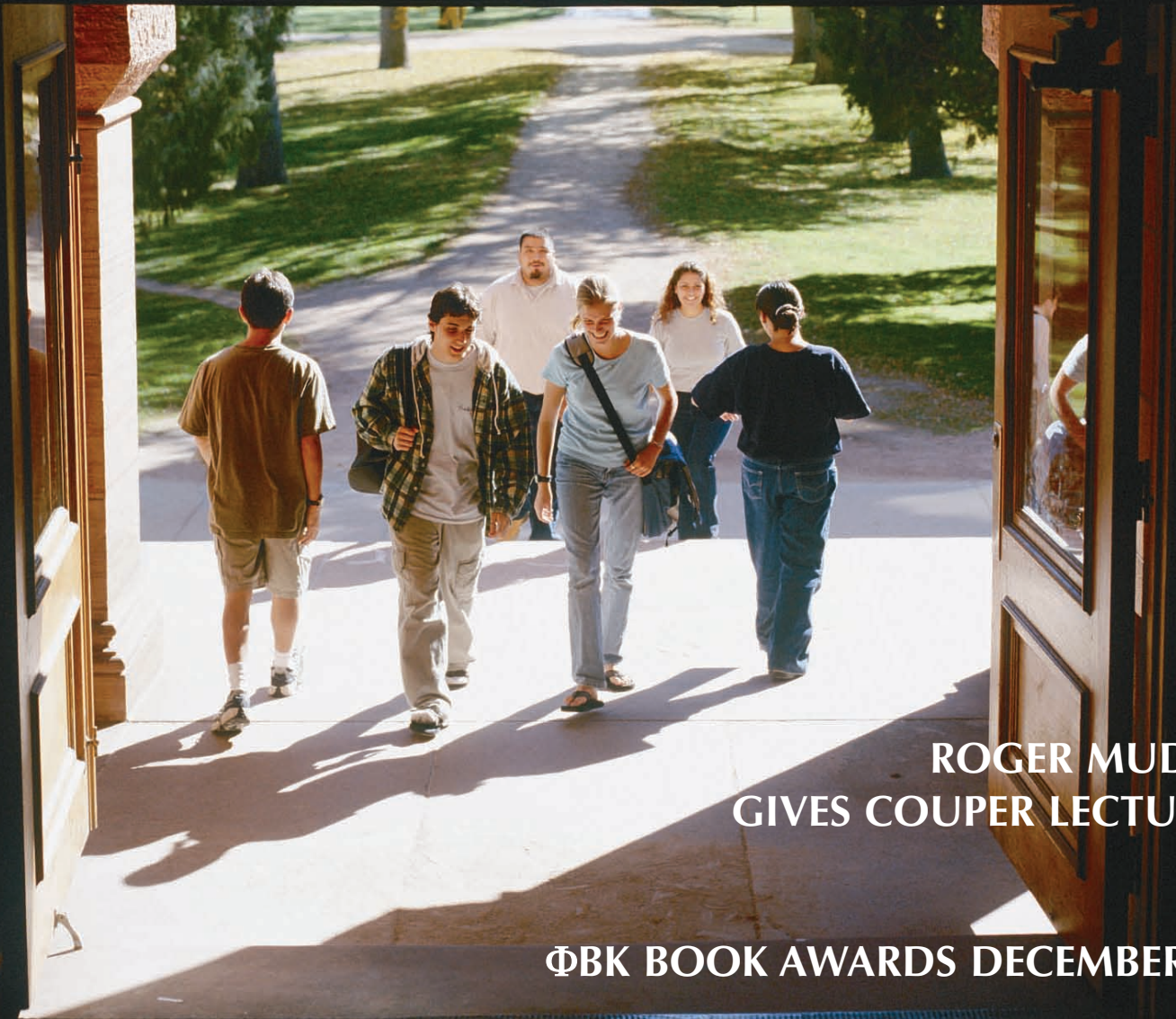




# PHI BETA KAPPA

THE KEY REPORTER

FALL 2008



ROGER MUDD  
GIVES COUPER LECTURE

ΦΒΚ BOOK AWARDS DECEMBER 5





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## Deliberating, Again

I used to teach logic. At the beginning of one semester a student, eager to enroll in the course, told me she wanted to take logic in order to learn how to think. I suppressed the catty comeback: "Oh, no. If you don't already know how to think, you'll just fail logic." The unspoken retort does, though, lay bare something odd about the notion of a course in logic. It is true that if you can't think, you'll do poorly. So what are you being taught?

Some of an introductory logic course amounts to learning a kind of notation that formalizes what we can already do: If (If p, then q) and p, then q; but If (If p, then q) and not-p, then not necessarily not-q. And if Socrates is a man and all men are mortal, then. . . . But what I enjoyed most were the so-called informal fallacies: the heap argument, the slippery slope, and the various *ad hominem* arguments, especially the *ad baculum*: "If you make that claim again, I'll punch you in the nose."

It is in these murkier regions that the human element of logic emerges. When people make cases for the things they hold true, arguments take on a distinctly human cast. People don't just disagree about what the facts are, they disagree about what the facts mean. And much of argumentation consists of trying to get the other person to take agreed upon facts as we do.

The word "deliberation" is rooted in a Latin word for weighing. We weigh facts, trying to assess their meaning. How much do we know and understand about that process? That's the question we decided to explore in Phi Beta Kappa's project called "Deliberation About Things That Matter," funded by the Teagle Foundation.

We asked several Phi Beta Kappa chapters to partner with a curricular authority on their campus — a dean, an honors program, a curriculum committee — to examine that question. How do people learn to deliberate? Can it be taught?

We wanted to draw on the variety and inventiveness of the chapters themselves, and so we placed no further restrictions on their designs. The chapter at a major state university in the southwest added follow-up discussions to a major speakers series that was integrated with a curricular reform exploration. Chapters at several small liberal arts colleges formed consortia of faculty who developed deliberative teaching and learning styles for their courses. Another chapter melded the deliberation project into a semester-long orientation series for new students. We had explicitly encouraged such blends, hoping for lasting effect.

We learned that coffee and doughnuts can be important. That's a symbolic statement gesturing toward an interesting array of human factors that seem to conduce to good deliberation. It helps when people know something about what they're discussing. It helps when people are polite and civil, and when they not only *wait* their turn, but also *take* their turn when it comes. Listening sympathetically to the opinions and reasons of others turns out to matter a lot.

At a more profound level, there are issues about protracted, perhaps intractable disagreements, persistent uncertainties, and learning to live without clear resolution. There is learning to cope with frustration — frustration at the social level ("He's not even *listening* to me!") and epistemological frustration ("No one could ever *know* that!")

What has been most interesting so far — and we are a long way from having weighed these reports fully — is the importance of the matrix of human interaction within which deliberation occurs. So much can go wrong that has nothing to do with logic, narrowly conceived. And so much of what goes right does so because of factors affecting our social, and even animal, nature. It will be important to remember this the next time we are tempted to wander off into an abstract analysis of reasons and conclusions. Evidence matters, but so do the doughnuts.

