

# The New Criterion

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## The Critic's Notebook

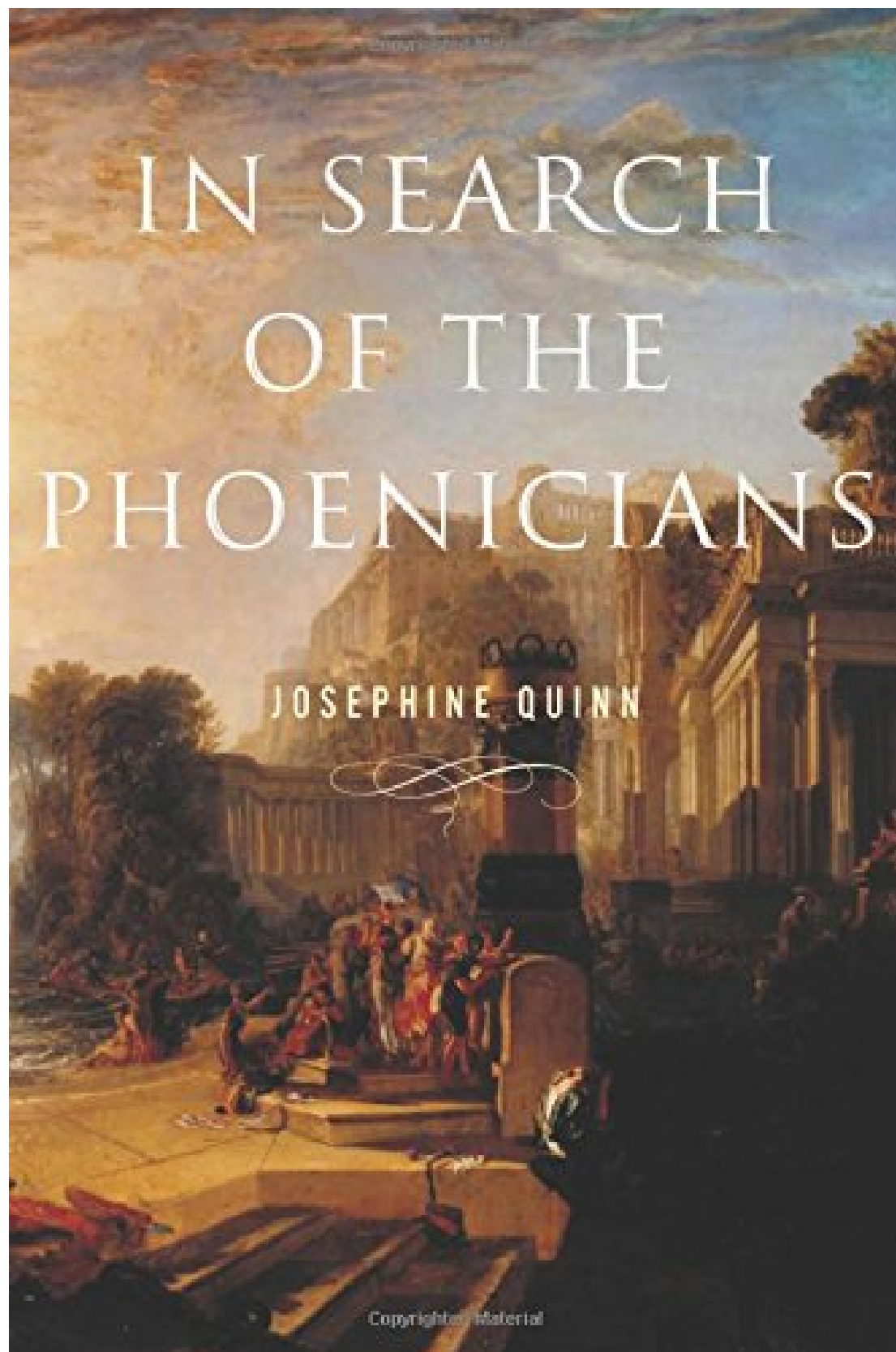
*by The Editors*

**This week: Lois Dodd, remembering Gavin Stamp & more.**



*Lois Dodd, The Woods, Fir Trees, 1968, Oil on Masonite, Alexandre Gallery.*

**Nonfiction:**



*In Search of the Phoenicians*, by Josephine Quinn (Princeton University Press): Phoenicia, the ancient civilization of seafaring traders that populated and controlled the Eastern Mediterranean coastal region before either the Greeks or the Romans extended even a fraction of that reach, was among the first to adopt such developments as a written alphabet and sophisticated naval trade. Composed of a set of politically independent city-states around the Mediterranean—most notably,

