

life by the clock.” But he attacks the scholarly consensus that urban merchants and traders who demanded standardized forms of time were chiefly responsible for this change. He shows that churchmen—usually seen as foot-draggers—gladly advanced the cause of time and that local aristocrats in towns and cities across Europe regarded public clocks as civic status symbols and rushed to install them. Nor was standardized time an instrument solely of workers’ oppression, Dohrn-van Rossum argues. As early as the 15th century, workmen turned it to their own advantage, using the clock to win hourly wages and limited working hours.

Despite prose charitably described—even allowing for the vagaries of translation—as uninviting, Dohrn-van Rossum paints a highly nuanced picture of time’s conquest of modern life. The old idea that time consciousness was imposed by a rising bourgeoisie intent upon reordering and rationalizing the world no longer seems solid. Dohrn-van Rossum paints a more complex (and untidy) picture of scattered and spontaneous generation; it makes time seem less our tyrant than our duly elected monarch.

—Steven Lagerfeld

**AN ISLAND OUT OF TIME:**  
*A Memoir of Smith Island in the Chesapeake.*

By Tom Horton. Norton. 352 pp. \$25

“Two things I never felt bad over—poachin’ oysters or takin’ waterfowl.” Who is speaking, a friend of the environment or one of its enemies? When it comes to the Chesapeake Bay, the answer is far from simple. The speaker is a Smith Island waterman, a member of a community that has long depended on the bay for its survival. Yet as native son and environmental journalist

Horton shows in this lyrical memoir, the watermen no longer enjoy an untroubled relationship with their home. Instead, they must deal with the fact that the bay is, as Horton observes, “a world-class resource, polluted big time, and now the object of unprecedented restoration efforts.”

But Horton’s main concern is not with the politics of conservation. It is with the interconnectedness of people who have for generations lived as intertwined with one another as the salt marshes are with the bay. As one islander says, “You know just how to avoid an argument, and you know just how to start one.” Sustaining this balance is a deep sense of tradition—some Smith Island families go back to the 1600s. Only recently has modern life intruded: electricity in 1949, telephone lines to the mainland in 1951. While younger islanders struggle with the enticements of the outside world, pattern and routine remain strong among the older. As one remarks, “I’m 55, and I’ve been crabbing right here for more than 40 years. This boat is nearly the same age. . . . If you were to put me in a new boat, I don’t think I would even know how to crab.”

Still, hovering over Horton’s vivid account is the clash between environmental activists and communities that, like this one, are part of the “ecosystem” the activists are crusading to save. The waterman who doesn’t regret poaching oysters or taking waterfowl tells Horton how “one freezing winter we sent up to Crisfield for corn and fed thousands of starving redheads [ducks] right off the stern of our boats.” Such people should be heeded when they protest. “Whenever you make a law that applies to everywhere,” the same waterman says, “it can’t apply over here. We got no industry and no farmland—just our marsh and the water, and nobody takes care of us but ourselves.”

—Debbie Lim

## Contemporary Affairs

**THE SOCIAL MISCONSTRUCTION OF REALITY:**

*Validity and Verification in the Scholarly Community.*

By Richard F. Hamilton. Yale Univ. Press. 278 pp. \$32.50

Mozart was buried in a pauper’s grave. The Duke of Wellington said “the Battle of

Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.” Protestant Christianity nurtured the “spirit of capitalism.” Hitler’s greatest support came from the lower-middle class. Totalitarianism began with the Enlightenment project of reforming criminals instead of punishing them.

Are all of the above true? Or are they