observation, inspiration anchored in real possibilities. A sense of wonder is a receptivity to experience the new, the different, the unexpected. It is inquisitive open-mindedness. And when the sense of wonder is informed by knowledge and experience, it can be a liberating and creative force.

"It took me years to recognize informed wonder for what it is. I learned that science is an exercise in

informed wonder. The best scientists are those with the imagination to conceive of new ways to explore the unknown and extract possible answers to all sorts of questions. Einstein wondered if Newton was the last word on gravity, then imagined what space and time were really like, and finally applied his knowledge to develop the equations and testable theories of relativity.

"Whatever career you choose, you must first be well trained—informed. But for maximum satisfaction, you should imagine how to take your work to a higher level of accomplishment and contribution to society. One never knows how the opportunities to practice informed wonder will show themselves. One must be open to seize these opportunities. Or as Yogi Berra said, 'When you come to a fork in the road, take it.'"

Early in life, Wilford himself instinctively had taken the advice he gave at Wofford. Born in 1933 and raised in Kentucky and Tennessee, he never aspired to be a science journalist; such a career hardly existed then. And in school he showed no brilliance in either science or mathematics. "Yet I must have been hard-wired to be a journalist," he said. "How else to explain why, at age 5, I started producing my own newspaper?"

He earned a B.S. in journalism at the University of Tennessee—whose ΦBK chapter later elected him an alumnus member—and a master's degree in political science at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. During college summers, he worked on newspapers in Tennessee, and in 1956 he was hired by the *Wall Street Journal* in New York. His ambition was to be a political reporter in Washington, or perhaps a foreign correspondent.

But then he was drafted. And while he was in the Army Counter-Intelligence Corps, in October 1957, "Sputnik was launched: the first artificial earth satellite. That turned out to be my fork in the road. Editors suddenly recognized the importance of

science and technology. After I returned to the *Journal*, the managing editor asked if I would try writing medical stories as part of an expanded science staff."

This sounded more interesting than covering trade shows and the annual meetings of corporations, so Wilford said yes. Eventually he shifted from medicine to science, notably space exploration. Here was his chance to cover one of the biggest stories of our time—flying to the Moon and exploring our solar system. Although he is not a scientist, he said he learned to write about these developments and others through informed wonder. And he continued to do that during three years at *Time* magazine, where he wrote several cover stories.

He said he did not realize that he was using informed wonder until 1983, by then a *Times* reporter for 18 years, when he accompanied a paleontologist to Hell Creek Canyon in Montana. They were looking for dinosaur fossils and traces of the event that presumably caused their extinction. The scientist, he recalled, pointed to a thin stratum of dark rock, "like a dirty bathtub ring." In this stratum, all over the world, is the chemical evidence that an asteroid or comet crashed into Earth 65 million years ago. The scientist also described pollen and bones that told of what Hell Creek had been like before that cataclysm.

"He was describing," Wilford said, "a world I could not see, and that he could not see but knew about, and it could be imagined. At Hell Creek, I realized that what I do as a journalist is to supply the inquisitive wonder, and the scientist informs me from the knowledge that his own wonder has given him."

When Wilford was a small boy in Hickman, Ky., on the Mississippi River, he made his first excursion with a wise and experienced guide. He was taking a walk with his grandfather, who was going blind. "We would walk to the brink of a high bluff," he said, "and there Granddaddy told me about the river below. I saw only the brown currents and long barges. I asked questions. Granddaddy told me where the

waters and boats might have come from and might be going, expanding the panorama to encompass the geography of middle America.

“Stretching before me, as I’ve come to recognize, was a prospect of informed wonder. A little boy in Kentucky could begin to imagine the world’s greater dimensions.”

As a journalist Wilford, and through him his readers, have repeated this modest lesson on a far grander scale. He speaks of sitting up at night with an astronomer on a mountain top. In the observatory’s control room, he sees a tiny smudge appearing on a video screen. The astronomer, however, “sees the sign of a planet orbiting a distant star. He is able to inform my wonder, and through me the wonder of a wider audience, as he had already informed himself.”

Wilford said he has been fascinated for many years by Mars, because it is the nearest place where we may learn if it is possible that life has existed elsewhere. A century ago, he noted, there were people, even some scientists, “who believed in Martians. They saw lines in their telescopes and imagined they were canals of an ancient civilization. They were seeing what they wanted to believe. Their wonder became fantasy.

“But the wonder persisted. Better telescopes—and spacecraft—became available. In 1976, the Viking spacecraft went looking for life on Mars. On the day of the first landing, the Viking camera panned the russet landscape, and the scientists were beside themselves with excitement. The camera focused on a rock. The chief scientist was a geologist, but he sounded as if this was the first rock he had ever seen. ‘Look at it, look at it!’ He grew hoarse exclaiming over and describing this solitary rock. But it was no ordinary rock. It was the first rock on Mars that any human had seen up close.”

Those scientists did not find conclusive evidence of life, Wilford said: “Not a creature was stirring, not even a microbe. But the Viking orbiters photographed the entire planet, and the scientists could see, nearly everywhere, what looked like riverbeds and other

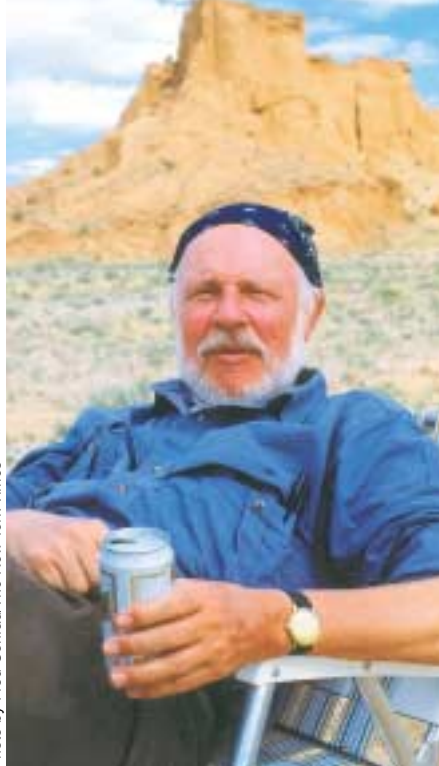


Photo by Fred Conrad/The New York Times

John Noble Wilford spent a month in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia with an American Museum of Natural History expedition, looking for dinosaur fossils. Beer from Ulan Bator was the travelers’ only luxury in that spartan environment.

traces of erosion by fluids. Could there once have been flowing water on Mars? An earlier Mars was warmer and wetter. Conditions for life could have existed at the same time life started on Earth 3.7 billion years ago. Stay tuned. The search for life on other worlds is one of the grand adventures of our time.”

No matter where he sets his laptop, Wilford can paint vivid prose pictures for readers. Here is how he began a *Times* report on the Cassini spacecraft last July: “The first spacecraft to orbit Saturn ... swiftly turned its cameras on the planet’s rings of ice and rock, and transmitted striking pictures of the encircling luminous strands, some with scalloped edges, strawlike textures and rippling waves that spread across the shimmering disk. Scientists could not have been more delighted.”

