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Book Marks

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BOOK MARKS

Featuring summaries of books written by Furman faculty and alumni, as well as reviews of books recommended by faculty and staff as “good reads.”

RECOMMENDED

John Derbyshire, *Prime Obsession: Bernhard Riemann and the Greatest Unsolved Problem in Mathematics* (Joseph Henry Press, 2003). Some books are meant for beach reading. This one is not. Nevertheless, readers who tackle it will be rewarded by a fascinating account of number theory. Derbyshire has actually written two books in a single volume: A biography of Riemann, the German mathematician, and an analysis of the problems that Riemann attempted to solve. The author's claim that the average reader will have enough mathematical knowledge to follow his discussions is generally true. Be prepared, however, to read some sections several times.

One of Derbyshire's main points is that mathematicians solve problems with both logic and intuition. Perhaps surprising to non-mathematicians, the latter is sometimes more important than the former. And it turns out that Riemann's Prime Number Theorem, still unproven today, is important every time we make an on-line purchase. To find out why, you'll have to enter the world of numbers that the author has illuminated so compellingly.

— **A. Scott Henderson,**
Education

Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality & Civilization* (Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2003). An early pioneer in gay and lesbian studies, the author provides an invaluable survey of the place of same-sex love and desire in the West. Some of his most fascinating insights arise from the attempt to historicize Biblical accounts of same-sex desire, as when he connects Levitical taboos

against same-sex behavior to the Hebrews' fear of pagan worship or shows how the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was originally seen as a cautionary tale of cupidity. But this book also demonstrates how early Christian fears of same-sex love developed into a rigid orthodoxy that has impacted life throughout the Christian West. Arguing that these fears are neither essential nor fundamental to Christian thought, Crompton nevertheless locates the irrational roots of modern prejudice in a highly specified and long history of religious ideology. And because his book also talks about China and Japan, Crompton offers examples of other, less overtly homophobic cultures through which to understand better our own.

— **Nick Radel,** *English*

Catherine Puglisi, *Caravaggio* (Phaidon, 1998). To understand the effect religious iconography can have, visit Caravaggio's three chapel paintings of Saint Matthew in the church of Santa Luigi dei Francesi, off the Piazza Novana in Rome. Neither your skepticism toward Catholicism nor capitalism (as you continually feed coins into the lighting box) will prevent you from having a religious experience.

If you can't make it to Rome, then read this book, which contains exquisite full-page reprints of the artist's main works and of those that influenced him. Each painting is analyzed in terms of Caravaggio's original use of traditional techniques — incisions, canvas drawing, real-life models, color, light, composition — as well as how his realistic, humane and sometimes homoerotic representation of his subject matter constituted a fundamental break with the contemporary mannerist and classical styles of Michelangelo

and Raphael, respectively. You will discover why Caravaggio is considered “the first modern painter,” and you will learn about the patronage system that supported his career, his notorious murder charge and his more ambiguous troubles in Malta — and how they influenced his work.

— **Richard Letteri,**
Communication Studies

FROM FACULTY

Paul Thomas, *Teaching Writing* (Peter Lang, 2005). Until a few decades ago, student writing stood as a distant third in the three R's. Since the late 1970s, however, students have been asked to write more, and teachers have been expected to teach writing more specifically. However, little has been done to prepare teachers for this shift in emphasis. This primer provides a brief history of the field, as well as an exploration of what we now know about teaching. Teachers entering the field as well as seasoned veterans will discover ways to foster student writers, and to grow as writers themselves. The author, assistant professor of education at Furman, publishes widely on writing and last year released *Numbers Games: Measuring and Mandating American Education* (Peter Lang), which deals with the politics of education in America.

Edgar McKnight and Christopher Church, *Hebrews-James* (Smyth & Helwys, 2005). McKnight, the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor Emeritus of Religion at Furman, is author or editor of more than a dozen books. Here he joins a colleague from the Baptist College of Health Sciences in Memphis, Tenn., for this New Testament commentary. In his examination of Hebrews, McKnight concentrates upon the literary qualities of the book, approaching it both as a sermonic interpretation of Old Testament

texts utilizing interpretative strategies of the first century Jewish synagogues and as a rhetorical appeal using rhetorical strategies of the classical world. In his accompanying commentary on the Letter of James, Church presents the letter as something of a biblical and historical fossil, a surviving representative of a once-flourishing Jewish Christianity.

FROM ALUMNI

Gary E. Parker '76, *Fateful Journeys* (Howard Publishing, 2005). This marks the author's second installment in his Southern Tides trilogy, which he launched in 2004 with *Secret Tides*. The series combines his love of history and the Civil War era into a sweeping family saga. The publisher says that this book is “a heart-rending epic of triumph on the costly road to freedom” that forces readers “to experience the painful consequences of choices, the depth of unwavering love, and the indomitable spirit to rise above oppression.” The author of 10 other novels and three novellas, Parker is senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga.

Kellie Stenzel '87, *The Women's Guide to Lower Scores* (Thomas Dunne, 2004). This is the third golf instructional by the former Furman golfer. Her earlier books focused on those just learning the game (*The Women's Guide to Golf: A Handbook for Beginners*) or golfers ready to take the next step (*The Women's Guide to Consistent Golf*). *Lower Scores*, designed for more experienced players, offers advice on shot selection and practice techniques, while also suggesting on-course strategies that can help lower scores. Stenzel is a teaching professional and a contributor to *Golf for Women* magazine.