

THE NEW YORKER

BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

A YEAR'S READING

Reviewers' favorites from 2011.

DECEMBER 19, 2011



NONFICTION

Too Much to Know, by *Ann M. Blair* (Yale; \$25). Information overload in Renaissance Europe.

The Anatomy of a Moment, by *Javier Cercas*, translated from the Spanish by *Anne McLean* (Bloomsbury; \$18). An account of the failed right-wing coup in post-Franco Spain.

The Most Human Human, by *Brian Christian* (Doubleday; \$27.95). What we can learn from computers about being human.

A World on Fire, by *Amanda Foreman* (Random House; \$35). Britain's role in the American Civil War.

George F. Kennan, by *John Lewis Gaddis* (Penguin Press; \$39.95). An authoritative biography of the Cold Warrior and father of containment.

The Chairs Are Where the People Go, by *Misha Glouberman*, with *Sheila Heti* (Faber & Faber; \$13). Philosophical squibs on the vagaries of contemporary life.

The Fear, by *Peter Godwin* (Back Bay; \$15.99). A memoir of Mugabe's Zimbabwe.

Pauline Kael, by *Brian Kellow* (Viking; \$27.95). A life of the critic.

Great Soul, by *Joseph Lelyveld* (Knopf; \$28.95). The successes and failures of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Joy of Secularism, edited by *George Levine* (Princeton; \$35). Life after God.

Malcolm X, by *Manning Marable* (Viking; \$30). A monumental biography of the black activist.

What It Is Like to Go to War, by *Karl Marlantes* (Atlantic Monthly; \$25). A Vietnam veteran on the experience of combat.

Molotov's Magic Lantern, by Rachel Polonsky (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux*; \$17). A roving evocation of Russia's past.

Leningrad, by Anna Reid (*Walker*; \$30). A history of the Second World War siege.

Mightier Than the Sword, by David S. Reynolds (*Norton*; \$27.95). "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the Civil War.

The Inner Life of Empires, by Emma Rothschild (*Princeton*; \$35). Private life and public power in eighteenth-century Scotland.

Modigliani, by Meryle Secrest (*Knopf*; \$35). A new life of the Italian artist.

Stolen World, by Jennie Erin Smith (*Crown*; \$25). Inside the international reptile trade.

Adventures in the Orgasmatron, by Christopher Turner (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux*; \$35). Wilhelm Reich and the psychology of the sexual revolution.

Pox, by Michael Willrich (*Penguin*; \$27.95). The battle to end smallpox in Progressive-era America and the epochal civil-liberties struggle that ensued.

The Idea of America, by Gordon S. Wood (*Penguin Press*; \$29.95). Reflections on the birth of a nation.

FICTION AND POETRY

Until the Dawn's Light, by Aharon Appelfeld, translated from the Hebrew by Jeffrey M. Green (*Schocken*; \$26). In turn-of-the-century Austria, a young Jewish woman converts to Christianity.

The Good Muslim, by Tahmima Anam (*Harper*; \$25.99). Secularism and fundamentalism collide in Bangladesh.

Started Early, Took My Dog, by Kate Atkinson (*Reagan Arthur*; \$14.99). A private investigator sets out to find a woman's natural parents.

Lost Memory of Skin, by Russell Banks (*Ecco*; \$25.99). A young sex offender struggles to get by in contemporary Florida.

The Sense of an Ending, by Julian Barnes (*Knopf*; \$23.95). In late middle age, a man reflects on a youthful love affair.

Touch, by Henri Cole (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux*; \$23). Poems of voluptuous candor.

Open City, by Teju Cole (*Random House*; \$25). A graduate student explores New York City on foot.

Daughters of the Revolution, by Carolyn Cooke (*Knopf*; \$24.95). An all-male Massachusetts boarding school admits its first female student.

The Angel Esmeralda, by Don DeLillo (*Scribner*; \$24). A career-spanning story collection

from the laureate of postmodern terror.

Solo, by *Rana Dasgupta* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; \$25). A hundred-year-old Bulgarian man looks back on his life and the twentieth century.

A Day in the Life of a Smiling Woman, by *Margaret Drabble* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; \$24). The collected stories, which address the changing roles of women in society.

The Forgotten Waltz, by *Anne Enright* (Norton; \$25.95). Adultery in Ireland.

The Art of Fielding, by *Chad Harbach* (Little, Brown; \$25.99). A campus baseball novel.

Ten Thousand Saints, by *Eleanor Henderson* (Ecco; \$26.99). Sex, drugs, and hardcore punk in New York.

The Stranger's Child, by *Alan Hollinghurst* (Knopf; \$27.95). Sexual politics and the making of literary reputations.

The Iliad, translated from the Greek by *Stephen Mitchell* (Free Press; \$35). A brisk, economical new version.

Train Dreams, by *Denis Johnson* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; \$18). The life and times of an anonymous drifter.

Leaving the Atocha Station, by *Ben Lerner* (Coffee House; \$15). Love, poetry, and fraudulence in literary Madrid.

Stone Upon Stone, by *Wiesław Myśliwski*, translated from the Polish by *Bill Johnston* (Archipelago; \$20). A sweeping novel of twentieth-century Poland.

The Tragedy of Arthur, by *Arthur Phillips* (Random House; \$26). An intricate novel posing as the introduction to a newly discovered Shakespeare play.

Life on Mars, by *Tracy K. Smith* (Graywolf; \$15). Elegiac poems about space, time, and loss.

Coming to That, by *Dorothea Tanning* (Graywolf; \$15). Poems on age, and the only end of age.

One with Others, by *C. D. Wright* (Copper Canyon; \$18). A book-length poem about a civil-rights march.

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