



We Review the  
Best of the Latest  
Books

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## Contents

December 2021 .....	1
Computers & Internet .....	2
<b>Handbook of Unconventional Computing</b> (in 2 Volumes) edited by Andrew Adamatzky (WSPC Book Series in Unconventional Computing, 2 volumes: World Scientific Publishing Company) .....	2
Culture / History / Science / Archaeology / Linguistics .....	4
<b>The Writing of the Gods: The Race to Decode the Rosetta Stone</b> by Edward Dolnick (Scribner) .....	4
Dictionaries / Linguistics / Sign Language .....	6
<b>The Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language</b> edited by Clayton Valli, illustrated by Peggy Swartzel Lott, Daniel Renner, & Rob Hills (Gallaudet University Press) .....	6
History / Black Americans .....	7
<b>Cedric Robinson: The Time of the Black Radical Tradition, 1<sup>st</sup> edition</b> by Joshua Myers (Black Lives Series: Polity Press) .....	7
History / Global / Africa .....	9
<b>Born in Blackness: Africa, Africans, and the Making of the Modern World, 1471 to the Second World War</b> by Howard W. French (Liveright Publishing Corporation) .....	9
History / Military / Women .....	12
<b>Wings of Gold: The Story of the First Women Naval Aviators</b> by Beverly Weintraub (Lyons Press) .....	12
Home & Garden / Crafts & Hobbies / Gardening .....	14
<b>Growing Figs in Cold Climates: A Complete Guide</b> by Lee Reich (New Society Publishers) .....	14
Philosophy / Culture / Humor .....	16

<b>Dave Chappelle and Philosophy:</b> When Keeping It Wrong Gets Real edited by Mark Ralkowski ( Pop Culture and Philosophy, Vol. 1: Open Universe) .....	16
Philosophy / History / Science .....	17
<b>Living as a Bird</b> by Vinciane Despret, translated by Helen Morrison (Polity Press).....	17
Psychology / Self-Help .....	20
<b>The Wisdom of Your Body</b> by Hillary L. McBride PhD (Brazos Press).....	20
Religion & Spirituality / Christianity .....	21
<b>The Essential Summa Theologiae:</b> A Reader and Commentary, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition by Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt (Baker Academic) .....	21
Religion & Spirituality / Christianity .....	24
<b>Handmaid of the Lord:</b> Mary, the Cistercians, and Armand-Jean de Rancé by David N. Bell (Cistercian Studies Series, No 293: Cistercian Publications, Liturgical Press) .....	24
Bibliography .....	25

## Computers & Internet

[Handbook of Unconventional Computing](#) (in 2 Volumes) edited by Andrew Adamatzky (WSPC Book Series in Unconventional Computing, 2 volumes: World Scientific Publishing Company)

Did you know that computation can be implemented with cytoskeleton networks, chemical reactions, liquid marbles, plants, polymers and dozens of other living and inanimate substrates? Do you know what is reversible computing or a DNA microscopy? Are you aware that randomness aids computation? Would you like to make logical circuits from enzymatic reactions? Have you ever tried to implement digital logic with Minecraft? Do you know that eroding sandstones can compute too?

[Handbook of Unconventional Computing](#) reviews most of the key attempts in coming up with an alternative way of computation. In doing so, the authors show that we do not need computers to compute and we do not need computation to infer. This 2-volume set invites readers to rethink the computer and computing, and appeals to computer scientists, mathematicians, physicists and philosophers.

The editor, Andrew Adamatzky, is at the University of West England in Bristol. The books have numerous authors.

Progress resides on explorations. An exploration is the departure from, or challenge of, traditional norms, and assessment of other possibilities or choices available. [Handbook](#)

[of Unconventional Computing](#) uncovers a wide range of amazing paradigms, algorithms, architectures and implementations of computation often being far outside the comfort zone of mainstream, conventional, computing sciences. There are two volumes. One deals with mostly theoretical results and algorithms, another with experimental laboratory implementations or computer models of novel computing substrates. Distribution of chapters between volumes is often subjective because a majority of the chapters well fit into both 'theoretical' and 'implementation' categories.

The first volume of [Handbook of Unconventional Computing](#) overviews topics related to the physics of computation, theory of computation, information theory and cognition, and evolution and computation. The boundaries between the topics are fuzzy and many chapters cover more than one topic. Physics of computation deals with analog computation, quantum computation, field computation, programmable matter, artificial morphogenesis, reversible logic elements with memory, the interplays between the costs of realizing physical computation and the computing capacity one can harvest from a physical device, and physical randomness in computation. Information theory and cognition is covered by the estimations of integrated information (information generated by a system beyond the information generated by its individual elements) using complexity measures and architectures for adding narratives for robot cognition, including an experimental scenario for investigating the narrative hypothesis in a combination of physical and simulated robots. The theory of computation is presented by a study of the computational power of the scatter machine bounded in polynomial space, a review of exclusively quantum problems (those which a Turing machine cannot solve), an extensive overview of the membrane computing concepts, and insights into symmetric automata and computation. Other important topics include evolving Boolean regulatory networks with variable gene expression times, swarm and stochastic computing for global optimization, unsupervised learning on bio-inspired topologies, and probabilistic logic gates in asynchronous Game of Life.

Topics presented in the second volume of [Handbook of Unconventional Computing](#) deal with computing in chemical systems, novel materials, biopolymers, alternative hardware and unclassified topics. Chemical computing includes mimicking Boolean logic gates with enzyme reactions, chemical oscillatory reactions, computation with polymerase strand displacement reactions, chemical automata, and training of chemical classifiers. The chapters on novel materials introduce organic memristive devices for bioinspired application, sensing and computing with liquid marbles, colloid droplet processors, and evolving conductive polymer neural networks. The biopolymers part of the volume is about biomolecular motor-based computing and optics-free DNA microscopy. Alternative hardware includes a hybrid computer approach to train a machine learning system, computing with square electromagnetic pulses, logical gates in natural erosion of sandstone, fully analog memristive circuits for optimization tasks, and wave-based majority gates with cellular automata. Other

(unclassified) exciting topics are information processing in plants with hormones, creative quantum computing, and digital logic with Minecraft.

The topics in [Handbook of Unconventional Computing](#) are presented in a lively and easily accessible manner and make for ideal supplementary reading across a broad range of subjects. All chapters are self-contained and accessible by readers with basic training in exact sciences. The treatise in alternative computing appeals to everyone – from high-school students to university professors, from mathematicians, computerists and engineers to chemists, biologists, and material scientists.

Culture / History / Science / Archaeology / Linguistics

## [The Writing of the Gods](#): The Race to Decode the Rosetta Stone by Edward Dolnick (Scribner)

[The Writing of the Gods](#) presents the surprising and compelling story of two rival geniuses in an all-out race to decode one of the world's most famous documents – the Rosetta Stone – and their twenty-year-long battle to solve the mystery of ancient Egypt's hieroglyphs.

