

Discovered in public and private archives around Russia, the 10 diaries included here reveal drastically different strategies of remembering—and forgetting.

Some diarists found memory a deadly foe: one imprisoned farmer completed an embittered recollection of life in a labor camp, only to be shot by a firing squad a week later. Others found it easier to forget, including the simple disciple who ended with the ded-

ication, “Stalin, you is dear to us all.” Still others took refuge in the prosaic: one collective farmer recorded nothing but the daily weather and every item requisitioned, bought, or traded. Most eloquent, though, is the diary in which a year of the writer’s life is simply missing—“crossed out like an unnecessary page.” No doubt, such silences contain the loudest memories.

—Ji Park

Arts & Letters

A COMPANION TO AMERICAN THOUGHT.

Edited by Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg. Blackwell.

804 pp. \$39.95

The appearance of this book is a welcome sign that intellectual history is making a comeback in the academy—and not a moment too soon. For more than two decades, the arbiters of scholarly fashion have all but written it off. While themselves writing in the most exquisitely impenetrable jargon, social historians, pop culture enthusiasts, identity politicians, and theory-ridden ideologues have derided intellectual history as an “elitist” preoccupation that unjustly “privileges” the articulate, literate, and educated.

Yet such oddly self-contradictory criticism has never quite carried the day. During the same period, the disciplined study of intellectual history has continued to grow, attracting many of the most talented younger scholars—including the editors of this volume.

This is a work of ambitious scope, with entries on a dizzying array of subjects, from “abstract expressionism,” to “evangelicalism,” “legal realism” to “youth.” Many are long interpretive essays, contributed by eminent scholars, falling into one of three categories: individuals (Ralph Waldo Emerson, Richard Rorty); events (the Armory Show of 1913, the American Revolution); or concepts (freedom, modernism, citizenship). At its best, the book combines the factual handiness of, say, *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* with the reflectiveness of works such as the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* or Raymond Williams’s *Keywords*.

The *Companion* is not without its flaws. To borrow a comparison from the world of mag-

azines, this is a writer’s encyclopedia, not an editor’s encyclopedia. Rather than assemble a tightly edited, tucked-canvas view of American culture, Fox and Kloppenberg have contracted with notable writers, then turned them loose. Such a characteristically “post-modern” choice is not without justification. But predictably, the result is a volume as full of crosscurrents as a turbulent ocean. The question: is this a fair reflection of the contemporary academy, or does it betray a concession to esoteric concerns that is undesirable in a general reference work?

The answer is: both. Many of the essays are masterfully done, precisely because they go beyond the conventional wisdom-mongering typical of encyclopedias. For example, Thomas Haskell’s essay on academic freedom is an elegantly concise goad to serious reflection. Likewise Christopher Lasch on guilt, Robert Westbrook on John Dewey, Dorothy Ross on liberalism, David Blight on Frederick Douglass, Jean Bethke Elshtain on Jane Addams, and many others.

But other essays, such as the entry on “body,” spin jargon to the point of parody: “The violences and pleasures induced by the unstable arrangements of possession, mechanics, and mediation are the landmarks of corporeality in our culture.” Similarly, the essay on virtue treats that venerable concept as little more than a battleground for gender issues—a worthwhile perspective, perhaps, but should it dominate here?

Still other essays get entangled in the scholarly disputes of the day. For instance, it is strange to see the Great Awakening discussed by a scholar vehemently committed to the position that such a religious revival never occurred. Equally odd is a treatment

of republicanism that views the concept as a retrospective invention of today's historians. Though expertly done, these insider pieces will be of limited use to readers who are not members of the guild.

In fairness to the editors, they did not create the lapses, lacunae, and lunacies of contemporary "American thought." However regrettable, the enormous gap between academic and democratic discourse is real, and this book could not help but reflect it. At the same time, the many outstanding essays collected in this volume—examples of intellectual history at its best—offer hope that the gap may yet be closed.

—Wilfred M. McClay

LEWIS CARROLL:

A Biography.

By Morton N. Cohen.

Knopf. 577 pp. \$35

Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832–98) was a stammering Oxford don, a brilliant mathematician, a superb photographer, a gifted nonsense poet, an indefatigable essayist and correspondent, and the author of some 300 published works. He also wrote two children's classics, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), which for many years dwarfed all his other achievements.



Now Carroll's fame as author of the Alice books seems dwarfed by another kind of fame—as a borderline pedophile who idolized little girls, such as Alice Liddell, the daughter of his Christ Church dean and the inspiration for his beloved heroine. Even in staid Victorian England, Carroll persuaded dozens of mothers to let him photograph their daughters—in company and alone, clothed and in the nude.

Cohen, emeritus professor of English at the City University of New York, probes these shadows judiciously, without making too much of them. Did Carroll ever molest? Cohen gives him the benefit of the doubt, suggesting that the eccentric

don's "suppressed and diverted sexual energies caused him unspeakable torments." Cohen also points out that Carroll is remembered not for suffering sexual torments (anyone can do that) but for sublimating them: "They were in all probability the source of those exceptional flashes of genius that gave the world his creative works."

—James Carman

NOT ENTITLED:

A Memoir.

By Frank Kermode.

Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 263 pp. \$23

Frank Kermode is too fine a critic to write an ordinary volume of reminiscence. Even as he locates himself at a remove from his life, the better to see its contours, he cannot help distancing himself from his written text, and cautioning readers about the truth they can expect from autobiographers: "The percentage of truth we leave out may after all show through somewhere, even if we fake the record."

To start with the plain facts: Kermode was born on the Isle of Man in 1919 to a family of modest means. He attended Liverpool University, served in the British navy during World War II, and taught literature for the next four decades—at Durham, Reading, Manchester, Bristol, University College (London), and Cambridge, as well as other institutions abroad. He worked as a journalist, became literary editor of *Encounter*, and was wounded in the heated public skirmish that saw the revelation of CIA funding of that journal.

He was wounded too in the critical wars over the ascendancy of "the new French approaches" to the study of literature. About these innovations, he is entirely sober: "The academy has long preferred ways of studying literature which actually permit or enjoin the study of something else in its place, and the success of the new French approaches has in many quarters come close to eliminating the study of literature altogether."

He won great fame as an astute reader of literature and was knighted for his achievement in 1991. The fame is only glancingly conveyed, and the knighthood goes unmentioned in the book.

Upon these plain facts, Kermode's memory and imagination work their magic. "The action of memory," he writes, "depends on the