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Review. Mikhail, Mona N., Seen and Heard: A Century of Arab Women in Literature and Culture

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ARTS & HUMANITIES

Fullerton) manages to present Twain as a sympathetic, Lear-like figure who is the victim of his own age and vanity. Not everyone will agree with this portrayal, but Lystra's well-researched pseudo-potboiler should be a welcome addition to most literature collections.—William D. Walsh, *Georgia State Univ., Atlanta*

Mikhail, Mona N. **Seen and Heard: A Century of Arab Women in Literature and Culture.**

Olive Branch: Interlink. 2004. 169p.
ISBN 1-56656-463-8. **pap.** \$15. LIT

On the heels of Azar Nafisi's immensely popular *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Mikhail (Arabic & comparative literature, NYU; *Images of Arab Women: Fact and Fiction*) makes a significant contribution to a growing body of work on Arab women's cultural experience with this collection of thought-provoking essays. Drawing parallels to contemporary Western materialistic marriage rites, Mikhail provides a fascinating examination of Arab women's roles in popular culture as well as of rituals and customs still practiced by educated Arab women today. While most of the essays are written by Mikhail herself, included also are pertinent writings by authors like Iqbal Barraka (editor in chief of the women's magazine *Hawa*), who addresses what Mikhail calls "the tired question of the veil." Overall, *Seen and Heard* sheds much-needed light on the changing roles, experiences, values, and expression of women in the Arab world. A welcome addition to academic libraries and larger public libraries.—Robin Imhof, *Univ. of the Pacific Lib., Stockton, CA*

Silvey, Anita. **100 Best Books for Children.**

Houghton. Apr. 2004. c.208p. bibliog.
index. ISBN 0-618-27889-3. \$20. LIT

Following the "books of the century" trend, publishing veteran Silvey (ed., *Children's Books and Their Creators*) offers an insider's perspective in this compact guide to the best of children's literature. In addition to providing plot summaries of the 100 selected books (published between 1902 and 2002), she incorporates anecdotes about the authors and others involved in publishing. For example, she discusses Margaret Wise Brown's getting approval for the text of *Goodnight Moon* after reading it over the telephone to her editor and the flight from the Nazis of Hans Rey, the creator of *Curious George*. Silvey organizes the titles into categories according to six age groups, starting with board books, and alphabetizes them by author within each category. The annotations are further supported by a lengthy bibliography as well as a section labeled "Personal Interviews and Correspondence." While no author has more than one title on the list, some do repeat on Silvey's supplemental list, "Beyond the Hundred Best." Teachers, librarians, and home-

schoolers will particularly enjoy the way Silvey spices her annotations with entertaining anecdotes. However, some parents may prefer either a simpler list, such as *School Library Journal's* "One Hundred Books That Shaped the Century" (*SLJ* 1/00), or a more comprehensive book with shorter annotations, such as Walter Mayes and Valerie Lewis's forthcoming second edition of *Valerie & Walter's Best Books for Children*. Recommended for professional development collections and larger public and academic libraries.—Marianne Orme, *Des Plaines P.L., IL*

Smith, Anna Deavere.

House Arrest and Piano.

Anchor: Doubleday. 2004. c.160p. ISBN
1-4000-3357-8. **pap.** \$12. DRAMA

One of theater's most noted monologists—a small clique that includes John Leguizamo—Smith chronicled manifestations of urban rage on both coasts in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and *Fires in the Mirror*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. The characters in those plays were based on real-life witnesses whom Smith interviewed. This book collects *House Arrest*, a drama about occupants and employees of the White House who are less residents than prisoners under 24-hour surveillance, and *Piano*, a story of rage and rape between the classes in Cuba on the eve of the Spanish American War. Like her earlier works, *House Arrest* incorporates interview materials (including verbal tics) as well as historic texts on Thomas Jefferson, Walt Whitman, and Abraham Lincoln. However, it is made up of 42 speaking parts; the number of actors needed is flexible, and the gender of the characters portrayed need not be matched to the gender of the actors. While the theme may not be a revelation, Smith's skill with words and pacing makes this a compelling drama. *Piano*, on the other hand, would probably play better than it reads. A strong and sensitive directorial hand, together with an experienced group of actors, would make much of it. Recommended for academic libraries that support theater programs.—Larry Schwartz, *Minnesota State Univ. Lib., Moorhead*

Performing Arts

★Brooks, Tim. **Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890–1919.**

Univ. of Illinois. (Music in American Life). May 2004. c.635p. photogs. bibliog. index. discog. ISBN 0-252-02850-3. \$65. MUSIC

In this chronological narrative, Brooks (executive vice president of research, Lifetime Television) presents a wealth of information about the first African American recording artists. Starting in 1890 with trailblazing street singer George W. Johnson, he produces significant biographies of nearly 40

African American performers and groups who delivered minstrelsy, vaudeville, theatrical songs, spirituals, jazz, poetry, and spoken word on Thomas Edison's perishable wax cylinders. While other writers have studied some of Brooks's subjects (e.g., W.C. Handy, Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, and boxer Jack Johnson), artists like Opal Cooper, Roland Hayes, Harry Burleigh, Dan Kildare, and R. Nathaniel Dett have been long neglected. Instead of providing a multilayered analysis of their larger impact, Brooks contents himself with writing the first in-depth chronicle of African Americans during the first three decades of the recording industry, relying on 19th- and 20th-century newspaper accounts plus a few interviews, census records, and older secondary sources. Chock-full of fascinating photos, this marvelously researched reference illuminates a forgotten part of African American history. Highly recommended as a seminal resource for libraries.—Dave Szatmary, *Univ. of Washington, Seattle*

The Columbia Companion to American History on Film: How the Movies Have Portrayed the American Past.

Columbia Univ. Apr. 2004. ed. by Peter C. Rollins. c.712p. photogs. bibliog. filmog. index. ISBN 0-231-11222-X. \$85.

FILM

Historical films from *The Birth of a Nation* to the recent *Titanic* reflect the prejudices of the era in which they were made. In this compilation of essays, 70 scholars analyze American history as it is revealed (or not revealed) in film. Organized around eight historical categories rather than by film discussed, the book examines important eras from the Puritan period through the bull market of the 1980s. Wars are depicted, important people portrayed, and various ethnic groups and American institutions included; the text visits every area of the country and discusses a range of special topics (e.g. crime, drugs, politics, feminism, railroads, sexuality, and slavery). Each essay provides an overview of the topic, citing major trends and movements, and concludes with a filmography and a bibliography. The essays themselves are uneven; some require extensive background to understand, while others require only a basic sense of history. Editor Rollins (English & American film studies, Oklahoma State Univ.; *Hollywood's Indian: Images of the Native American on Film*) emphasizes that this book is not comprehensive but instead offers a substantial foundation for deeper study. The extensive cross-referencing advertised in the introduction was not seen. Given the substantial price, this work is recommended mainly for large public or academic libraries; for a narrative assessment, consider Robert Brent Toplin's *History by Hollywood*.—Grant A. Fredericksen, *Illinois Prairie Dist. P.L., Metamora*