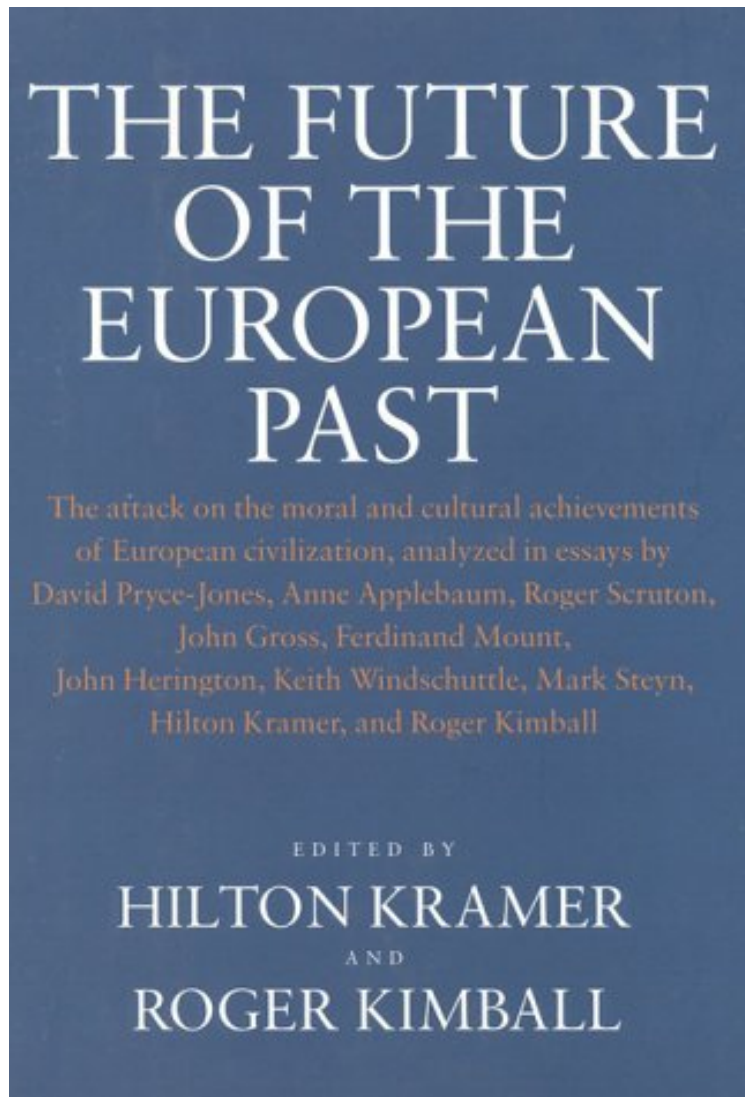


(Read now) The Future of the European Past

## The Future of the European Past

*Hilton Kramer*

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**Hilton Kramer : The Future of the European Past** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Future of the European Past:

16 of 54 people found the following review helpful. very irritatingBy pnotley@hotmail.com This collection of essays published in the New Criterion are not all bad. The late John Herrington saw signs of hope in reviving the classics. Ferdinand Mount takes a rather calm attitude to the problem of "dumbing down." But the rest of the essays show all the vices that make the New Criterion the intensely irritating journal that it is. First off, there is the bullying, ostentatious anti-communism, as if the contributors were the only people in the world who recognized that Stalin was evil. David Pryce-Jones labels Stefan George a Nazi, where in fact he died in exile. He also dismisses Sartre and

Brecht as Stalinist hacks, all in the name of liberal opposition to ideological judgments in literature. His essay ends in a hysterical comparison of the EEC to Vichy France. Anne Applebaum accuses unnamed scholars of saying Stalin killed only hundreds of people. Her own grasp of totalitarianism is not so good herself since she blurts out there is "no proof he [Hitler] knew about the Holocaust." Of course there is considerable proof; what is open to question is the existence of a specific written or verbal order starting the process. Whatever one feels about the state of today's culture, one will be irritated about the shallow impressionism. John Gross and Mark Steyn complain popular songs no longer make historical or literary allusions. At the time they were writing their essays there was a number one hit in Britain called "Breakfast at Tiffany's." And then there's Monty Python, Kate Bush, Sting, one could go on. Gross complains that pub names are becoming facetious, that shallower celebrities are being praised at Madame Tussaud's. The decline of the Anglican church, a phenomenon lasting centuries, is blamed on its new uninspired liturgy. Pryce-Jones, Gross, and Hilton Kramer wince or fume whenever anything nice is said about homosexuals. Nor are there much rigorous discussion of opposing arguments. Roger Kimball sneers at Jacques Derrida, while Keith Windschuttle reduces Fernand Braudel and the *Annales* to a shameful desire to escape the shame of Vichy. Hilton Kramer spends several pages attacking Svetlana Alpers for making a suggestion about homosexuality and ignores the rest of her work. For all the talk of the "European" past, the essayists belittle and ignore the rest of Europe, while defending Anglo-American elites from every slight. 18 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant and utterly compulsive reading. By Hal Colebatch. This is a brilliant and compulsive book, though in its dissection of our cultural malaise far more terrifying than any escapade by Hannibal Lecter. Read it if you care about the future of civilization. 8 of 42 people found the following review helpful. Myopic Worldview. By D. S. Heersink. I happen to think a great deal of good has been created by DWM (dead white males), and that they have much to say to us, despite the homogeneity of their ilk. But, these writers' prejudices about incidental matters (e.g., homosexuality) tend to throw the authors off subject into temperamental tangents of irritating, often infuriating, polemics. Indeed, this tendency among these so-called conservative illuminati make them seem borish, immature, and wildly inflammatory about all the wrong things. Rather than lead us to appreciate the "best" in human history, after the excellence of Matthew Arnold, they tend to approach the matter by eloquent straw man sophistry. It makes them appear collectively as myopic narcissists, whose only worldview is what they hate. I hate "jello," but what relevance does jello have with the excellence of a Berlioz composition? About as much as homosexuality has to the excellence of John Maynard Keynes' economics. Shooting the tree and getting lost in the forest is not a good sign for any critic; yet, nearly all are "victims" of this polemic. For individuals who despise victimhood, they fail to see their essays are filled with it; what they write often begets the very thing they profess to deplore. As articulate as these essays are, they are not very well-written. If looking to the past opens doors to the future, then reading Allen Tate, Isaiah Berlin, and Aldous Huxley are much better road maps to great ideas and fine literature, and much better critics than most of these amateurs.