The book was written by Edward Dolnick, the author of *The Clockwork Universe*, *The Forger's Spell*, *Down the Great Unknown*, and the Edgar Award-winning *The Rescue Artist*. A former chief science writer at *The Boston Globe*, he has written for *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, among others.

As told in [The Writing of the Gods](#), The Rosetta Stone is one of the most famous objects in the world, attracting millions of visitors to the British museum every year, and yet most people don't really know what it is. Discovered in a pile of rubble in 1799, this slab of stone proved to be the key to unlocking a lost language that baffled scholars for centuries.

Carved in ancient Egypt, the Rosetta Stone carried the same message in different languages – in Greek using Greek letters, and in Egyptian using picture-writing called hieroglyphs. Until its discovery, no one in the world knew how to read the hieroglyphs that covered every temple and text and statue in Egypt.

Dominating the world for thirty centuries, ancient Egypt was the mightiest empire the world had ever known, yet everything about it – the pyramids, mummies, the Sphinx – was shrouded in mystery. Whoever was able to decipher the Rosetta Stone, and learn how to read hieroglyphs would solve that mystery and fling open a door that had been locked for two thousand years.

Two brilliant rivals set out to win that prize. One was English, the other French, at a time when England and France were enemies and the world's two great superpowers. [The Writing of the Gods](#) chronicles this high-stakes intellectual race in which the winner would win glory for both himself and his nation.

An engrossing account of the 20-year competition that followed [the discovery of the Rosetta Stone].... Dolnick exuberantly captures the frustrations and triumphs of scholars as they puzzle out the meaning of long-dead runes. – *New York Times Book Review*  
[Dolnick] does a masterful job of guiding the reader through the labyrinth of false starts, wrong turns, and dead ends that prefaced a fuller understanding of the symbols.... [The Writing of the Gods](#) is an engrossing account of one of the greatest breakthroughs in archaeological history, one that brought a dead language, and a buried culture, back to life. – *Christian Science Monitor*

An entertaining account of a great intellectual achievement. – *The Economist*  
Dolnick treats [Young and Chamopillon's] efforts like a thriller, with both men making game-changing breakthroughs, benefiting from shrewd guesses, and being hampered by preconceptions or bad luck. While the codebreaking chapters captivate, the supporting material – covering the development of writing, the history and culture of ancient Egypt, Napoleon's military campaigns in the region, the academic milieu of the early 19th century and more – can be every bit as entertaining. – *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

[Dolnick] does a first-rate job of storytelling; his scenes are vivid and his cast of characters wide-ranging. Too, he writes with wit. – *New York Journal of Books*

[Dolnick] has a remarkable ability to explain and contextualize complex topics and create compelling, lucid nonfiction narratives.... Reading [The Writing of the Gods](#) is like tagging along for a dazzling intellectual journey of discovery, akin to listening to a fascinating lecture. Dolnick brings this period of history to life in the same way the Rosetta Stone revived ancient Egypt. – *BookPage*, starred review

Stimulating.... Dolnick lucidly explains the complex steps taken to decipher the relic, and offers brisk and enlightening history lessons on the first appearances of written language, Roman emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the fourth century, the Scientific Revolution, and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. The result is an immersive and knowledgeable introduction to one of archaeology's greatest breakthroughs. – *Publisher's Weekly*

Dolnick presents a fast-paced intellectual adventure for general readers that surveys the invention of writing and the processes of deciphering and decoding. Highly recommended for anyone who relishes challenging puzzles. – *Library Journal*  
Prolific nonfiction author and prior science writer at the *Boston Globe*, Dolnick's prose is beautifully lyrical, and will engage even those unfamiliar with the three converging subjects of ancient Egypt, the Rosetta Stone, and Europe during the Napoleonic Wars. – *Booklist*

Dolnick provides an exciting narrative of the journey to legibility .... Dolnick makes complicated linguistic challenges not only comprehensible, but also especially vivid for readers new to the subject, and, as in his previous books, his enthusiasm is infectious. – *Kirkus Reviews*

A riveting portrait of empires both ancient and modern, [The Writing of the Gods](#) is an unparalleled look at the culture and history of ancient Egypt and a fascinating, fast-paced story of human folly and discovery unlike any other.

Dictionaries / Linguistics / Sign Language

[The Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language](#) edited by Clayton Valli, illustrated by Peggy Swartzel Lott, Daniel Renner, & Rob Hills (Gallaudet University Press)

Created by an unparalleled board of experts led by renowned ASL linguist and poet Clayton Valli, [The Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language](#) contains over 3,000 illustrations. Valli was Assistant Professor in the Master's Interpreting Program at Gallaudet University, a renowned linguist who coauthored the *Linguistics of American Sign Language*, and also a gifted ASL poet.

The comprehensive introduction lays the groundwork for learning ASL by explaining in plain language the workings of ASL syntax and structure. It also offers examples of idioms and describes the antecedents of ASL, its place in the Deaf community, and its meaning in Deaf culture. This extraordinary reference also provides a special section on ASL classifiers and their use. Readers will find complete descriptions of the various classifiers and examples of how to use these integral facets of ASL.

[The Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language](#) is a learning tool for beginning signers, a reference tool for more advanced signers, and also an English vocabulary reference for Deaf people. The signs are arranged in alphabetical order by the English word most commonly associated with each sign. This allows dictionary users to find the signs they need more easily. The rest of the English words associated with a given sign (in other words, the synonyms) are listed under the main entry, and all the words appear in the index.

Each sign illustration, including depictions of fingerspelling when appropriate, incorporates a complete list of English synonyms. A full, alphabetized English index enables users to cross-reference words and signs throughout the volume.

[The Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language](#) is an outstanding ASL reference for all instructors, students, and users of ASL. The paperback edition does not include the DVD found in the hardcover edition.

**Cedric Robinson**: The Time of the Black Radical Tradition,  
1<sup>st</sup> edition by Joshua Myers (Black Lives Series: Polity Press)

Cedric Robinson (1940-2016) – political theorist, historian, and activist – was one of the greatest black radical thinkers of the twentieth century. In **Cedric Robinson**, the first major book to tell his story, Joshua Myers shows how Robinson's work interrogated the foundations of western political thought, modern capitalism, and changing meanings of race.

Myers is Assistant Professor in the Department of Afro-American Studies at Howard University.

Tracing the course of Robinson's journey from his early days as an agitator in the 1960s to his publication of such seminal works as *Black Marxism*, Myers in **Cedric Robinson** frames Robinson's mission as aiming to understand and practice opposition to 'the terms of order.' In so doing, Robinson excavated the Black Radical tradition as a form of resistance that imagined that life on wholly different terms was possible.

