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Book Review of "Top Secret: The Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters" edited by Thomas Fensch

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SOCIAL SCIENCES

public libraries.—*Mark Ellis, Albany State Univ., GA*

Davis, William C. **Rhett: The Turbulent Life and Times of a Fire-Eater.**

Univ. of South Carolina. 2001. 615p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 1-57003-439-7. \$59.95. HIST
Explanations for the American Civil War often focus on the activities of Northern abolitionists and Southern fire-eaters, who are often blamed for their inability to compromise. This life of Robert Barnwell Rhett chronicles one of the earliest, best known, and most extreme of the fire-eaters. Director of the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies and author or editor of over 50 books, including Rhett's memoirs, *A Fire-Eater Remembers*, Davis draws on an impressive selection of primary and secondary sources to produce this well-written biography of a central figure in the development of secessionist thought. Libraries desiring a comprehensive Civil War collection will want this, but others may be content with more general volumes such as Eric H. Walther's *The Fire-Eaters (LJ 7/92)*. Recommended for larger academic and public libraries with an interest in a comprehensive Civil War collection.—*Theresa McDevitt, Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania*

Germond, Philippe (text) & Jacques Livet (photogs.). **An Egyptian Bestiary: Animals in Life and Religion in the Land of the Pharaohs.**

Thames & Hudson, dist. by Norton. 2001. 224p. photogs. bibliog. index. LC 2001088627. ISBN 0-500-51059-8. \$65. ARCHAEOLOGICAL
Animal-headed gods, scarab beetles, mummified cats, crocodiles, and bulls are ubiquitous in Egyptian life. An amazing number of birds, monkeys, fish, and insects can be easily identified from their detailed portrayals in tomb reliefs, sculpture, or manuscripts. In addition to the animals they encountered in their daily lives, Egyptians worshiped a large, mostly animal-headed pantheon ("Who was that baboon-headed god, anyway?"). Mirroring the distinction in Egyptian life, Germond (Egyptology, Univ. of Geneva) divides the book into the secular and sacred sections. Within those sections, he groups animals by species, discussing waterfowl in one section and ibis-headed gods in another. It is Livet's photographs, though, that grab the reader. Most are life-sized, with meticulous and stunning detail. For the quality of the illustrations alone, the book is a worthy addition to most collections; Germond's text raises it to the level of a critical addition to any but the most limited of Egyptian collections. And the baboon-headed god is usually Thoth, patron of writers.—*Mary Morgan Smith, Northland P.L., Pittsburgh*

Goldfield, David. **Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History.**

Louisiana State Univ. Mar. 2002. c.359p. permanent paper. photogs. index. ISBN 0-8071-2758-2. \$34.95. HIST
Goldfield (history, Univ. of North Carolina, Charlotte) focuses on how race, religion, and Civil War history have shaped Southern culture. He discusses how Southern white men turned the Civil War and the Reconstruction era into the "Lost Cause" and "Redemption" in an effort to restore the principles on which Southern society rested, namely, white supremacy and patriarchy. The first part of the book focuses on the white male establishment's efforts to maintain the status quo. Goldfield then describes how white and African American women and, finally, African American men slowly but steadily worked toward equality. The author argues that, despite a great deal of progress, the South continues to be burdened by its past, citing the recent South Carolina flag controversy as an example. Goldfield's narrative consists of short historical vignettes drawn from history, journals, diaries, and novels interspersed with his own musings and opinions, making it more a compilation of interesting stories and reflections than a social history of the period. Recommended only for academic libraries with comprehensive Southern history collections.—*Robert K. Flatley, Frostburg State Univ., MD*

Gordon, Mel. **Erik Jan Hanussen: Hitler's Jewish Clairvoyant.**

Feral House. Feb. 2002. c.296p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-922915-68-7. \$24.95. HIST
Gordon (theater arts, Berkeley) provides a detailed reconstruction of the career of the shadowy figure Erik Jan Hanussen. An Austrian Jew who went through several stage names during his adult life, Hanussen is chiefly remembered as the clairvoyant who held séances for Hitler and who was murdered by the Nazis in 1933. Gordon has assembled an impressive amount of material reconstructing not only the details of Hanussen's life but also how he marketed himself as a magician, psychic, and occultist. In the process, the reader learns a great deal about the underworld of central European carnivals, magic stage shows, and in particular the spiritualism that gained prominence after the Great War. Although his reconstruction of Hanussen's life is impressive, Gordon is on less firm ground historically, making several small errors (e.g., he refers to the Hapsburgs as the "Duo-Monarchy"). In addition, his thesis that Hitler was unelectable in 1932 until Hanussen's involvement changed the course of history is one few historians are likely to back. Recommended with reservations for public and

specialized libraries.—*Frederic Krome, Jacob Rader Marcus Ctr. of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati*

