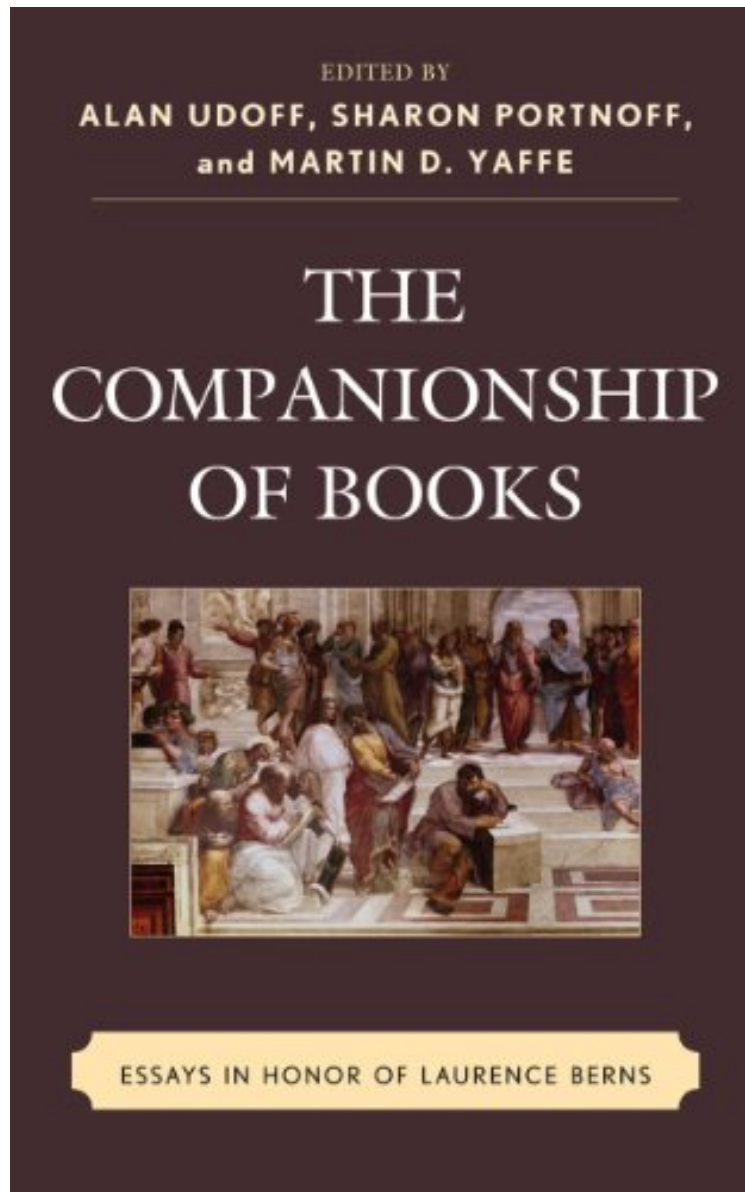


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The Companionship of Books: Essays in Honor of Laurence Berns

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From Lexington Books : The Companionship of Books: Essays in Honor of Laurence Berns before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Companionship of Books: Essays in Honor of Laurence Berns:

This volume is a collection of essays by various contributors in honor of the late Laurence Berns, Richard Hammond Elliot Tutor Emeritus at St. John's College, Annapolis. The essays address the literary, political, theological, and philosophical themes of his life's work as a scholar, teacher, and constant companion of the "great books." Included are essays interpreting biblical books, as well as books by Homer, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Virgil, Dante, Spinoza, Milton, Rousseau, Darwin, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Camus, and H.G. Wells. Like their honoree, the essayists aim at understanding such books as their authors wished them to be understood—for the light they shed on universal and timeless questions about God, nature, and human life which animated the authors themselves and which they saw fit to share, elegantly and eloquently, with thoughtful readers. Each essay is, in its way, a model of how to read and reflect on the writings of the great authors.

This collection is inspired by Laurence Berns, 'scholar, friend, and teacher,' whose thoughtful and probing spirit is reflected in each essay and whose breadth of interests is exhibited by the range of the whole—from the Bible, Plato and Herodotus, Dante and Milton, Spinoza and Rousseau, to Darwin, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky. In their illuminating introduction, Martin Yaffe and Joshua Parens show us how Laurence Berns was drawn, and drew others, into philosophical conversation with the great books. In continuing that conversation, the editors and authors of these essays pay a fitting tribute to him. (Ronna Burger, Tulane University) This collection of short but penetrating essays is a feast for the inquiring mind. Topics range from medieval and more recent re-interpreters of the Bible (including Spinoza), to Herodotus and Homer on the causes of war, to studies of the classical tragedians and Socrates, to arguments of Milton, Rousseau, and later literary and scientific works. One sees how a fresh approach to the 'great books' breeds careful but often surprising instruction, not least as to such modern writers as Camus, Dostoyevsky, Darwin, and H.G. Wells. The editors had said to the authors: write something that Laurence Berns 'might enjoy reading.' They did. The result is a tribute rare in thoughtfulness, in importance of topic, and in consistency of quality. (Robert Faulkner, Boston College) The Companionship of Books is a wonderful collection of essays borne in the spirit of a teacher and scholar whose own deep friendship with books extended across a remarkable expanse of the Western tradition. Its essays are impressive not only for their philosophical penetration, but also because they draw out fascinating conversations between great writers across time. It should be of interest to anyone who wishes to rekindle old philosophical friendships, discover new ones—and partake of an enriching exchange between great readers and writers alike. (Natalie Elliot, Southern Methodist University) About the Author Alan Udoff is professor of philosophy and Jewish studies at St. Francis College. Martin D. Yaffe is professor of philosophy and religion studies at University of North Texas. Sharon Portnoff teaches at Connecticut College.