

# Editor's Choice

**THE LOST:** *A Search for Six of Six Million*, by Daniel Mendelsohn. (HarperCollins, \$27.95.) Grappling with the Holocaust in both its personal and geopolitical dimensions, Mendelsohn reconstructs the story of his great-uncle's family.

**YOKOHAMA BURNING:** *The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II*, by Joshua Hammer. (Free Press, \$26.) Hammer argues that the disaster in the cosmopolitan city marked a turning point in Japan's embrace of militant nationalism.

**IT'S GETTING LATER ALL THE TIME:** *A Novel in the Form of Letters*, by Antonio Tabucchi. Translated by Alastair McEwan. (New Directions, paper, \$15.95.) Letters by 17 men to distant or long-lost lovers, and a single reply to them all.

**CREATIONISTS:** *Selected Essays, 1993-2006*, by E. L. Doctorow. (Random House, \$24.95.) Respectful, text-centered literary musings on Poe, Twain, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos and others.

**FORGETFULNESS,** by Ward Just. (Houghton Mifflin, \$25.) In this novel, one of Just's best, a small-time American spy uneasily revisits his earlier life after his French wife is murdered.

**THE INHABITED WORLD,** by David Long. (Houghton Mifflin, \$23.) This novel's hero, a ghost, looks back ruefully on his suicide and longs to help a woman survive her own despair.

**BLUE FRONT,** by Martha Collins. (Graywolf, paper, \$14.) Poems built around a 1909 lynching in the hometown of Collins's father.

**ANCESTOR STONES,** by Aminatta Forna. (*Atlantic Monthly*, \$24.) This debut novel's emigrant heroine learns about the history of Sierra Leone, her homeland, from tales told by her four aunts.

**THE THEOCONS:** *Secular America Under Siege*, by Damon Linker. (Doubleday, \$26.) A study of a group of Roman Catholic thinkers who have helped spread America's religious revival from the masses to the intelligentsia.

**THINGS I DIDN'T KNOW:** *A Memoir*, by Robert Hughes. (Knopf, \$27.95.) Writing after a near-fatal car crash, the Australian art critic describes his formative years and the evolution of his craft.

The full reviews of these and other recent books are on the Web: [nytimes.com/books](http://nytimes.com/books).

## Paperback Row

**TULIA: Race, Cocaine, and Corruption in a Small Texas Town,** by Nate Blakeslee. (*PublicAffairs*, \$14.95.) From 2000 to 2003, Tulia, in the Texas panhandle, became notorious for a bogus drug sting that unjustly sent many of the town's blacks to prison. A native Texan, Blakeslee broke the story for *The Texas Observer*, drawing national attention to the arrests, which were based on the inconsistent testimony of a single undercover officer. "Tulia" follows the legal battle that ultimately led to the reversal of the convictions, and is a devastating critique of Texas' judicial system and the nation's drug laws. Our reviewer, Sara Mosle, called "Tulia" a "riveting legal thriller" that resembles a "modern-day 'To Kill a Mockingbird' — or would, that is, if the novel were a true story and Atticus had won."

**SAVING FISH FROM DROWNING,** by Amy Tan. (*Ballantine*, \$14.95.) In Tan's evocative farce, a group of high-powered Americans travel down the Burma Road, starting in China and continuing across the border into Myanmar. The trip — a comedy of errors marked by cultural gaffes and tribal curses — is narrated by the ghost of Bibi Chen, a San Francisco socialite who was supposed to lead the group but died under mysterious circumstances.

**LOVESICK BLUES: The Life of Hank Williams,** by Paul Hemphill. (*Penguin*, \$14.) This concise biography tells the story of the country music legend (1923-53), who rose from "Singing Kid" novelty to headliner at the Grand Ole Opry and managed to die at 29 after an existence with every kind of trouble.

**THE DARWIN CONSPIRACY,** by John Darnton. (*Anchor*, \$14.) In this elaborate historical thriller by a longtime editor at *The New York Times*, two young researchers comb musty archives and crumbling manor houses for hidden documents that will reveal a secret, sinister side to Charles Darwin. (Alternating chapters, set in the 19th century, tell Darnton's version of what really happened on the H.M.S. Beagle's five-year voyage around the world.)

**TEACHER MAN: A Memoir,** by Frank McCourt. (*Scribner*, \$15.) McCourt, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "Angela's Ashes" and "Tis," has written another memoir, this one about his 30-year career teaching English and creative writing in New York's public high schools. Admittedly ill-equipped for the conventional curriculum, McCourt found other ways to motivate the kids, turning his life stories into lessons. "My life saved my life," he recalls. "'Teacher Man' is an irresistible valedictory," Ben Yagoda wrote here, "about a man finding his voice in the classroom, on the page and in his soul."

**THE AGE OF CONVERSATION,** by Benedetta Craveri. Translated by Teresa Waugh. (*New York Review Books*, \$18.95.) Craveri, an Italian professor of French literature, argues that the Marquise de Rambouillet fomented a revolution when she offered her famed salon as a place for the French nobility to gather in the early 17th century. This entertaining book explores a golden age of conversation in France (from 1610 to 1789), in which the aristocracy established a new order, away from the strictures of the royal court.

**THIRD GIRL FROM THE LEFT,** by Martha Southgate. (*Mariner/Houghton Mifflin*, \$12.95.) Southgate's second novel is a penetrating portrait of three generations of headstrong, movie-loving women: Tamara, a struggling young filmmaker; her mother, Angela, a former *Playboy* Bunny and blaxploitation-film extra ("She was the third girl from the left in the fight scene in 'Coffy'"); and Angela's mother, Mildred, a survivor of the 1921 Tulsa race riots who finds brief happiness at the local movie house.

**AMERICA'S CONSTITUTION: A Biography,** by Akhil Reed Amar. (*Random House*, \$16.95.) Drawing on history and legal scholarship, this accessible book comments on the origin and significance of virtually every paragraph of the Constitution. Amar, a professor at Yale Law School, examines how a document that was drafted largely to protect the interests of wealthy slaveholders could later be instrumental in the emancipation of slaves and enfranchisement of women. In the *Book Review*, James Ryerson called Amar's study "authoritative, important and, at a time of maddening political polarity, refreshingly hard to categorize."

**FIDDLERS: A Novel of the 87th Precinct,** by Ed McBain. (*Harvest/Harcourt*, \$14.) In this 55th and last novel in his groundbreaking series of police procedurals (McBain died in 2005), the detectives of the 87th are stumped by a serial killer. "The most endearing quality about McBain's detectives has always been their ability to uncover the ugliness in human nature without turning ugly themselves," Marilyn Stasio wrote here. IHSAN TAYLOR