Harris, William V. **Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity.**

Harvard Univ. 2002. c.480p. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-674-00618-6. \$49.95. HIST
In this comprehensive exploration of anger and self-understanding in the classical world, Harris (Columbia Univ.; *Ancient Literacy*) endeavors to show that ancient discourses on anger control were responses to political and social conditions. Since the *Iliad*, the oldest work in Western literature, has as its theme the anger of Achilles, Harris has astutely hit upon a fascinating theme. Following a cogent effort to reconcile ancient and modern terminology, Harris catalogs the authors who wrote treatises on anger control. He then attempts to find the political elements that inspired so much writing on the subject. Looking through a lens defined by anger and rage, Harris examines the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, and Seneca and the histories of Polybius and Plutarch, among others. This includes examining the control of anger in light of the patriarchal family structure and issues of civility in the volatile relationship of slaves and masters. He concludes by pursuing the evolution of these thoughts in the early Christian traditions. Highly recommended for faculty and graduate students of classical antiquity.—*Clay Williams, Hunter Coll., New York*

★Kennedy, John & Nikita Khrushchev. **Top Secret: The Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters.**

New Century. 2002. c.574p. ed. by Thomas Fensch. bibliog. index. LC 2001117613. ISBN 0-930751-17-5. \$40. pap. ISBN 0-930751-18-3. \$25. HIST
In the early 1960s, newly elected U.S. President John F. Kennedy and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Nikita S. Khrushchev began a very private correspondence that resulted in the exchange of 120 letters. The letters deal with a wide variety of topics, from the mundane (vacations) to the profound (the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear disarmament). Held as top secret until being recently declassified, the letters reveal Khrushchev's trying to forge a relationship with Kennedy and the U.S. President at first exercising caution, then recognizing the utility of the exchanges, and finally opening up a genuine dialog with the Soviet leader. Both leaders gradually moved beyond the formalities of diplomatic language and ideological posturing and attempted to use this avenue both to gain a better understanding of the adversary and to signal actions and motives. This utterly fascinating collection will prove invaluable for those wishing to understand the

complex and contradictory people and policies of this era of the Cold War.—*Michael A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount Univ., Los Angeles*

Lehning, James R. To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic.

Cornell Univ. 2002. c.208p. illus. index. ISBN 0-8014-3888-8. \$39.95. HIST
In his latest treatise, Lehning (history, Univ. of Utah; *Peasant and French*), who has been an innovative interpreter of French history since the 1970s, displays a phenomenal grasp of primary and secondary sources dealing with the formative years of the French Third Republic (1870–1940). He skillfully uses obscure administrative correspondences and police reports to re-create the dynamics of a government struggling to implement seemingly noble political ideals. Lehning emphasizes that the early leaders of the Third Republic were haunted by the bloody legacy of the Revolution of 1789, and universal male suffrage was considered to be the panacea for French society's inclination toward violent clashes between extreme political visions. Their dreams were shattered by the realities of a body politic that could never seem to find common ground. For a more positive view of the early years of the Third Republic, see Philip Nord's *The Republican Moment* (LJ 10/15/95). Lehning has produced a graduate-level study, but every student of history would do well to read this account of a divided society that never found a basis for political unity. Recommended for academic and larger public libraries.—*Jim Doyle, Sara Hightower Regional Lib., Rome, GA*

Lepore, Jill. A Is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States.

Knopf. Feb. 2002. c.256p. illus. index. LC 2001038057. ISBN 0-375-40449-X. \$25. HIST
A nation is held together by more than political subdivisions and geography, argues Lepore (Boston Univ.; *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Democracy*), who maintains that a common language—a set of characters, numbers, and symbols used in a way unique to that nation—also creates bonds. Here she describes seven men who formed the special language that is American. Noah Webster wrote his dictionary, and William Thornton devised a universal alphabet. While Sequoyah put the Cherokee language into a written form, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet invented sign language for the deaf, and Samuel F.B. Morse invented the Morse code. Lepore also discusses how Abd al-Rahman demonstrated literacy's importance for freedom and how Alexander Graham Bell brought us the telephone. Unfortunately, Lepore doesn't always ar-

gue well for each person's contribution to her theme (e.g., al-Rahman's contribution to a national language is murky at best), and her story of early America through the development of its own language has limited appeal. This thorough, if unexciting, read is recommended only for academic libraries with concentrations in American history.—*Grant A. Fredericksen, Illinois Prairie District P.L., Metamora*

Miller, William Lee. Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography.

