

Going to the Tigers: Essays and Exhortations: Writers on Writing Series

Robert Cohen

University of Michigan Press (Aug 16, 2022)

Softcover \$19.95 (144pp)

978-0-472-05555-5

Robert Cohen's essays are insightful, entertaining explorations of writers and writing.

Probing literature with an expansive view of the craft, the book covers major figures, including John Cheever and Henry James, as well as less famous writers, including Stanley Elkin and Richard Fariña. It muses on how characters are named, on stylistic changes throughout writing careers, and the essence of Jewishness. Throughout, a delightful sense of mystery and excitement is generated regarding what subject will be tackled next.

Evincing encyclopedic knowledge of the works of the mentioned authors, the book selects quotations from their writings in a pointed manner that also maintains the flavor of the originals. In comparing descriptions of September 11, 2001, the book evokes both John Updike's "honeyed prose" and Don DeLillo's spare, affecting, seven-word counterpart.

Cohen's personal observations have their own distinctive style: in "Refer Madness," a musing entry on referentiality, he shares that "Every raging old man reminds me of Lear." Elsewhere, QR codes are described as "little squares of frozen static that sit like Rorschach blots," while nouns, in their "rugged, Gary Cooper-ish laconicism," are contrasted with adjectives that can look "sweaty and undignified, like Peter Lorre in *Casablanca*." And two successive travel-related chapters, focusing on Sardinia and Florence in turn, are different in their approaches, but equal in their literary entertainment: in the first, Cohen and his wife follow in the steps of grumbling D. H. Lawrence; the second essay takes note of Franz Kafka's idea for a budget travel guide, using it as an inspiration to launch a funny, artful parody of the existential misery that inhabits Kafka's work.

Going to the Tigers is an enriching, engaging guide to some of the highs, lows, hows, and whys of literature.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.