

A black and white portrait of H. L. Mencken, an older man with a receding hairline, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right with a faint smile.

"Mencken at last gets his due . . . .  
*The Skeptic* may well be the best  
biography ever written of an  
American journalist."

—*The Atlantic Monthly*

# THE SKEPTIC

A LIFE OF H. L. MENCKEN

# TERRY TEACHOUT

# Skeptic A Life Of H L Mencken

**David Kirk**



## **Skeptic A Life Of H L Mencken:**

The Skeptic Terry Teachout, 2002-11-05 When H L Mencken talked everyone listened like it or not In the Roaring Twenties he was the one critic who mattered the champion of a generation of plain speaking writers who redefined the American novel and the ax swinging scourge of the know nothing go getting middle class philistines whom he dubbed the booboisie Some loved him others loathed him but everybody read him Now Terry Teachout takes on the man Edmund Wilson called our greatest practicing literary journalist brilliantly capturing all of Mercken s energy and erudition passion and paradoxes in a masterful biography of this iconoclastic figure and the world he shaped From his carefree days as a teenage cub reporter in turn of the century Baltimore to his noisy tenure as founding editor of the American Mercury the most influential magazine of the twenties Mencken distinguished himself with a contrary spirit a razor sharp wit he coined the term Bible Belt and a keen eye for such up and coming authors as Theodore Dreiser Sinclair Lewis Willa Cather and F Scott Fitzgerald He covered everything from the Scopes evolution trial to the 1948 presidential elections in the pages of the Baltimore Sun He wrote bestselling books about the failure of democracy the foibles of the female sex and what he memorably called the American language But his favorite topic was the one he saw wherever he looked the sterile life denying strain of puritanism that he believed was strangling the culture of his native land No modern writer has been more controversial than H L Mencken His fans saw him as the fearless leader of the endless battle against ignorance and hypocrisy while his enemies dismissed him as a cantankerous self righteous ideologue The surging popularity of Franklin D Roosevelt the politician he hated most eventually caused his star to fade but the unsparing vigor of his critique of American life and letters and the raucously colloquial prose style in which he blasted the Babbitts retains its freshness and relevance to this day Himself an accomplished critic and journalist Terry Teachout has combed through reams of Mencken s private papers including the searingly candid autobiographical manuscripts sealed after his death in 1956 Out of this material he has fashioned a portrait of the artist as intellectual gadfly working newspaperman devoted husband and faithless over Meticulously researched elegantly written and completely absorbing The Skeptic vividly evokes the life and legacy of a true American legend

**Reading the Obscene** Jordan Carroll, 2021-11-23 With Reading the Obscene Jordan Carroll reveals new insights about the editors who fought the most famous anti censorship battles of the twentieth century While many critics have interpreted obscenity as a form of populist protest Reading the Obscene shows that the editors who worked to dismantle censorship often catered to elite audiences composed primarily of white men in the professional managerial class As Carroll argues transgressive editors such as H L Mencken at the Smart Set and the American Mercury William Gaines and Al Feldstein at EC Comics Hugh Hefner at Playboy Lawrence Ferlinghetti at City Lights Books and Barney Rosset at Grove Press taught their readers to approach even the most scandalizing texts with the same cold calculation and professional reserve they employed in their occupations Along the way these editors kicked off a middle class sexual revolution in which

white collar professionals imagined they could control sexuality through management science Obscenity is often presented as self shattering and subversive but with this provocative work Carroll calls into question some of the most sensational claims about obscenity suggesting that when transgression becomes a sign of class distinction we must abandon the idea that obscenity always overturns hierarchies and disrupts social order Winner of the 2022 MLA Prize for Independent Scholars sponsored by the Modern Language Association

**The Conservative Century** Gregory L. Schneider, 2009 This concise history focuses on the development of American conservatism in the twentieth century up to the present Gregory L Schneider traces the course of a once reactionary movement opposed to progressive reform and the New Deal and describes how it came to advance alternative policies and programs that revolutionized the shaping of domestic politics foreign policy and economic policy Along the way he profiles such influential thinkers as William F Buckley Frank Meyer Henry Regnery and Barry Goldwater He also details how the decline of liberalism after the 1960s helped conservatives gain political power and how their energized activism and organization culminated in the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 Schneider also describes how the years since the Reagan Revolution have been decidedly mixed for American conservatives

