

An Editor's Foreword

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Volume 4 of this series finally appears, thanks to a number of people who labored behind the scenes. First to be thanked is Thomas R. Smith, who birthed this annual publication in 2005 and saw it through three previous volumes. Tom's vision and effort provided most of the copy for this current volume, he having chosen authors wisely and well—along with providing much of the detailed scholarly editing that makes these essays sing. As its succeeding editor, I was privy to Tom's adroit editing as I perused his marginal dialogues with authors and the changes made to manuscripts. Tom's knowledge of the field plus scrupulous instincts helped authors rephrase their thoughts more clearly. These are tough shoes to fill. But I agree with the founding philosophy of this publication and hope to maintain its high standards of editorial prowess and production and niche as a venue for commentary on all forms of lifewriting, including creative work.

I also thank Penn State University Abington, which paid for some of the mailings involved in this production, and for supporting Tom Smith's admirable effort in creating and editing this annual publication during its first three volumes. Gratitude is due the Nonfiction Writing Program in Brown University's Department of English for crucial support that allowed Rob Ward, our book reviews editor, also to serve as the volume's indexer. And my gratitude goes to other staff members who rallied to this enterprise: Assistant Editor Sylvia Alexis Rolloff and Kate Holguin, copy editor. We all learned how to do this together, and are looking forward to volume 5.

Finally, I want to thank David Ramm for starting me on this venture, and Albert Rolls for taking over the reins at AMS Publishing so ably. Now I thank contributors for your patience in the long learning curve required to produce this volume. It has been a pleasure to get to know you through this exchange, and I hope you are pleased with the production.

Since my role began as book review editor, I offer two important books in review. John Gatt-Rutter discusses Felice Piemontese's 2001 sort-of biography in Italian, *Dottore In Niente* (Doctor of/in Nothing). This portrait of "G," the Frenchman Guy Debord, is written in a style appropriate to this founding philosopher of an avant-garde movement of libertarianism in the second half of the twentieth century—and whose theory of "the spectacle" has had enormous impact despite his disregard for fame. According to Gatt-Rutter, the volume interrogates the conventions of biography even while portraying the mysterious "G" in bits and pieces. It also exemplifies many of the questions of postmodernism and "the ineffability trope."

Speaking of which, Philip Howerton writes on *Weeds: A Farm Daughter's Lament*, which usefully examines the ineffability of childhood memories. Evelyn I. Funda's memoir deals with several powerful American themes: the family farm, the heroic flight to America from the corrupt Old World, and the sacred family stories. As Howerton reveals, Funda heroically faces the truth as these old tropes crumble under rational inquiry, but she constructs new, compassionate truths of the past while evoking poignant memories.

Dear Readers, this volume is now yours to enjoy and comment. Please let us know what you think.