

HOME LIFE

Dollars & Sense: Who Moved My Cheese

Helping Hands: Harlan County, USA, Push

Women's Health: Sound and Fury, The Incredible Human Machine

- [Johnson, Spencer, Ken Blanchard, Kenneth H. Blanchard, Tony Roberts. Who Moved My Cheese: An Amazing Way To Deal With Change In Your Work And In Your Life.](#)

- [Robinson, Marilynne. Gilead.](#)

In 1981, Marilynne Robinson wrote *Housekeeping*, which won the PEN/Hemingway Award and became a modern classic. Since then, she has written two pieces of nonfiction: *Mother Country* and *The Death of Adam*. With *Gilead*, we have, at last, another work of fiction. As with *The Great Fire*, Shirley Hazzards's return, 22 years after *The Transit of Venus*, it was worth the long wait. Books such as these take time, and thought, and a certain kind of genius. There are no invidious comparisons to be made. Robinson's books are unlike in every way but one: the same incisive thought and careful prose illuminate both.

The narrator, John Ames, is 76, a preacher who has lived almost all of his life in Gilead, Iowa. He is writing a letter to his almost seven-year-old son, the blessing of his second marriage. It is a summing-up, an apologia, a consideration of his life. Robinson takes the story away from being simply the reminiscences of one man and moves it into the realm of a meditation on fathers and children, particularly sons, on faith, and on the imperfectability of man.

The reason for the letter is Ames's failing health. He wants to leave an account of himself for this son who will never really know him. His greatest regret is that he hasn't much to leave them, in worldly terms. "Your mother told you I'm writing your begats, and you seemed very pleased with the idea. Well, then. What should I record for you?" In the course of the narrative, John Ames records himself, inside and out, in a meditative style. Robinson's prose asks the reader to slow down to the pace of an old man in Gilead, Iowa, in 1956. Ames writes of his father and grandfather, estranged over his grandfather's departure for Kansas to march for abolition and his father's lifelong pacifism. The tension between them, their love for each other and their inability to bridge the chasm of their beliefs is a constant source of rumination for John Ames. Fathers and sons.

The other constant in the book is Ames's friendship since childhood with "old Boughton," a Presbyterian minister. Boughton, father of many children, favors his son, named John Ames Boughton, above all others. Ames must constantly monitor his tendency to be envious of Boughton's bounteous family; his first wife died in childbirth and the baby died almost immediately after her. Jack Boughton is a ne'er-do-well, Ames knows it and strives to love him as he knows he should. Jack arrives in Gilead after a long absence, full of charm and mischief, causing Ames to wonder what influence he might have on Ames's young wife and son when Ames dies.

These are the things that Ames tells his son about: his ancestors, the nature of love and friendship, the part that faith and prayer play in every life and an awareness of one's own culpability. There is also reconciliation without resignation, self-awareness without deprecation, abundant good humor, philosophical queries--Jack asks, "'Do you ever wonder why American Christianity seems to wait for the real thinking to be done elsewhere?'"--and an ongoing sense of childlike wonder at the beauty and variety of God's world.

In Marilynne Robinson's hands, there is a balm in Gilead, as the old spiritual tells us. --Valerie Ryan --This text refers to the *Hardcover* edition.

Fans of Robinson's acclaimed debut *Housekeeping* (1981) will find that the long wait has been worth it. From the first page of her second novel, the voice of Rev. John Ames mesmerizes with his account of his life—and that of his father and grandfather. Ames is 77 years old in 1956, in failing health, with a much younger wife and six-year-old son; as a preacher in the small Iowa town where he spent his entire life, he has produced volumes and volumes of sermons and prayers, "[t]rying to say what was true." But it is in this mesmerizing account—in the form of a letter to his young son, who he imagines reading it when he is grown—that his meditations on creation and existence are fully illumined. Ames details the often harsh conditions of perishing Midwestern prairie towns, the Spanish influenza and two world wars. He relates the death of his first wife and child, and his long years alone attempting to live up to the legacy of his fiery grandfather, a man who saw visions of Christ and became a controversial figure in the Kansas abolitionist movement, and his own father's embittered pacifism. During the course of Ames's writing, he is confronted with one of his most difficult and long-simmering crises of personal resentment when John Ames Boughton (his namesake and son of his best friend) returns to his hometown, trailing with him the actions of a callous past and precarious future. In attempting to find a way to comprehend and forgive, Ames finds that he must face a final comprehension of self—as well as the worth of his life's reflections. Robinson's prose is beautiful, shimmering and precise; the revelations are subtle but never muted when they come, and the careful telling carries the breath of suspense. There is no simple redemption here; despite the meditations on faith, even readers with no religious inclinations will be captivated. Many writers try to capture life's universals of strength, struggle, joy and forgiveness—but Robinson truly succeeds in what is destined to become her second classic.

