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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

Debbie Vaughn

College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

by **Phillip P. Powell** (College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston)
<vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Column Editor's Note: How intriguing it is to examine an issue through different lenses. This is just what the **1985-1989 Chautauqua Conferences** allowed United States and Soviet citizens to do: to learn about the thoughts and experiences of then-enemies at the height of the Cold War. Events at these five conferences are recorded in **Ross Mackenzie's** *When Stars and Stripes Met Hammer and Sickle The Chautauqua Conferences on U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1985-1989*. Keeping with the "different lenses" theme, it is fascinating to study one discipline through the filter of another.

Claudia Durst Johnson's addition to the series *Exploring Social Issues Through Literature* examines labor and the workplace through literary classics such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Hard Times*, and *The Jungle*.

Sincere and abundant thanks to **Phillip Powell** for providing **ATG** readers to see these books through his own lens. Happy reading, everyone! — **DV**



Mackenzie, Ross. *When Stars and Stripes Met Hammer and Sickle The Chautauqua Conferences on U. S.-Soviet Relations, 1985-1989*.

Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.
ISBN 1570036365. 224 pages. \$21.95

Reviewed by **Phillip P. Powell** (College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

The **Chautauqua Institution** has been a part of the American cultural landscape since it was established by the Methodists in the 1870s near Jamestown, New York. This 2006 season is no exception for **Chautauqua's** goal to be all you can be and know all you can know (paraphrasing the opening page of the **Institution's** homepage). The first session for 2006 is titled "Russia: A Post Soviet Identity." Seeing this really brought forth the realization that the relationship — political and cultural — between the United States and Russia/USSR has been of long interest at **Chautauqua**.

This book covers in anecdotal fashion the series of conferences that ran from 1985-1989. It was a period of major transition between the two nations when the Russian words *glasnost* and *perestroika* were heard

often reflecting in changes occurring particularly in the Soviet Union both in the domestic sense and the diplomatic sense. Each year's conference, a continued experiment in citizen diplomacy, demonstrated in microcosm what often was occurring between the two nations themselves. These weeklong meetings alternated between US and the Soviet Union with the first and third ones in **Chautauqua**. The Soviets hosted the second and fourth conferences in Jurmala (near Riga, Latvia) and Tbilisi, Georgia. The final one in 1989 was in Pittsburgh. The atmosphere of the first meeting was extremely tense because of the recent arrest of **Nicholas Daniloff** for alleged spying. **Daniloff**, who was a reporter for *US News & World Report*, was accused of spying soon after a Soviet was accused here in the US. But as rap-

prochement gradually took place, the atmosphere of succeeding conferences became warmer.

Each conference is given a chapter. Background information, not only of the political situation, but of the actual arrangements is detailed. Even some of the travails of traveling are included. But more importantly, much is given to what both scheduled speakers had to say at that time about the situation as it was. The crux of the conferences, though, was what "ordinary" citizens of both the USSR and the USA thought. It was an unusual opportunity for the Soviets in particular to be able to express what was really on their minds without — it is wished — the fear of retribution. Americans got to see that ordinary Soviet citizens were not the demons often portrayed by the media and the government. The participants became individual citizens of the world rather than a part of a gigantic monolith.

What a different time that was! It was we and they. There was a tangible quality to it all that no longer exists. Twenty years removed, we are in a much different world, a potentially much more unstable world than what existed then. It sort of causes one to long for the "good old days." This is an interesting read.

Johnson, Claudia Durst. *Labor and Workplace Issues in Literature*. Exploring Social Issues Through Literature. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006.

ISBN 031333286X. 208 pages. \$49.95.

Reviewed by **Phillip P. Powell** (College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

In this more politically conservative time, the important contributions of the American labor movement are often overlooked in our increasingly complacent society. **Johnson's** book, which is part of *Greenwood's Exploring Social Issues through Literature* series, quickly brings us back to the literature that heightened public awareness of inhuman, unsafe and treacherous practices the American labor force faced and still faces.

Johnson selected for discussion primarily nine American works—all but two being nov-

els. The two exceptions are the recollections of a West Indian slave woman and also a short story by **Melville**. They range in time from the early 1830s into the late 20th century.

