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Book Review: "Ousmane Sembène: the making of a militant artist," Gadjigo, Samba.

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(entirely in English) are useful. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers.—S. Gittleman, Tufts University

48-2511 P302 2009-24105 CIP
Telling stories: language, narrative, and social life, ed. by Deborah Schiffrin, Anna De Fina, and Anastasia Nylund. Georgetown University, 2010. 219p bibl afp ISBN 9781589016293 pbk, \$44.95

Schiffrin, De Fina, and Nylund (all, Georgetown Univ.) organize these essays around the theme of how people tell stories and narratives in various personal and communal contexts: discussions among college students, callers on radio shows, television interviews, patients with Alzheimer's disease, lawyers in a courtroom, graphic novels. Using semiotics, sociolinguistics, semantics, psychology, and other disciplines, the contributors present essays that range in difficulty from introductory and instructive (as in the opening essay, "Where Should I Begin?" by William Labov) to highly theoretical (e.g., Jerome Bruner's "Narrative, Culture, and Mind") and include treatments oriented toward the historical (as in a contribution by Richard Bauman), the global (contributions by Leor Cohen, Malavika Shetty, and Isolde Carranza), and the visual (those by Michael Bamberg and David Herman). Most essays run to ten pages or fewer, thus the volume as whole evokes the informal conference roundtable setting from which the essays emanate. Because of the essays' brevity, the content is often broad and necessarily takes linguistic or theoretical knowledge for granted. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Graduate students, researchers, faculty.—R. Shapiro, City University of New York

48-2512 PE1585 2009-574 CIP
Wierzbicka, Anna. **Experience, evidence, and sense: the hidden cultural legacy of English**. Oxford, 2010. 460p bibl index afp ISBN 9780195368000, \$99.00; ISBN 9780195368017 pbk, \$35.00

In this companion to her *English: Meaning and Culture* (CH, Jan'07, 44-2548), Polish-born linguist Anna Wierzbicka (linguistics, Australian National Univ.) again explores words and phrases that are both unique to the English language and revelatory of what she calls "Anglo" culture. One need not accept her theory of a neutral meta-language of 70-odd "semantic primes" (notions for which there exist expressions in all languages, and to which all more complex expressions may be reduced) to appreciate her analysis and history of distinctively English expressions such as "experience" (not synonymous with German *Erlebnis* or *Erfahrung* or with French *expérience*), "sense" (as in "commonsense" and "sense of humor"), and "evidence" (not synonymous with French *évidence*). As in her earlier work, Wierzbicka attributes English's distinctive expressions to the empiricism that, she believes, has since the 17th century come to dominate "Anglo" culture in ways not true of the cultures of other language groups. This claim requires far more than linguistic evidence to become fully persuasive, but even without such evidence Wierzbicka's stunning ability to distinguish fine shades of meaning (and often to correct the *Oxford English Dictionary*) makes this book as exciting as it is accessible. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. ★★★ Lower-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers.—D. L. Patey, Smith College

African & Middle Eastern

48-2513 PQ3989 2009-37116 CIP
Gadjigo, Samba. **Ousmane Sembène: the making of a militant artist**, tr. by Moustapha Diop. Indiana, 2010. 188p index afp ISBN 9780253354136, \$50.00; ISBN 9780253221513 pbk, \$19.95

This is the first biography of one of the most important African writers and filmmakers, a man who remains, as Gadjigo (Mount Holyoke College) puts it, "an unknown celebrity." The author intends to rectify this situation by retracing Sembène's trajectory from 1923 to 1956, the formative years in which Sembène (1923-2007) became a militant artist. By Gadjigo's own account, this is a careful "reconstruction" of the artist's life: because of the scarcity of written information about Sembène, the author has relied on first-hand oral testimonies. He provides numerous insights into Sembène's personal development by recalling little-known episodes of his life—episodes that reveal Sembène's major concerns as he expressed them in his work. In placing Sembène's experiences in their larger context, Gadjigo also re-creates a time period: for example, the reader gets a glimpse of what life was like for African dockworkers in post-WW II Marseille. This book is lively and the many quotes and personal testimonies make for an enjoyable read. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.—S. Vanbaelen, Butler University

48-2514 PR9369 2010-8153 CIP
Gordimer, Nadine. **Telling times: writing and living, 1954-2008**. W.W. Norton, 2010. 742p ISBN 9780393066289, \$39.95

In her 1991 Nobel lecture, Gordimer pointed out how factual explanations always fall short of the truth of her fiction: "The life, the opinions, are not the work, for it is in the tension between standing apart and being involved that the imagination transforms both." In the present volume, one finds the raw materials Gordimer's imagination would come to test and transform into her major novels and short stories. The essays tell the historical moment and reveal the brutality or the nobility of an individual, an event, or a collective political decision. Here one can look at the process of an extraordinary writer—at how she selects and transforms the telling moment into character, plot, and meaning. Organized by decades, the volume covers, with precision and energy, a range of topics: childhood memories; the social/political trajectory of apartheid; censorship and the role of the writer; and the contributions of contemporary poets and intellectuals, including Octavio Paz, Edward Said, and Albert Memmi. This important volume adds to the reader's understanding of Gordimer and of the role of the artist as "an agent of change," as someone who is actively engaged in representing the traumas and injustices of the time and arriving at the fullest possible consciousness. **Summing Up:** Essential. ★★★ All readers.—E. M. Huergo, Montgomery College—Rockville Campus

48-2515 PJ6057 2009-49134 CIP
Mallette, Karla. **European modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: toward a new philology and a counter-orientalism**. Pennsylvania, 2010. 312p bibl index afp ISBN 9780812242416, \$65.00

In this study of the linguistic and cultural contact between Arabs and Romance-language-speaking Europeans in medieval and early modern periods of Mediterranean history, Mallette (Italian and Near Eastern studies, Univ. of Michigan) provides the background for what she contends to be the origins of European modernity. She demonstrates