John Churchill  
Secretary

# SPOTLIGHT



*I recall Phi Beta Kappa fondly from my college days. Having arrived at Colby College I learned of its Beta Chapter and the scholars who had achieved ΦBK status before me. Knowing the academic standards required for admission, I thought it an unattainable goal. It was indeed a great honor when I heard the news that I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and even today I look back on that accomplishment with great pride.*

— Gregory Ciottone

Gregory Ciottone, M.D., is the chief medical officer of American Hospital Management Company (AHMC). He is responsible for continuing medical education, quality programs and medical staff related issues for AHMC's network of international managed facilities. Ciottone is a board-certified emergency physician and is an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, where he currently is the chair of the Disaster Medicine Section. He has served as director of the Division of International Disaster and Emergency Medicine and medical director for emergency management at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, where he works clinically in the Department of Emergency Medicine. In addition, Ciottone holds a visiting professorship in disaster medicine at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium and the Università del Piemonte Orientale in Italy, and has served as the medical director for the Office of Security and Investigations with United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. He recently established the Operational Medicine Institute at Harvard Medical Faculty Physicians, of which he has assumed the position of director. Ciottone became a member of Phi Beta Kappa at Colby College in 1987, where he received his bachelor's degree. ■

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Colorado College students enter Palmer Hall, one of the campus' historic buildings, completed in 1904.

## Roger Mudd Gives 2008 Couper Lecture in Washington, D.C.



Roger Mudd (left), 2008 Couper Lecturer, with Murray Drabkin, President of the Fellows

The 2008 Couper Lectureship was awarded to journalist Roger Mudd, widely recognized for his many years of distinguished service at CBS News. His talk, titled “When the News Was

the News,” was delivered to a gathering of the Fellows of the Phi Beta Kappa Society and the Secretary’s Circle on Saturday, May 17, at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., during a luncheon held in his

honor.

Mudd joined the CBS Washington Bureau in 1961 and was one of a group of legendary CBS News broadcasters. He has covered a wide range of historic events, including the Congressional debates over Civil Rights legislation as well as Watergate and the Vietnam war.

In addition Mudd has served as weekend anchor for *CBS Evening News*, co-anchor of the weekday *NBC Nightly News*, co-host of *Meet the Press* and anchor for *American Almanac*. Most recently he has been the primary anchor for *The History Channel*.

Mudd has received numerous awards including the George Foster Peabody Award, the Joan Shorenstein Award for Distinguished Washington Reporting, and five Emmys.

The Couper Lectureship is an endowed program through which the Fellows recognize an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the values espoused by the Society. It is named for the late Richard W. Couper,

## Lynn Pasquerella and Joe Poluka Join $\Phi$ BK Senate

The Phi Beta Kappa Society is pleased to announce the election of Lynn Pasquerella and Joe Poluka to its senate. The decision was made in June at the spring meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Senate in Washington, D.C. Pasquerella and Poluka will serve on the senate until the next meeting of the Council of the Phi Beta Kappa Society in the fall of 2009.

Senator Pasquerella is provost of the University of Hartford. Prior to the University of Hartford, Pasquerella was a professor of philosophy specializing in medical ethics at the University of Rhode Island, where she rose through the professorial ranks, became associate dean and later interim graduate dean before becoming dean and vice provost. At the University of Rhode Island, Pasquerella also served as chair of the Institutional Review Board and Council for Research. She is a Fellow in the John Hazen White Sr. Center for Ethics and Public Service and was a professor of medical ethics for two years, from 1993–1995, in the Brown

University Medical School’s Affinity Group Program. In 1998, Pasquerella was honored by *Change* magazine and the American Association of Higher Education as one of the nation’s “Young Leaders of the Academy.”

“I am very pleased to be able to serve Phi Beta Kappa as a member of the senate,” Pasquerella commented. “I look forward to working with this group of extraordinary individuals and to playing a leadership role in both promoting the liberal arts and sciences and providing access to excellence in higher education.”

Senator Poluka is a partner in the firm Blank Rome. He practices in the area of white collar, internal and government investigations. Prior to joining Blank Rome, Poluka served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Criminal Division of the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, United States Department of Justice. While at the U.S. Attorney’s Office, he also served as the deputy chief of the Violent Crimes, Terrorism & Immigration

Fraud Section, as well as the coordinator of the Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council.

“I am honored that the senate has placed its confidence in me and look forward to bringing a perspective from outside of academia to affirming the importance of a liberal arts education both inside and outside the university walls,” Poluka commented.

“Phi Beta Kappa is very fortunate to have secured the services of Lynn Pasquerella and Joe Poluka as senators,” said  $\Phi$ BK Secretary John Churchill.

“Members of our senate serve as the directors who guide the national office on policy matters and set the direction for the Society’s future. Our new senators bring deep understanding of education in the liberal arts and sciences, and perspectives from outside of academia for assessing the best ways to advance the values of liberal education in American society. I look forward to working with them.” ■



## ΦBK's Annual Book Awards Dinner To Be Held December 5 in Williamsburg, Va.

Members of the Secretary's Circle and the Fellows of the Phi Beta Kappa Society are invited to join the ΦBK Senate in Williamsburg, Va., this December for the Society's annual book awards dinner.

This occasion marks the anniversary of Phi Beta Kappa, which was founded in Williamsburg's historic Raleigh Tavern on December 5, 1776, and it is the first time the Society has held an event in Williamsburg since its 225th anniversary celebration in 2001. The Society hopes that this will begin a tradition of having a larger gathering of members at this annual black-tie event.

The Secretary's Circle and the Fellows of the Phi Beta Kappa Society are groups of ΦBK members whose financial contributions help to support the Society's mission and programs, like the award-winning quarterly *The American Scholar*, the Visiting Scholar Program, *The Key Reporter* and the

various fellowships, professorships and awards sponsored by the Society.

This year's book awards dinner will be held Friday, December 5, at the Williamsburg Lodge in Colonial Williamsburg. The award recipients and the keynote speaker for the event will be announced in the coming weeks.

The book awards recognize outstanding scholarly books published in the United States in the fields of the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences and mathematics.

Previous ΦBK book award winners have included Marjorie Garber, Harold Bloom, Robert Nozick, John Rawls, Robert Coles, Richard Hofstadter, Jared Diamond, Edward O. Wilson, Ernst Mayr, Stephen Jay Gould and Linus Pauling, among others.

For more information, please contact the Society at (202) 745-3246 or (202) 745-3287. ■

### ΦBK in the News

• The University of North Carolina has established a scholarship to honor the memory of slain student body president *Eve Marie Carson*. It will be awarded to juniors at UNC who have demonstrated leadership and community involvement at the campus, local or global level, and who have a 3.0 or higher GPA. Carson was inducted into ΦBK as a junior at UNC last year. ("UNC Names Scholarship for Carson" [www.wral.com/news/local/story/3439167/](http://www.wral.com/news/local/story/3439167/) 26 Aug. 2008.)

• **Christian A. Brickman** (ΦBK, Occidental College, 1986) joined Kimberly-Clark Corporation as chief strategy officer on Sept. 1. Brickman will lead the development and monitoring of the company's strategic plans and processes in order to enhance growth initiatives. ("Kimberly-Clark Names Christian A. Brickman Chief Strategy Officer" [www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/August2008/06/c2026.html](http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/August2008/06/c2026.html) 6 Aug. 2008.)

• In July, **David V. Gilroy** (ΦBK, Princeton University, 1988) was appointed to Anpath Group, Inc.'s

board of directors and to the board of directors of Anpath's subsidiary, EnviroSystems, Inc. Gilroy is the founder and managing director of Growth Finance LLC, a provider of professional CFO/controller services and advisory support to growth companies undertaking capital raising or merger and acquisition transactions. ("Anpath Group, Inc. Announces Appointments of David V. Gilroy and Paul A. Boyer to Board of Directors" [www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/anpath-group-inc-announces-appointments-490525.shtml](http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/anpath-group-inc-announces-appointments-490525.shtml) 1 Aug. 2008.)

