



The Dustbin of History

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A collection of 26 essays on history, popular culture, music, and the media which have appeared in magazines such as Artfocus, The Village Voice, and Threepenny Review. Annotation copyright Book News, Inc. Portland, Or.

The Dustbin of History Details

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From Reader Review The Dustbin of History for online ebook

Nick Black says

quality of thought: 3 stars

esoteric level of references: 5 stars

average: 4 stars

robert says

The title essay is oh so brilliant.

Roderick says

Okay, ole Grrreil Marrrrcus is kinda classically informed critique-person, maybe more of an analyst/"comparer", brings up lots of references about a lot of subjects in his writing, some of which I had no bleepin' idea what he was referrin' to, and didn't really care to know about, but other stuff I do know something about, an' I have, like, my own well-(or-not-so-well-)formed opinions about. Interesting, to say the least.

Tom says

I've owned this for years, at least a decade, but the density and abstraction of the opening essay, coupled with the book's relative lack of music writing, rendered this something less than a must-read. But I'm very glad I gave it another shot, and a little annoyed with myself for not trusting that Marcus would make something interesting and worthwhile out of Nazi-hunting thriller novels, various visual artists, Susan Sontag, and the unknown-to-me early-R&B businesswoman Deborah Chessler, among the numerous subjects he tackles here. As usual, I find myself facing down an unpredictable shopping list -- Marcus is bad (but so good!) for my wallet. (A sampling: Peter Handke's *Short Letter, Long Farewell*, the works of Eric Ambler, Peter Schneider's *The Wall Jumper* -- Germany looms large in this book -- and movies like *American Hot Wax* and *The Manchurian Candidate*.)

The overall themes here aren't all that unusual for Marcus -- secret and shadow histories, one-off moments of transcendence and revelation, the triumphs of small, often forgotten pieces of popular culture -- but what makes *The Dustbin of History* a little different from the rest of his work (at least what I've read of it) is its range. He's all over the map here, both geographically and metaphorically. In a way, it's sort of strange to see some of his old standbys, like Bob Dylan and Robert Johnson, in this context, just because they're such familiar touchstones for his work, but it's not like their presence doesn't make sense. For a collection of pieces written anywhere between the mid-'70s and the mid-'90s, it holds together remarkably well, and I can definitely see myself revisiting at least half a dozen of these essays for years to come.

Hannah Cook says

This was SOOOOOOOOOOOO BORING. UGH. I finished it about 2 months ago and I'm actually still haunted by how lame and boring it was. I felt like he had kind of a good concept (which I can't recall right now, but I picked it off the shelf so it must have sounded good) and he totally blew it. Yawn fest.

Malcolm says

Griel Marcus is one of the sharpest popular culture analysts we're lucky enough to have. Some of these essays have dated, but a few have really stood the test of time. The stand-out piece for me (amid a series of useful and in places insightful forays into the social, cultural and political significance and contexts of popular cultural texts) is the essay 'Myth and Misquotation' originally delivered as a commencement speech at UC Berkeley. It is a brief essay I keep coming back to because it deals with the subtle significances of language - often at level of individual words. The book is worth it for this piece alone.

Simon says

If life still allows me to be at a good university and to be able to go to a series of lectures on diverse and loosely linked subjects, and to take my time with some of the more closely argued concepts and to be made to chuckle with recognition or surprise, then life would be quite like reading The Dustbin of History. Sometimes obscure, sometimes somewhat dated in his points of cultural reference (ok it was published in 1995 - but even then it was only dons and bar props who were pointing to these sources) but always well argued, thought provoking and entertaining. I've been drawn through these essays at a dash. I shall return to each one separately and give it the full attention it deserves.