In the 2000 preface to his best-known text, *Black Marxism*, Robinson describes Black Radical tradition as "an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle." Enslavement, inasmuch as it provided the occasion for struggle over and within a particular kind of existence, was ultimately a challenge that required Africans to remain connected, to create the records – the collective intelligence – of those struggles and prior knowledges in order to continuously apply them to the realization of an otherwise to that existence and a more familiar mode of being. Robinson's conception of the Black Radical tradition as that accretion is consistent with the worldviews of enslaved African ancestors. And they might easily find direct familial and ancestral ties between Robinson, an African with roots in Alabama, and the peoples of the region who conceived of the Kongo cosmogram, who later found themselves in the western hemisphere in large numbers, helping to produce the artistic and spiritual cultures that have been collected under the designation, 'black Atlantic.'

'Significances, meanings, and relations' are deeper than the order of time and are the points of departure that **Cedric Robinson** takes in thinking with the life of Cedric Robinson. As an intellectual biography, it speaks to and with the larger themes and considerations of his work, while thinking through the contexts that made the work, the moments that made the worker. It is chronological but also thematic. The first few chapters look at the foundation of Robinson's relations. They are followed by chapters that consider the meanings of his work. And a final chapter considers the significance of it all. **Cedric Robinson** is imagined as a contribution to the larger constellation of that work, an offering to future workers, an entry into Robinson's roll of life.

In Robinson's practice of Black Study, readers are offered the gift of seeing how those peoples who were excluded from history, and thus excluded from time, found ways to realize themselves. All time is not closure or management, reducible to spatial logics of colonialism and exploitation – all time is not order. This is the Black Radical tradition, living beyond the order of time, finding ways to live again.

According to Myers, Robinson arrived onto the scene at perhaps one of the most critical junctures of western time: the mid-twentieth century. It was a moment where the hegemonic grip of western world order – the order that he would come to understand as constructed on a myth – was loosening thanks to the combined pressures of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements across the globe. In the wake of this moment in *Black Marxism*, Robinson wrote: "Everywhere one turns or cares to look, the signs of a collapsing world are evident; at the center, at its extremities, the systems of western power are fragmenting... the characteristic tendency of capitalist societies to amass violence for domination and exploitation [created] a diminishing return, a dialectic, in its use. `Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.'"

Robinson's sojourn through the conceptual worlds of Black Study began in earnest in the early 1960s in the Bay Area, continued through the Midwestern and Northeastern United States, and into the United Kingdom, before finding settlement in Santa Barbara, California, where he served as the director of the Center of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It was there where he and his partner Elizabeth, and daughter Najda, made their home, where all five of his books were released, and where the communities of struggle that would significantly mark their lives – both on and off campus – were based.

According to Myers in [Cedric Robinson](#), it would be impossible, however, to understand this intellectual journey by solely focusing upon the academic contexts of the work. The journey must also take into account what it meant to be raised by Black folks from Alabama. It has to think through the meaning of the organizing tradition of 1960s Oakland and the larger momentum of Black revolutionary work that spawned networks of activists, thinkers, and artists in places like Detroit and New York. It has to search for meaning in the African-diasporic connections that were forged in travels to Mexico, southern Africa, and the United Kingdom. Black Study occurred there as well. And Robinson saw in real, Black space and in communal time the ways in which structures of thought that sought to understand and make realizable certain outcomes for Black peoples were deeply, even fatally, flawed. It was a form of study that was with rather than simply of Black peoples, a way of realizing that managed to offer more than the scientific veneer of objectivity in favor of a sort of rigor and deep thinking that was grounded in solidarity.

And then, according to Myers, it was Robinson, again in 2013, who reminded people that Black modes of living in the forms of spirituals were often dismissed as 'noise,' and

that what was assumed as 'noise' had evoked and invoked life. He told people to find that noise, to see the ways that this noise has been, at root, what they are.

*Cedric J. Robinson finally has found a worthy biographer in Joshua Myers. This book will remind you why we must urgently read and re-read Robinson's work. A tour de force.* – Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

*Joshua Myers has written a necessary and much needed text to broaden and deepen our understanding of the life, thought, and practice of Cedric Robinson.* – Corey D. B. Walker, Wake Forest University

In the era of Black Lives Matter, resistance is as necessary as ever, and Robinson's contribution only gains in importance. [Cedric Robinson](#), a powerful work, is essential reading for anyone wanting to learn more about it.

History / Global / Africa

## [Born in Blackness](#): Africa, Africans, and the Making of the Modern World, 1471 to the Second World War by Howard W. French (Liveright Publishing Corporation)

Revealing the central yet intentionally obliterated role of Africa in the creation of modernity, [Born in Blackness](#) vitally reframes our understanding of world history.

Traditional accounts of the making of the modern world afford a place of primacy to European history. Some credit the fifteenth-century Age of Discovery and the maritime connection it established between West and East; others the accidental unearthing of the 'New World.' Still others point to the development of the scientific method, or the spread of Judeo-Christian beliefs; and so on, ad infinitum. The history of Africa, by contrast, has long been relegated to the remote outskirts of our global story. What if, instead, we put Africa and Africans at the very center of our thinking about the origins of modernity?

In a sweeping narrative spanning more than six centuries, Howard W. French does just that, for [Born in Blackness](#) vitally reframes the story of medieval and emerging Africa, demonstrating how the economic ascendancy of Europe, the anchoring of democracy in the West, and the fulfillment of so-called Enlightenment ideals all grew out of Europe's dehumanizing engagement with the 'dark' continent. In fact, French reveals, the first impetus for the Age of Discovery was not – as we are so often told, even today – Europe's yearning for ties with Asia, but rather its centuries-old desire to forge a trade in gold with legendarily rich Black societies sequestered away in the heart of West Africa.

French is a professor of journalism at Columbia University and former New York Times bureau chief in the Caribbean and Central America, West and Central Africa, Tokyo, and Shanghai.

Creating a historical narrative that begins with the commencement of commercial relations between Portugal and Africa in the fifteenth century and ends with the onset of World War II, [Born in Blackness](#) interweaves precise historical detail with poignant, personal reportage. In so doing, it dramatically retrieves the lives of major African historical figures, from the unimaginably rich medieval emperors who traded with the Near East and beyond, to the Kongo sovereigns who heroically battled seventeenth-century European powers, to the ex-slaves who liberated Haitians from bondage and profoundly altered the course of American history.

While French cogently demonstrates the centrality of Africa to the rise of the modern world, [Born in Blackness](#) becomes, at the same time, a far more significant narrative, one that reveals a long-concealed history of trivialization and, more often, elision in depictions of African history throughout the last five hundred years. As French shows, the achievements of sovereign African nations and their now-far-flung peoples have time and again been etiolated and deliberately erased from modern history. As the West ascended, their stories – siloed and piecemeal – were swept into secluded corners, thus setting the stage for the hagiographic ‘rise of the West’ theories that have endured to this day.