• **Susan Krane** (ΦBK, Carleton College, 1976) joined the San Jose (Calif.) Museum of Art as its new executive director in September. Previously, Krane was executive director of the Scottsdale (Ariz.) Museum of Contemporary Art. She also served as curator of modern and contemporary art at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. (McCollum, Charlie. "Background on the New Executive Director of San Jose Museum of Art" [www.mercurynews.com/valley/ci\\_10039532](http://www.mercurynews.com/valley/ci_10039532) 30 July 2008.)

### New Membership Benefits

Through our partnerships with Colonial Williamsburg and Encyclopaedia Britannica, ΦBK is now offering a series of new benefits to our members.



*Colonial Williamsburg*

ΦBK members and their immediate family can receive a 20 percent discount at Colonial Williamsburg Hotels, a 20 percent discount on passes to the Historic Area and a 15 percent discount on Williamsburg merchandise. Some restrictions apply. For more details, click on the Colonial Williamsburg promotion after logging in on the ΦBK Web site.



New members can also receive a free one-year subscription to Encyclopaedia Britannica online and a 25 percent discount on Britannica merchandise from [store.britannica.com](http://store.britannica.com). In addition, all Phi Beta Kappans are eligible for a 50 percent discount on the annual subscription rate and continued discounts in Britannica's online store.

#### How to Get the Discounts

To take advantage of these exciting new benefits and review the full details, members will need to login at [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org).

You will be asked for your login, which is your Member ID, the six- or seven-digit number that appears next to your name on your *Key Reporter* address label.

Your password consists of your first and last names and the last two digits of the year you were elected to ΦBK, with no spaces in between.

Have a problem logging in? Call (202) 745-3242, or write to [membership@pbk.org](mailto:membership@pbk.org).

# Why Michelangelo Studied Cadavers

## The Spiritual and Spirited Dimensions of Scholarship

by Richard Leo Enos, Professor  
Texas Christian University

*The following is an abbreviated version of a Phi Beta Kappa Lecture presented to the Delta of Texas Chapter on May 8, 2008. Professor Enos is the Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition in the English Department at Texas Christian University.*

Penniless, frantic, hounded by publishers who wanted him to make good on the advances they had made for a book that he had not yet even begun to write, Victor Hugo locked himself in his house, sealed away all clothes but those he would wear in his home and wrote for months on end! The result was a work of genius: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Recounting this famous story in the forward to the novel, Nina Rosenstien observed that Hugo had written one of the masterpieces of literature “in one tremendous burst of creative energy.”<sup>1</sup> What engaged Hugo to unleash this tidal wave of genius? Consider also the stories surrounding Michelangelo, who was so driven to perfection in his art that he obtained papal permission to view dissections of the human body in order to study anatomy and kinesiology. Why would Michelangelo seek dispensation from what the Church (at the time) would consider blasphemy — the defilement of the human body — for the sake of his art? Why would Jean-François Champollion devote much of his life to deciphering Egyptian, driving himself relentlessly while constantly facing criticism by would-be competitors?<sup>2</sup> We can dismiss Hugo, Michelangelo, Champollion — and countless other “geniuses” — as talented but obsessive fanatics who drove themselves beyond all reasonable limits to produce unparalleled contributions to the arts, sciences and humanities. However, a better route to take would be not to waive these efforts away as magnificent aberrations, but rather to pause and consider what unleashed their talent.

Pausing to reflect on luminaries

such as those mentioned earlier leads us to a basic reassessment of a fundamental notion: what does it mean to be smart and successful? Two prominent Greek thinkers help to clarify the meaning of being smart and successful. The Athenian educator Isocrates has given us the secret of how talent can be realized. In his *Antidosis*, written at the age of 82, Isocrates claimed that there are three traits that must exist for a smart and successful student: talent, practice and experience. Talent is native ability, the gift from God, what Cicero called *ingenium*. In our cyber-terms, we think that someone is well wired or programmed. It is not unusual, for example, to see children who seem to be light-years ahead of their peers on the soccer field and in the classroom, but often these early bloomers fade into obscurity. I believe that this fading happens not because talent is diminished but that it is un(der)developed and the individual is lacking in the other two traits that Isocrates sees as essential for the smart and successful person: practice and experience.

In his book, *Get in the Game*, Hall of Fame baseball player Cal Ripken, Jr. cites how New York Yankee great Lou Gehrig believed that he was born with no “natural ability” but, through countless hours of extra practice, became one the game’s greatest players.<sup>3</sup> Driven to perfection, Gehrig had learned that practice teaches success from failure and (of equal importance) how to extend the boundaries of failure to success. Hall of Fame basketball coach Bob Knight once observed that what is more important than the will to win is the will to *prepare* to win. That is, nurturing and developing our talent comes about through the price we pay to develop it. Practice, however, is far different than the third necessary trait for successfully being smart: experience. Practice anticipates, and seeks to prepare for, what the situation that we hope to perform in may be like . . . it is our best guess. Experience is what we learn during the actual performance. For this reason, it is impossible both to teach experience and to replicate all the knowledge that comes from experi-

ence. Our question remains, however, how do we come to realize what talent, practice and experience have to do with being successful and smart?

Aristotle, our second Greek thinker, provides insight to, and a resolution of, this issue. In the opening passages of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle maintained that people not only have talent but a *dynamis* or power. This capacity can lay dormant, but when energized (*energia*), the dormant talent becomes activated; individuals are willing to work hard, and to risk failure, through performance. I believe that the reason some “smart” people never accomplish much of anything is because they (for a variety of reasons) never tap into that *dynamis*; they never realize the talent buried within them. I believe that hard-work, effort and risk-taking will not only activate talent but make people realize that all of us have much more ability than we realize.

There are lessons we can learn about what it means to be smart and successful from the sages of the past. It is the spiritual and spirited side of scholarship. Talent unrealized is talent wasted and what we need to nurture and teach is the passion that helps each of us find our talent, be satisfied with the effort to develop it and be proud of the best effort we offer to perform it. Our Phi Beta Kappa students have recognized only some of their talents, they have doubtlessly energized some of that talent and have achieved success, but that was preparation for the real voyage they are about to embark upon. May that performance result in adventurous voyages whose experiences navigate them to their own home ports successfully. ■

### Notes

1. Gramercy Books, 1995, p. 8.
2. See C. W. Ceram’s *Gods, Graves and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*, 2nd ed., 1972, pp. 100-32.
3. pp. 12-13.

## Hold this Thought

### ΦBK Member Barbara Brown Applies Her Background in Philosophy & Humanities on the Air

From the studios of public radio in Anchorage, Alaska, comes *Hold this Thought*, a daily, one-minute thought from literature, history or culture designed to change the world . . . or at least inspire reflection and conversation. Barbara Brown (ΦBK, Stanford University, 1974) is merging the humanities, broadcast and new media in her efforts to take the usually shallow sound bite and transform it into something deeper, something that provokes attention, maybe even action — all in one minute.

A lot can be said in one minute. It's not just a quotation; it's a complete passage, something with multiple layers. "People submit things they come across reading, so the variety — from science, from fiction, from theater — resonates with different listeners," Brown says. These are sourced citations, not musings of the mind, so she has to check for accuracy, timing and permission. Then contributors record them for both broadcast and podcast. Other NPR stations make it possible to record all over the U.S.

Sherlock Holmes one day, chaos theory the next. *The Kite Runner* and Pablo Casals. Has it worked? Is "thoughtfulness" on the upswing? Who can be sure? According to Brown, "e-mails come to the station from around the country, and thousands are 'holding this thought,' whether via podcast, e-mail subscriptions to their inbox, bookmarking the Web site or listening on the radio."

