

Current Books

grownup. I don't think I will ever be a grownup." As usual, Nkosi is right. He dies an international celebrity in 2001, age 12, weighing 20 pounds.

Playfulness, affection, courage, and sorrow entwine in the wasted body of the boy, and in this astute and heartfelt memoir. Wooten knows it's not possible for American readers to care about five million, 10 million, 20 million orphans, but he makes us care about one, and that's a start.

—MELISSA FAY GREENE

FREE WORLD:

America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West.

By Timothy Garton Ash. Random House. 286 pp. \$24.95

Among specialists in international relations, the terrorist attack that toppled the World Trade Center also shattered the optimism to which the end of the Cold War had given rise. History, it turned out, had *not* ended. Globalization, the Big Idea of the 1990s, wasn't likely to provide an all-purpose remedy for the world's ills. As for the much-touted "unipolar moment," its defining feature turned out to be not peace and stability but the prospect of open-ended conflict. Contemptuous of allies and disdainful of international norms, the Bush administration seemingly went out of its way to alienate the rest of the world. In the eyes of more than a few informed observers, the United States became a rogue nation. To critics who excoriated the administration for its arrogance and warmongering, the future of the world order began to look bleak indeed.

In this upbeat and admirable if ultimately unsatisfying book, Timothy Garton Ash argues that such gloom is misplaced. The signs of the times call not for despair, he believes, but for the West to redouble its efforts to build a "Free World," making available to all the blessings of peace, liberty, and prosperity. The opportunity to create such a global order is at hand, but fleeting: Fail to seize the opportunity now and it may be lost forever.

A prolific journalist and historian who teaches at Oxford University, Garton Ash

builds his book around a series of immensely readable essays examining the predicament in which Great Britain, the United States, and continental Europe now find themselves. The result is far more nuanced than Robert Kagan's caricature of a feisty American Mars and a played-out European Venus talking past each other. It is far more interesting and persuasive as well.

According to Garton Ash, nations on both sides of the Atlantic—not least his own Britain—are internally divided, poorly led, and mired in myth, jealousy, and old resentments. As a consequence, they are unable to grasp where their true interests lie. In fact, he emphasizes, the divisions currently besetting the Atlantic community are trivial in comparison with the values that its members hold in common. Quoting Freud, he dismisses the West's intramural quarrels as the "narcissism of minor differences." Instead of squabbling about Iraq, farm subsidies, or the death penalty, Europeans and Americans ought to return to their true calling—nurturing the creation of a Free World that by all rights ought to encompass the entire globe.

Assigning to Britain the pivotal role of patching up the transatlantic divide, Garton Ash calls for a massive collaborative effort to make good on the promise of liberalism. Through free trade, greatly expanded support for international development and human rights, and efforts to forestall the impending crisis of global warming, Garton Ash believes that the West can eliminate global poverty, foster the final triumph of democracy, and ensure that the planet remains inhabitable for future generations.

But don't count on the likes of George W. Bush, Jacques Chirac, and Gerhard Schröder to take up this cause anytime soon. According to Garton Ash, "foreign policy is too important to be left to the politicians," who often as not "don't know what they're doing." Instead, he advocates a sort of transnational populism, summoning "the thousand million" inhabitants of the developed nations to unite behind a "well-informed, enlightened, strategic approach to the rest of the world"—and to do so now, before environmental damage becomes ir-

reversible, and before shifts in demography and economic clout leave the West unable to influence the rising powers of the East and South.

It's an appealing vision. Garton Ash's confidence in the essential goodwill of Western peoples—his belief that, together, we can rise above our petty concerns and act for the common good—makes it an affecting one as well. Yet embedded in it is a fundamental and typically Western flaw. Garton Ash assumes that all humanity shares his own secular liberal aspirations. In effect, Garton Ash's *Free World* offers the promise of a decent, perhaps even comfortable life devoid of transcendence. He consigns God to the margins. In reality, however, God still haunts the world. Indeed, many of those upon whom Garton Ash is most eager to confer the blessings of liberty are adamant that God remain at the center of their universe. Any strategy for enlarging the Free World that fails to take this uncomfortable fact into consideration is doomed to fail.

—ANDREW J. BACEVICH

**THREE NIGHTS IN AUGUST:
*Strategy, Heartbreak, and Joy Inside
the Mind of a Manager.***

By Buzz Bissinger. Houghton Mifflin.
280 pp. \$25

It's a perilous journey through the mind of a major league baseball manager, filled with potholes of depression and washouts of fear, but we want to take it. We want to know what lies behind the glowering game face of that most enigmatic baseball man, and what subplots consume him—including the individual melodramas of a busload of barely post-adolescent millionaires.

Buzz Bissinger, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Friday Night Lights* (1990), was granted unlimited access to the St. Louis Cardinals' organization by its legendary manager, Tony La Russa. The book follows a three-game series during 2003

against the Chicago Cubs and their wily skipper, Dusty Baker. It's a fresh and thoroughly enjoyable narrative—like TiVo-ing through a great matchup, with Bissinger lingering over the good parts and skipping the junk.

There's plenty of action, but Bissinger is too sensitive an observer and too complex a writer to settle for a simple play-by-play. We watch La Russa's pregame ritual of making cards showing how each of his pitchers has done against the Cubs hitters, his irritation when inexperienced young players hog the spotlight, and the flop sweat when he chooses a risky tactic based not on numbers but on intuition. When the lineup is ravaged by injuries, we're with La Russa as he ponders and frets—dining alone at Morton's, lying awake all night in the hotel. And we enter the manager's tunnel of concentration: Everything disappears except the motions of the game, as if it were played in pure silence.

La Russa's internal conflicts are nicely balanced against the stakes in the outcome of every pitch, but two events from the previous year overshadow everything. With a novelist's sense of when to expand the moment and when to roll with the action, Bissinger skillfully discloses the lingering heartbreaks: In 2002, the Cardinals' much-loved broadcaster, Jack Buck, died, and, three days later, their popular 33-year-old pitcher, Darryl Kile, suffered a fatal heart attack in his sleep.

Bissinger has finely cultivated the



Bantering with the Cubs' Dusty Baker is one of the few things that comes easily for Cardinals manager Tony La Russa.