Even in the world of “hard” science, Wilford offers touches of whimsy. The above report ends with a physicist’s description of “powerful disturbances, not unlike a sonic boom,” created by the pressure of supersonic particle winds in space interacting with

Saturn’s magnetic fields. Cassini recorded seven such “crossing shocks” in a single day. “Perhaps,” Wilford concluded, “it was Saturn’s way of announcing the arrival of the Cassini spacecraft, the first ever to orbit the solar system’s second-largest planet.”

Or consider his report last spring on the discovery on Cyprus of a grave from 7500 B.C. that included the skeleton of a cat. It starts: “If it can truly be said that people train cats, rather than the other way around, human-feline bonding apparently had its start at least 9,500 years ago—about 5,000 years earlier than previously thought.” And it ends: “No doubt the next challenge for science will be to fathom the minds of cats. Is it really true, as T.S. Eliot imagined, that cats in their most inscrutable reveries are deep into long division?”

Wilford’s books include the award-winning “We Reach the Moon,” a detailed study of the Apollo program; “The Mapmakers”; “The Riddle of the Dinosaurs”; “Mars Beckons”; and “The Mysterious History of Columbus.” He edited “Scientists at Work” and “Cosmic Dispatches: *The New York Times* Reports on Astronomy and Cosmology.”

Wilford is often asked what audience he writes for. He says he must write for his editors: If a story is not interesting and understandable to them, they may not publish it. He also writes for scientists: He does not want to make mistakes and misrepresent the significance of their work.

“But mostly,” he said, “I write for an audience of one: me. I strive to make the story understandable to myself. This means I must explain the things I didn’t understand when I started my reporting, because others may have some of the same questions. I try to keep in mind what it was about the subject that interested me in the first place, because nonscientists like me probably will find this the reason to keep reading.”

One way for general readers to relate to science, he suggested, is to think of it as an exploration. Cosmologists explore the history of the universe, and paleon-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

The
AMERICAN
SCHOLAR



THE
THOUGHTFUL
GIFT OF GOOD
READING

As the winter holidays approach, consider a gift subscription to *The American Scholar* for family and friends on your list. A year of the *Scholar* will bring four issues filled with good reading on important cultural and intellectual matters. Your recipients will be informed of your generosity with a festive holiday message. They will then be reminded of your thoughtfulness in every season of the coming year, as their copies of the *Scholar* arrive.

You can arrange the first gift, at a special annual rate of \$24, and each additional gift at the annual rate of \$23, by calling:

1-800-821-4567

Call now and check some names off your list. By the way, if your recipients enjoy their issues and then give them to someone else, it's all right for everyone to know that. Regifting the *Scholar* is permitted. And so is archiving it.



THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR
P.O. Box 354
Mount Morris, Illinois 61054-7834

(Please add \$10 for Canadian subscriptions,
or \$15 for international subscriptions.)

Robert S. Wilson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

also won the National Magazine Award for General Excellence during his tenure.

For 11 years Wilson was book editor and columnist at *USA Today*, and for six years he was an editor at *The Washington Post*, including three years at its *Book World*. His essays, reviews, and fiction have appeared in the *Scholar* and in such publications as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, *Smithsonian*, *The Wilson Quarterly*, and *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. He comes to the *Scholar* from AARP, where he edited the *Bulletin*, a monthly news publication.

Wilson was the editor of "A Certain Somewhere: Writers on the Places They Remember," a collection of essays from *Preservation*, published by Random House. He is under contract with

Scribner for a biography of Clarence King, a writer, geologist, and adventurer who occupies a chapter in "The Education of Henry Adams." Wilson said that its probable theme "is how the two late 19th-century secular religions, science and greed, warred within King."

A graduate of Washington and Lee University, Wilson earned a master's degree at the University of Virginia. He has taught writing there and at Johns Hopkins University, George Mason University, and American University.

Wilson's father was in the U.S. Air Force, and he lived in many areas growing up, including four years in Japan. His home today is a 19th-century house in Manassas, Va.

The American Scholar was founded in 1932. Its first editor was William A. Shimer, followed by Marjorie Hope Nicholson, Hiram Haydn, Peter Gay (acting editor), Joseph Epstein, and Anne Fadiman.

School Visits

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

other Φ BK associations that are considering similar presentations in their own communities:

—Because one purpose is to encourage students to apply to institutions with Φ BK chapters, the fall semester is the best time for school visits. By early spring, seniors have completed the college application process.

—National Honor Society chapters are the best venue, but not the only one, for the presentations. For example, the Beta Club is a good substitute if a school does not have an NHS chapter.

—If association members assume that very few students who attend a program have heard of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, they are probably right.

—Presenters will have a maximum of 20 or 25 minutes to deliver their message.

—All presentations should be reinforced by distributing "The Phi Beta Kappa Society At a

Glance" pamphlet to every student who attends.

—An awareness presentation should be scheduled every other year to ensure that all the "best and brightest" students at the target schools hear from Φ BK before they graduate.

The Lowcountry Association's outreach also includes sending welcoming letters to new Φ BK members from the Charleston metropolitan area. The letters include information about association membership.

Other associations that may have questions are welcome to contact me at jdchurchill@sc.rr.com.

Phi Beta Kappa Society records indicate that six of the current justices on the U.S. Supreme Court are Φ BK members: Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Anthony Kennedy, Chief Justice William Rehnquist, David Souter, and John Paul Stevens.

An Initiation Poem at Queens College

Editor's note: *Marie Terrone was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Fordham University. She is a member of the ΦBK chapter at Queens College of the City of New York. Its officers invited her to read her poetry at this year's initiation of new members. The poem below is from her first published book, "The Bodies We Were Loaned."*

Madame Curie

Even through her cheap boots she felt
something shift below the earth,
and her skin tingled, a thousand tiny
bombs

exploding in on through her fingertips,
belly, hips, the very roots of her scalp.
Even picking mushrooms, she saw the
glow

worms and fireflies throb brighter
as she neared. When her mother died,
she gave up her bed to boarders,
stoked their last
embers, boiled their *pirogi*. She tend-
ed rich
children, charges that circled her
like a planet's moons. Even gravity
stopped

trying to hold her down. Science
whispered
in her ear, stirred her, pulled her
across every border
to Paris and Pierre. How they pulsed,

huddled together in the lab with a
box of radium,

watching rays burst free and split
into alpha, beta, gamma. How they
beamed
at the Folies-Bergere, all those legs

rising and falling like happy electrons.
Thin, squinting men in top hats
heaped prizes
on them. Even when a streetcar's
wheels

rumbled by to claim Pierre, Manya
pushed on,
an engine doing its work. She rigged
x-rays
on vans to see the wounds of war,
killed tumors

burned skin off her fingers. She
glowed, she believed
in the triumph of good. Even when
her great heart
stopped pumping, needles jumped
beyond their scales.

Couper Scholars

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

University, Greensboro; St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas; Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Ala.; the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas; the University of Texas—El Paso; and Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans.