"One viewer in Los Angeles heard a piece read by a woman she'd met 30 years ago in Europe. And others are taking their 'thought' to work for conversation," Brown reports. "With the global reach of the Internet, thoughtful people in all parts of the country are connecting."

When Brown graduated from Stanford with her degree in philosophy and humanities and a ΦBK key, she thought her only employment option was becoming a professor. A brief sojourn at Cornell convinced her she needed to be farther out in the world,

so an eclectic career path was launched. In San Francisco, Brown ran political campaigns and did community outreach. A keep-bus-fares-low effort led to the MUNI transit system, where Brown was ultimately put in charge of the entire street operation. But philosophy was never very far away: she launched the first Joint



Barbara Brown in the studios of KSKA, Anchorage, Alaska

Labor-Management Board in the American transit industry. After ten years, a thirst for adventure intervened, and Brown moved to Anchorage, Alaska, to manage People Mover.

According to Brown, career paths in Alaska have a tendency to diversify. "The spirit moves, doors open, you can end up going onstage and, next thing you know, you're managing a theater company. Or writing a weekly column for the *Anchorage Daily News*, not to mention volunteering as The Storytime Lady in the Alaska Botanical Garden," Brown says.

In 2001, Brown was hired as the director of Leadership Anchorage, an intensive community leadership program within the Alaska Humanities Forum (the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the

Humanities). Leadership Anchorage is unique in that it incorporates readings in the humanities with practical applications in leadership, ethics and community-building.

As part of Leadership Anchorage, Brown began bringing in speakers for on-stage, noon-time conversations on yearly themes: "Practicing Courage," "Earning Trust" and "Rising to the Occasion." These one-hour conversations were so popular that the local public radio station, KSKA, began broadcasting them. Later, worrying that many people were no longer tuning in for a full hour, Brown tried to figure out ways to involve greater numbers in . . . thinking. That's how *Hold this Thought* was born, and in fall 2007, Barbara made it her "next big thing." You can make it yours, too. As Barbara says, "a little more thoughtfulness couldn't hurt!"



#### A Sample Thought

"The air becomes still. We become quiet. Together, we witness a sight that few people ever see: we are surrounded by killer whales . . .

"Conventional teachings suggest that eternity is something that starts after death, and then goes on — well, forever. But I know that it is this moment that is eternal. One wave moves in a certain manner while that particular killer whale rises above the water and catches one ray of light against the flash of its singular fin, and I stand here on this particular boat, late in the afternoon of this certain day, with these people who have traveled distances near and far to stand here and be captured with me in this moment, which is gone before I blink and which will continue always to exist."

— From Ernestine Hayes, author of *Blonde Indian*. What is your eternal moment?

To hear more "thoughts" or share your own, go to the program homepage at [www.holdthisthought.org](http://www.holdthisthought.org). ■



# “Stories of War” on the $\Phi\text{BK}$ Lecture Circuit

BY TOM PALAIMA,  $\Phi\text{BK}$  FELLOWS LECTURER

When I was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa at Boston College in 1973, I was a mathematics and classics major heading to graduate school in classics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. There I continued exploring interests in Homer, Hesiod, Roman satire, ancient Greek history and what became the career-long research specialty for which I was awarded a MacArthur fellowship, Mycenaean Greek script, language and culture.

At Boston College, I was drawn to classics by an inspiring professor, David Gill, S.J., and by the vivid realism of Homer’s *Iliad*. I took Father Gill for four semesters of Greek and Roman history, and for two senior seminars, one on George Grote’s seminal *History of Greece* (1846-1856), the other on Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788). These works, written by non-academics for strong personal reasons, planted deep in my heart that the ultimate aim of

history is to explore why human beings, individually and collectively, live their lives as they do.

This is what the motto *Philosophia Biou Kubernetes* is telling us members of Phi Beta Kappa. By passionately cultivating true wisdom about life, we can guide our own lives and the lives of others. The founders of the Society took for granted that we, as humanists, would aim for what was good.

I was overwhelmed when I first read Homer’s *Iliad* and Euripides’ *Medea* and *The Trojan Women* in Greek. I had never read anything so true in my life. But in my first 12 years of teaching after finishing my Ph.D. (1980), I was frustrated that I could not

communicate to university undergraduates the visceral power of the *Iliad* or make them feel what it meant for 17,000 Athenian citizen soldiers and veterans to watch Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* in the Theater of Dionysus, months after many of those same soldiers had slaughtered the adult male population of the island of Melos. Those who argue that *The Trojan Women* or the *Iliad* are anti-war stories, in the modern sense, have lots of ques-

nage of wars, the atrocities of the Nazi Holocaust, the brutalities of dictatorships, the irrational violence of serial killers or the plain human misery caused by social and economic inequality in any period. Second, I had just tried de-compartmentalizing my interests by having mythology students watch the documentary *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* before we began studying the *Iliad*; and it worked. Watching and hearing soldiers

their age come to terms with war made my students see in Homer part of what I had always seen because of my life-long fascination with human inhumanity.

In my Phi Beta Kappa lectures “Stories of War,” I try to get people to think about what soldiers, writers, reporters and singers from Homer to the present have been trying to make us see: war as it is and what war does to us.

All great stories of war are trying to get at truth. This may include factual realities that non-combatant civilians do not

understand or have any chance to see. But the truth of war stories is always more than that.

Tim O’Brien claims true war stories have an uncompromising allegiance to evil and do not convey moral lessons. Filmmaker Werner Herzog extracts ecstatic truth from Operation Desert Storm and the life of U.S. pilot Dieter Dengler, a prisoner of war in Laos during the Vietnam War. Marine veteran poet Charles E. Patterson wants us to know how morally decent American soldiers and young Viet Cong family men behave in war.

Mostly I talk about stories of war to Phi Beta Kappa initiates for the reason William Styron gives in *Sophie’s*



Tom Palaima in his office at the University of Texas at Austin. The blue poster in the background is from a conference he helped to organize, “How War Changes Lives.”

tions to answer.

About 15 years ago, I was asked whether I would like to teach a junior seminar in the Plan II Honors Program at the University of Texas at Austin, where I have taught since 1986. To my surprise, I spontaneously answered, “Sure. How about a course on war and violence?”

I had never taught any such course, nor had I been thinking about doing so. Looking back now, I think two things made me say this.

First, I unconsciously realized that I had always kept in a separate personal compartment my lifelong intellectual and emotional interest in the human experience of evil, manifest in the car-



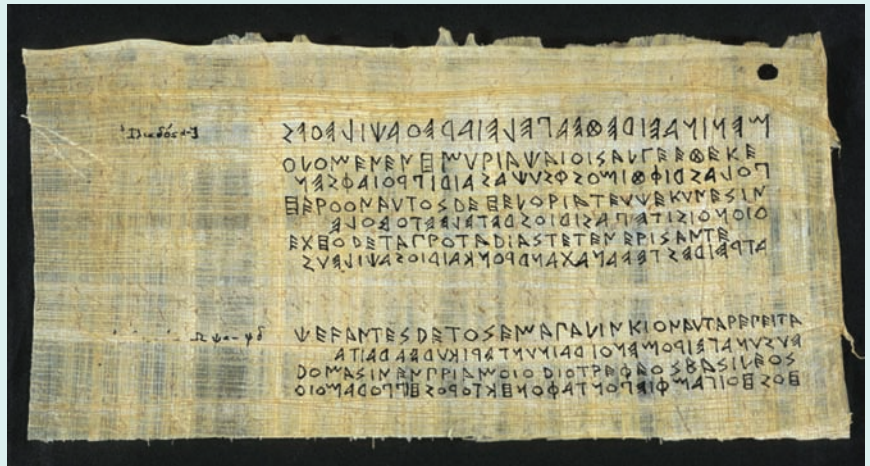
*Choice.* “[P]rofessors of philosophy, ministers of the Gospel, rabbis, shamans, all historians, writers, politicians and diplomats . . . , stand-up comedians, film directors, journalists, in short anyone concerned remotely with affecting the consciousness of his fellow man — and this would include our own beloved children” should get to know the mind of Rudolf Höss, Kommandant of Auschwitz. Otherwise we will only know the “mediocre evil” in “most novels and plays and movies.” We will have “no acquaintance with true evil,” with how “crushingly banal” it is. We will forget or be ignorant of the lessons of the past.