Knopf. 2002. c.576p. index. LC 2001038099. ISBN 0-375-40158-X. \$30. HIST
Miller (*Arguing About Slavery*) recasts Lincoln's life as a lesson in political morality. Less biography than an extended essay on the process whereby Lincoln learned to think and act in moral terms, Miller's wide-ranging probe of the sources of Lincoln's thought and the character of his action on such topics as slavery, secession, party politics, family, and community explores what being a public man meant, up to the moment of Lincoln's inauguration as President. In Miller's hands, Lincoln emerges as a purposeful learner and thinker whose moral and political compass came from Scripture, Shakespeare, the law, and "the people," to whom he listened but never pandered. Miller's great contribution is showing that Lincoln's call to public service demanded an ethical stance and that he owed his success to his moral clarity on the issues of the day. Though readers will chafe at Miller's sometimes too precious arguments, obscure asides, and unabashed admiration of Lincoln, they will appreciate his insistence that politics must be a noble calling, as Lincoln would (and did) have it. Recommended for large public and academic libraries.—*Randall M. Miller, Saint Joseph's Univ., Philadelphia*

★Plains. Vol. 13. 2 vols.

Smithsonian. (Handbook of North American Indians). 2001. 1360p. ed. by Raymond J. DeMallie. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-16-050400-7. \$101. HIST
Edited by DeMallie, director of the American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana University, this latest addition to the distinguished "Handbook of North American Indians" series documents approximately 10,000 years of Native American habitation in a geographically defined region that extends from the Upper Mississippi River valley to the Rocky Mountains and from the Saskatchewan River valley in present-day Canada to the Rio Grande. It is a region largely comprising grasslands that served into the late 19th century as the grazing area for the large herds of buffalo that provided basic sustenance for Native American groups such as the Blackfoot, Sioux, Cheyenne, and Comanche. Divided into 67 chapters over two volumes, this

work features the most current research available from some of the foremost experts in their respective fields. Thirty-five of the chapters focus on specific native groups, while the remaining 32 explore such varied topics as "Hunting and Gathering Traditions," "The Languages of the Plains," and "Intertribal Religious Movements." More than 30 years in the making, this scholarly work is simply the most authoritative and comprehensive title available on the topic and should be acquired by all public and academic libraries. Academic libraries should also strongly consider purchasing DeMallie's equally outstanding *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775–1979* (Univ. of Oklahoma, 1999), which he coedited with Vine Deloria Jr.—*John Burch, Campbellsville Univ., KY*

Smith, Michael. Tom Crean: Unsung Hero of the Scott and Shackleton Antarctic Expeditions.

Mountaineers. Feb. 2002. c.352p. photos. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-89886-858-0. \$24.95. HIST
"Tom Crean was the difference between life and death" for two members of Robert F. Scott's 1910–13 *Terra Nova* expedition. With this statement, British journalist Smith demands that history revisit the heroic age of polar exploration, focusing on one of the lesser-known heroes. Tom Crean went to Antarctica with Scott's *Discovery* (1901–04) and *Terra Nova* (1910–13) expeditions, as well as with Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* (1914–16) expedition. Some of his courageous accomplishments include ice-floe hopping and climbing the Barrier to affect a rescue, traveling 35 miles in 18 hours with minimal rations to get help for others, and the infamous crossing of the southern ocean to South Georgia Island with Shackleton. Crean was awarded many medals, including the Albert Medal, the highest recognition for gallantry. But Smith argues that because of politics and the class prejudices of the day (Crean was a poor Irishman), he did not receive the recognition he was due. Crean was not a diarist, so Smith relied on interviews, letters, the diaries of Crean's contemporaries, and previously published works for this captivating account of one man's often overlooked contributions. Recommended for polar and exploration collections and larger public libraries.—*Margaret Atwater-Singer, Univ. of Evansville, IN*

Tucker, Spencer C. A Short History of the Civil War at Sea.

SR Bks: Scholarly Resources. (American Crisis, No. 5). 2001. c.192p. illus. maps. bibliog. index. LC 2001032268. ISBN 0-8420-2868-4. pap. \$17.95. HIST
Fascination with the Civil War at sea re-