Tyre, Arwad, Byblos, and Carthage—Phoenicia is typically thought of as a unified precursor to the Greek civilization that ultimately eclipsed it. In a new book, however, Josephine Quinn, an associate professor of ancient history at the University of Oxford, argues that the entire idea of a proto-nationalist “Phoenician” identity or culture may not have existed at all. Rather, evidence suggests that it is unlikely that Phoenicians saw themselves as a collective that rose above the level of the city or indeed family. As such, Quinn argues that the histories of Phoenicia that invented and sustained this narrative of a Phoenician national identity are themselves worthy of study. Though the historiography of Phoenicia is an admittedly narrow topic, Quinn’s *In Search of the Phoenicians* will serve as a comprehensive introduction to the literary, artistic, dramatic, and technological cultures of these ancient societies. —AS

**Art:**





*Lois Dodd, View Through Elliot's Shack, Looking South, 1971, Oil on linen, Alexandre Gallery.*

“Lois Dodd: Selected Paintings” at Alexandre Gallery (through January 27): Born in 1927, Lois Dodd studied at New York’s Cooper Union in the 1940s. She was one of the founders of New York’s pioneering Tanager Gallery in the 1950s. Yet unlike much of the rest of the New York School, who were painting windows to their souls, Dodd has spent a lifetime painting windows to windows.

Her body of work, now continuing into her tenth decade, has always been a window to an independent artistic spirit, revealing mood of nature, shelter, and viewpoint through an economy of form and brushstroke. Dodd is now the subject of a new monograph, her first, written by the curator and critic Faye Hirsch and published by Lund Humphries as part of its series on contemporary painters. Through January 27, Alexandre Gallery, Dodd's steadfast representation, has mounted a must-see survey show occasioned by this publication. —JP

**Music:**



*Pagliacci* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Metropolitan Opera (January 8–February 1): A personal favorite returns to the Metropolitan Opera this week: *Pagliacci*, the classic two-act melodrama by the one-hit wonder Ruggero Leoncavallo, was the second opera I ever saw, on a double-bill with Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. It was a perfect pairing: sumptuous lyricism and wry comedy, followed by white-knuckle tragedy and a gripping score. *Pagliacci*'s thrilling music is immediately captivating to anyone who hears it, and the drama lands with crushing force as the scenario rapidly unravels in the last five minutes of the opera. The current production by David McVicar, presented in the traditional pairing with Mascagni's much slower *Cavalleria Rusticana*, is one of the best in the Met's repertory, bringing out the essential contrast of comic and tragic elements by updating the commedia dell'arte scene into the more familiar idiom of vaudeville. Roberto Alagna, starring as the tragic clown Canio, leads a superb cast that includes George Gagnidze as Tonio and Aleksandra Kurzak as Nedda. Nicola Luisotti conducts. —ECS

**Architecture:**



GAVIN STAMP

'An unforgettable, passionate, book'  
A. N. Wilson, *Evening Standard*



*The Memorial to  
the Missing  
of the Somme*



*The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme*, by Gavin Stamp (Profile Books): The world of architectural history received sad news last week with the announcement of the death of Gavin Stamp. A tireless seeker of the unknown and an independent voice in a profession rife with sycophants, Stamp heralded the forgotten throughout his long career, both in his campaigning—he did more to restore the reputation of Glasgow's Alexander "Greek" Thomson than anyone—and in his regular Nooks and Corners column for *Private Eye*, where he followed John Betjeman. Now is as good a time as ever to revisit the book that may be Stamp's masterpiece: his 2007 monograph on Lutyens's

Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. Keep an eye out for Clive Aslet's forthcoming obituary of Stamp, due to appear in the March issue of *The New Criterion*. —BR



*Balthus (Balthasar Klossowski), The Mountain, 1936–37, Oil on canvas, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.*

**From the archive:** “Balthus presents Balthus” by Jed Perl (October 1993). On the Balthus retrospective in Lausanne.

**From the current issue:** “Music, money, mortality” by Kyle Smith. On *The Band’s Visit* at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, *Junk* at the Vivian Beaumont Theater, and *Shadowlands* at the Acorn Theatre.

**Broadcast:** “Populism & its critics,” a symposium with *The New Criterion* and The Social Affairs Unit.

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