

lege, has long been recognized as one of the world's foremost Dead Sea Scroll scholars. With skill worthy of a spy-thriller writer, Vermes recounts the "revolutionary" action taken in 1988, when the *Biblical Archaeology Review* published a computer-aided reconstruction of various smuggled fragments circulating among privileged scholars. With the scrolls thus effectively "liberated" from the clutches of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the official scroll editors, the pace of translation increased exponentially, leading to this present volume.

Are the scrolls worth the wait? Biblical scholars will no doubt be disappointed. With no sure way to establish the scrolls' provenance, questions regarding the biblical canon remain unresolved, even though the Cave I version of the Book of Isaiah predates the oldest previously known version by a thousand years. The Qumran scrolls quote freely from a variety of Scriptural sources and thus shed little light on what constitutes the "true" or original Scripture. The value of the scrolls lies more in the tantalizing glimpses they yield of the Qumran community that created them.

Included among the documents is an elaborate codex of laws known as the Community Rule, describing the hierarchy of the society from the Master or Teacher of Righteousness (at one time mistakenly thought to be Jesus of Nazareth), to the lesser Guardians or Teachers (who interpreted liturgical matters and maintained discipline and order), and finally to the Disciples, who strove to follow the holy way of the community. Other scrolls deal with the scheduling of daily events in the community temple, liturgical calendars and lists of prayers, and a wealth of scriptural writings and attendant commentary. There are many fragments of Scriptural text not found in present-day bibles (Vermes calls them "Biblically Based Apocryphal Works"), as well as a badly deteriorated document known as the War Scroll. The War Scroll either describes a battle that has already taken place (perhaps the final battle of the Israelites against the Kittim from the Book of Daniel) or prophesies a battle yet to come; in either case, it includes intriguing descriptions of contemporary war tactics similar to those used by the Romans.

The massive work of translating this material clearly signals only the beginning of scholarly engagement with the contents.

Vermes sides with those who think the scrolls community was an Essene sect, described in the First Book of the Maccabees as having been led into the Judean wilderness by the Teacher of Righteousness after a clash with the "Wicked Priest or Priests." The Essenes, says Vermes, were "devoted to the observance of 'perfect holiness'" but "lacked the pliant strength and the elasticity of thought and depth of spiritual vision which enabled rabbinic Judaism to survive and flourish." Sometime during the first century C.E., the Maccabean Essene community was reported to have been wiped out by the Romans. Of the creators of the scrolls, says Vermes, only one thing can now be said with certainty: "No one of the original occupants of Qumran returned to the caves to reclaim their valuable manuscripts."

—James Carman

**FIVE LOST CLASSICS:  
*Tao, Huang-Lao, and Yin-Yang  
in Han China.***

By Robin D. S. Yates. Ballantine Books. 464 pp. \$27.50

In 1973, Chinese archaeologists excavating tombs at a site named Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan, made an incredible discovery. Along with many exquisite works of Han dynasty art and craftsmanship, the archaeologists found a large cache of manuscripts written on bamboo and silk. These included versions of the *Laozi* and the *Yi jing* (or *Book of Changes*). Evidently the tomb was sealed in 168 B.C.E., making these the oldest extant versions of two seminal works of Chinese philosophical literature.

The unearthing of the Mawangdui manuscripts not only revolutionized the international study of ancient Chinese philosophy and history; it sparked a renaissance in Chinese archaeology. Excavations at other sites have yielded a flood of new material that has set off major scholarly debates. To bring the texts to a broad audience and to allow English-speaking readers a window onto these debates, Ballantine Books began publishing translations of the recently discovered texts in 1989. The latest in this series is a translation of five key Mawangdui texts by Yates, a professor of East Asian studies at McGill University.

Four of the texts, written on silk and appended to *Laoze B* (the second version of the *Laozi* found at Mawangdui), promise to

illuminate a mystery that has puzzled students of the Han dynasty for centuries. At the beginning of the Han, before Confucianism became the official ideology of the empire, the court was dominated by a form of Taoism known as Huang-Lao (a term that combines the names of Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor, and of Laozi, the legendary founder of Taoism). The content of Huang-Lao was unknown until 1973, because there were no received texts clearly identified with it. Most scholars agree that the four texts appended to Mawangdui *Laozi B* will help to clarify Huang-Lao,

but the consensus ends there.

Yates's is the first complete English translation of the four *Laozi B* texts (and one other text from the same cache). Some of his interpretations are controversial, especially his theory that a distinct school of philosophy, Yin-Yang, existed prior to Huang-Lao and contributed significantly to it. Of course, no translator could avoid controversy in the midst of such fertile debate. These are exciting times for anyone interested in the fundamentals of Chinese thought, and this translation provides a welcome introduction.

—Andrew Meyer

## Science & Technology

### VISUAL EXPLANATIONS:

#### *Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative.*

By Edward R. Tufte.

Graphics Press. 156 pp. \$45

Edward Tufte's first book, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (1983), revealed a curious fact about the incipient era of personal computing: unprecedented amounts of data can now be manipulated with unheard-of speed, yet users often rely on visual presentations that are ungainly and distracting. In his book, described by one reviewer as "a visual Strunk and White," Tufte did not try to create a new aesthetic for the Information Age (as publications such as *Wired* have since claimed to do). Rather, the

Yale University political scientist and statistician searched the past for graphic works exemplifying clarity, integrity, and ingenuity—such as a combined map and chart, drawn in 1861 by the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard, that traces both the advance and the retreat of Napoleon's army in Russia during his invasion of 1812. Using a thick line that changes color and grows thinner as the troops move westward, Minard vividly captured the drastic attrition that Napoleon's army suffered. It is, in Tufte's opinion, "the best graphic ever made."

Despite the comparison to Strunk and White, Tufte's works are not mainly rule books or guides. Rather, they are splendidly

