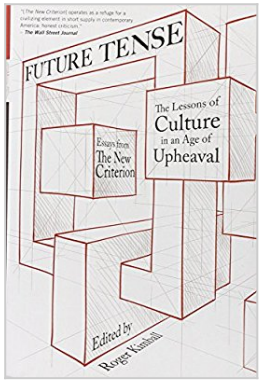

Future Tense: The Lessons of Culture in an Age of Upheaval

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Future Tense: The Lessons of Culture in an Age of Upheaval From Brand: Encounter Books

We are living in an age of unprecedented upheaval. The future of Western culture is uncertain. America's economic and political vitality are more fragile than ever. The preservation of tradition is far from guaranteed.

Many have observed that we are living through a world historical moment of which Hegel spoke: a time when many of the traditional assumptions about the shape and future of culture are suddenly in play. As *The New Criterion* embarks on its fourth decade of publication, the magazine commemorates its commitment to the civilizing values of informed criticism with the publication of *Future Tense: The Lessons of Culture in an Age of Upheaval*.

Compiling the writings of some of the greatest essayists of our time, Future Tense examines this pivotal period through a variety of lenses. Beginning with a meditation on memorials after the 9/11 attacks (Michael J. Lewis), the essays address patriotism in relation to Pericles (Victor Davis Hanson), twenty-first century American pride and leadership (Andrew Roberts), the future of religion in America (David Bentley Hart), and the unwinding of the welfare state (Kevin D. Williamson). Continuing this arc, pieces examine self-knowledge and modern technology (Anthony Daniels), the cultural capital of museums (James Panero), and the difficulties of making law in the modern world (Andrew C. McCarthy). In its penultimate essay, the book explores the possibility of a forthcoming political revolution (James Piereson), then closes with a reflection of culture's role in the economy of life and the fragility of civilization (Roger Kimball).

Taken together, these prominent writers demonstrate an acute understanding of the value of Western thought as well as the challenges it faces. *Future Tense* is an engaging discourse on the prospects of society and an important collection for anyone concerned with the longevity of traditional culture.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

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America resumed: 9/11 remembered
by Michael J. Lewis

The first entry in our series "Future tense: the lessons of culture in an age of upheaval."

If asked to describe the cultural legacy of World War One, you might cite Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* or George M. Cohan's rousing but now forgotten "Over There." Or perhaps the poignant battle monuments of the American Expeditionary Force, of which Paul Cret's temple at Chateau Thierry is the loveliest. But these items are tangible, and the most vital cultural legacy of any war—or any great national trauma, for that matter—is intangible. It is the comprehensive way it changes our shared attitudes and assumptions, our collective sensibility.

Changes in the collective sensibility, being invisible, usually do not reveal themselves until they are expressed in action. The whip can crack before anyone realizes that it was coiling, and so it was at the end of World War I with Prohibition. In 1919 two separate forces—a wartime mood of urgency and a newfound bitterness toward America's brewers, nearly all of them German—fatefully converged, and in a matter of days accomplished what a half century of temperance crusading had failed to do. Any reckoning of the cultural legacy of the war must give Prohibition a central place.

And what of September 11, 2001? Here too one must distinguish between tangible and intangible consequences. The day has already brought forth an enormous trove of cultural artifacts, including skyscrapers and memorials, novels and films, plays and songs. If they do not quite stand comparison with the achievement of Hemingway, Cohan, or Cret, they are notable for a very different reason. Questions of art and culture seldom are directly involved in a national trauma; they belong to the shadow realm in which great events are digested and replayed after the fact, much as a dream imaginatively rehearses the happenings of the day. But on September 11, it happened that a work of art, a modernist landmark known throughout the world, was at the center of events. And so the cultural artifacts created in the wake of its destruction speak with unusual clarity about how the collective sensibility has changed, and how it has not.

What's a museum?
by James Panero

What's a museum? Lately, it seems, the answer is whatever we want. Today's museums can be tourist attractions, department stores, civic centers, town squares, catalysts of urban renewal, food courts, licensing brands, showcases for contemporary architecture, social clubs, LEED-certified environmentally conscious facilities, and franchise opportunities. A "well-run museum is eerily like an upscale suburban shopping

mall," says an article in *The New York Times*. A cafe with "art on the side," advertises London's Victoria and Albert Museum. "We are in the entertainment business, and competing against other forms of entertainment out there," says a one-time spokesman for the Guggenheim museum. "Inclusive places that welcome diverse audiences" and "reflect our society's pluralism in every aspect of their operations and programs," suggests the American Association of Museums. "We live in a more global, multicultural society that cares about diversity and inclusivity," so "service to the community" is now among the museum's à la carte options, says Kaywin Feldman, the latest head of the Association of Art Museum Directors. As reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, museums are even about "bringing art to those with Alzheimer's or post-traumatic stress disorder, and farming crops for donation to local food banks," initiatives that have been promoted through grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Users Review

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