**The Trial of the Century** Gregg Jarrett, 2023-05-30 A masterful The American Spectator history of the iconic attorney Clarence Darrow and the famous Scopes Monkey Trial from the 1 New York Times bestselling author of The Russia Hoax and Witch Hunt Nearly a century ago famed liberal attorney Clarence Darrow defended schoolteacher John Scopes in a blockbuster legal proceeding that brought the attention of the entire country to the small town of Dayton Tennessee Darrow s seminal defense of freedom of speech helped form the legal bedrock on which our civil liberties depend today Expertly researched colorful and dramatic Publishers Weekly The Trial of the Century calls upon our past to unite Americans in the defense of the free exchange of ideas especially in this divided time

*Mocking Eugenics* Ewa Barbara Luczak, 2021-07-28 Mocking Eugenics explores the opposition to eugenic discourse mounted by twentieth century American artists seeking to challenge and destabilize what they viewed as a dangerous body of thought Focusing on their wielding of humor to attack the contemporaneous science of heredity and the totalitarian impulse informing it this book confronts the conflict between eugenic theories presented as grounded in scientific and metaphysical truth and the satirical treatment of eugenics as not only absurdly illogical but also antithetical to democratic ideals and inimical to humanistic values Through analyses of the films of Charlie Chaplin and the fiction of F Scott Fitzgerald Ernest Hemingway Anita Loos and Wallace Thurman Mocking Eugenics examines their use of laughter to dismantle the rhetoric of perfectionism white supremacy and nativism that shaped mainstream expressions of American patriotism and normative white masculinity As such it will appeal to scholars of cultural studies literature cinema sociology humor and American studies

*American Biography* Carl Rollyson, 2006-02 This collection of reviews selected from Rollyson s New York Sun column is as much about the romance of biography as it is about the American lives Certain concerns resonate throughout the book the American left s failure to reckon with Communist subversion McCarthyism and

Stalinism the problematic nature of authorized biography the history of American biography definitive biographies literary biography the differences between autobiography and biography the importance of interviews in biographies of contemporary figures the differences between history and biography comparative biographies the virtues of short biographies and of biographies for children the tendency of biographers to fictionalize and of novelists to biographize psychology and biography Rollyson's own experience as a biographer and the way biographers treat one another's work Too many biographers he believes evince no interest in the biographical tradition Concerned only with possession of their subjects their proprietorial attitude deforms not only their biographies but also the genre itself If biography is reviewed badly receiving hardly more than a summary of the subject's life with a perfunctory nod to the biographer it is because the biographical tradition has been disregarded or discounted This book in other words has been written on the behalf of biography a genre that still awaits a full vindication

**The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture** Charles Reagan Wilson, 2014-02-01 This volume of The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture addresses the cultural social and intellectual terrain of myth manners and historical memory in the American South Evaluating how a distinct southern identity has been created recreated and performed through memories that blur the line between fact and fiction this volume paints a broad multihued picture of the region seen through the lenses of belief and cultural practice The 95 entries here represent a substantial revision and expansion of the material on historical memory and manners in the original edition They address such matters as myths and memories surrounding the Old South and the Civil War stereotypes and traditions related to the body sexuality gender and family such as debutante balls and beauty pageants institutions and places associated with historical memory such as cemeteries monuments and museums and specific subjects and objects of myths including the Confederate flag and Graceland Together they offer a compelling portrait of the southern way of life as it has been imagined lived and contested

**The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture** M. Thomas Inge, Charles Reagan Wilson, 2014-02-01 Offering a comprehensive view of the South's literary landscape past and present this volume of The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture celebrates the region's ever flourishing literary culture and recognizes the ongoing evolution of the southern literary canon As new writers draw upon and reshape previous traditions southern literature has broadened and deepened its connections not just to the American literary mainstream but also to world literatures a development thoughtfully explored in the essays here Greatly expanding the content of the literature section in the original Encyclopedia this volume includes 31 thematic essays addressing major genres of literature theoretical categories such as regionalism the southern gothic and agrarianism and themes in southern writing such as food religion and sexuality Most striking is the fivefold increase in the number of biographical entries which introduce southern novelists playwrights poets and critics Special attention is given to contemporary writers and other individuals who have not been widely covered in previous scholarship