*The way we think about history is entirely wrong, says Howard W French at the start of this magnificent, powerful and absorbing book.... This is not a comfortable or comforting read, but it is beautifully done; a masterpiece even.... French writes with the elegance you would expect from a distinguished foreign correspondent, and with the passion of someone deeply committed to providing a corrective. – Peter Frankopan, The Observer*  
[Born in Blackness](#) is laced with arresting nuggets... Filled with pain, but also with pride: pride at the endurance of oppressed millions, at the many slave uprisings and rebellions culminating in the Haitian revolution, which defeated ‘the idea of Black slavery itself,’ and in the cultural riches of the African diaspora... Searing, humbling and essential reading. – Nigel Cliff, New York Times Book Review

*There are few words that can express the resounding impact of French’s breathtaking work on the known historiography of African and African American history... Highly recommended for any audience. – Monique Martinez, Library Journal*

*A Black journalist reframes modern history by restoring Africa to its rightful place at the center of the story... This meticulously researched book eloquently debunks conventional understanding of European conquest... A fascinating retelling of modern history that restores Africa to its rightful place. – Kirkus Reviews*

*What happens if we put Africa and Africans into the center of our thinking about the origins of the modern world? In this powerful account of six centuries of global history,*

Howard W. French takes us on a journey that effectively undermines many of the almost mythical narratives that we have been taught about the sources of Europe's strength, wealth and modernity. Pushing back against a prevailing current of purposeful forgetting, French shows that Europe's 'Great Divergence' would have been unimaginable without Africans; their wealth, capital and labor played an important role in powering the emerging global economy. To understand the world we live in today, this book is a must-read. – Sven Beckert, author of *Empire of Cotton*

**[Born in Blackness](#)** charges into the roiling debates about how modernity began, with a powerfully argued case for placing Africa and Africans at the heart of the process, giving voice to a silenced history. – Kwame Anthony Appiah, author of *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*

**[Born in Blackness](#)** is a brilliant reworking of the conventional wisdom about the rise of the Modern World. This deeply researched and elegantly written book rewinds the tape past Christopher Columbus, and shows how the tragic relationship between Africa and Europe, which began in the 15th century, created modernity as we know it. – Annette Gordon-Reed, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*

Howard French's **[Born in Blackness](#)** is a vitally important retelling of a story from which Africa and Africans have long been willfully excluded: it renders visible their role as leading actors in the making of modernity. This is essential reading for anyone with an interest in world history. – Amitav Ghosh, author of *Gun Island* and the *Ibis Trilogy*

**[Born in Blackness](#)** does for traditional Eurocentric history what Copernicus did for the pieties of his time when he showed that the Earth revolved around the Sun and not vice versa. Africa, its peoples, and its wealth, the superbly qualified Howard French shows us, are far more central to the formation of the modern world than we usually think. And, unlike Copernicus, French has been to all the places he writes about. – Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold's Ghost: A story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*

**[Born in Blackness](#)** is an urgent, searching and imaginative retelling of the decisive role of Africa and Africans in shaping world history. French covers a huge amount of ground with style, asking vital new questions and foregrounding the role of Africans in creating – and fighting for – the world of democratic freedoms which is now taken for granted. – Toby Green, author of *A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution*

With this powerful retelling of global history, Howard W. French challenges us to discard long-accepted mythologies that have obscured the foundations of our contemporary world. Through a riveting account of the centrality of Africa and Africans in shaping economic systems and political thought, he offers a capacious and compelling

explanation for how this world came to be. [Born in Blackness](#) offers us a new understanding of our common history, and reminds us that confronting that past is precondition for the construction of a different future. – Laurent Dubois, author of *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*

A necessary book. A compelling narrative that systematically dismantles one prop after another in the academy's master narrative of how Europe brought light to 'the Dark Continent' over the past six centuries. Howard W. French has written a worthy successor to Du Bois' *The World and Africa*. – Mahmood Mamdani, author of *Neither Settler nor Native*

It is not outrageous to call [Born in Blackness](#) a significant rewriting of the history of the world. The book is epic history on the grand scale. In the lofty tradition of bold, revisionist narratives, it reframes the story of gold and tobacco, sugar and cotton – and of the greatest 'commodity' of them all, the twelve million people who were brought in chains from Africa to the 'New World,' whose reclaimed lives shed a harsh light on the present world.

History / Military / Women

## [Wings of Gold](#): The Story of the First Women Naval Aviators by Beverly Weintraub (Lyons Press)

According to [Wings of Gold](#), on Feb. 2, 2019, the skies over Maynardville, Tennessee, filled with the roar of four F/A-18F Super Hornets streaking overhead in close formation. In each aircraft were two young female flyers, executing the first all-woman Missing Man Formation flyover in Navy history in memory of Captain Rosemary Mariner – groundbreaking Navy jet pilot, inspiring commander, determined and dedicated leader – whose drive to ensure the United States military had its choice of the best America had to offer, both men and women, broke down barriers and opened doors for female aviators wanting to serve their country.

Back in 1972, Mariner and her five fellow graduates from the inaugural group of female Naval Aviators were elected for Navy flight training as an experiment and racked up an impressive roster of achievements, and firsts: first woman to fly a tactical jet aircraft; first woman to command an aviation squadron; first female Hurricane Hunter; first pregnant Navy pilot; plaintiff in a federal lawsuit that overturned limits on women's ability to fulfill their military duty.

Leading by example, and by confrontation when necessary, they challenged deep skepticism within the fleet and blazed a trail for female aviators wanting to serve their country equally with their male counterparts.

Author of [Wings of Gold](#), Beverly Weintraub, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist whose coverage of aviation, education and social services has appeared in the *New York Daily News* and the *Washington Post*. She served for 10 years on the Daily News Editorial Board and is currently executive editor at The 74, a K-12 education news site. An instrument-rated private pilot, Weintraub is a member of the Ninety-Nines, International Organization of Women Pilots; serves on the board of directors of the Air Race Classic, the annual all-women cross-country airplane race; and is a five-time ARC racer.

[Wings of Gold](#) is the story of these groundbreaking female pilots' struggles and triumphs as they earned their Wings of Gold, learned to fly increasingly sophisticated jet fighters and helicopters, mastered aircraft carrier landings, served at sea and reached heights of command that would have been unthinkable less than a generation before. And it is the story of the legacy they left behind, one for which the women performing the Navy's first Missing Woman Flyover in Mariner's memory owe a debt of gratitude.

*With extensive reference notes, this is a worthy contribution to aviation, military, and women's history. – Publishers Weekly*

*Journalist and pilot Weintraub debuts with a meticulous and often infuriating chronicle of the obstacles faced by the first six women to earn their naval aviation wings in the early 1970s.... This is a fine-grained look at a critical battle in the fight for gender equality. – Publishers Weekly*

*Blending thorough research with first-hand accounts, Weintraub paints a fascinating tale of the first women pilots in the navy who eventually succeeded in overturning archaic laws and policies that stymied their careers and hurt the navy. [Wings of Gold](#) is an inspiring story about strong women who never gave up on their goal of making things better for future generations of women. – Col. Eileen Bjorkman, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), author of *Unforgotten in the Gulf of Tonkin: A Story of the U.S. Military's Commitment to Leave No One Behind**

*[Wings of Gold](#) is an inspiring motivational read for all. It is especially a motivational read for those who, frustrated by a lack of equal opportunity, seek to change the system for the better, despite the long uphill fight they might face. – Lt. Col. James G. Zumwalt, USMC (Ret.)*

*[Wings of Gold](#) is one of those books that serves as both a reference and history book while telling a compelling story of the women who paved the way in a sometimes unfriendly atmosphere. Many of the principal subjects are familiar, but there's also information that may be unfamiliar and surprising. The Source section adds great background specifics and provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the story. – Jacque Boyd, *Ninety-Nines Magazine**

Fascinating and inspiring, [Wings of Gold](#) is a motivational reference helping readers to keep fighting against the odds, whatever their field of endeavor.