The Couper Scholars are Dr. Joyce Appleby, professor emerita of history, University of California—Los Angeles; Dr. Joan Ferrante, professor of comparative literature, Columbia University; Dr. Robert Patten, the Lynette S. Autry Professor in Humanities, Rice University; and Dr. Peter Stansky, the Frances and Charles Field Professor of History, Stanford University.

Appleby is a former Guggenheim Fellow and a past president of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians. Ferrante is a past president of the ΦBK Society, the Medieval Academy of America, and the Dante Society. Patten is director of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals and The Dickens Project. Stansky is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the Royal Historical Society.

Leadership

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

some Roman emperors, Hitler, and Cambodia's Pol Pot. These too were moral leaders.

I hope that you find leadership in its positive forms as the meaning in your life. Remember that good leadership is carried out as a service to others. Bad leadership is a form of self-aggrandizement. If you lead well, in an attitude of service, you may reap praise and riches; or you may be assassinated. As you lead, though, it will require balancing. Thus, you will lead as though you are balancing on a tightrope.

I conclude with a statement from George Bernard Shaw: "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die; for the harder I work the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' for me. It is sort of a splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

Philosophers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

digm shift," said that the world can be seen through a structured prism of preconceived ideas, language, and logic. "A paradigm," said Kuhn, "is a set of embodied experiences."

I was close now, but I still lacked the final organizing structure—which Hegel provided. He proclaimed that triadic logic is the answer: "Unlike most financial logic based on positives and negatives, there is a triadic logic operating here providing powerful cohesion between the moving parts. A system of logic with three bases is dynamic rather than static, and serves to bring the three sides of the triangle into a coherent whole. This is the logic of a three-legged stool." After several years of these "conversations," involving dozens of aged acquaintances, I had my answer.

This leads us back to the central question: Why should anyone study liberal arts, especially history? The answer is simple: Regardless of the endeavor, one can never have too many old friends.



From Our Book Critics

Humanities: Svetlana Alpers, Rebecca Resinski, Eugen Weber

Social Sciences: Rick Eden, Jan Ellen Lewis

Anna J. Schwartz, Larry J. Zimmerman

Natural Sciences: Germaine Cornélissen, Jay M. Pasachoff

By Jan Lewis

Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination. Barbara Taylor. Cambridge University Press, 2003. \$65; paper \$22.99

Barbara Taylor's brilliant study proceeds from an unsettling observation: Mary Wollstonecraft, the icon of modern feminism, was a misogynist. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," one of the foundational texts of feminism, is as much a critique of women—their simpering weakness, their uncultivated minds, their excesses of emotion—as it is a condemnation of male oppression. In her misogyny, Wollstonecraft was not alone. This paradox—what Taylor calls "the repudiation of Woman"—has been "a key element of feminism." Taylor uses Wollstonecraft's life and work to help us work our way out of this paradox and imagine a different future for women. Her book is rich, dense (in the good sense), and intense, required reading for anyone interested in the history or future of feminism.

The problem for Wollstonecraft, and implicitly for all women, is that they come into being—in the philosophical and psychoanalytical senses, that is—as the objects of man's imagination. Taylor develops this point in an exhilarating analysis of Wollstonecraft's analysis of Rousseau (which may be more Taylor than Wollstonecraft, but never mind). Rousseau's ideal woman is "a chimera of womanhood, rooted in erotic imaginings ... that entrances both sexes—women in narcissistic self-admira-

tion; men in objectifying passion—to the point where real women disappear into its seductions." Although Taylor does not say it in so many words, this is the female dilemma still.

It was also Wollstonecraft's particular problem. Anyone who knows the first thing about her knows about her disastrous affair with the feckless Gilbert Imlay and the daughter she bore out of wedlock. At the time, moralists read Wollstonecraft's untimely death from the complications of bearing a second child as a judgment upon her unorthodox life. Taylor does not gloss over Wollstonecraft's foolish choices or personal failings, but neither does she make them emblems of Wollstonecraft's life. Instead, her Wollstonecraft is allowed to learn from her own mistakes and achieve maturity in both her life and work.

Taylor grounds Wollstonecraft in her historical context. She was a late-18th-century British radical, *petit bourgeois* in both her upbringing and outlook, and a Rational Dissenter in her religion. Living in an age torn by religious fundamentalisms, we may find it difficult to recognize other, nonfundamentalist religious impulses as truly religious, let alone one of the foundations of modern feminism.

It is a cliché to say that no brief review can do justice to a book such as this; however, in this case it is true.

The Songs of the Kings. Barry Unsworth. *Nan A. Talese/Doubleday*, 2003. \$26

The setting for Barry Unsworth's stunning retelling of the prelude to the Trojan War is

Aulis, where the Greek army anxiously waits for the favorable wind that will take it to Troy to redeem Helen, the sister-in-law of their king, Agamemnon. Calchas, their seer, is plagued by uncertainty; he cannot say when the winds will change or what the Greeks must do to propitiate the gods. He looks on impotently as others usurp his place, men who know how "to secure belief beforehand for what they were going to say ... But this, after all, was no more than anyone would do when there was a story to tell, a story he believed and wanted others to believe." In this case, the story has been scripted by Odysseus. And because it is so well and forcefully told, Agamemnon comes to accept it: His daughter Iphigeneia must be sacrificed.

If you want to learn about the origins of our current war in Iraq, you could read Bob Woodward's "Plan of Attack," where you will find that Colin Powell was a prophet whose words went unheeded. But you will also wonder whether Mr. Powell was himself the source of this tragic and flattering depiction. Or you could just read "The Songs of the Kings" and contemplate the age-old question of how men talk each other into what they convince themselves will be easy, glorious wars.

The answer, Unsworth suggests, is the power of stories. Iphigeneia, who accepts as her destiny the story that self-interested men have written for her, observes that "we are all the victims of stories in one way or another, even if we are not in them, even if we are not born yet."

Christian Slaves and Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800. Robert C. Davis. *Palgrave Macmillan*, 2003. \$65

Robert C. Davis estimates that in the three centuries between 1500 and 1800, North Africans enslaved perhaps a million and a quarter Europeans. This figure is the product of a series of calculations and estimates based on sources so spotty and vague—travelers' estimates of how many European slaves were in this or that North African city in a particular year, Davis's own estimates of annual death rates—as to make the sources for the simultaneous trans-Atlantic slave trade look positively definitive. Whatever the precise numbers, Davis makes it clear that the North African enslavement of Europeans was a massive endeavor, large enough to invite comparisons to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. He calculates that in the 16th and 17th centuries, "nearly as many Europeans were taken forcibly to Barbary... as were West Africans hauled off to labor on plantations in the Americas."

This slave trade was an extension of the near-constant state of war between the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires, but war was only the pretext for a flourishing business in European men and women. Most of the European slaves captured by North Africans were used as galley slaves in corsairs that preyed upon commercial traffic in the Mediterranean. Hence, North Africans needed slaves in order to obtain more

How Books Are Chosen for Review

Phi Beta Kappa members frequently contact *The Key Reporter* to inquire about having their new books featured in "From Our Book Critics."