Defiant Joy Kevin Belmonte, 2011-01-03 You may be aware that G K Chesterton authored influential Christian

biographies and apologetics But you may not know the larger than life Gilbert Keith Chesterton himself not yet Equally versed in poetry novels literary criticism and journalism he addressed politics culture and religion with a towering intellect and a soaring wit Chesterton engaged his world through the written word He carried on lively public discussions with the social commentators of his day continually challenging them with civility humility erudition and his ever sharp sense of humor Today s reader can find the same treasures for as Chesterton said What a man can believe depends upon his philosophy not upon the clock or the century In Kevin Belmonte s fresh new biography you ll get to know the real G K Chesterton and his literary and cultured accomplishments A giant of his time Chesterton continues to live large in the imaginations of twenty first century readers Endorsements Chesterton s explanation of Christianity makes absolute sense of the world He reminds us that free of our comforting delusions reality is a tragic adventure in which we get to participate DONALD MILLER author of the New York Times bestsellers A Million Miles in a Thousand Years and Blue Like Jazz Bravo to Kevin Belmonte for turning his caring attention to the incomparably hilarious and brilliant genius that is G K Chesterton ERIC METAXAS New York Times best selling author of Bonhoeffer Pastor Martyr Prophet Spy and Amazing Grace William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery There s a great new biography about one of the Christian giants of the 20th Century And I mean that literally To read Kevin Belmonte s recent book Defiant Joy The Remarkable Life Impact of G K Chesterton is to feel a powerful sense of longing because there is such a longing a great need for advocates like Chesterton in our day But let s be grateful we still have the works of that great man to study and learn from And we also have for you have Belmonte s vibrant new biography a wonderful reminder of the magnificent example Chesterton has set for us CHUCK COLSON <http://patriotpost.us/opinion/chuck-colson/2012/01/26/defiant-joy-why-we-still-need-chesterton>

**The Future of (High) Culture in America** Daniel Asia,2015-09-04 This book brings together the proceedings of the inaugural conference of the University of Arizona Center for American Culture and Ideas CACI an institution dedicated to studying and promoting the arts particularly investigating the relationship between the high arts and culture in America The conference was titled The Future of High Culture in America and was held in March 2014 Presenters and respondents included practicing artists critics educators and academics curators and art purveyors all at the top of their game Papers were presented followed by comments from a panel of respondents and an audience question and answer period The conference title can be read as both a statement and a question Is there high culture in America and if so is it in jeopardy This suggests an opportunity to consider what culture or high culture means This book explores a range of subjects including music dance the visual arts particularly photography and more general philosophical and psychological matters As such it offers a fascinating and provocative kaleidoscope of the position of arts and culture in America

**Margaret Mead** Nancy C. Lutkehaus,2018-06-26 Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world Margaret Mead This quotation found on posters and bumper stickers and adopted as the motto for hundreds of organizations worldwide speaks to the global

influence and legacy of the American anthropologist Margaret Mead 1901-78 In this insightful and revealing book Nancy Lutkehaus explains how and why Mead became the best known anthropologist and female public intellectual in twentieth century America Using photographs films television appearances and materials from newspapers magazines and scholarly journals Lutkehaus explores the ways in which Mead became an American cultural heroine Identifying four key images associated with her the New Woman the Anthropologist Adventurer the Scientist and the Public Intellectual Lutkehaus examines the various meanings that different segments of American society assigned to Mead throughout her lengthy career as a public figure The author shows that Mead came to represent a new set of values and ideas about women non Western peoples culture and America's role in the twentieth century that have significantly transformed society and become generally accepted today Lutkehaus also considers why there has been no other anthropologist since Mead to become as famous Margaret Mead is an engaging look at how one woman's life and accomplishments resonated with the issues that shaped American society and changed her into a celebrity and cultural icon

**A Jealous God** Pamela R. Winnick, 2005-10-30 A look at the personal and professional motivations behind the scientific community's dogmatic rejection of religion and how this impacts the culture The age old war between religion and science has taken a new twist Once the dedicated scientist martyr fought heroically against rigid religionists But now the tables have turned and it is established science crusading against religion pushing atheistic agendas in the classroom in textbooks and in the media This book shows how science has now become a religion of its own an often fanatical one at that furiously preaching atheism punishing dissenters dictating how and what we should think and subtly inserting its worldviews in everything from education to entertainment And with stunning clarity it proves that with billions of dollars up for grabs in the race for stem cell research intellectual integrity has been replaced with good old fashioned greed With sharp insight and completely original reporting this book defiantly shows the extent to which science is beating down religion and how this systematic tyranny is unmistakably weakening culture and society