Home & Garden / Crafts & Hobbies / Gardening

## [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#): A Complete Guide by Lee Reich (New Society Publishers)

What is it about fig trees that makes so many people want to grow them? And that includes many people who one might imagine wouldn't think of growing figs because they garden where winters seem to be too cold and summers seem not hot enough for this exotic fruit.

From Minnesota to Moscow, [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#) is a complete, full-color, illustrated guide to organic methods for growing delicious figs in cold climates, well outside the traditional hot, arid home of this ancient fruiting tree.

Author Lee Reich, a syndicated garden columnist, has a PhD in Horticulture from the University of Maryland and an MS in Soil Science and a BA in Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin.

Coverage includes:

- Five methods for growing figs in cold climates including overwintering.
- Cultivar selection for cool and cold climates.
- Pruning techniques for a variety of methods of growing figs in cold climates.
- Pest problems and solutions.
- Harvesting, including ways to speed ripening, identify ripe fruit, and manage an overabundance.
- Small-scale commercial fig production in cold climates.

Fresh figs are juicy, full-bodied, and filled with a honey-sweet flavor, and because truly ripe figs are highly perishable, they are only available to those who grow their own.

By choosing the right cultivars and techniques, figs can be grown across cool and cold growing zones of North America, Europe, and beyond, putting them within reach of almost every gardener. Easy and delicious — if readers can grow a houseplant, says [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#), they can grow a fig.

[Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#) is a welcome addition to our library from Lee Reich, our fruit guru. We have grown this delicious fruit on Maine's chilly coast, but Lee shows us

how to do it even better. – Barbara Damrosch and Eliot Coleman, farmers, Four Season Farm

How far insightful horticultural knowledge can take us! Lee Reich has just talked me into trying to grow figs. Plant wisdom thrives in [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#). Clear instruction, backed with appropriate choice of methods for one's location, opens the doors on fig potential. Truly, to eat a fresh fig is to dine with the gods. – Michael Phillips, Holistic Orchard Network, author, *The Apple Grower* and *The Holistic Orchard*

All gardeners need to take a look at [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#) by Lee Reich. There is so much information applicable to growing any fruit that even if you don't want to grow figs, you won't regret the read. Here is an example of the perfect 'how-to' gardening book. It is clearly written, with so many beautiful photos and expertly drawn illustrations, it could be a coffee table book and not just the next have-to-have gardening book. By all means, add [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#) to the Lee Reich shelf in your bookcase. If you don't have such a collection get on it, ASAP! – Jeff Lowenfels, Lord of the Roots, author, *DIY Autoflowering Cannabis*

For those who like to push the standard boundaries of suggested growing zones, Lee Reich's tribute to the mighty fig is a monumental and easily digestible resource. From pruning to pests to pairings, Reich's open love letter to the fig is full of insider tips on how to bring the familiar taste of the Mediterranean closer to home. Warning: There may be a Brown Turkey or Italian Honey in your hoop house future! – Jules Torti, editor-in-chief, *Harrowsmith* magazine, author, *Trail Mix: 920km on the Camino de Santiago*

Happily for fruit lovers, expert grower Lee Reich has turned his attention to figs. This latest volume offers multiple methods for producing a bountiful fig harvest in frigid climes, even without a greenhouse. You'll learn how to grow the luscious fruit in containers or in the ground, how to prune judiciously, choose the right cultivar, and much more. This detailed guide is yet another of Reich's indispensable additions to the gardener's bookshelf. Be sure to add it to your own library. – Rebecca Martin, *Mother Earth News* magazine

Finally, a complete book about [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#). Lee Reich is a master at growing food, especially fruits, and his extensive personal knowledge about figs comes through clearly in his writings. This book covers every aspect and even shows you how to grow figs in five different ways to meet every gardener's needs. I've been following Lee's work for some time and trust what he says. He has a rare knack for combining science and practicality to come up with a simple way to garden. Follow his advice for growing figs and you are guaranteed success. – Robert Pavlis, author, *Garden Myths*, *Building Natural Ponds*, and *Soil Science for Gardeners*, owner, *Aspen Grove Gardens*

For a cold climate grower like me who does not yet grow figs. Lee Reich has made it seem easy and given me a fig growing goal. Some of his five techniques to grow figs

way outside their usual growing areas would apply to other fruit as well, expanding the list of fruit to grow in your backyard or homestead. Plus the techniques open up vast areas of the planet to growing fresh figs. Finally Lee's FIGurative puns put a jovial touch to the text. – Stefan Sobkowiak, The Permaculture Orchard YouTube Channel

Lee Reich has written the definitive fig book! If you want to experience the bliss of eating a perfectly ripe fig fresh from your own tree – a delight that has to be experienced to be believed – this book will show you how. If you thought your climate was too cold for figs, his clear and well-illustrated instructions on different methods for overwintering fig trees will change your mind. With detailed information on the biology of these unique trees and on the types of figs, along with clear instructions on how to prune them, there is plenty here for novice and experienced fig growers alike. – Linda Gilkeson, author, *Backyard Bounty*

If readers already grow figs, [Growing Figs in Cold Climates](#) will help them grow better or more figs, or be able to manage them more easily. If they haven't yet experienced the rewards of growing figs, they have a treat in store. A love letter to the fig, the book provides clear and complete instructions on choosing and growing figs.

Philosophy / Culture / Humor

## [Dave Chappelle and Philosophy](#): When Keeping It Wrong Gets Real edited by Mark Ralkowski ( Pop Culture and Philosophy, Vol. 1: Open Universe)

Dave Chappelle's life and career raise a wide range of philosophical questions about race, gender, the ethics of humor, the problems with cancel culture, and American politics and history. Chappelle says that as an artist his aim is to 'reveal people to themselves,' and he insists on absolute artistic freedom for comedians. This, according to editor Mark Ralkowski, makes some people uncomfortable, while others love it. [Dave Chappelle and Philosophy](#) treats it as an invitation to think about some of the most urgent moral and political questions of our time.

[Dave Chappelle and Philosophy](#) is a collection of 29 wide-ranging essays by an assortment of authors dealing with race, sex, gender, society and humor in Chappelle's work. Ralkowski, is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Honors at George Washington University.