According to the series foreword, these books have been designed as a resource for both secondary school teachers and librarians. From what the reviewer can see, the target group can be extended to students in lower level undergraduate English and history courses also. If this book is an indicator, a great deal of salient information is provided in a concise package.

Other issues include the environment, youth gangs, bioethics, and race.


Even before reading about the coal miners of **Zola's** *Germinale* many years ago — talk about a downer — this reviewer read about the meatpacking industry and the plight of Eastern European immigrants in **Upton Sinclair's** *The Jungle*. **Johnson** writes about *The Jungle* in a 22 page essay nestled between "Bartleby the Scrivener" and *The Grapes of Wrath*. **Johnson** not only recreates the story of the Lithuanian family's struggles, but places the story in its proper historical and geographical context. This is done in fairly gripping and graphic detail. Following are individual discussions of the various social and political ills detailed in the book. In the case of *The Jungle*, there are descriptions

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of the slaughterhouse itself and the different jobs in which people are engaged. Additional sections describe sexual abuse and prostitution, child labor practices, and then the rise of the Socialist Party in the US at that time. What is most amazing, **Johnson** tells that meat packing practices today, though improved over the last hundred years, still remain suspect from human rights, safety and sanitation points of view. Vegetarianism is sounding better and better.

At the end of each chapter, the reader is provided open-ended questions that could serve as topics for student papers or even for further reflection.

If this volume is any indication, teachers and librarians are given excellent background information to knowledgeably suggest and discuss this genre of literature. 

From the Reference Desk from page 48

The New York Public Library's Best of Reference 2006 list includes:

Encyclopedia of American Gospel Music. McNeil, W.K. Routledge, 2005. (ISBN: 0415941792) \$150.

The Greenwood Companion To Shakespeare: A Comprehensive Guide for Students, **Rosenblum, Joseph**. Greenwood Press, 2005. (ISBN: 0313327807) \$299.95.

The Oxford Companion to the Photograph, **Lenman, Robin**. Oxford University Press, 2005. (ISBN: 0198662718) \$65.

100 Most Popular Genre Fiction Authors, **Drew, Bernard**. Libraries Unlimited Inc., 2005. (ISBN: 1591581265) \$65.

Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture, **Davis, Edward**. Routledge, 2005. (ISBN: 0415241294) \$210.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States, **Oboler, Suzanne**. Oxford University Press, 2005. (ISBN: 0195156005) \$525.

National Geographic Almanac of Geography. National Geographic Society, 2005. (ISBN: 079223877X) \$40.

The Encyclopedia of New York State, **Eisenstadt, Peter**. Syracuse University Press, 2005. (ISBN: 081560808X) \$95.

The Landmarks of New York: An Illustrated Record of the City's Historic Buildings, **Diamonstein-Spielvogel, Barbaralee**. Monacelli Press, 2005. (ISBN: 1580931545) \$65.

Plant, **Marinelli, Janet**. DK Publishing, 2005. (ISBN: 075660589X) \$50.


A Consumer's Guide to Laboratory Tests, **Ricotta, Mary**. Prometheus Books, 2005. (ISBN: 1591022479) \$21.

Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, **Shelton, Dinah**. Macmillan Library Reference, 2005. (ISBN: 0028658477) \$415.

Tobacco in History and Culture: An Encyclopedia, **Goodman, Jordan**. Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005. (ISBN: 0684314053) \$275.

The Encyclopedia of Politics: The Left and The Right, **Carlisle, Rodney**. Sage Publications, Inc., 2005. (ISBN: 1412904099) \$295.

Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics, **Mitcham, Carl**. Macmillan Library Reference, 2005. (ISBN: 0028658310) \$450.

The United States at War, **Super, John**. Salem Press, Inc., 2005. (ISBN: 1587652366) \$104. 

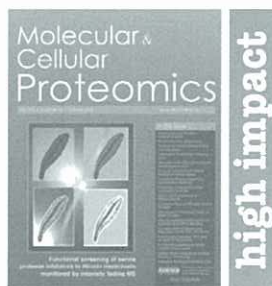


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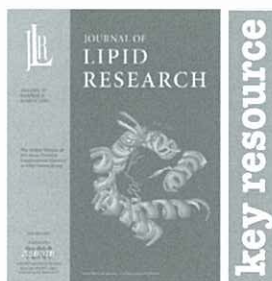


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