**He Crashed Me So I Crashed Him Back** Mark Bechtel, 2025-05-01 On a cold February day in 1979 when most of the Northeast was snowed in by a blizzard NASCAR entered the American consciousness with a dramatic telecast of the Daytona 500 It was the first 500 mile race to be broadcast live on national television and featured the heroes and legends of the sport racing on a hallowed track With one of the wildest finishes in sports history a finish that was just the start of the drama everything changed for what is now America's second most popular sport He Crashed Me So I Crashed Him Back is the story of an emerging sport trying to find its feet It's the story of how Bobby Allison Donnie Allison Cale Yarborough Richard Petty Dale Earnhardt Darrell Waltrip A J Foyt and Kyle Petty came together in an unforgettable season that featured the first nationally televised NASCAR races There were rivalries even the sibling kind and plenty of fistfights feuds and frenzied finishes Rollicking and full of larger than life characters He Crashed Me So I Crashed Him Back is the remarkable tale of the birth of modern stock car racing

*A Treasure Chest of Hidden History* Rusty Glover, 2013-09-16 As a high school

history teacher for the past 25 years I have collected and read hundreds of books pertaining to my subjects taught On the completion of each book I would carefully take notes on the most interesting events quotes or interpretations that I felt would enhance instruction for my students After filling numerous notepads of information on over 800 books I contemplated a project of sharing my most interesting findings The result of this twenty plus year project is this book This book is divided into 16 chapters based on the various topics presented Some chapters contain a small amount of entries such as Nicknames Espionage or Labor while chapters on the Presidents or quotes will fill over thirty pages The first chapter puts emphasis on the role my home state of Alabama has played on the national scene One chapter is entitled Miscellaneous Odds and Ends due to the subject matter not fitting into any other classification      **Observing America** Robert Frankel,2007-01-05

Beginning with Alexis de Tocqueville and Frances Trollope visitors to America have written some of the most penetrating and occasionally scathing commentaries on U S politics and culture Observing America focuses on four of the most insightful British commentators on America between 1890 and 1950 The colorful journalist W T Stead championed Anglo American unity while plunging into reform efforts in Chicago The versatile writer H G Wells fiercely criticized capitalist America but found reason for hope in the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt G K Chesterton one of England s great men of letters urged Americans to preserve the vestiges of Jeffersonian democracy that he still discerned in the small towns of the heartland And the influential political theorist and activist Harold Laski assailed the business ethos that he believed dominated the nation especially after Franklin Roosevelt s death Robert Frankel examines the New World experiences of these commentators and the books they wrote about America He also probes similar writings by other prominent observers from the British Isles including Beatrice Webb Rudyard Kipling and George Bernard Shaw The result is a book that offers keen insights into America s national identity in a time of vast political and cultural change      *Tales of Berlin in American Literature up to the 21st Century* Joshua Parker,2016-03-17 Of all European cities Americans today are perhaps most curious about Berlin whose position in the American imagination is an essential component of nineteenth century postwar and contemporary transatlantic imagology Over various periods Berlin has been a tenuous space for American claims to cultural heritage and to real geographic space in Europe symbolizing the ultimate evil and the power of redemption This volume offers a comprehensive examination of the city s image in American literature from 1840 to the present Tracing both a history of Berlin and of American culture through the ways the city has been narrated across three centuries by some 100 authors through 145 novels short stories plays and poems Tales of Berlin presents a composite landscape not only of the German capital but of shifting subtexts in American society which have contextualized its meaning for Americans in the past and continue to do so today      *Make 'em Laugh!* Zeke Jarvis,2015-04-07 This lighthearted and eye opening book explores the role of comedy in cultural and political critiques of American society from the past century This unprecedented look at the history of satire in America showcases the means by which our society is informed by humor from



the way we examine the news to how we communicate with each other to what we seek out for entertainment From biographical information to critical reception of material and personalities the book features humorists from both literary and popular culture settings spanning the past 100 years Through its 180 entries this comprehensive volume covers a range of artists individuals such as Joan Rivers Hunter S Thompson and Chris Rock and topics including vaudeville cartoons and live performances The content is organized by media and genre to showcase connections between writers and performers Chapters include an alphabetical listing of humorists grouped by television and film stars stand up and performance comics literary humorists and humorists in popular print