The reviewers determine independently which books they will write about. There are many authors among the Society's more than half a million members, so the reviewers do not give preference to members' books in making their decisions.

ΦBK authors are welcome to ask their publishers to send review copies of their books to the editor of the newsletter; they will be forwarded to the most appropriate reviewer. Not every field or area of interest is represented among the nine critics.

The Key Reporter's readership is attractive to publishers, so many of them regularly submit books to be sent to a reviewer for consideration. The newsletter also forwards publishers' catalogs to the critics, and most of the critics also have their own sources for new publications.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

From Our Book Critics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

slaves. The mortality rate was so high that the demand for fresh slaves was almost insatiable.

The treatment of slaves, particularly in the galleys, was brutal. There, as many as five men were chained together at each oar, rowing night and day, for days on end—always chained and half-naked, with no protection from the elements, so that their “flesh is burned off their backs.” The corsairs preyed not only on ships at sea but also along the coastlines. Mediterranean islands such as Sardinia and Sicily were particularly vulnerable, but so also were coastal Italy and Spain. In some regions, whole villages were abandoned. Such was the case in large portions of the Italian peninsula, where the governments were too weak to protect their citizens and instead ordered them to move to the interior. Although most Christian slaves came from Southern Europe, North African slaving expeditions ranged as far as the North Atlantic, not only seizing British ships but also raiding along the coasts of Ireland, Cornwall, and Devon.

Almost all the captives seized from ships were male. In addition to serving as galley slaves, they worked primarily in heavy construction. A few became house servants. Europeans believed that some of the men, particularly young ones, were turned into male prostitutes and sexual slaves. While it is true that, unlike Europe at the time, North African cities had vibrant homosexual cultures, it is hard to know how widespread the practice of sexual enslavement was. Still, Davis notes that some of the best-known homosexual men in North Africa were Europeans, and he speculates that they voluntarily migrated to North Africa, evidently the Christopher Street of its day.

Fascinating in its own right, Davis's account of the Muslim trade in Europeans provides a context for the African slave trade. Both slave trades developed at the same time, in an era when captives of war were often enslaved. The original basis for both slave trades was ethnic and religious; only later was the African slave trade justified in racial terms. And the African slave trade developed differently in another way: It required significant capital investment and therefore efficient organization as well, while the trade in Europeans was essentially a pre-modern economic enterprise requiring little capital or efficiency, but not producing much wealth either.

By the 18th century, the Muslim trade in Europeans had evolved into a ransoming operation, with Europeans gladly paying to get their compatriots back. The redeemed captives became part of elaborate spectacles and processions, enacting religious narratives of “retribution and redemption” rather than political ones of “liberty and citizenship.” Hence, Davis concludes, it is difficult to “insert the story of Barbary Coast slavery into the master narrative of European imperialism,” but this splendid book invites us to try.

By Anna J. Schwartz

In Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives on Economic Growth. Edited by Dani Rodrik. Princeton University Press, 2003. Paper \$32.50

The introductory chapter by the editor of this collection, 13 studies of the success or failure of economic growth strategies in various countries and regions, asks what we learn from the narratives. The aim of the collection is to explain the diversity of experiences with economic growth. The framework of the analysis departs from the earlier focus on proximate factors such as physical and human capital, productivity, and price distortions as determinants of economic performance. Instead it emphasizes deeper factors such as geography, trade, and institutions. The authors of the studies tend to be growth theorists rather than country specialists; they draw the connections between country experiences on one side and growth theory on the other.

Geography refers to a country's physical location (proximity to navigable waters, climate). Trade refers to market size and participation in trade in goods, services, capital, and possibly

labor. Institutions refer to the quality of formal and informal sociopolitical arrangements, such as the legal system.

The summaries of the countries' narratives reported by the editor list the following findings: The quality of institutions is key; government policies toward trade do not play as important a role as the institutional settings; geography is not destiny; good institutions can be acquired but often require a willingness to depart from orthodoxy and pay attention to local conditions; the onset of economic growth does not require extensive institutional reform; sustaining high growth in adverse circumstances requires stronger institutions.

The country studies are organized under four headings: three chapters with a long historical perspective (Australia, India, Botswana), six chapters on the transition in and out of growth (Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Mauritius, Venezuela, Eastern Europe), three studies emphasizing institutions (China, Bolivia, Mexico), and one chapter on growth without social development (Pakistan).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Golden Gifts from Phi Beta Kappa



Phi Beta Kappa's official key insignia is featured on a line of gifts and membership items available from the Society.

The popular wall display combines a membership certificate and a large gold-plated key, double-matted in a 12" x 16" walnut frame. The gold-plated letter opener and the brass key ring have the Society's emblem on the front and the member's name, school, and year of election on the reverse.

To order, complete the form below and mail it with your payment and a copy of the mailing label from the back cover showing your membership number to Hand & Hammer, 2610 Morse Lane, Woodbridge VA 22192.

You may place an order or request the complete product brochure by calling (703) 491-4866 or by faxing (703) 491-2031. You may also order online at www.hand-hammer.com.

___ Wall display (key and certificate framed 12" x 16")...\$85

___ Letter opener (gold plate).....\$19

___ Key ring (solid brass).....\$12

Name, school, and date for personalization _____

___ Check made payable to Hand & Hammer is enclosed.

Charge my ___ Visa ___ MasterCard (VA residents add 5% tax)

Card no. _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____ Phone _____



Letters to the Editor

“Irony 101”

I enjoyed Sabrina Broselow’s article, “Irony 101” [Summer *Key Reporter*]. In the ’80s, while raising three sons and working full time, I struggled to “be present” as I folded multiple loads of sheets and towels. I found it tremendously challenging, keeping out of my head and “in the moment.”

Today, recovering from the tumult of a house full of visiting grandchildren, I am settling myself by folding loads of sheets and towels, vacuuming, and even reading *The Key Reporter* and writing this letter. Thank goodness for the restorative function of mundane tasks. They are, indeed, good for the soul. Sabrina’s godmother was ahead of her time, wise enough to understand what the Buddhists call the Zen of everyday life. Perhaps we will need to do brain imaging studies before we acknowledge that routine often leads to peace of mind.

Barbara Morris Stock, Wilmette, Ill.

Thanks to Sabrina Broselow for “Irony 101.” I enjoy hanging laundry, although most people I tell that to are either amused or appalled.

I attended law school and then practiced law for 10 years, constantly surrounded by and using sarcasm and irony. When I shifted careers and began writing about gardens and gardening, I was pleasantly surprised that none of the dozens of gardeners I spoke with ever used anything I said as an invitation for a caustic comment. One of the hazards of post-graduate education seems to be narrowing one’s responses to the world to analysis with a critical edge.

Amy Houchen, Portland, Ore.

I was saddened to read of Sabrina Broselow’s narrow-minded classmates who proved unable to see beyond their own cultural biases. The fact that her godmother’s letter was so opaque to these highly educated people illustrates one of the greatest ironies of modern feminism. In our efforts to open up new venues for women’s achievement, we have devalued any work that has historically belonged to women. We have effectively cut ourselves off from the legacy of our foremothers, who found dignity and satisfaction in all the work they did, even when it was domestic in nature.