For the ancient Greeks something that was true (*a-lethes*) was something that we must not forget. Phi Beta Kappa initiates need to take the great stories of war into their hearts and minds and remember them throughout their lives. This is not a pacifist message. The ancient Greeks, as George Santayana and Douglas MacArthur recognized, fought wars almost constantly. But they also made sure, by telling honest public stories, that their men, women and children, soldier and civilian, knew what war is. ■

*Tom Palaima is Raymond F. Dickson Centennial Professor of Classics and director of the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory at the University of Texas at Austin.*

*Palaima has been a member of the ΦBK Fellows Lectureship since the 2004-2005 academic year and has given lectures for the Society at Roanoke College, St. Olaf College and Hendrix College, as well as for the East Central Illinois Association and the Northeast Alabama Association. His lectures have included “Truth in War Stories, Old and New” and “Home Front and War Front in Ancient and Modern Times.” He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Boston College in 1973.*

*Palaima writes regular commentaries for the Austin American-Statesman and regular book reviews for The Times Higher Education Supplement. To see his short on-line lecture on war stories go to [http://www.utexas.edu/inside\\_ut/take5/palaima/](http://www.utexas.edu/inside_ut/take5/palaima/)*



Above is an image of what the opening and closing lines of Homer's *Iliad* would look like written on papyrus in Greek of the sixth century B.C., which Palaima prepared for a Discovery Channel documentary on the realities of war in the *Iliad*. The program was titled *Unsolved History: The Trojan Horse* (2004). The opening lines describe the destruction caused by Achilles' rage, and the close describes the burial of the Trojan hero, horse-taming Hector.



Palaima spoke at the ΦBK induction ceremony at Hendrix College in April. He is pictured here instructing some of ΦBK's newest members in the art of the Society's “secret” handshake, following his lecture “Truth in War Stories, Old and New.”

• **Karen Hughes** (ΦBK, Southern Methodist University, 1977) became the new global vice chair of Burson-Marsteller in early July. Hughes is the former U.S. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. In her work for Burson-Marsteller, she will focus on providing clients with senior level communications strategy and counsel. (“Karen Hughes Joins Burson-Marsteller as Global Vice Chair” [www.marketwatch.com/news/story/karen-hughes](http://www.marketwatch.com/news/story/karen-hughes) 9 July 2008.)

### ΦBK in Popular Culture

• The Phi Beta Kappa key was used as a clue on the television quiz show *Jeopardy!* on Sept. 8. Since its 1984 syndication debut, *Jeopardy!* has been honored with 27 Daytime Emmy Awards and has trademark status as “America’s Favorite Quiz Show” from the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office. (*Jeopardy!* [www.jeopardy.com/show/guide\\_showhistory.php](http://www.jeopardy.com/show/guide_showhistory.php) 27 Aug. 2008.)

• In the Aug. 3 *Washington Post* review of Brenda Wineapple’s book *White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (Knopf, 2008), Joel Brouwer makes the following observation about Dickinson’s long-time correspondent: “After Higginson led an attempt to free a captured slave held in Boston’s Court House, Thoreau praised him as ‘the only Harvard Phi Beta Kappa, Unitarian minister, and

master of seven languages who has led a storming party against a federal bastion with a battering ram in his hands,’ a distinction I imagine Higginson holds to this day.” Higginson (ΦBK, Harvard, 1841) served on the first ΦBK Senate and was the Society’s third president. Wineapple serves on the editorial board of ΦBK’s magazine, *The American Scholar*. Her article “Emily Dickinson’s Unlikely Admirer” appeared in the magazine’s summer 2008 issue. (Brouwer, Joel. “This Is My Letter to the World: How a Very Private Poet Found Herself the Perfect Mentor” [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/31/AR2008073102692.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/31/AR2008073102692.html) 3 Aug. 2008.)

• John Garfield’s film noir classic, *Force of Evil* (1948) features a smart but crooked lawyer named Joe Morse whose ΦBK key, it seems, is also the key to understanding his character. As Imogen Sara Smith writes in “Plumbing the Depths of Capitalism: On *Force of Evil*”: “Garfield found the key to the character in the Phi Beta Kappa key that Morse wears on his watch-chain over his expensive suits. It gives him a touch of pathos: he clings to pride in his success and can’t understand why people don’t admire him, why they aren’t grateful when he tries to help them.” (Smith, Imogen Sara. “Plumbing the Depths of Capitalism: On *Force of Evil*” *Bright Lights Film Journal* [www.brightlightsfilm.com/61/61forceofevil.html](http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/61/61forceofevil.html) Aug. 2008. ■

### START A ΦBK ASSOCIATION IN YOUR AREA!

ΦBK is looking for members interested in starting new associations in unrepresented parts of the country. You can find a full list of current associations and links to their Web sites by going to [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org) and clicking on “Association Directory” under the Alumni Associations tab. Associations bring together ΦBK members for intellectual, social and philanthropic activities.

Large metropolitan areas currently without associations include:

- Portland, Or.
- Cincinnati, Ohio
- New Orleans, La.
- Salt Lake City, Utah
- Charlotte, N.C.

We can put you in touch with other interested members in your area, as well as provide information and experienced contacts who can help you get started. If you’d like to start an association in one of these areas or in another part of the country, or if you have any questions, please contact Cara Engel at (202) 745-3249 or [associations@pbk.org](mailto:associations@pbk.org).

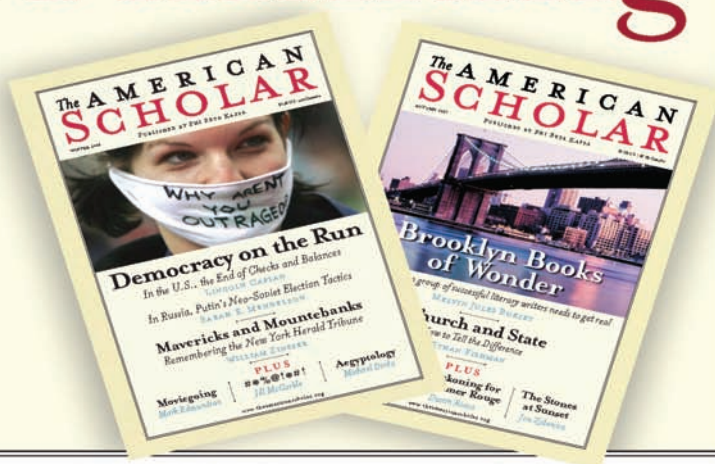
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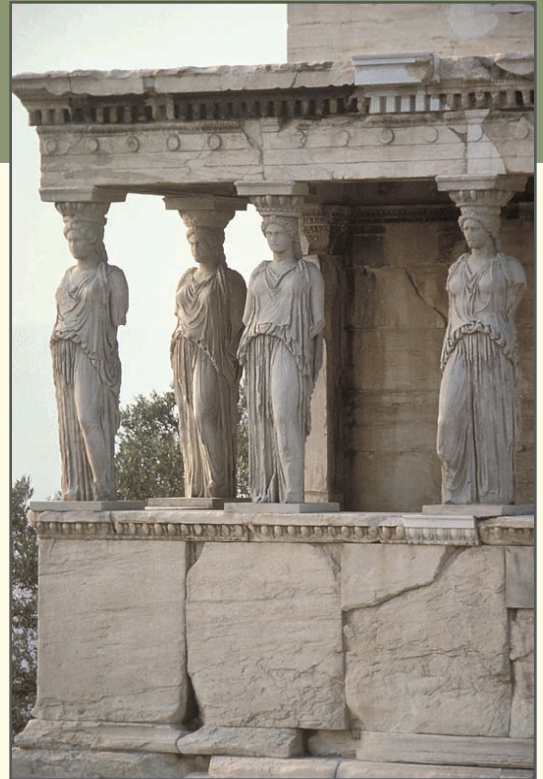
# MARY ISABEL SIBLEY FELLOWSHIP FOR GREEK STUDIES 2009

