

Library Journal

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Epstein (emeritus lecturer of English, Northwestern Univ.), a frequent contributor to the *Wall Street Journal*, *Commentary*, and the *Weekly Standard*, is acclaimed for his witty, perceptive, and occasionally contentious essays, which he began during his editorship (1974–97) of *American Scholar*. These writings have been published in multiple collections (e.g., *A Literary Education and Other Essays* and *Essays in Biography*), and in this latest, most of the 143 pieces are harvested from the *Weekly Standard* (1996–2015).

They are essentially aperçus—insights or observations on matters personal or familiar. Humorous and conversational, leavened with literary and philosophical quotations, the narratives deplore phone menus, remembering PINs, and infelicitous sentence structure (“It Rings—You Jump,” “Numbers on the Brain,” “Mr. Epstein Regrets”). The author bemoans the excessive use of buzzwords (“Take a Flying Focus,” “Don’t Ask, Multitask,” “The Issue Issue”) and extols his fashionable attire—hat, sneakers, and bow-tie (“Cool Chapeau, Man,” “Foot Fop”).

VERDICT In “Literary Tippling,” Epstein recounts his need to “tipple”—to have reading material at every occasion, including the bathroom. These entertaining and engaging essays are pithy (most are no longer than two pages), and as the book title itself suggests, amenable to such “tippling.”

—Lonnie Weatherby, McGill Univ. Lib., Montreal