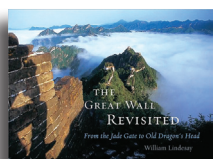


Hammond cheerfully laments what he perceives as the marginality of what he teaches to his students' lives and interests: "Can a middle-aged guy teach Milton again and not slip deeper into the Hades of the un-hip?" The off-beat quip is his métier. Of the eleven essays, perhaps the most engaging is Hammond's count of remaining obdurately on the sidelines as New Years, and the New Millennium, roll by with their changing modes of obligatory celebration. Hammond is his own man—and has much to teach us.

Also Recommended: *The Oldest We Have Ever Been*, edited by Maud Lavin (University of Arizona Press, 978-0-8165-2616-1). Defying stereotyping, these seven stories by accomplished writers fix upon shifts, epiphanies, and new challenges in midlife. Harmless addictions, love, health, taxes, and mortality feature—humanly, humorously, and very rewardingly. A fine, resonant collection.



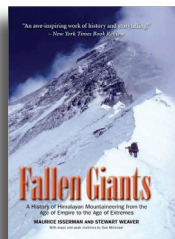
The Very Long and the Very High

Two books share this final section; both will greatly change our perceptions.

The Great Wall Revisited From the Jade Gate to Old Dragon's Head William Lindesay

Harvard University Press, 310 illustrations, Hardcover \$39.95 (291pp)
978-0-674-03149-01

In this handsomely produced volume, Lindesay achieves a five-strike success. He provides a concise account of the when, whys, and wheres of wall building, dispatching the still-enduring myths of a single wall, built at a single time or in a single style to block the northern nomads; he tracks the Wall's early presentation in Western cartography and narrative; he presents remarkable William Edgar Geil (1865-1925), the pioneer of Wall exploration and reportage; and, by re-photographing seventy-two significant sites, he gives us a very timely history of the destruction of many fine Wall towers and structures—all of which he accomplishes in clean prose and unrivaled photos and reproductions. In addition, Lindesay provides a clear and much-needed illustration of the Wall's strategically sited western and eastern end-structures.



Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes

Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver
Yale University Press, 65 photos,
15 maps, Hardcover \$39.95 (592pp)
978-0-300-11501-7

The authors have transformed the catalog-of-climbs, accounts-of-accidents approach of Himalayan mountaineering history into one that captures history and change—from sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century reports, through the early amateur climbers such as Mallory and Irvine to today's highly publicized ascents. Heroism, death, and drama abound, but so does politicking, manipulation by

host countries, and the horrific degradation of environment. Nonetheless, the unrivaled grandeur of the peaks and the outsize egos of their conquerors shine through. The author's thoroughness and range make this hefty volume nearly encyclopedic in scope; the details on the "how" of climbing, the no-margin-for-error experience, and the bonus of Vittorio Sella's unmatched photographs make for a great book.

ALSO NOT TO BE MISSED

The Wide Open: Prose, Poetry and Photographs of the Prairie, edited by Annick Smith and Susan O'Connor (University of Nebraska Press, 978-0-8032-1751-5). The prose of Jim Harrison, Barry Lopez, Gretel Ehrlich, and others and photographs by Lee Friedlander, Lois Conner and Geoffrey James combine to make this comprehensive 11 x 9.5-inch volume a superb evocation of the prairie and its life.

The Concubine, the Princess, and the Teacher: Voices from the Ottoman Harem, translated and edited by Douglas Scott Brookes (University of Texas Press, 978-0-292-7184-2-5). The harem was more complex, and exotic, than Westerners imagined, but a world of women living within Ottoman protocol yields other fascinations, as three women of different backgrounds and periods report.

When War becomes Personal: Soldiers' Accounts from the Civil War to Iraq, Donald Anderson, editor (University of Iowa Press, 978-1-58729-680-2). Statistically speaking, very few of us will ever experience life and death moments in battle, but these fifteen highly individual essays, which include incisive comment on the carnage at Chickamauga and the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan, will prompt us to ponder mortality, morality, and fate.

Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story and a Biography by Clifton Crais and Pamela Scully (Princeton University Press, 978-0-691-13580-9). Exploited by owners, anthropologists, showmen, and the voyeuristic public, Sara Baartman was stripped of her humanity. In their deeply sensitive biographical study that recreates the environments in which she lived, the authors restore Sara's humanity and dignity.

Zong! by M. NourbeSe Philip: As told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng (Wesleyan University Press, 978-0-8195-6876-2). In one of the most appalling incidents in the history of slavery, a British captain threw 150 Africans overboard as water ran short in order to claim "property losses" rather than admit faulty navigation and incur "nonreimbursable" deaths on board. This fragmented, poetic retelling of "a story that must be told" provides a unique record, including the frighteningly impersonal and distanced court record.

What's Bugging You—A Fond Look at the Animals We Love to Hate by Arthur V. Evans (University of Virginia Press, 978-0-8139-2698-8). In fifty-one engaging essays, entomologist Arthur Evans discusses small critters from dung-beetles through earwigs, butterflies, bumblebees, hornets, spiders, mudbugs, and more in a prolonged nature walk for discoveries that moves into fascinating life histories. **F**