Phi Beta Kappa is now accepting applications for the 2009 Mary Isabel Sibley Fellowship for Greek Studies.

Candidates must be unmarried women between the ages of 25 and 35. They must hold a doctorate or have fulfilled all the requirements for a doctorate except the dissertation, and they must be planning to devote full-time work to research during the fellowship year that begins September 1, 2009. Eligibility is not restricted to members of Phi Beta Kappa or to U.S. citizens.

Applications for the \$20,000 award are due **January 15, 2009**. The recipient of the award will be notified no later than May 15, 2009. Application materials can be found at [www.pbk.org/sibley](http://www.pbk.org/sibley).

Direct questions to Sam Esquith, Coordinator of Society Activities, at [awards@pbk.org](mailto:awards@pbk.org).



## Phi Beta Kappa Membership Items

Phi Beta Kappa's distinctive key design, the symbol of membership in the Society, is featured on a range of new additions to the collection of membership items, including the crystal stein shown here.

Also, a complete line of solid gold and gold-plated key jewelry, as well as other items bearing the Society's insignia is available. Keys are made in three sizes in either 10-karat solid gold or 24-karat gold electroplate. The medium-size key is shown here actual size with matching 18-inch neck chain.

The popular membership display includes a personalized certificate and a large gold-electroplated key, double-matted in an attractive 12 x 16 inch walnut frame.

To order, complete the form below and mail it with your payment and a copy of your mailing label from the back cover showing your membership number to Hand & Hammer, 2610 Morse Lane, Woodbridge, VA 22192. You can also place an order or request the complete product brochure by calling (703) 491-4866 or by faxing (703) 491-2031. You can also order on line at [www.hand-hammer.com](http://www.hand-hammer.com). A three dollar shipping and handling fee is added to each order.

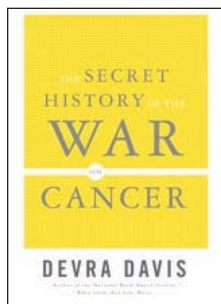
- Phi Beta Kappa stein (crystal 6" high)..... \$60
- Medium-size key, 10-karat gold (1-3/8" high)..... \$96
- Medium-size key, 24-karat gold-plated (1-3/8" high)..... \$29
- 10-karat gold neck chain, 18 inches (for gold key)..... \$64
- 24-karat gold-plated chain, 18 inches (for plated key)..... \$8
- Wall Display (key and certificate framed 12" x 16")..... \$89
- Shipping Fee (per order)..... \$3

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## From Our Book Critics

By Germaine Cornelissen



*The Secret History of the War on Cancer.* Devra Davis. Basic Books, 2007. 528 pages. \$27.95

This is an amazing book. It reads like a novel, yet important issues are discussed clearly and precisely. Devra Davis, a professor of epidemiology honored for her research and policy work, blends personal stories with scientific accounts in the light of a well-documented historical, political regulatory, and legal background of what was known about the causes of cancer, and what was done — or not done — about it. The reader is introduced in simple terms to the methods of epidemiology, the statistical study of how, when, and where diseases occur and what their likely causes may be.

Cancer incidence has sky-rocketed since the Industrial Revolution, and is affecting younger and younger people, even those with no family history of the disease. As early as 1936, when over 200 worldwide top cancer scientists convened in Brussels to attend the Second International Congress of Scientific and Social Campaign Against Cancer, many agents widely used in the workplace, in the home and even as part of people's lifestyles, were known to be carcinogenic. These included ionizing and solar radiation, arsenic, benzene, asbestos, synthetic dyes and certain hormones. These environmental hazards are investigated in depth in several chapters, where the reader is introduced to the major (many of them well-known) protagonists.

A major point of the book is the need to pay more attention to cancer prevention, by reducing exposure to known carcinogens, something the author estimates could have saved at least 1.5 million American lives since 1971. Failure to act by fighting the “wrong battles” is perhaps best illustrated by the story of cigarette smok-

ing. Despite evidence from Germany, Britain and the United States that the death rate from lung cancer was higher in smokers than in non-smokers, the tobacco industry set up its own research council to cast doubt about the danger of smoking under the false pretense of adding scientific knowledge. Even the U.S. National Cancer Institute joined forces with industry to engineer a “safe” (filtered) cigarette, against any common sense and consensus among scientists that it would be impossible to do. Business interests and profits to individual players too often took precedent over ethics, allowing the industry to pressure scientists into not publishing damaging results, or to subsidize ill-designed studies to prevent risks from being unveiled, or pay esteemed scientists to act as “expert witnesses” on their behalf. In Davis' words, “[w]orker health remains a matter that can be deemed a trade secret in many industrial nations.”

In terms of cancer detection, the author describes how the widespread use in the U.S. of the life-saving test for cervical cancer, the Pap smear (named after its discoverer George Papanicolaou), was delayed by more than a decade because of fears that it would undermine the private practice of medicine, since doctors mistrusted the competency of people outside their profession. This delay led to unnecessary surgery or death for millions of women. Davis further voices concern over the use of mammograms in women younger than 50 years. She also discusses possible long-term risks of cancer brought about by radiation from X-rays, other common medical procedures and cell phones.

As for cancer treatment, survivors of World War I who were exposed to mustard gas provided a strange and important clue about possible ways to treat cancer. These men had very low white blood cell counts, a finding that provided the basis for the golden age of chemotherapy: nitrogen mustard was successfully used to treat some patients with leukemia, a form of cancer in which the bone marrow makes too many white cells. While the most important battle for environmental safety to prevent cancer continues,

another battle is also being fought to improve cancer treatment by optimizing the scheduling of its administration. Despite superior results achieved both in the experimental laboratory and in the clinic, timing treatment (chronotherapy) has not (yet?) entered mainstream medicine.

A fascinating but sobering book, highly recommended.



*Suffer the Child: How the Healthcare System is Failing Our Future.* Lidia Wasowicz Pringle. Capital Books, Inc., 2007. 434 pages. \$24.95

This comprehensive review of the state of health of American children by investigative reporter Lidia Wasowicz Pringle is a much needed and welcome wake-up call. Detailed statistics gathered in numerous interviews with physicians, policy makers, parents, children's advocates, educators, drug developers and public health specialists are presented in a systematic examination of possible reasons for the failing healthcare system and ways to solve the problems. The book aims to neither convict nor condemn, but rather to call for cooperation, collaboration and communication: the three Cs for success singled out in the epilogue.

