

The New Criterion

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The Critic's Notebook for January 25, 2016

by The Editors




Ernest Hemingway, Milan, 1918. Ernest Hemingway Photograph Collection. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

Sign up to receive “Critic’s Notebook” in your inbox every week—it only takes a few seconds and it’s completely free! “Critic’s Notebook” is a weekly preview of the best to read, see, and hear in New York and beyond, compiled by the editors of *The New Criterion*.

This week: The Prose Factory, Papa, and Beethoven at the NY Phil.

Fiction: “Ernest Hemingway: Between Two Wars,” at the Morgan Library (Through January 31): Perhaps more than any other writer, Ernest Hemingway stands as the quintessential American scribe. He has all the qualities we like to imagine are particularly American: his stoic disposition, his adventurous spirit, and his large- and hard-living. Much of the popular image of Hemingway was a meticulous act of self-myth-making, owing as much to his novels as it did his safari photo-shoots in *Life* magazine and elsewhere. Those interested in peering behind Hemingway’s intricately fashioned mask would do well to hop over to the Morgan by Sunday. There, an exhibition featuring numerous artifacts from Hemingway’s fertile interwar years shows the man behind the myth. Seen in tandem with a reading of the recently released volume of Hemingway’s letters (reviewed in our forthcoming February issue by Bruce Bawer), the exhibit will offer a necessary corrective on the man who called himself Papa. —BR

**The Prose Factory: Literary Life in England Since 1918, by D. J. Taylor (Chatto & Windus):** There’s nothing a writer likes more than a bit of literary gossip. But gossiping about one’s contemporaries is a dangerous gambit; better to stick (mostly) to forebears. D. J. Taylor does just that in his forthcoming study of English literary life after the First World War. *The Prose Factory* proves an illuminating survey of not just literary England in the twentieth century, but also of the (excuse me) prosaic aspects of being a jobbing writer: how exactly one makes a go of it in a notoriously poorly compensated job. Interspersed are the sorts of entertaining anecdotes that could probably fill many more volumes, as long as someone were willing to publish them. Until that day Taylor’s book will serve as a resource well worth consulting. —BR

Art: The Winter Antiques Show, at the Park Avenue Armory (Through January 31): What does it say about the state of antiques now that the Winter Antiques Show features contemporary work? For years, the cutoff date for this esteemed sixty-two-year-old fair has been creeping up, most recently to the Old Master era of 1969. By dropping the requirement that objects have any claim to antiquity whatsoever, the fair looks “less brown,” at least according to *The New York Times*. But does the shift also speak to uncertainties in the European antiques market and a rising cultural ambivalence, if not contempt, for the symbols of the past? We have until Sunday, January 31, to decide for ourselves at the Park Avenue Armory, where at least this fair’s frozen forecast remains consistent year to year. —JP

Music: Beethoven Violin Concerto & Bruckner, at the New York Philharmonic (January 27–30) and The Orchestre National de France, at Carnegie Hall (January 28): The violin is rarely underrepresented as a solo instrument, but the next few months in particular look to be a banner winter and spring for violinists, including two major concerto appearances this week alone. First up, on Wednesday and

continuing through the weekend, James Ehnes joins the New York Philharmonic for Beethoven's Violin Concerto, one of the shining pearls of the repertoire and a notable exemplar of the composer's "middle period." Balancing the program is Bruckner's massive Symphony No. 6, under the baton of the BBC Philharmonic's Juanjo Mena.

Thursday night, the Orchestra National de France visits Carnegie Hall with an impressive program of three concert staples. Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Tchaikovsky's Fifth frame the program, and Julian Rachlin joins to perform Shostakovich's scathing Violin Concerto No. 1, one of the true masterpieces of the twentieth-century concerto repertoire. Daniele Gatti, the fiery music director of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, conducts. If you can't make it to Carnegie Hall that night, watch the concert live on medici.tv. —ECS



Other: *Wasted Words: The Essential Dave Hickey Online Compilation*, by Dave Hickey, edited by Julia Friedman (PCP Press) and *Dust Bunnies: Dave Hickey's Online Aphorisms*, by Dave Hickey, edited by Julia Friedman (PCP Press): How should this one be filed? Under art? Books? Internet culture? Let's settle for "other." Between June 2014 and April 2015, the curmudgeonly libertarian art critic Dave Hickey took to Facebook with a reported 3,000 posts and replies, generating some 700,000 words in response. The exchanges were not always pretty as the vinegary critic dripped and dribbled over the otherwise sweet crude of art-world social media before calling it quits. In the ephemeral online world, we thought that might be it. But edited by the art historian, writer, and curator Julia Friedman, Hickey's exchanges have now been collected in *Wasted Words: The Essential Dave Hickey Online Compilation*, a 586-page paperback of "polyphonic digital discourse." Friedman has also created a companion publication, *Dust Bunnies: Dave Hickey's Online Aphorisms*, as a 124-page distillation of the full Hickey. —JP

From the archive: Hemingway's prelude to Paris, by Bruce Bawer: Before seeing the Hemingway show at the Morgan, read Bruce Bawer on the author's early years.

From our latest issue: The Obama Library double parks, by John Vinci: On the way plans for the Obama Presidential Library may destroy historic Chicago.

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