

Sunday Book Review

Paperback Row

By ELSA DIXLER
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FREEDOM FOR THE THOUGHT THAT WE HATE: A Biography of the First Amendment, by Anthony Lewis (*Basic*, \$15.95.) “Many of the great advances in the quality — the decency — of American society were initiated by judges,” Lewis writes in this account of how they prohibited the government from banning offensive speech and created the modern First Amendment. In this “passionate if discursive essay,” as [Jeffrey Rosen](#) called it in the Book Review, Lewis discusses a range of issues from sedition and obscenity to hate speech and secret wiretapping.



Abraham Verghese

CUTTING FOR STONE, by Abraham Verghese (*Vintage*, \$15.95.) Twin brothers, conjoined and then separated, grow up amid the political turmoil of Ethiopia. Both go into medicine, like their adoptive parents and like their father — who abandoned them after the tumultuous birth that killed their mother. This big, dense novel, the first by Verghese, a physician and accomplished writer, is full of vivid descriptions of surgery and of heartfelt affection for the characters.

EZRA POUND: POET. A Portrait of the Man and His Work. Volume I: The Young Genius, 1885-1920, by A. David Moody. (*Oxford University*, \$19.95.) The early Pound — editor and talent-spotter, connected to all the important little magazines in London in the teens — comes alive in this installment of a projected two-volume biography. Moody “knows more about Pound’s poetry than probably anyone else alive,” our reviewer, Charles McGrath, said, and he provides close readings of the first books. His theme is Pound’s effort to find a suitable poetic subject and method that would transcend his academic interest in Provençal poetry and engage the world. Moody also gives us a man who was, as [William Carlos Williams](#) put it, both “often brilliant” and “an ass.”

JOKER ONE: A Marine Platoon’s Story of Courage, Leadership, and Brotherhood, by Donovan Campbell (*Random House*, \$16.) Campbell led a 40-man Marine platoon in Ramadi during the most violent days of the insurgency in 2004. In this remarkably detailed account of their experience, he doesn’t delve into whether the Iraq war was justified or well-planned. But he describes a

unit whose background, training and equipment (insufficient armor and translation services) left its members completely unprepared.

PASSING STRANGE: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception Across the Color Line, by *Martha A. Sandweiss* (Penguin, \$17.) Clarence King, a well-known 19th-century explorer, geologist and writer — a blond blue blood from Newport — passed as black for 13 years. His “peculiarly American story,” in Sandweiss’s words, is the subject of this meticulously researched book. King met Ada Copeland, a former slave, in New York City and claimed to be a sleeping-car porter (therefore black) in order to marry her legally. King’s white friends thought he was a man about town who lived in residence hotels when in New York (he was actually in Queens with Ada), and Ada believed his frequent absences were required by his job. King confessed his real identity to his wife before he died in 1901; she lived to 103, and was one of the few former slaves alive to hear King’s “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963.

NOTHING TO FEAR: FDR’s Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America, by *Adam Cohen* (Penguin, \$16.) When [Franklin Roosevelt](#) took office in 1933, banks were closed in 38 states and unemployment was over 25 percent. In the first 100 days, the new president signed 14 major acts of legislation, remaking the banking and financial system and providing relief for farmers and the unemployed. Cohen, a member of the editorial board of *The New York Times*, tells the story vividly, illuminating policy discussions with portraits of some of the crucial aides through whom Roosevelt worked.

THE COLLECTOR OF WORLDS, by *Iliya Troyanov*. Translated by *William Hobson* (Ecco/Harper Collins, \$13.99.) Sir Richard Francis Burton, a 19th-century British adventurer, linguist, archaeologist, poet, spy and mystic, moved easily among cultures and identities. He mastered Islamic ritual so completely that he was able to complete the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1853 undetected. Troyanov, a Bulgarian-born novelist who now lives in Vienna, “has turned Burton’s unbelievable life into believable fiction,” our reviewer, Ben Macintyre, said.

HOW TO LIVE: A Search for Wisdom From Old People (While They Are Still on This Earth), by *Henry Alford* (Twelve, \$13.99.) Alford set out to “spend time with as many fascinating senior citizens as I can” in his search for wisdom. He interviews informants over 70 years old — including some famous ones, like [Harold Bloom](#) and [Edward Albee](#) — and, while questioning his stepfather, precipitates a family crisis that ends his mother’s marriage.

THE MANUAL OF DETECTION, by *Jedediah Berry* (Penguin, \$15.) Berry’s first novel manages to be both dreamlike and clever. A book of instructions is turned over to a newly minted novice detective hunting for a vanished colleague on the rainy streets of an unnamed city. As he re-examines the man’s closed cases, his “uncanny adventures make for a memorable trip,” Marilyn Stasio said in the *Book Review*.