Rebecca D. Bruner, Mesa, Ariz.

I took great delight in Ms. Broselow’s article. It brought back fond memories of my high school AP English class over 30 years ago, when we would argue with Mr. Sapinsky that perhaps the author of our latest reading did not mean

anything more than that the grass was green and the sky was blue. Perhaps there was no hidden meaning, no reference to the hero’s inexperience or youthfulness. Just that the grass was green instead of brown and the sky was blue, not gray. He would not allow that such a thing was even possible. There was *always* more there than the reader would think at first blush. Analysis was necessary, and if you could not find anything more to it, then *you* were at fault.

How I would relish feeding Ms. Broselow’s article to Mr. Sapinsky—no salt, no pepper, no ketchup—were I able to locate him today! Her godmother *had* meant exactly what she had written. She took deep satisfaction in performing her distaff duties and was pleased to learn that there were men who enjoyed their jobs too. That is all. No tongue-in-cheek, no dirty digs, no irony.

Dodie Hoover, Pleasanton, Calif.

To Sabrina Broselow of “Irony 101”: Why not go to the source and simply ask your godmother to clarify the intent of her letter to the *New York Times*? Was her “female perspective” indeed genuine, or a sarcastic statement on the mundane lives of middle-class women? Was her gift of the hand-sewn apron a reminder to a brilliant goddaughter that simple pleasures are also gratifying, or was it just too delicious an opportunity to pass up? Was the apron perhaps hand-sewn by the male contributor to the *Times* who, thinking he had found a soul mate in Sally, contacted her, and after a series of the most ironic twists life can offer, joined her in her mischievous pursuits? Pick up the phone, Sabrina! Or better yet, travel to Saginaw and see for yourself if the freezer frosted over.

Joanne Marie Smullen, Bloomington, Minn.

The American Scholar

John Churchill’s essay [Summer *Key Reporter*] on *The American Scholar* struck me as not only disingenuous but also exemplary of “imperial hubris.” After a belabored explanation of the Society’s budgetary assessment of the *Scholar* and the judgment that the subsidy to the magazine was twice what it should be, readers are advised that Anne Fadiman’s staff structure cannot be maintained and she is moving on after the next issue.

What is not said is that she and her senior editors were asked to leave, and that the contributing editors and the majority of the editorial board are leaving as well (see Fadiman’s letter in the Summer *Scholar*). But we are assured that the search for the next editor is underway and the journal is strong and well respected, and that the Society “is committed to support-

ing it at a level that will maintain or even increase its stature in American letters.”

So even though the editors are fired, the staff is decimated, the budget is halved, the *Scholar* may be *better* in the future? What does it all mean? Dumbing down the journal or simply making it less imaginative, fewer pages, more repeats from past publications? At the same time, in the *Reporter*, we learn that two of the four yearly issues of this publication will no longer be sent to those who have not contributed to the Society’s giving campaigns.

This is not a class act, commensurate with perceived Φ BK standards. I would venture that the majority of the 30,000 *Scholar* subscribers would react favorably to a \$5 increase in the subscription fee. That alone would reduce the putative disparity in budget allowances to a likely tolerable margin. There must be wealthy friends of the Society who could underwrite part of the need.

The American Scholar is a benchmark that points to the overall excellence of the Society and what it stands for. Anne Fadiman’s stewardship has been brilliant. As the son of a minister who lived hand to mouth at the whim of a board of trustees of a large church in the ’30s and ’40s, I am reminded, albeit perhaps a crude analogy, of the approach when difficult budget decisions faced the congregation: The first place the trustees looked to cut was the minister’s already meager salary. We can do better than this.

Bernard G. Elliker, Laurel, Md.

As a long-time Φ BK member subscriber to *The American Scholar* (*TAS*), I am dismayed by the Society’s handling of the journal’s affairs, most recently leading to the departure of editor Anne Fadiman. The Society’s oversight of *TAS* in recent times has been nothing short of disastrous. The Secretary’s explanation of the most recent turn of events [Summer *Key Reporter*] is hardly sufficient for those concerned with the future of *TAS*, not just the quality of the journal, but its very survival.

Prior to the current debacle involving Ms. Fadiman, there was the apparently forced departure of Joseph Epstein, after a long and quite successful editorial reign; this too led to much recrimination and ill-feeling between editorial staff, subscribers, and the Society. Ms. Fadiman was brought in as something of a “savior,” or at least a bright new light, for the journal (at least, as ballyhooed by the Society); yet now she too departs in a cloud of acrimony.

It also hardly helps that, despite all the good words the Secretary endows on *TAS*, the central fact lurking in his message is a substantial funding cut for the journal. In the face of such financial problems, but more especially in light

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

Letters

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

of the shabby handling of the journal's last two editors, both individuals of repute in the literary world, it is hard to believe that *TAS* will be able to continue at its past level of excellence. *TAS* deserves and needs a higher standard of thoughtful and supportive governance.

Anthony G. Medici, Oakton, Va.

Secretary John Churchill responds: "This issue of *The Key Reporter* announces the appointment of Robert S. Wilson as editor of *The American Scholar*. He is the distinguished former editor of one award-winning magazine of cultural affairs and former literary editor of another. This appointment has been widely praised; it is good news for members of Phi Beta Kappa and for readers of the magazine. It is the strongest possible confirmation that the *Scholar* will continue to attract the best editorial and writing talent to its pages. The future of *The American Scholar* is secure. It will continue to be a source of pride, enjoyment, and learning for members of Phi Beta Kappa and the rest of its constituency."

Praise for Weber

Eugen Weber, like the other *Key Reporter* book critics, has been doing an excellent job of book reviewing over the years. The censorious comments in a complaining letter to the editor in the Summer 2004 issue include stick-figure caricatures of some worthwhile if controversial authors whom Weber reviewed.

My only criticism about the book review section is that non-Western topics seldom receive attention.

Philip Williams, Tempe, Ariz.

Weber replies to the letter to the editor cited above, and to two others in the *Summer Key Reporter* on different subjects:

"I did not realize that reviews of books like *Richard Pipes's* and *Kramer/Kimbal's* would 'distress' readers in quest of 'worthier' works. By happy coincidence, other distressed readers (of *Ron Scapp*) complain of over-leftism. *TKR* must be doing something right.

"I yield to none in my admiration of W.S. Gilbert, but Mr. Zweifel is a bit strong when he treats his 'rule the roost' as the touchstone of correct usage. John Skelton, the 15th-16th-century poet dear to Oxford, Cambridge, and the early Tudors, used 'rule the roost.' Zweifel tells us that James Joyce did too. So, indeed, did everyone around me in England, where I grew up. Perhaps both idioms are right.

"As for D.J. Smith, her hope that 'Hypocratic Oath' was used with tongue in cheek was founded. I had wanted to write 'Hypocritical Oath,' then settled for an allusive wink: what the

French call *un clin d'oeil*. I was wrong to expect too much."