*Dave Chappelle. Truth-teller or out of touch? Progressive or retrograde? Timeless or tired? Feminist or misogynist? Ally or apologist? Iconic or infamous? The philosophers gathered here confront these questions and more, offering readers a deeper appreciation of Chappelle's art and a better understanding of Chappelle as an artist. [Dave Chappelle and Philosophy](#) is a portrait of the artist as a middle-aged man*

and anyone interested in comedy, and potentially some who aren't, will enjoy and benefit from this book. – Sheila Lintott, Professor of Philosophy, Bucknell University  
*Hunkered down in our various ideological bunkers, we live certain in our knowledge of who's on our side and who's the enemy. Dave Chappelle is unique in his ability to make us laugh while scrambling the lines, making everyone uncomfortable. This is also what good philosophy does. Put the two together and the result is this volume, full of challenging, insightful discussion.* – Steven Gimbel, author of *Isn't That Clever: A Philosophical Account of Humor and Comedy*

[Dave Chappelle and Philosophy](#) is a wide-ranging deep dive into the most distinctive and creative comedian of our generation. Anyone interested in a deeper philosophical appreciation of Chappelle's work should read this book. – Luvell Anderson, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Syracuse University

*Whether you love Dave Chappelle or detest him, this volume is a must-read. Picking up with ponderous questions about race, sex, gender, American society, and the utility of humor that his off-controversial humor leaves hanging in the air for a thoughtful audience, these exceptional essayists offer invaluable direction to those of us bamboozled by the landscape Chappelle lays before us.* – Tom Wilk, Widener University  
*This wonderful collection approaches Chappelle as 'the most talented comedian in the world' and humor as 'one of the most valuable things in life'. Explaining why we're drawn to Chappelle's comedy despite its flaws, this remarkable study of the value of comedy, its relationship with truth, and its ties with freedom succeeds in unraveling the unique job of comedy through a close and engaging analysis of a controversial phenomenon in contemporary culture.* – Lydia Amir, Tufts University, author of *The Legacy of Nietzsche's Philosophy of Laughter*

*Whether up or down, humor cannot do without punching. In the twenty-first-century US of A, no stand-up comedian has attracted such large audiences as Dave Chappelle, whose anarchic brilliance and scorching satire have been the source of much controversy, commentary, commendation, and commercial success. In this essay collection, twenty-nine scholars discuss Chappelle's artistry from a fistful of ethico-political and socio-cultural perspectives.* – Giorgio Baruchello and Ársæll Már Arnarsson, authors of *Humour and Cruelty*

Challenging and insightful like its subject, [Dave Chappelle and Philosophy](#) is a wonderful collection of essays on the greatest comedian of our time.

Philosophy / History / Science

[Living as a Bird](#) by Vinciane Despret, translated by Helen Morrison (Polity Press)

In the first days of spring, birds undergo a spectacular metamorphosis. After a long winter of migration and peaceful coexistence, they suddenly begin to sing with all their

might, varying each series of notes as if it were an audiophonic novel. They cannot bear the presence of other birds and begin to threaten and attack them if they cross a border, which might be invisible to human eyes but seems perfectly tangible to birds. Is this display of bird aggression just a pretence, a game that all birds play? Or do birds suddenly become territorial – and, if so, why?

By attending carefully to the ways that birds construct their worlds and ornithologists have tried to understand them, Vinciane Despret in [Living as a Bird](#) sheds fresh light on the activities of both and, at the same time, enables us to become more aware of the multiple worlds and modes of existence that characterize the planet humans share in common with birds and other species.

Despret is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Liège.

According to Stéphane Durand in a postscript to [Living as a Bird](#), Despret listens to the blackbird singing and to ornithologists thinking. Countering the trend of a science in a hurry to promulgate great universal laws, and to jump, far too quickly, to the conclusion that nature is simply a jungle where the notion of the survival of the fittest holds sway, Vinciane advances tentatively, one step at a time. She observes the ideas of ornithologists in the same way that ornithologists observe birds. She calls for researchers who are ready to observe tirelessly, who are not afraid to hesitate or to suspend judgment, and who take the time to allow the smallest differences to emerge, the most modest particularities to become apparent. Vinciane explores the labyrinth of their theories. She is on the lookout for ideas, hunting them down, and, as she writes, we see them appear, evolve, disappear, and sometimes reappear once again. There is a kind of ecology of ideas at work in [Living as a Bird](#). Vinciane pays attention to whatever attracts the attention of these scientists: a supercharged attention which enables the subtle diversity of things, of beings and of ideas to express itself.

According to Baptiste, Morizot in the other postscript to [Living as a Bird](#), Despret's book is full of differences of opinion, disagreements, ongoing debates. 'So, we might say, we were well and truly taken for a ride. It wasn't a book about birds, but about the scientists who talk about them, about scientific controversies.' But, no, there is no denying it, this is indeed a book about birds, first of all because it is a book for birds. Not in a militant sense ('Stand up for birds!' – Yes, indeed, but who would disagree?). More in the way we might say 'It's for you' when we give someone a present. And, yet, birds cannot even read.

Despret sets out not to create new knowledge about birds but instead to transform the hitherto epistemological status of that knowledge. Previously firmly lodged in the uncompromising grip of explanations, governed by the competitive and subtractive logic typical of mainstream natural sciences, she has relocated it and incorporated it

into the multicolored and cosmopolitan marketplace of interpretation, one characterized by cooperation and integration.

Despret has substituted an approach based on explanations for a hermeneutic one. This is one of the unusual aspects of [Living as a Bird](#) which sets out to clarify without seeking to explain, which draws on the various ornithological attempts at explanation in order to defuse them as 'scientific explanations' – that is to say, definitive and exclusive ones – and to hijack them, in the way a plane might be hijacked, transforming them instead into interpretations which accumulate and adjust to each other instead of canceling each other out. Explanations stifle each other by competitive exclusion, whereas interpretations interlink, play with each other. Here, explaining an aspect of animal behavior is not about finding the true law of nature, the primary cause, the ultimate equation, but instead about setting the scene for an ongoing debate on all possible meanings. Traditional history of science is often a graveyard for dead ideas. In [Living as a Bird](#), it is a flourishing domain.

By following this route, it is through the ongoing human debate on the meaning of their behaviors that the living demonstrate that they are not composed of stupid and ignorant matter but that they are in fact much more than that, a supermatter with powers that are beyond our understanding, yet without being supernatural.

[Living as a Bird](#) is not therefore aimed at us. It does not conclude with lessons on humans drawn from observations of scientific controversies. Birds are not held up as a mirror for humans; the subject is not pinned on to planet 'Homo' by the gravitational force of anthroponarcissism (like each time humans talk about animals only to end up talking about themselves). On the contrary, here birds are enriched with all the resources of human discussion: the relationship of means to ends is reversed. It is no longer a matter of salvaging the delicacy of the nightingale or the cunning of the crow as heraldic devices to enrich human symbolism, but one of kidnapping the investigation, science, human thinking, in order to enrich non-human life.