Sound and Fury – DVD

(Barnes&Noble) – Deaf Culture v. Cochlear Implant issue

An informative and emotionally involving portrait of an important subculture, *Sound and Fury* allows us a glimpse inside the world of the deaf community, while dealing with a controversial operation that some people in that community are resisting. Cochlear ear implants have allowed many deaf people to hear and learn to speak, but many in the deaf community who are happy with its supportive and nurturing atmosphere see the operation as a threat. The film focuses on the Artinian brothers -- Peter is deaf, Chris is not -- who are faced with the same decision over one of their children. Peter is married to Nita, a deaf woman, and the oldest of their three deaf children, five-year-old Heather, decides she wants the operation. Her parents are torn, wanting to accede to Heather's wishes but

afraid of losing her to the land of the hearing. Chris and his hearing wife, Mari, also have three children, but only one-an infant twin-can't hear. They (and Peter and Chris's hearing parents) are all for the operation, and the film charts the progress of the debates among the family and their final decisions on the operation. Sound and Fury was screened in competition at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival. Tom Wiener, All Movie Guide

American Experience: A Midwife's Tale a.k.a. A Midwife's Tale

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book of the same name by historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, American Experience: A Midwife's Tale is an investigative unfolding of the life of an 18th century midwife, Martha Ballard, living on the Maine frontier. For 27 years, Ballard kept a diary in which she recorded the weather, daily household tasks, her midwifery duties, her medical practice, and countless incidents, which, through Ulrich's exploration, reveals the turmoil of post-Revolutionary America through a woman's eye. Social change, religious conflict, economic instability, as well as the grim realities of disease, domestic violence, and debtor's prison are all culled from the cryptic entries of Ballard's diary. ~ Brooke Hodess, All Movie Guide All Movie Guide

Harlan County, USA

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

In Harlan County, USA, documentarian [Barbara Kopple](#) created a humanist masterpiece - a testament to the enduring strength of America's working-class poor. This harrowing document of the confrontation between striking Kentucky coal miners and the monolithic Duke Power and Electric Company took four years to complete, during which Kopple and her crew lived with the coal miners' families for months at a time. The filmmaker makes no attempt to hide her bias for the workers: The faceless corporation is portrayed as a brutal machine sending its hired goons to terrorize the hapless strikers, while the miners families diligently support the cause, even as money becomes scarce. (She visited similar territory in 1990 with American Dream, about a strike at a Hormel plant in Minnesota.) An Academy Award winner upon its release, Harlan County, USA was included in the Library of Congress's National Film Registry in 1990 -- an honor befitting its status as one of the great documentaries of our time Emily Fisher, Barnes & Noble

National Geographic: The Incredible Human Machine a.k.a. The Incredible Human Machine

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

You and your family can travel on an amazing journey through the inner world of the human body. Have you ever wondered how your taste buds or vocal cords look at close range? How your eardrum processes sound? How are your muscles able to move in so many ways? Or how does your eye adjust to changes in light? Tiny cameras explore up close the internal workings of the human body in this crash course in human physiology. Though made in 1975, the visual effects created by x-rays, microscopes, and time-lapse

photography still fascinate in this exploration at the microscopic level. ~ Gayla Mills, All Movie Guide All Movie

Push by Sapphire

Winner of the American Library Association's Black Caucus Award

"A horrific, hope-filled story [that is] brilliant, blunt, merciless." --Newsday

Precious Jones, a sixteen-year-old black girl, has up until now been invisible; invisible to the father who raped her, to the mother who batters her, and to the authorities who dismiss her as just one more of society's casualties. When the illiterate Precious, pregnant with a second child by her father, meets a determined and highly radical teacher, her life begins to change, for she learns how to write about her life and how to make it her own for the first time. This electrifying novel, by a writer of prophetic power, is relentless, remorseless, and truly inspirational.