

Society's Books of Note

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Martha Bayles, *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy and America's Image Abroad*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. \$30.00. 325pp.

Martha Bayles, Boston College, has written a pathbreaking assessment of the ways in which American popular culture in its most commercialized forms has presented a distorted picture of America to the world. She argues persuasively that the American ideals of freedom and democracy require and deserve more effective representation against the challenges of globalization.

Thomas E. Patterson, *Informing the News: The Need for Knowledge-Based Journalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 2013. \$15.00. 256pp.

Thomas Patterson, Harvard University, proposes "knowledge-based journalism" as a corrective to the misinterpretations of the subjects that journalists cover and to their vulnerability to manipulation by their sources. He calls for nothing less than a major overhaul of journalism practice and education. The book speaks not only to journalists but to all who are concerned about the integrity of the information on which America's democracy depends.

Jonathan Rieder, *Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013. \$25.00. 218pp.

Jonathan Rieder, Barnard College, explores King's famous letter, adding new documentary evidence to its context. He insists on its centrality to King's mission as an angry prophet rather than hopeful dreamer. King understood, Rieder concludes, that moral appeal without struggle never brings justice.

Theodore Sasson, *The New American Zionism*. New York: New York University Press, 2013. \$39.00. 229pp.

Theodore Sasson, Brandeis University and Middlebury College, argues that American Jews have not abandoned their support for Israel, despite claims to the contrary, but that they now focus their philanthropy and lobbying in line with their own political viewpoints for the region, reaching out directly to players in Israel, rather than going through centralized institutions as was the case in the past. American Jews may now find Israel more personally meaningful than ever before. Yet, at the same time, their ability to influence policy will diminish as they no longer speak with a unified voice.

Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. \$24.95. 296pp.

Peter van der Veer, Utrecht University, challenges the notion that modernity in China and India are derivative imitations of the West, arguing that these societies have transformed their ancient traditions in unique and distinctive ways. He begins with nineteenth-century imperial history, exploring how Western concepts of spirituality, secularity, religion, and magic were used to translate the traditions of India and China. He traces how modern Western notions of religion and magic were incorporated into the respective nation-building projects of Chinese and Indian nationalist intellectuals, yet how modernity in China and India is by no means uniform.