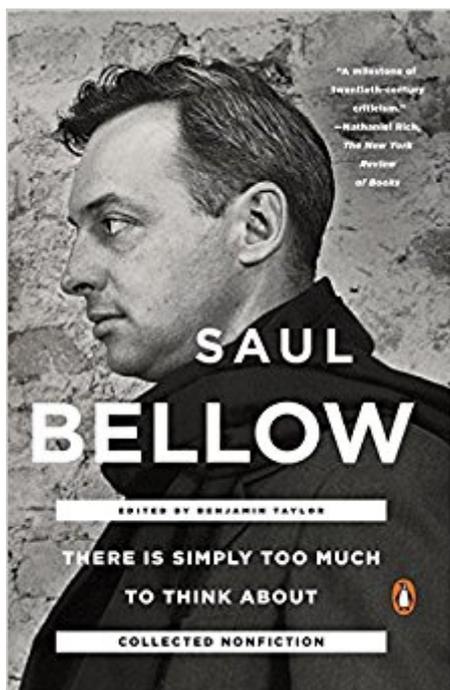


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There Is Simply Too Much To Think About: Collected Nonfiction



Synopsis

“Bellow’s nonfiction has the same strengths as his stories and novels: a dynamic responsiveness to character, place, and time (or era) . . . And you wonder “what other highbrow writer, or indeed lowbrow writer has such a reflexive grasp of the street, the machine, the law courts, the rackets?” • “Martin Amis, The New York Times Book Review “ One of the supreme fiction writers of the twentieth century, Nobel laureate Saul Bellow was also deeply insightful in his lesser-known roles as essayist, critic, and lecturer. Gathered together in this stunning compilation, Bellow’s vast range of nonfiction reveals the same wit, daring, and wisdom that distinguish *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Henderson the Rain King*, *Herzog*, *Humboldt’s Gift*, and other masterly novels. In *There Is Simply Too Much to Think About*, as in the novels, the twentieth century comes fiercely to life through Bellow’s unrivaled human understanding and singular style. “ Benjamin Taylor, editor of the acclaimed *Saul Bellow: Letters*, joins Bellow’s better-known essays to previously uncollected works selected from his criticism, interviews, speeches, and other reflections. Featuring Bellow’s commentary on such fellow writers as Ralph Ellison, Philip Roth, and J. D. Salinger, a remembrance of Franklin D. Roosevelt, dispatches from Paris, Spain, and Israel, and indelible portraits of his hometown, Chicago, this collection brings together writing from every phase of his career. *There Is Simply Too Much to Think About* is a guided tour of the twentieth century “what we did, suffered, survived” conducted by one of modern life’s most inspiring minds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Geoff Dyer once said that when choosing a book review to reprint in a collection of essays, it is important for the piece to have "something that transforms it from being a review to a sort of essay in its own right. People either are or are not interested in Denis Johnson, say, but there are a few things in that essay that are worth raising about people other than Denis Johnson. The better the piece, in some ways, the more irrelevant it would render this issue of whether or not you had read the book in question." Much of Saul Bellow's collected nonfiction is made up of book reviews and literary theorizing. That "something" that Dyer looked for in his own writing is present everywhere in Bellow's work. In a word, it is his style. Admirers of Bellow's fiction will delight simply in the wealth of Bellovian prose on offer in this heavy volume. In Martin Amis's words, "His sentences seem to weigh more than anyone else's." In "Starting Out in Chicago," Bellow writes the following of his decision to become a writer, some 40 years earlier: "And what was the most impractical of choices in sombre, heavy, growling, lowbrow Chicago? Why, it was to be the representative of beauty, the interpreter of the human heart, the hero of ingenuity, playfulness, personal freedom, generosity and love. I cannot say even now this was a bad sort of crackpot to be." The combination of this Dickensian luxuriance in language and the urbane wisecracking that made Bellow's voice such a distinctive one in 20th-century letters is one that is hard to grow tired of. For a book that is essentially a work of collected criticism, there is much skepticism of critics expressed throughout.

Philip Roth concludes his blurb on the back cover of the dust jacket thus: "One witnesses his excited mind, in a molten state, running over." Yes, one does, and what more could one ask? The book's editor, Benjamin Taylor, keeps himself unobtrusive. Mostly he has just searched and selected. The title is not Taylor's. It comes from the title of one of Bellow's essays, but it is an excellent choice by Taylor, who also provides a perfect epigraph for the book, from Bellow's MR. SAMMLER'S PLANET: "Once you begin talking, once the mind takes to this way of turning, it keeps turning, and it dips through all events. And perhaps it makes matters slightly more tolerable to let it turn. Though I can't see why they should be tolerable. It is really a frightful moment. But what can one do? The thoughts continue to turn." In spite of Bellow's unwavering awareness of modern materialism's corruptive power, he keeps coming through with hope. From "The Sealed Treasure": "This society, with its titanic products, conditions but cannot absolutely denature us." That's followed by: "It forces certain elements of the genius in our species to go into hiding." In another essay: "In the greatest confusion there is still an open channel to the

soul. It may be difficult to find because by midlife it is overgrown, and some of the wildest thickets that surround it grow out of what we describe as our education.â •From â œThe Civilized Barbarian Readerâ •: â œI readily concede that here and there I am probably hard to read, and I am likely to become harder as the illiteracy of the public increases.â •In â œI Got A Scheme!

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