It is no longer news that the history of the European past and its role in shaping American cultural life is under severe attack. In virtually every university that offers a liberal arts curriculum, in every arts institution that deals with European classics, in the offices of every publication that engages in intellectual pursuits, the discussion of the past has become the principal battleground for mapping out the future of our culture. In this provocative and insightful collection of essays first published in *The New Criterion*, ten distinguished critics reflect on the fate of Europe's cultural and political legacy as we approach the turn of the century. On subjects ranging from the collapse of communism and its implications for European society, to the study of the classics, to the prospects for serious music and art, these essays offer analyses marked by wit, independence, and commanding intelligence. The contributors include David Pryce-Jones, Anne Applebaum, Roger Scruton, John Gross, Ferdinand Mount, John Herington, Keith Windschuttle, Mark Steyn, Hilton Kramer, and Roger Kimball. *The Future of the European Past* is a major contribution to the debate over some of the most pressing cultural issues of our time.

*The Future of the European Past* offers acute insight into the modern decay of the empires of the mind that have for centuries defined Europe. (Bruce Alan Johnson *American Outlook*) Powerful... Hilton and Kramer take their axes to the roots of the problem. A counterblast to the attacks on the moral and cultural achievements of European civilization. (George Walden *Times Literary Supplement*) The strength of this book is its usefulness in helping a reader discriminate within a large and unquestionably problematic, but also mixed, field of cultural, political, literary, and artistic situations. (Colin Walters *The Washington Times*) Cogent and convincing... an articulate and thought-provoking collection. (Norman Davies *The Wall Street Journal*) From the Inside Flap: As we approach the year 2000 and a new millennium, the authority of our cultural institutions seems to be slipping away. The dazzling accomplishments of Western science and modern capitalism have made us vastly richer and technologically more competent than any society in history, while liberal democracy has secured us an unparalleled degree of personal and political liberty. Yet the moral and cultural achievements of the European civilization--the very achievements that underwrite our prosperity and give meaning and purpose to our liberty--are everywhere under attack. In virtually every university that offers a liberal arts curriculum, in every arts institution that deals with European classics, in the offices of every

publication that engages in intellectual pursuits, the discussion of the past has become the principal conflict in deciding the future of our culture. In *The Future of the European Past*, ten distinguished critics reflect upon the breakdown of culture and the fate of Europe's legacy. In their provocative and insightful essays, first published in the *New Criterion*, they assess the decline of historical memory; the resurgence of elites associated with Europe's totalitarian past; the subversions of the new historical method; the disregard for musical tonality; the retreat of British tradition in the face of pop culture; the postmodern assault on art criticism and art history; the pervasiveness of deconstruction and structuralism in academic inquiry; the future of classical studies; and other aspects of the battle that is now under way for the future of American cultural life. Marked by wit, independence, and commanding intelligence, these appraisals comprise a major interpretation of this crucial debate. The contributors include David Pryce-Jones, Anne Applebaum, Roger Scruton, John Gross, Ferdinand Mount, John Herington, Keith Windschuttle, Mark Steyn, Hilton Kramer, and Roger Kimball. About the Author Hilton Kramer is editor of *The New Criterion* and author, most recently, of *The Twilight of the Intellectuals*. Roger Kimball is managing editor of *The New Criterion* and author of *The Long March*, *Experiments Against Reality*, and *Tenured Radicals*. Together Messrs. Kramer and Kimball have also edited *Against the Grain*, *The Future of the European Past*, and *The Betrayal of Liberalism*.