Chronic conditions like asthma are on the rise, while ailments usually seen in adulthood, such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure are observed at ever younger ages. Depression and suicides are affecting growing numbers of children, for reasons that are not very well understood, and for which some anti-depressants have been found to lead some teens toward suicide rather than soothing their anxieties. Special consideration is given to autism, a condition first described in 1943, with a fast-growing incidence but little-known etiology, affecting one in 166 children by the time the book was written.

On the positive side, scourges such as polio and smallpox have been eradicated. But new insidious illnesses have

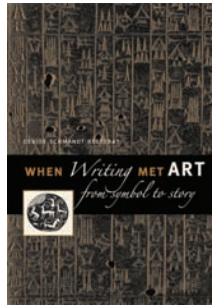


emerged that are a challenge to the healthcare system. Not only is there a strain on pediatricians' time and on the availability of specialists, but treatment guidelines are also wanting, with 70 percent of drugs prescribed for children lacking official sanction for pediatric use and being prescribed "off label" at the doctor's discretion. Yet, so very little is known about long-term effects on growing bodies and developing minds of the medication often taken indefinitely in the case of chronic diseases, not to mention complications related to drug interactions when coexisting conditions require more than a single treatment. Another important issue raised by Pringle is that help for children may come in the form of medication, but drugs alone rarely suffice. This is particularly true in the case of depression for which condition the author views a gap between what is known and what is practiced. Another example is the possible role of vaccines in relation to autism addressed in the book, while results from recently published studies apparently cannot corroborate it.

One aspect of the problem not covered in the book but which is receiving increasing attention deals with the effects of pharmaceuticals in the environment, notably in water. Some studies suggest that ingesting only scant amounts of these washed-out pharmaceuticals may have an impact on organisms, such as fish, and may potentially affect human health. The amount of other chemicals and toxic substances in the environment is also unprecedented and their effects on human health are not sufficiently studied.

The detailed index and the numerous references and footnotes leading readers to additional information add value to the book that addresses many important issues facing the healthcare system today.

By Rick Eden



*When Writing Met Art: From Symbol to Story.* Denise Schmandt-Besserat. University of Texas Press 2007. 144 pages. \$45.00

This wonderful book by Denise Schmandt-Besserat, the foremost expert on the origins of writing and counting, is fascinating and fully accessible to the lay reader despite its arcane topic.

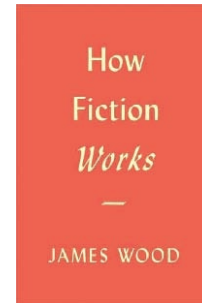
Writing originated over 5,000 years ago in the Near East, when accountants took small clay tokens representing different sorts of goods and impressed them onto the clay envelopes in which the tokens were stored. Importantly, marks of the same sort were repeated in neat horizontal rows. Each mark represented one thing. The relative order, size and location of the marks carried meaning.

Artists incorporated the distinctive characteristics of writing — linearity; one-to-one correspondence; semantic use of size, order and location; and “determinatives” (signs that modify the meaning of other signs) — into their carvings and paintings. For example, preliterate pottery paintings were designs, decorative and evocative, but after the invention of writing, the space, location, size, position and orientation of depicted figures all began to convey meaning. The paintings became informative and narrative.

About 3000 B.C., accountants produced another innovation. To represent names of those giving or receiving goods, they devised phonograms that were in effect rhyming puns: “small, easy-to-draw pictures evoking words that sounded like the given name.” Centuries later, when names were inscribed on small statues intended as gifts to the gods, titles were added and then actions conveyed by complete sentences with verbs; “writing [metamorphosed] from an accounting device to a medium of communication able to convey any possible idea.”

In a manner reminiscent of Edward Tufte in *Beautiful Evidence*, Schmandt-Besserat closes by analyz-

ing the sophisticated integration of writing and art on the stele of Hammurabi, carved about 1750 B.C. On that magnificent early example of an illustrated text, words and pictures complement one another, so that “there is no tension between the two media in the monument; one does not override the other, but rather they compound dynamically.”



*How Fiction Works.* James Wood. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. 288 pages. \$24.00

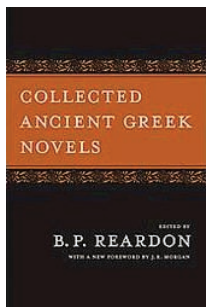
Though James Wood delivers considerably less than his title promises, this is an excellent and highly engaging primer on narrative prose style in the modern novel. As Wood explains, his interest is in the “brushwork” of realistic novelists, in the artistic devices by which they create an illusion of verisimilitude. His close readings help to explain how novelists write, not novels, but sentences in novels.

Wood is at his best explaining the artistry of free indirect style, a narrative device by which linguistic choices characteristic of the person being described are blended with those of the narrator. Free indirect style can create the impression of intense intimacy, as though we were privileged not only to know what the character is thinking but also to experience the world through his or her being.

Wood pays little attention to structure or plot. Otherwise, a more natural place to begin an explanation of “how fiction works” would have been the interplay of narration and dialog, the alternation that Richard Lanham in *Analyzing Prose* calls “the archetypal pattern of Western narrative structure.” Wood devotes only a single short chapter to dialog, half of which he uses to explain how the same effects can be achieved by other means. Of plot, Wood notes merely that it need not be chronological — one can begin in *media res* or use fast forwards.

Of the two sources of novelty in the novel identified by Milan Kundera in *The Curtain*, Wood focuses on the

“novel” perception of an aspect of human nature or experience. More specifically, Wood shows how modern realistic novelists create stylistically the effect of verisimilitude. The effect comes in two stages: first, surprise at encountering an innovative word, metaphor or detail; then, satisfied appreciation of how superior the innovation is to conventional depiction — how much truer it seems. Ironically, realism depends on evolving artifice: “the writer has to act as if the available novelistic methods are continually about to turn into mere convention.”



**Collected Ancient Greek Novels.** Ed. B. P. Reardon, [various translators]. Foreword by J. R. Morgan. University of California Press, 1989. Second edition, 2008. 848 pages. \$39.95. Paperback

The modern reader will find many pleasures and surprises in these ancient novels. The editor, B. P. Reardon, includes readings from 19 ancient texts, but most are fragmentary. The core of the anthology consists of five “love-and-adventure romances” (*Chaereas and Callirhoe* by Chariton; *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius; *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus; *An Ephesian Tale* by Xenophon; and *An Ethiopian Story* by Heliodoros) and two comic novels (*A True Story* and *The Ass*, the first by Lucian and the second attributed to him). All seven date from a flowering of the novel in the Roman Empire during the first few centuries of the Common Era. They were composed, though, not in Latin but in Greek: the translators here include Reardon, Graham Anderson, John Winkler, Christopher Gill and J.R. Morgan.

Despite their antiquity, these novels are by no means primitive. Like modern motion pictures, they represent a mature and sophisticated art form even though aimed at a popular taste. They are also highly cinematic, and this quality is one of their chief pleasures. The physical beauty of the main characters is highlighted, and exotic

costumes and settings are pushed to the fore. Heliodoros, for example, moves his *An Ethiopian Story* from Greece to Egypt and then on to Ethiopia, and he populates it with characters from many cultures, classes and occupations.

The most obvious — and potentially off-putting — difference between these and modern novels lies in the use of dialog. Although dialog in the form of more or less realistic conversation does appear, it is also used in other ways. For example, speeches often become artificially long and florid: these linguistic flights function much as do songs in today’s musicals, and the break with realism is just as jarring until one can adjust to the convention. Speeches can also be extended into storytelling, so that a character becomes a secondary narrator, creating opportunities for complex developments in plot, theme, characterization and tone. In this and other ways, these early novels confirm Milan Kundera’s claim in *The Curtain*, that “for the art of the novel from its birth, composition (architecture) took on primordial importance.”