ΦBK and the Military

Editor's note: *The president of the Central Carolinas ΦBK Association responded to a letter [Summer Key Reporter] asking if a visit to the new Airborne and Special Operations Museum was relevant to the association's mission:*

Yes, to answer the question, there was both an academic and intellectual connection. This is where Fort Bragg, Pope Air Force Base, and the 82nd Airborne comprise our country's largest military installation, and we want to know why it's necessary. The resulting huge economic forces affect our schools, museums, clubs, and society.

Our mindset at the Central Carolinas ΦBK Association is one of peace, and an atmosphere of intellectual freedom, with due respect for our military, which protects these.

Voit Gilmore, Pinehurst, N.C.

Young Professionals

I read with great interest the article [*Summer Key Reporter*] on the D.C. Area Young Professionals group. I very much hope that other ΦBK associations, inspired by the article, will consider forming similar groups in other major cities. I, for one, would be among the first to sign up for YP events in the Chicago area.

Andrew H. Weaver, Chicago, Ill.

"The Handshake"

I was delighted to see the photo [*Summer Key Reporter*] of the vice president of the chapter at the University of Oregon using "the handshake" to welcome a new member. When I was initiated at the University of Washington in 1955, the handshake was administered by the oldest member of the chapter. As I recall, his hands were very gnarled, and I was so astounded to learn that there even *was* a "secret" handshake that I have been unable to remember it to this day. Now I know it really exists!

Naomi Kahan Strauss, Tigard, Ore.

"The Protocols"

The *Summer Key Reporter* review of "Dismantling the Big Lie: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" concludes: "It is sad to consider how influential the nasty hoax remains, despite the many good efforts to discredit it." This is particularly the case in the Arab and Islamic world where, unlike elsewhere, "its most enthusiastic believers have been Arab intellectuals and political elites" (interview with Prof. Richard Landes, Boston University, available at www.jcpa.org).

First translated into Arabic in 1920, "The Protocols" has had successive translations with

increased circulation. It appears in texts of Arab education systems and is used by Hamas in its basic documents. Mainline Arab newspapers treat it as the most profound Western import. It has been incorporated into Arab culture.

The line from "The Protocols" to the Holocaust was "short and straight," and its impact on how the Arab-Islamic world regards Jews has been even more compelling.

Joseph Lerner, Jerusalem, Israel

Ignorance in Print

While I agree with V. Wensley Koch [*Letters, Summer Key Reporter*] that fewer Americans can spell and write correctly than in the past, I believe the incidence of errors in published works stems more from publishers' and editors' reliance on spell check and grammar check. Only a real, live, literate proofreader could prevent some of the errors I've seen. Five different textbooks informed me that correlation does not prove a *casual* relationship. One explained a lower percentage of elderly people among immigrants by citing differences in birth rate, immigration rate, and *morality*.

Not all textbook errors are modern. I recall reading in my junior high science book that an eclipse of the sun was the shadow of the sun on the moon. I wondered at the time where the author thought the light came from.

Grace Collins Leary, Radford, Va.

The *Key Reporter* welcomes letters to the editor. Those that are published may be condensed. Please send letters to Barbara Ryan by e-mail at bryan@pbk.org, by fax at (202) 986-1601, or by postal mail to the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

Among the first 50 members of Phi Beta Kappa were leaders in the American Revolution, delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1788, and members of the Continental Congress and U.S. Congress. Two ΦBK founders were elected to the U.S. Senate, and two became justices on the Supreme Court: Chief Justice John Marshall and Associate Justice Bushrod Washington. Seventeen U.S. presidents have belonged to the Society, six of them initiated as undergraduates and the others elected as alumni or honorary members.

From the Secretary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

This move creates an aura of privileged expertise, discouraging us from speaking unless we are endowed with specialized professional credentials.

Years ago an Englishman told me his amusement over the American habit of excusing oneself from responsibility for knowledge of a topic with the exculpatory remark, "I haven't had a course in that." Nowadays we might beg off from almost anything by saying, "Oh, there are Ph.D. programs in that field. I don't have the expertise." Thus, important regions of discourse pass out of the public domain into the preserves of putative experts.

And those preserves become ever more narrowly defined. Once there was Rodent Science. Now there are Mouse Science, Rat Science, Squirrel Studies, Flying Squirrel Studies, and their sub-domains, like Urban Rat Ergonomics, Country Mouse Ethnography, and Moose-Squirrel Symbiosis. All good. But if possessing the standing to have an opinion depends on expertise, and if expertise exists only in tiny, segregated preserves, the useful exchange of opinions will become a less and less common feature of decision-making. Our opinions will come to depend on sheer trust in authorities whose vocabularies, standards of evidence, and ontologies we do not understand. If the mark of deliberative sophistication is to know *why* one believes something, we will become less and less sophisticated, less and less independent.

This vulnerability results from the loss of the facility of critical thinking, which results from the loss of an intellectual commons, which results from a concentration on specialized, technical knowledge, to the neglect of general and comparative skills of understanding.

The fundamental ingredient is deliberative capacity. But deliberative capacity requires for its practice a command of knowledge. So holding knowledge in common is a condition of the possibility of being able to think well. Therefore, we need to hold in

From Our Book Critics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Lives of the Laureates: Eighteen Nobel Economists. Fourth Edition. Edited by William Breit and Barry T. Hirsch. MIT Press, 2004. \$27.95

This collection of autobiographical essays by 18 winners of the Nobel Prize in Economics provides for readers an encounter with the authors of the major economic ideas of the contemporary economics profession. The laureates reflect on their experiences that set them on the path to intellectual discovery. In nontechnical language, each gives an account of the work for which the honor was conferred. The editors have contributed an Afterword on the lessons of the essays.

Memoirs of an Unregulated Economist. George J. Stigler. University of Chicago Press, 2004. Paper \$16

George Stigler won the Nobel Prize in 1982, and "Memoirs" was originally published by Basic Books in 1988. Anyone who enjoyed reading his witty autobiographical essay in the book about the laureates will find this paperback reprint an entertaining and intellectual treat. The sketches Stigler provides of his views on economic issues, and of economists with whom he interacted, are gems. To cite a few examples: Why is monopoly a less satisfactory explanation of business behavior than the drive for efficiency? Do antitrust laws increase competition? How does a feud between two members of an economics department—Paul Douglas vs. Frank Knight—play out? Why is "The Road to Serfdom" by Friedrich Hayek less

common as knowledge whatever it is that makes possible a deliberation on important questions. So it matters what we learn. It matters what we read. It matters what **ΦBK** publishes.

For that reason I am delighted to note the appointment of Robert S. Wilson as editor of *The American Scholar*. From the beginning, the *Scholar* has been dedicated to the proposition that important public issues, even issues essential to the survival of democracy, could be illumined by experts who are willing to bring their specialized knowledge into a broader forum. Bob Wilson brings a rich background and a keen sensibility to the continuance of this purpose. Good writing on important topics made available to a broad readership: That is the *Scholar's* historic aim, and we will continue to achieve it.

convincing now than it was initially? There are many other stimulating sidelights on the practice of economics in this accessible account by an economist of note.