This gives deeper dimensions to the experience of a bird's song, to the three notes of the chiffchaff. Animals no longer need to be capable of handling tools, of counting, of being 'more intelligent than was thought' in order to have inexhaustible depths. The most stereotyped behavior, the most unsophisticated song, is already more complicated to interpret than human capabilities permit. It has the infinite depths of Talmudic debate. Thus, according to Despret, living creatures are overflowing with acephalous intelligence.

*Without forgetting the dangers of violence and extinction, Despret's writing always makes the world more generous, open, surprising, and generative. [Living as a Bird](#) inquires about and engages with 'territory' and 'territoriality' in exquisite specificity and concrete detail, exploring these birds, these writers and observers of birds, these*

*sounds and calls, these rituals and affects. In the process, this potent little book describes and proposes a polyphonic score. Readers learn how to pay attention, to attend, to tune the senses and to open the imagination. What emerges are bird-rich, science-rich stories that are less deterministic, less self-satisfied with Explanation, more open to manoeuvre, both for birds and for humans who tune themselves to complex avian performances of their becoming in place. – Donna Haraway, Professor Emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz*

[Living as a Bird](#) is amazing, entrancing, mind-blowing and instructive.

Psychology / Self-Help

## [The Wisdom of Your Body](#) by Hillary L. McBride PhD (Brazos Press)

Many people have a complicated relationship with their bodies. Maybe readers have been made to feel ashamed of their bodies or like they aren't good enough. Some bodies are riddled with stress, pain, or the effects of trauma. Maybe they think of their bodies as an accessory to what they believe they really are – a mind. Maybe their experiences with racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, or sizeism have made them believe their bodies aren't the right kind of body. Whatever the reason, many don't feel at home in their bodies. But being disconnected from oneself as a body means being disconnected from truly living and from the interconnection that weaves everyone together.

Psychologist and award-winning researcher Hillary McBride in [The Wisdom of Your Body](#) explores the broken and unhealthy ideas readers have inherited about their bodies. Embodiment is the way people are in the world, and embodiment is heavily influenced by who they have been allowed to be. McBride shows that many people feel disembodied due to colonization, racism, sexism, and patriarchy – destructive systems that rank certain bodies as less valuable, beautiful, or human than others.

McBride is a licensed therapist, an award-winning researcher, and a sought-after speaker who specializes in embodiment. She is an adjunct professor in the department of counseling psychology at the University of British Columbia and has a private counseling practice in Vancouver.

According to McBride in [The Wisdom of Your Body](#), embracing embodiment can liberate people from destructive systems. As readers come to understand the world around them and the stories they have been told, they see that their perspectives of reality often limit how they see and experience themselves, each other, and what they believe is Sacred. Instead of the body being a problem to overcome, their bodies can be the place where they feel most alive, the seat of their spirituality and wisdom.

[The Wisdom of Your Body](#) offers a compassionate, healthy, and holistic perspective on

embodied living. Weaving together research, stories from her work as a therapist, and deeply personal narratives of healing from a life-threatening eating disorder, a near-fatal car accident, and chronic pain, McBride invites readers to reclaim the wisdom of the body and to experience the wholeness that has been there all along. End-of-chapter questions and practices are included.

[The Wisdom of Your Body](#) is the exact message I wish someone had given me thirty years ago. This book will help set people free. – Jen Hatmaker, New York

Times bestselling author of *Fierce, Free, and Full of Fire* and *Of Mess and Moxie*; host of the For the Love podcast

A book offering profound healing and insight – the rare tome that can change not only individual lives but also our world. – Mike McHargue, host of The Cozy Robot Show and author of *You're a Miracle (and a Pain in the Ass)*

This book is an invitation to look deeper and to live a fully connected and embodied life. – Morgan Harper Nichols, author of *All Along You Were Blooming*

This might be the revolution for which we've all been secretly longing. [The Wisdom of Your Body](#) is a book I will be recommending to everyone. – Sarah Bessey, author

of *Jesus Feminist*, editor of the New York Times bestseller *A Rhythm of Prayer*

It is the most important work of my adulthood to learn that I am my body. This book is the indispensable tool I've been looking for. – Jedidiah Jenkins, New York Times

bestselling author of *Like Streams to the Ocean* and *To Shake the Sleeping Self*

*Soulful. Joyful.* McBride is the gentle and powerful voice that calls us back home to

ourselves. – Kate Bowler, Duke Divinity School; author of *Everything Happens for a Reason*

In [The Wisdom of Your Body](#) clinical psychologist McBride explores the ways many people inherit a broken and unhealthy understanding of the body and offers a more compassionate, healthy, and holistic perspective on embodied life.

Religion & Spirituality / Christianity

## [The Essential Summa Theologiae](#): A Reader and Commentary, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt (Baker Academic)

Saint Thomas Aquinas's masterwork, the *Summa theologiae*, can be daunting to beginners. [The Essential Summa Theologiae](#) by an expert on Aquinas's theology offers an ideal introduction.

Author Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt is professor of theology at Loyola University Maryland and a deacon of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

[The Essential Summa Theologiae](#) presents key selections from the *Summa* along with accessible commentary designed to provide background, explain key concepts, and walk readers through Aquinas's arguments. Previously published as *Holy Teaching*, this new edition has been fully revised and includes a substantial amount of new material. The book draws from the entire *Summa* and incorporates selections that focus on moral theology, providing a fuller picture of Aquinas's thought.

In the introduction, Bauerschmidt says that because the *first edition* of [The Essential Summa Theologiae](#), under the title *Holy Teaching: Introducing the "Summa Theologiae"* of St. Thomas Aquinas (2005), proved useful to people teaching Thomas Aquinas, he has produced this *second edition*. Some of the changes and additions from the *first edition* include:

First, the content is expanded, primarily with material from the *secunda pars*. In part this is in order to make the book more useful for those who want to focus on Thomas's moral teachings. But mainly it is because in the intervening fifteen years he has come to understand better what Thomas is doing in the *Summa*. His original desire was to redress somewhat the bias against the explicitly theological elements of Thomas – his writing on the Trinity or Christology, for example. What he now sees, he says, is that the second part of the *Summa* is just as theological as the first and third parts, and in a sense the first and third parts exist to give a capacious theological context for the second part, which was crucial for preparing Dominican friars for their ministry of caring for souls through the sacrament of penance.

He includes texts that give an accurate, if not exhaustive, picture of how Thomas thought about human action – what makes it good and what makes it bad. The selections from the first half of the second part contain key elements of what modern philosophers might call Thomas's 'action theory': the end-oriented or teleological nature of human action, the nature of the will and its freedom, the role of virtue and law in guiding human acts, and the role of God's grace. From the second half of the second part, which is structured around the cardinal and theological virtues, he has chosen one or more general questions on each virtue, along with some questions that show how what Thomas thinks about these virtues plays out in terms of practical questions, ranging from the toleration of heretics to the licitness of war to economic justice.