**1932** David Pietrusza, 2015-10-20 Two Depression battered nations confronted destiny in 1932 going to the polls in their own way to anoint new leaders to rescue their people from starvation and hopelessness America would elect a Congress and a president ebullient aristocrat Franklin Roosevelt or tarnished Wonder Boy Herbert Hoover Decadent divided Weimar Germany faced two rounds of bloody Reichstag elections and two presidential contests doddering reactionary Paul von Hindenburg against rising radical hate monger Adolf Hitler The outcome seemed foreordained unstoppable forces advancing upon crumbled disoriented societies A merciless Great Depression brought greater perhaps hopeful perhaps deadly transformation FDR's New Deal and Hitler's Third Reich But neither outcome was inevitable Readers enter the fray through David Pietrusza's page turning account Roosevelt's fellow Democrats may yet halt him at a deadlocked convention 1928's Democratic nominee Al Smith harbors a grudge against his one time protege Press baron William Randolph Hearst lays his own plans to block Roosevelt's ascent to the White House FDR's politically inspired juggling of a New York City scandal threatens his juggernaut In Germany the Nazis surge at the polls but twice fall short of Reichstag majorities Hitler tasting power after a lifetime of failure and obscurity falls to Hindenburg for the presidency also twice within the year Cabals and counter cabals plot Secrets of love and suicide haunt Hitler Yet guile and ambition may yet still prevail 1932's breathtaking narrative covers two epic stories that possess haunting parallels to today's crisis filled vortex It is an all too human tale of scapegoats and panaceas class warfare and racial politics of a seemingly bottomless depression of massive unemployment and hardship of unprecedented public works infrastructure programs of business stimulus programs and damaging allegations of political cronyism of waves of bank failures and of mortgages foreclosed of Washington bonus marches and Berlin street fights of once solid financial empires collapsing seemingly overnight of rapidly shifting social mores and of mountains of irresponsible international debt threatening to crash not just mere nations but the entire global economy It is the tale of spell binding leaders versus bland businessmen and out of touch upper class elites and of two nations inching to safety but lurching toward disaster It is 1932's nightmare with lessons for today

America and the Great War Margaret E. Wagner, 2017-05-30 Choice Magazine Outstanding Academic Titles of the Year for 2017 A uniquely colorful chronicle of this dramatic and convulsive chapter in American and world history It's an epic tale and here it is wondrously well told David M Kennedy Pulitzer Prize winning historian and author of FREEDOM

FROM FEAR From August 1914 through March 1917 Americans were increasingly horrified at the unprecedented destruction of the First World War While sending massive assistance to the conflict s victims most Americans opposed direct involvement Their country was immersed in its own internal struggles including attempts to curb the power of business monopolies reform labor practices secure proper treatment for millions of recent immigrants and expand American democracy Yet from the first the war deeply affected American emotions and the nation s commercial financial and political interests The menace from German U boats and failure of U S attempts at mediation finally led to a declaration of war signed by President Wilson on April 6 1917 America and the Great War commemorates the centennial of that turning point in American history Chronicling the United States in neutrality and in conflict it presents events and arguments political and military battles bitter tragedies and epic achievements that marked U S involvement in the first modern war Drawing on the matchless resources of the Library of Congress the book includes many eyewitness accounts and more than 250 color and black and white images many never before published With an introduction by Pulitzer Prize winning historian David M Kennedy America and the Great War brings to life the tempestuous era from which the United States emerged as a major world power

**Chronology of the Evolution-Creationism Controversy** Randy Moore, Mark Decker, Sehoya H. Cotner, 2009-11-25 A unique chronology with entries describing the key events in the 3 000 year conflict between religion and science over the explanation and definition of life on Earth Exhaustively researched and authoritative Chronology of the Evolution Creationism Controversy does what no other work does it examines the conflict between the religious and scientific views of life on Earth in its full 3 000 year historical context showing readers how this roiling debate has played out over the centuries With hundreds of entries Chronology of the Evolution Creationism Controversy describes specific cultural religious and scientific events relevant to the evolution creationism controversy from the first notions of creationism in ancient Egypt to the present Within this historical approach it identifies a number of recurring themes that have shaped the debate through the ages including famous court cases the recurrence of the intelligent design argument disagreements over the age of the Earth and the impact of technological advances on both the scientific and faith based viewpoints While approaching the subject globally throughout the book s second half focuses on tensions between science and religious thought in the United States since the early 1900s

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