By Eugen Weber

The Language Police. Diane Ravitch. Knopf, 2003. \$24

Diane Ravitch's darkly illuminating book makes melancholy reading. But no one who cares about America's schools, or American minds and values, should miss it. Priggish, humorless, and meddling, the language police thrive throughout the educational publishing industry: dumbing down language; excluding allegedly insensitive topics, imagery, and words; filtering or banning whatever controversial notions could spark contention or hurt sales; avoiding usages too colorful, vivid, or even British.

Harry Potter books feature maledictory occultism; "Great Expectations" is too controversial. Strident or stealthy censors, politicized boards of education, book banners and bowdlerizers, rightists, leftists, pietists, "genderists," tribalists—all of them are out to sanitize schooling, intimidate publishers and librarians, impose self-censorship, turn reading material into insipid pabulum, impoverish imaginations, and distort history in deference to religious, ethnic, and gender sensibilities.

Clear, witty, and written in normal everyday English, "The Language Police" is a brave attempt to stall our plunge into the bog of euphemism.

Art: A New History. Paul Johnson. Harper Collins, 2003. \$39.95

In the mid-1930s, when Paul Johnson was 6 years old, his father, an artist and head of an art school, advised him that art was in for a bad time: "Frauds like Picasso will rule the roost for the next half-century. Do something else for a living." Johnson became a writer, as prejudiced and provocative as he is talented.

Now he celebrates his *violon d'Ingres* in a monumental and vastly readable tome. Full of unexpected details that bring works and personalities to life, "Art" runs from prehistory to posthistory. Omnivorous, idiosyncratic, and finely illustrated, it features all the works and figures we expect, but it also touches on Asia and Central America, North America and Russia, Africa and the Pacific world. Verve never peters out. Witness the ending chapters that discuss "fashion art"—conflation of novelty and commerce; "ideological art"—dehumanizing and corrosive; and contemporary architecture—the solipsistic servant of High Frivolities à la Frank Gehry.

Too heavy to read in bed, too cumbersome for a plane ride, yet vivacious, sensible, full of color and bounce, Johnson's tour de force, cheap at the price, bears out what he says about good painting: "It interests the mind and delights the senses."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

From Our Book Critics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Football in France: A Cultural History. *Geoff Hare. Berg, 2003. \$79.95; paper \$25.95*

Sport as showbiz, fashion, health promoter, and sales promoter has become a metaphor of our times. A Marxist critic refers to the “sportification” of French culture. A contributor to the literary *Temps modernes* argues that fascination with football is “cretinizing” the French.

Geoff Hare’s slim, straightforward, limpid volume sets things in perspective. Football, especially football as mass spectator sport, caught on later in France than in most countries—and long attracted less attention than, say, bicycle racing. But it is catching up thanks to TV, to business interests, to competitive successes, and to its role in forging and affirming often rivalrous local, ethnic, and national identities.

Hare examines all this and more: clubs and their socioeconomic geography; fans and their sociology; old-fashioned club loyalties and new-fangled club business; players, their “heroization” and commercialization; coaches, trading, trafficking, politics, corruption and commodification. His readers will learn more about France and its economy, the French and their mentality (or mentalities) than they expect. And, painlessly, about French football too.

Wings of Madness: Alberto Santos-Dumont and the Invention of Flight. *Paul Hoffman. Hyperion, 2003. \$24.95*

France is the birthplace of manned flight. In 1783 the Montgolfier brothers’ hot air balloon sailed over Paris. In 1901 Alberto Santos-Dumont (1873–1932), son of a Brazilian coffee planter, strapped a motor-tricycle engine to a cigar-shaped balloon, added propeller and rudder, and flew his dirigible around the Eiffel Tower, evoking the admiration of Paris crowds that included Jules Verne and H.G. Wells.

When the young Brazilian arrived in Paris in 1891, he marveled at the wonders of modern technology: bikes with rubber tires, motorcars with unreliable internal combustion engines, electric elevators that eased the ascent of the new Eiffel Tower, even unpopular telephones. Within a decade, the shy but plucky aeronaut had become an international celebrity.

While the Wright brothers built and flew the world’s first airplane, Santos-Dumont navigated the first airship in Europe. He also developed a personal flying machine small enough to use in lieu of a car, and he regularly flew it to visit friends, shop, or drop into a restaurant or club where it could be tethered to a lamp post. Crowds flocked to see him. Louis Cartier, his jeweler friend, invented a wrist watch that allowed him to time his flights. Soon, though, native reserve and taciturnity turned into derangement. The monomania that had wrested triumph out of thin air declined into dejection, alienation, and finally suicide.

Paul Hoffman spins a spirited, colorful, ultimately depressing tale of aspiration, adventure,

achievement, and final foundering. I found it riveting.

By Svetlana Alpers

H. N. Werkman. *Alston W. Purvis. Yale University Press, 2004. \$19.95*

We have been told that books are an endangered species and that the publishing and selling of them as we have known it will not last much longer. Meanwhile, however, elegant and purposeful book design is experiencing a revival.

This book narrates the life and displays the work of the Dutch printmaker Hendrik Werkman (1882–1945). Supporting himself with a small commercial business, Werkman came into his own in the 1920s and 1930s, publishing a small journal and individual prints. He continued to work during the Nazi occupation of Holland—only to be executed three days before the country’s liberation. He had been jailed for producing “Bolshevik art.”

We think of printers as social beings who often work together. But though he was nominally a member of a group of artists in Groningen known as *de Ploeg*, Werkman was a loner. The few attempts he made to reach out were firmly ignored by other European artists with interests similar to his. He can be described as a concrete visionary whose creativity took place uniquely on the press. He began with typography, to which he then added other materials that were literally pressed together like a collage in the printing process.

This elegant paperback book, part of a series called “Monographics,” is worthy of Werkman. Design has been made out of design. The surprising angles of his lettering and colors look astonishingly fresh. There is an optimism to Werkman’s inventions that belies his life and those terrible times.

Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form, 1940s–1970s. *Edited by Lynn Zelevansky and others. MIT Press, 2004. \$49.95*

This book is also exacting and persuasive in its design. Like many art books today, it was produced on the occasion of an exhibition. However, it is not so much a catalog of objects but rather essays and groups of illustrations that take up such themes as the times, the body, light and movement, and concrete poetry, ending with the problem of painting. The exhibit is by nature ephemeral, but the book remains.

The works under consideration are abstractions or minimalisms in various media, produced in a 30-year period post–World War II. The artists include Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, Jan Dibbetts, and Daniel Buren but also Sandor Pinczehely, Lygia Clark, Gianni Colombo, and many others. They come from Central Europe and South America as well as Western Europe and North America. The old hegemony is called into question, though; despite the popularity of the notion, the scope cannot be described as global.