### By Jay Pasachoff



**America in Space: NASA’s First Fifty Years.** Steven J. Dick, et al. Abrams Books in collaboration with NASA, 2007. 352 pages. \$50.00

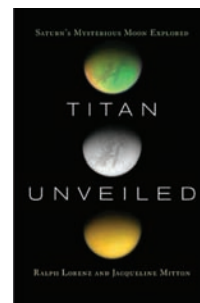
Not long after the Soviets put Sputnik into space on October 4, 1957, and the United States laggingly got Explorer I into orbit, the U.S. formed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). We are now celebrating NASA’s 50th birthday, and a team led by chief NASA historian Steven Dick put together a beautiful, large-format book for the occasion. They even got famously reclusive astronaut Neil Armstrong to write the foreword, in which Armstrong traced the growth of transportation systems back to 13th- and 14th-century Mediterranean caravels.

Each section of the book starts

with a one-page introduction, and then goes into dramatic partial-page, full-page and double-page images. The quality of the paper and of the image reproduction is very high. The book begins with introductory material, showing the evolution of NASA’s predecessor organization from when it was set up by Woodrow Wilson (with a group including Wilson) onward, and then to a dramatic image, still pre-NASA, including rocket pioneers Hermann Oberth and a much younger Wernher von Braun. Part 2 is about aeronautics, the first “A” in NASA. Part 3, “One Small Step,” is the heart of the book. It takes us in sections through Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and the space shuttles, ending up with the International Space Station in gorgeous double-page spreads.

Part 4 on “Voyages in Space and Time” deals with robotic missions that have meant so much to astronomers. We see beautiful images, well captioned, of all the planets, and even Carl Sagan’s “pale blue dot” shows as a 1-millimeter point silhouetted against a dark background on the giant page. The images of Mars and of Earth are particularly beautiful.

The book ably accompanies the Discovery Channel’s six-hour cable television series *When We Left Earth: The NASA Missions*, which aired this spring. (I reviewed that for *Science* magazine, overall favorably, though I criticized the lack of attention to NASA’s robotic program: probes to the planets, Hubble Space Telescope and so on.) Perhaps, compared with television, the book gives a more lasting impression to those who will see it. Its size and beauty will draw the attention of anybody visiting who spots it on your desk or coffee table. I recommend it highly.



**Titan Unveiled: Saturn’s Mysterious Moon Explored.** Ralph Lorenz and Jacqueline Mitton. Princeton University Press, 2008. 243 pages & 8 color plates. \$29.95

In this 50th anniversary year of

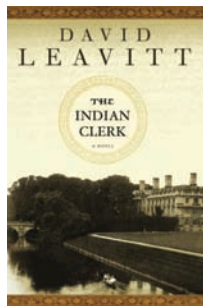


NASA, the organization has one of its biggest successes sending back data regularly. The Cassini mission to Saturn generates visible images, radar images and direct sampling of particles and the magnetic field, with the images regularly updated at [www.ciclops.org](http://www.ciclops.org). Radar scientist Ralph Lorenz has teamed up with science writer Jacqueline Mitton to provide this first-rate report on the mission.

In particular, the Cassini spacecraft carried the Huygens probe, a European Space Agency contribution, that actually landed on Titan, a huge planet-sized moon that boasts of a smoggy atmosphere as dense as Earth's. (In the late 17th century, serving Louis XIV and setting up the Paris Observatory, Jean Dominique Cassini discovered the major division in Saturn's rings as well as several moons of Saturn; in 1655, the Dutch astronomer Christiaan Huygens discovered Titan, joining Cassini in Paris the next year.) The Huygens probe penetrated Titan's atmosphere in January 2005 and sent back remarkable images showing branching channels and an apparent lake shore (though the former lake was, no doubt, filled with ethane or methane rather than water). As the book mentions, *Nature's* headline read, "Titan team claims just deserts as probe hits moon of *crème brûlée*," referring to the pebbles and other parts of the crusty surface imaged after landing and their covering softer material. The feat of landing the spacecraft on Titan was one of the most difficult and remarkable of the space age.

Lorenz was part of Cassini's radar-science team as well as the Huygens-probe team, and the book discusses those observations more than others, which is reasonable. At various times, Lorenz's personal thoughts are summarized, his "log" making a pre-blog-era blog.

*Titan Unveiled* unveils not only this remarkable moon but also the way that science is done, at least with large-scale planetary science. High-school and college students would benefit from following the twists and turns, and the evolving thought, of the scientists involved. And the general reader will enjoy seeing scientific progress revealed as well as the coverage of excellent and interesting results.



***The Indian Clerk: A Novel.*** David Leavitt. Bloomsbury, 2008. 496 pages. \$16.00. Paper

This novel is a fictional reworking of the story of how the great mathematician G. H. Hardy, at Cambridge University around 1913, fortuitously realized that the mathematical formulae sent him by a clerk in India had such astonishing content that the material couldn't just have been made up. With this realization, Srinivasa Ramanujan was brought to England, so Hardy and other mathematicians could both help him and learn from him. Ramanujan was so intuitive that he didn't necessarily know how he got his results, which dealt with number theory (such as the number of primes up to a number  $n$ , easy to calculate for, say, 100, but impossible to calculate for a million or a billion) nor had he been trained to the academic style of mathematics in which proofs are important.

David Leavitt's story is interwoven with that of the Cambridge Apostles, famously often homosexual, an organization that had a variety of famous men as members — John Maynard Keynes and Lytton Strachey being among those of a slightly earlier period. (Burgess, MacLean, Blunt, and Philby were of a much later period.)

I normally disapprove of mixing fiction with fact, but Leavitt's afterword about sources and acknowledgments discusses ("[n]ow on to inventions and half-truths") not only where to find accurate stories but also where he changed or distorted the facts. Did he really have to move Ludwig Wittgenstein's membership induction into the Apostle three months earlier? Would the story have been any less gripping without the fabricated details about Alice Neville, who with her husband while traveling in India helped coax Ramanujan to come to England? Leavitt made up that she spoke Swedish and sang Gilbert and Sullivan; I would have preferred reading just what was the truth. I suspect that Leavitt could have used his substantial literary skills to make just as readable a

book while limiting himself to fact instead of fiction.

But still, the story is winning, and this long book is very readable. Leavitt tells my favorite Ramanujan story, earlier told by C. P. Snow, the scientist and public servant turned novelist and essayist. When Ramanujan was in the hospital, leading up to his fatal illness at the age of 32, Hardy came to the hospital and said, "The taxi I took from Pimlico today had the number 1729. It seemed to me a rather dull number." Then Ramanujan smiled. 'No, Hardy,' he said. 'It is a very interesting number. It is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways.'" Neither Hardy nor I nor almost anyone else would see not only the sum of two cubes, and two different versions of that, but also know that it was the smallest such! Note that a cubic foot has 1728 cubic inches, so it is somewhat obvious that 1729 is 12 cubed plus 1 cubed. And it is also 10 cubed plus 9 cubed — but who knows what 9 cubed is these days.

Leavitt's *The Indian Clerk* is a wonderful overlap between mathematics and literature. ■

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Go to the login page on the ΦBK Web site located at [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org).

You will be asked for your login, which is your Member ID, the six- or seven-digit number that appears next to your name on your *Key Reporter* address label and other ΦBK mailings.

Your password consists of your first and last names and the last two digits of the year you were elected to ΦBK, with no spaces in between.

For example, if your name is Mary Jones and you were elected in 2001, your password is maryjones01. If your last name is hyphenated, include the hyphen.

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