colonists in the 1630s are reenacted by the museum’s stories and simulations, which encourage visitors to question received ideas of historical narratives and standards of evidence. Cohen places museum displays alongside seventeenth-century narratives of the war in order to examine the Pequot War from a Native American perspective and to model how scholars might uncover non-European perspectives about colonization without constituting Native stories as necessarily stable or linear.

Cohen’s study includes Native Americans as both producers and receivers of communication. In this way, he complicates the assumption, shared by some scholars of colonial discourse, that reports of intercultural encounter reflect solely European perspectives. Moreover, Cohen analyzes his own reliance on ethnographic information from colonial sources, and he calls for scholars both to remain aware of colonists’ ulterior motives and to attend to Native Americans’ roles as participants in colonial culture. Ultimately, he reconsiders the evidentiary and interpretive practices that have informed not only literary and cultural histories but also legal decisions regarding sovereignty and tribal affiliation.

In summary, Cohen’s book offers both an analysis of communication in New England and a methodological rumination on reading and teaching colonial texts. His research on New England prompts consideration of how scholars might reevaluate communication in other locales, such as the Caribbean or colonies such as Virginia and New York—arenas where information was exchanged in various European languages and where communication often occurred in the context of slavery. The Networked Wilderness thus offers a productive and thought-provoking analysis of colonial communication that will be of interest to historians of the book and of early American literature.

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You do not have to be a hunter or an anthropologist to find a great deal of value in this remarkable book. A Matter of Life and Death is challenging, nuanced, and entertaining; from the preface forward,
Boglioli, an assistant professor of anthropology at Drew University, has a great deal of respect for rural people and rural life as well as for the integrity of research conducted within his academic community. This respect comes through in the book’s fair-minded treatment of hunting and hunters in Vermont and in its sympathetic and thorough examination of rural society and tradition. This rigorous, unsentimental, unapologetic, and respectful approach is not often found in academic work on rural America, particularly when it comes to a topic as politically and emotionally charged as hunting.

The book’s introduction establishes its ethnographic approach, its structure, and its author’s unique perspective as both a researcher and a hunter. Boglioli goes beyond simple documentation of hunting culture in Vermont; his intention is to argue against the simplistic, moralistic judgments often made in both academic and popular venues against hunting and hunters. A Matter of Life and Death places hunting firmly within the context of—rather than in opposition to—modernity, and it makes a compelling case that rural culture in America needs to be more carefully examined.

Chapter 2 traces the history of deer populations and their management in Vermont over the past century and includes some excellent passages on the consequences of game management decisions in Vermont. Boglioli argues here that attitudes toward hunting and deer population control in Vermont are guided by decidedly local concerns, and he notes that the state’s venerated hunting tradition is, in fact, a relatively recent phenomenon. Chapter 2 examines the common belief among Vermont hunters that people are both dependent on and necessary for the success of animal populations. Boglioli tracks this logic across a variety of contexts associated with everyday rural life as a means of placing hunting within a larger rural-cultural context. Chapter 3 focuses on relationships between hunting and modernity. Here, Boglioli argues that people choose to hunt for reasons that go beyond the perceived benefits of hunting, such as self-sufficiency or a heightened sense of community. The choice to hunt, Boglioli says, is rooted in deeper “rural sensibilities” with long-standing historical and cultural origins.

In the book’s fourth chapter, Boglioli examines hunters’ attitudes toward hunting practices, enumerating views on sportsmanship, consumption of game meat, respect for animals, and the practical and challenging project of finding deer. Chapter 5 explores male and
female hunters’ differing experiences. Men, Boglioli’s findings suggest, do not simply embrace hunting as a crude form of aggressive “hyper-masculinity,” as some readers might assume. For women, Boglioli finds, hunting often represents a politicized act of “resistance.” This chapter also includes a thoughtful look at the family dynamics of hunting across generations and between spouses.

Chapter 6 examines the often rustic and remote “deer camps” where some hunters spend part or all of the annual hunting season. Boglioli reveals the deer camp to be more than a site for drunken or misogynistic behavior, as it has sometimes been stereotyped. Rather, he frames deer camp as a meaningful and multigenerational tradition, a cherished vacation, an opportunity for social interaction, and an alternative way of life. In the book’s final chapter, Boglioli provides a fascinating account of public controversies surrounding coyote hunting tournaments in Vermont. For Boglioli, these disputes suggest a great deal about the social dynamics between “old time” Vermon ters and newcomers to the state and about the place of human-animal interactions in the construction of a rural, Euro-American cultural identity.

Boglioli offers a short conclusion in which he examines some of the key paradoxes of hunting and in which he reiterates some of the book’s broader academic findings and significance for anthropologists and other scholars. Boglioli states at the start of his conclusion: “Vermont hunters are living proof that many things in life are not what they seem to be” (p. 128). This may appear too general a claim to be truly meaningful, but in fact it convincingly forms the core of this book’s rationale and larger significance for readers from across the academic community. A Matter of Life and Death is a book written by an intellectual who understands clearly both his subject (rural hunters) and his anticipated audience (other intellectuals, and largely urban intellectuals at that). Boglioli unveils the world of Vermont hunters in order to question many of the misinformed assumptions about hunting that he knows many of his readers will bring to this book. It is important to stress that this is by no means a jaded defense of hunters against a caricatured bloc of ideologically-driven hunting opponents or “elite” intellectuals. Boglioli simply asks his readers to remove blinders that may distort their conceptions of others—and this is something we all ought to be willing to do. In this sense, it is hard not to see A Matter of Life and Death as a model of fair-minded scholarship, a study whose essential lessons can be applied to any number of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Perhaps
the greatest value of this book, then, is in what it reminds us about academic inquiry as a whole.

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Oliver Wendell Holmes, declared William Osler in 1894, “will always occupy a unique position in the affections of medical men.” Addressing a group of fellow physicians, Osler was thinking less of such celebrated works as The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table than of the writings in which Holmes combined literary genius with the specialized knowledge brought home from his Parisian medical studies in the 1830s. These included Holmes’s famously controversial essay on the doctor-borne contagiousness of puerperal fever as well as his attacks on an outdated and dangerous “heroic” practice: the bleeding, purging, and drugging regimen that had hastened so many already desperately ill patients to their graves.

What Osler could never have foreseen is that Holmes’s wider reputation as a major American writer might someday shrink to virtual invisibility. Yet this is what has happened. The Autocrat is no longer taught in college courses. Holmes’s collected works, teeming with brilliant wit and rich in serious moral reflection, go unread in American studies graduate programs. In one widely used classroom anthology of American literature, the space allotted to Holmes—just enough for three short poems and the comic recitation piece “The Wonderful One-Hoss-Shay”—is exceeded by that given to such figures as Phillis Wheatley, Philip Freneau, and Elizabeth Drew Stoddard.

Against this background, it is heartening to find that, as Osler predicted, Holmes has not lost his place in the regard of fellow physicians. The bicentennial of his birth in 1809 has been celebrated in a sumptuous volume edited by Scott H. Podolsky and Charles S. Bryan, both clinical practitioners and both, like Holmes himself, representatives of a long and honorable tradition of medical humanism. Their own contributions to the volume are among its merits. Their joint contribution is a substantial section entitled “The Quotable Holmes,”