The book is for looking as well as for reading—the small squares of contrasting yellow that highlight the chapters on the index page, the pale yellow line surrounding the text on each page, the tiny yellow cross marking the page numbers top right and left, the pale yellow overlay on the triple columns of endnotes, and the broader yellow border around the columns of the master checklist. Photographs of the artworks are creatively set into the grid. It offers delectation as well as instruction.

Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). *Edited by Helen C. Evans. Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2004. \$75*

This large and splendid volume was published to accompany an exhibition of art from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

John Noble Wilford

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

tologists and evolutionary biologists explore the history of life. Archaeologists explore the history of human culture. “The word ‘explore,’” he said, “comes from the Latin, ‘to cry out.’ That is, to search out and exclaim discovery. The word ‘discover’ means to make known something secret, unknown, or previously unnoticed.”

His friend Larry McGehee thinks of one Wilford quest—for the Loch Ness monster—as “St. George and the Dragon in modern dress, and a great metaphor for intellectual and spiritual inquisitiveness.” Wilford said he had no such grand ideas in mind when he started that expedition in 1976. And he would not have done it, he said, “if there was not some chance of success, some serious purpose.”

He based this on the fact that experts in remote-sensing technology, including MIT professors, were deploying new sonar and underwater cameras to look for Nessie. “But St. George did not even find the dragon,” he said. “I heard some marvelous tales of ‘partly informed wonder’—especially in the evenings at the pub. Very likely, Nessie is an endearing illusion. But if there *is* a strange creature in the loch, it is cleverer than modern technology.

“Anyhow, it’s well that this mystery remains a mystery. Who would want to live in a world where all mysteries are solved?”

From Our Book Critics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

the final centuries of the former empire of the new Rome, centered in Constantinople, which came to be called Byzantium. The centuries represented were contemporary with the *trecento*, *quattrocento*, and *cinquecento* in Italian art. It was an aim of the exhibit and catalog to jolt one's historical sense to realize that Byzantine art not only preceded painting in Italy, hence led up to it, but also went on at the same time.

The exhibition was distinguished by extraordinary loans, which were negotiated from distant and often inaccessible sites. It offered a huge array of diverse objects: icons, coins, metal work, sculpture, mosaics, books, and textiles. What has been described as the rich "visual commonwealth" of the eastern Mediterranean—a mixture of Byzantine, Western, and Crusader—has obvious relevance for the understanding of international connectedness in the 21st century.

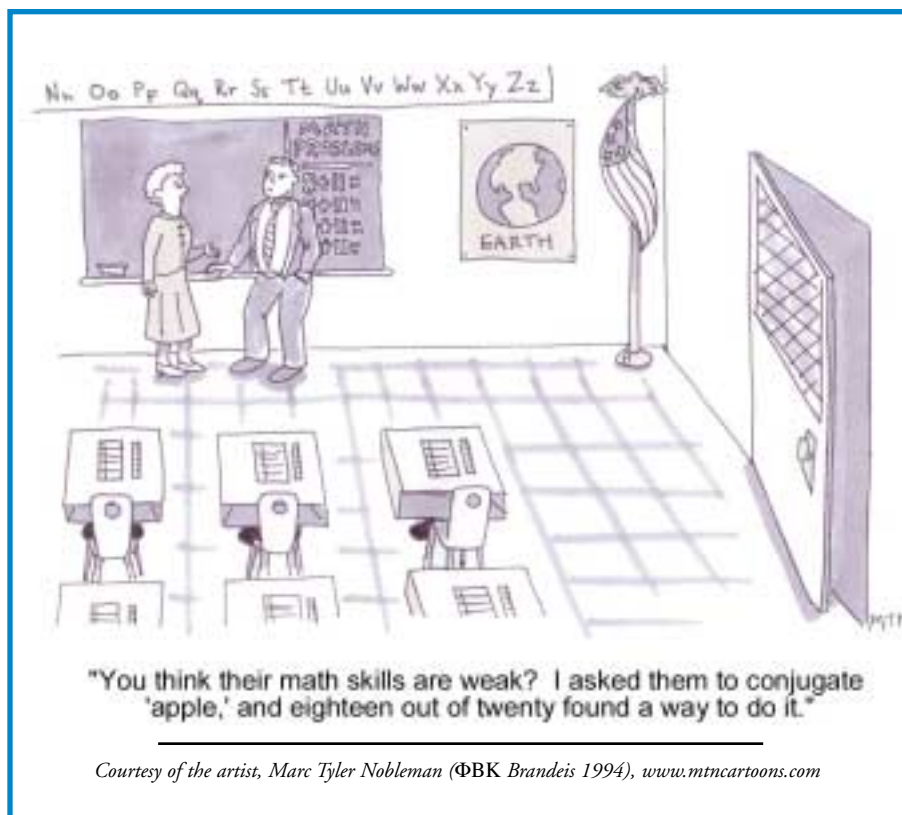
The book is a treasure of a different sort. Clear and succinct scholarly essays address each artistic medium as well as more general issues. The exhibit wisely avoided any virtual re-creation of settings. But photographs in the book let us see the landscapes, the buildings in the landscapes from which objects come, the interior ambiances where they were situated (one essay refers to the sociability of icons), and how they look when they are in use. A full-page photo shows priests carrying a liturgical textile in celebration of Easter, and others enable us to see a garment from both front and back.

Given world enough and time, the thing to do would have been to work through the catalog and then see the exhibit. As it is, the book succeeds in standing on its own.

Requiem for Communism. *Charity Scribner. MIT Press, 2003. \$34.95*

This is a powerful and nuanced consideration of the politics of memory as engaged by writers, artists, and filmmakers in Europe's "second world." Berlin and the former German Democratic Republic are at the center.

What can now be made of the ideal dream of a collective, egalitarian, industrial-proletarian



society? Imperfect though it was in practice, it was lost in the fall of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe. What, generally, can be done with memories of lost political dreams?

Collective *memory* plays a minimal role here. Scribner sides with those who distinguish memory from history, with those who distinguish that with which one is still connected from that which is past, and with which a connection must therefore be made. Chapters are dedicated to nostalgia, melancholy, and disavowal as alternative modes of coping with loss.

Scribner is an independent voice. She raises questions about phenomena such as the films of the Polish director Andrej Wajda and the writings of the English critic John Berger; both once seemed like beacons of freedom and

progress. She argues powerfully to rescue Christa Wolf from revelations of her connections with the East German secret police, reading Wolf's later works as a turning of surveillance back onto herself. Scribner emphasizes the formal appeal of Rachel Whiteread's "House," erected and then demolished in London's East End. As Scribner writes, it "concretizes the impossibility of seeing the past 'as it really was.'"

MIT designed a book to fit the subject. From the stark photo of the building on the cover to the grid and the inking of the pages, it is lean, unflashy, serious. Scribner makes one think not only about Eastern Europe past but also about the conditions of the world in which we live now.

THE KEY REPORTER

THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY
1606 New Hampshire Ave. NW
Washington DC 20009
Tel: (202) 265-3808
Fax: (202) 986-1601

Periodicals Postage
PAID
at Washington DC
and at additional mailing addresses