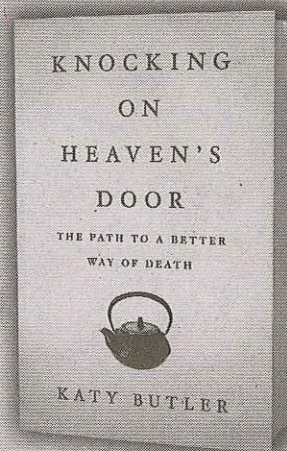


“A thoroughly researched and compelling mix of personal narrative and reporting.”

—Abraham Verghese,
The New York Times
Book Review



Knocking on Heaven's Door will inspire the difficult conversations we need to have with loved ones as it illuminates the path to a better way of death.

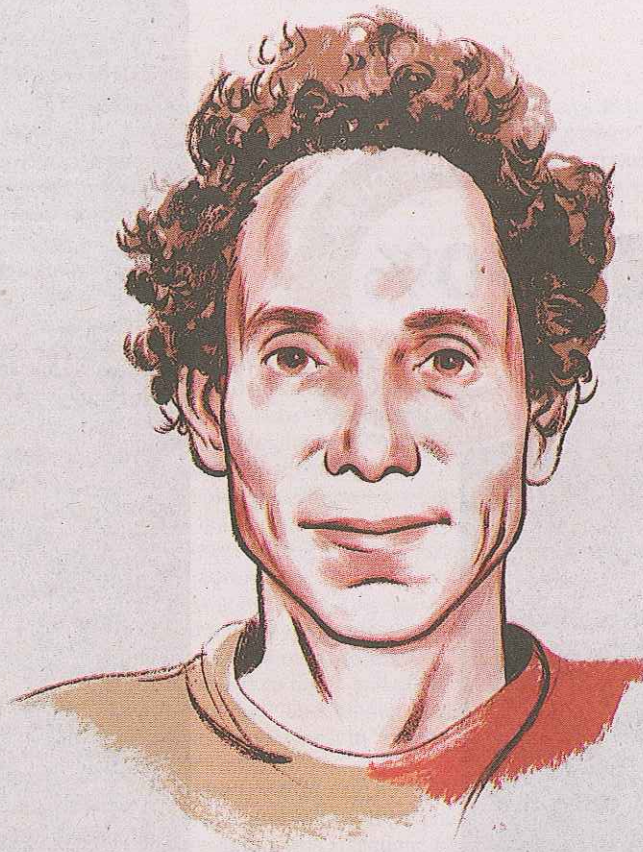
“So honest, so perceptive, and so achingly beautiful.”

—Dr. Sherwin B. Nuland,
author of *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter*

Also available as an ebook
and as an audiobook.

 **SCRIBNER**
A Division of Simon & Schuster
A CBS COMPANY

By the Book



Malcolm Gladwell

The author of ‘David and Goliath’ compares Michael Lewis to Tiger Woods: ‘I’ll never play like that. But it’s good to be reminded every now and again what genius looks like.’

What’s the best book you’ve read so far this year?

There have been many. I loved Jonathan Dee’s new novel, “A Thousand Pardons.” The best science book I read was Adam Alter’s “Drunk Tank Pink,” which is a really provocative look at how much our behavior is contextually determined.

Which writers do you find yourself returning to again and again — reading every new book and rereading the old?

Did I mention Lee Child? The two contemporary writers whom I consider as role models are Janet Malcolm and Michael Lewis. I reread Malcolm’s “Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession” just to remind myself how nonfiction is supposed to be done. I love how ominous her writing is. Even when she is simply sketching out the scenery, you know that something wonderful and thrilling is about to happen. Lewis is tougher, because what he does is almost impossible to emulate. “The Big Short,” one of the best business books of the past two decades, was about derivatives. I read Lewis for the same reasons I watch Tiger Woods. I’ll never play like that. But it’s good to be reminded every

now and again what genius looks like.

Who are your favorite social science writers? Anyone new and especially smart we should pay attention to?

I mentioned Adam Alter, who is a psychologist at New York University. I also really like Adam Grant, who is a psychologist at Penn and the author of “Give and Take.” What really excites me as a sports fan, though, is all the smart sports books coming from an academic perspective: “The Sports Gene,” by David Epstein; “The Numbers Game,” by Chris Anderson and David Sally; and “The Wages of Wins” and “Stumbling on Wins,” by Dave Berri and others.

What books, to your mind, bring together social science, business principles and narrative nonfiction in an interesting or innovative way?

Can I return again to Michael Lewis? Bringing together social science and business principles is easy. Doing that and telling a compelling story is next to impossible. I think only Michael Lewis can do it well. His nonbusiness books like “The Blind Side,” by the way, are even better. That book is as close to perfect as a work of

popular nonfiction can be.

In general, what kinds of stories are you drawn to? Any you steer clear of?

I don’t think I will ever write about politics or foreign policy. I feel like there is so much good writing in those areas that I have little to add. I also like to steer clear of writing about people whom I do not personally like. My rule is that if I interview someone, they should never read what I have to say about them and regret having given me the interview.

What’s the last book to make you laugh out loud? To cry? And the last book that made you angry?

I read Jeremy Adelman’s biography of Albert O. Hirschman early this year and was deeply moved by it. Hirschman wasn’t just a man with a thousand extraordinary adventures (fighting fascists in Spain, smuggling Jews out of France, writing “Exit, Voice, and Loyalty” and a handful of other unforgettable books). He was also wise and decent and honest. I finished that book with tears in my eyes.

What books might we be surprised to find on your shelves?

I have — by conservative estimate — several hundred novels with the word “spy” in the title.

Disappointing, overrated, just not good: What book did you feel you were supposed to like, and didn’t? Do you remember the last book you put down without finishing?

I feel terrible for saying this. But I started reading “The Cuckoo’s Calling” before I knew it was by J.K. Rowling, and I couldn’t finish it. Is there something wrong with me?

If you could meet any character from literature, who would it be?

I’d like to go for a long walk on the Hampstead Heath with George Smiley. It would be drizzling. We would end up having a tepid cup of tea somewhere, with slightly stale biscuits. I would ask him lots of questions about Control, and he would evade them, gracefully.

What book have you always meant to read and haven’t gotten around to yet? Anything you feel embarrassed not to have read?

I have never read any Tolstoy. I felt badly about this until I read a Bill Simmons column where he confessed that he’d never seen “The Big Lebowski.” Simmons, it should be pointed out, has seen everything. He said that everyone needs to have skipped at least one great cultural touchstone. □

ONLINE An expanded version of this interview is available at nytimes.com/books.