Second, Bauerschmidt identifies for each article one or more key secondary readings, in part as an attempt to show his own intellectual indebtedness. He chooses sources that he says have informed his readings, but in some cases he chooses readings that disagree with his interpretations, and some that disagree with one another, in order to initiate readers into the vast and sometimes fractious world of Aquinas interpretation.

Third, Thomas changed his mind on a number of questions, and so has Bauerschmidt. The commentary on all articles has been revised, and the changes reflect his growth in understanding Thomas over the past fifteen years. He stands by most of what he said in the *first edition* of [The Essential Summa Theologiae](#), but he has also come to a deeper understanding of how Thomas was not a unique beacon of truth in the thirteenth century; he was rather a member of a community of scholars who had their differences, but who also agreed on much. He has softened some of his judgments regarding those who disagreed with Thomas and become more aware of how much he took from predecessors and contemporaries.

*This is it: the ideal set of Summa selections for most classrooms as well as for readers who wish they could take a class on Thomas Aquinas with a professor capable of paraphrasing the Angelic Doctor, explaining and illustrating his thought while pointing to further readings both medieval and modern.* – Fred Sanders, Torrey Honors College, Biola University

*In this expanded edition of his reader and commentary, Bauerschmidt has done students of St. Thomas a tremendous service – giving them a sense of the work as a whole by zeroing in on its essential parts and showing how those parts bear on the whole. His commentary is admirably clear, replete with easily grasped examples that bring complex theological ideas back to ordinary life. An excellent resource for the classroom and for anyone interested in the thought of Thomas Aquinas.* – Jennifer A. Frey, University of South Carolina

*An indispensable learning tool for anyone who wants to come to grips with the thought of St. Thomas. The addition of crucial texts from the second part of the Summa in this second edition brings out even more Aquinas's profound vision of the unity of theological science, where moral theology is enfolded at the heart of dogmatics. Bauerschmidt's insightful introduction offers readers a fuller picture of this friar-theologian and equips them to approach his penetrating texts for themselves.* – Simon Francis Gaine, OP, Thomistic Institute Angelicum, Pontifical University of St. Thomas, Rome  
*Like Thomas Aquinas himself, Bauerschmidt here aims for pedagogy, and he attains it admirably. This carefully chosen selection of key texts from the Summa theologiae, accompanied by in-depth commentary, captures and clarifies the grand scope of this complex work for 'beginners' in theology. Expanded treatment of questions on the moral life in this revised edition especially assist the study of Aquinas's unique vision of graced human action as the way to perfect happiness found in the knowledge and love of God. As a classroom text or for personal study, this volume is an invaluable resource for students and teachers.* – Daria Spezzano, Providence College

[The Essential Summa Theologiae](#) is ideal for beginners in theology, offering an insightful introduction and clear commentary.

**Handmaid of the Lord**: Mary, the Cistercians, and Armand-Jean de Rancé by David N. Bell (Cistercian Studies Series, No 293: Cistercian Publications, Liturgical Press)

In **Handmaid of the Lord**, David N. Bell explores what Cistercian writers and preachers have said about Mary from the time of the founding fathers of the Order to Armand-Jean de Rancé, who introduced the Cistercian Strict Observance and who died in 1700.

Bell is professor emeritus of religious studies at Memorial University and a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He retired as head of the department of religious studies at the end of 2011. He has published some two dozen books, more than a hundred articles, and a great number of book reviews.

**Handmaid of the Lord** is not a history of Mary, of the Ways in which she has been portrayed, described, idealized, idolized, represented, misrepresented, and so on. There are already too many books on these subjects, Bell's concern is limited to examining what Cistercian writers and preachers have said about Mary from the time of the founding fathers of the Order to Armand-Jean de Rancé, the great Reformer, who died in 1700.

**Handmaid of the Lord** is divided into three parts. The first part, the first four chapters, presents some selective background material on Mary that is necessary for understanding where the Cistercian writers are coming from, and the sources and ideas they are using. There were two major areas of controversy, one lesser and one greater. The lesser of the two concerned the Dormition or Assumption of the Virgin, and the question of whether, at the end of her life, Mary died and was buried, and was then resurrected and her body taken up to heaven, or whether her body and soul were assumed into heaven together at the very moment of her death. The greater controversy concerned the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which, as one writer has rightly said, "occasioned what was perhaps the most prolonged and passionate debate that has ever been carried on in Catholic theology."

The next eight chapters, the second part of **Handmaid of the Lord**, examine the Marian ideas of Cistercian writers from Bernard of Clairvaux to a number of visionaries, both male and female, who take readers to the very end of the thirteenth century. There is then a gap of more than three centuries – the reasons are given at the end of chapter twelve – before readers arrive at the birth of Armand-Jean de Rancé in 1626. The final chapters – part three of the book – summarize the life of Rancé, examine the place of Mary at la Trappe, and present annotated translations of Rancé's five conferences for

three Marian feasts. An earlier version of chapters thirteen and fourteen appeared in 2013 in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, but the versions that appear here have been considerably amended and corrected.

*David Bell offers his characteristic erudition in an accessible and engaging way, leading us from the life of Mary of Nazareth to her enshrinement as model of humility and monastic life in the thought of Armand-Jean de Rancé, leader of the monastic reform at la Trappe. This journey takes an extended sojourn among the Cistercians of the 12th and 13th centuries, correcting misperceptions and putting fine detail on the common generalizations about the flourishing devotion to Mary in these centuries. And like a suspense story, the conflicts about the Immaculate Conception and other Marian controversies are recounted with verve. Concluding with his new translations of Rancé's conferences on Marian feasts, David Bell provides a magisterial work that can serve as a reference point for any of the many subjects covered here. – Anne L. Clark, Professor of Religion, University of Vermont*

*David Bell has the enviable talent of making obscure subjects not only interesting but fascinating. He ferrets out detail and anecdote to bring what we might otherwise think of as staid characters or situations to startling life, in all their living, breathing contradictions. In [Handmaid of the Lord](#) he excavates for us the place of Mary in the Cistercian tradition, touching on not only the well-known in Bernard of Clairvaux, but also the neglected, such as Stephen of Sawley and Ogier of Locedio, leading us finally to the surprising reverence given to Mary at La Trappe under the putatively stern Abbot Rancé. Bell's wit, sometimes caustic, and his erudition shine out of every page. This book will be indispensable for anyone interested in Mary's role among the Cistercians, but also in the church at large. A thoroughly enjoyable read. – Fr. Lawrence Morey, OCSO*

*Another delightful book from David Bell's prolific pen, permeated by his seemingly effortless erudition and comprehensive knowledge of Cistercian authors – both the figureheads and those who are more obscure. – Mette Birkedal Bruun, Professor of Church History, University of Copenhagen*

A masterwork, erudite, engaging and accessible, [Handmaid of the Lord](#) fills in a lot of gaps and brings the characters to life. <>  
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