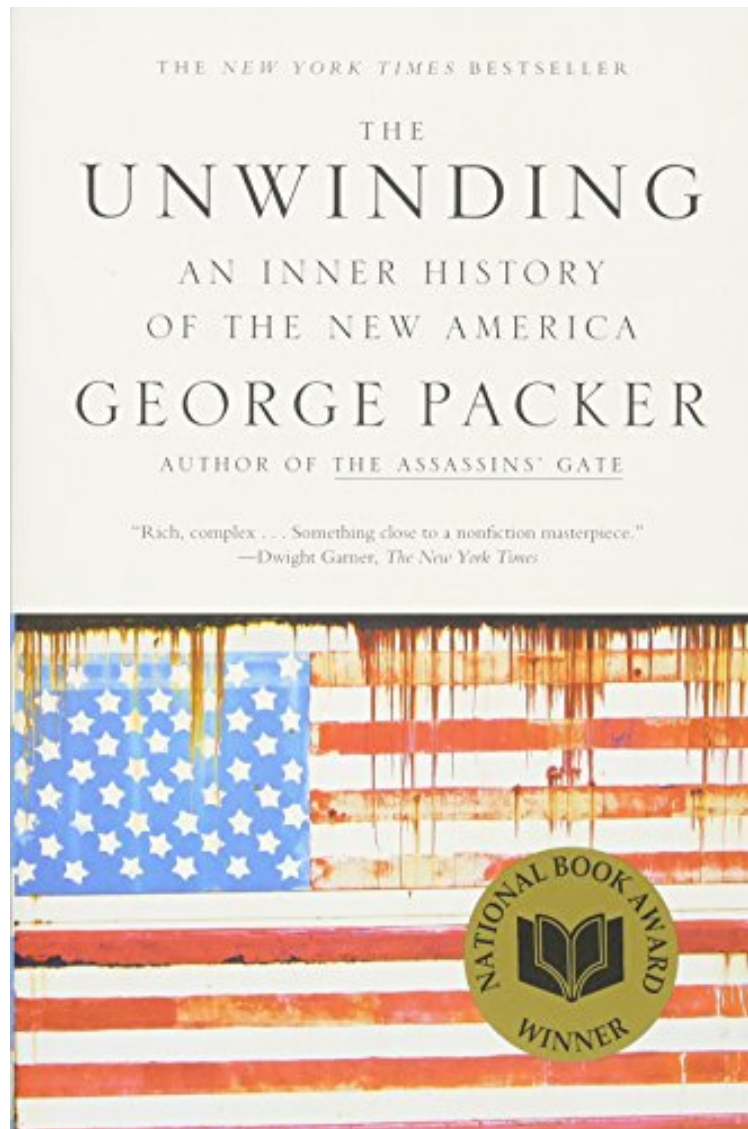


[Free read ebook] The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America

The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America

George Packer

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#46230 in Books Packer George 2014-03-04 2014-03-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 .32 x .5 x 5.521, 1.00 #File Name: 0374534608448 pagesThe Unwinding An Inner History of the New America | File size: 36.Mb

George Packer : The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America:

655 of 683 people found the following review helpful. Institutions vs. IndividualsBy LukesterFirst off, this is not a polemical book with Packer trying to thrust his viewpoint down your throat. Packer's own voice is largely absent from this book. Instead, he lets his characters speak for themselves. Regardless of your politics, you have to agree with Packer that since the 1960's, Americans have "watched structures that had been in place before your birth collapse like

pillars of salt across the vast visible landscape." Government no longer consists of genuine politicians seeking to help the people, banks are no longer the staid institutions we once knew, and American manufacturing and the stable union jobs that accompanied it are mostly gone. As Packer notes, the loss of these institutions has obviously hurt some and helped others to prosper. Packer tells this story by presenting a series of compelling profiles of several individuals: among them a union worker in Youngstown, Ohio, a entrepreneur/bio-fuels evangelist in North Carolina, a D.C. insider, and a Silicon Valley innovator. These profiles follow the progression of their protagonist from the late 70's to the present day. Each story is independent, but all share a common thread: as the institutions that provided security to Americans following the New Deal and into the 70's started to fall apart, each person is forced to deal with their new found freedom. Some thrive, while others struggle to survive. Interspersed in these longer narratives are shorter profiles of key players in the unwinding, from Newt Gingrich and Andrew Breitbart to Oprah Winfrey and Jay-Z. As he skips ahead in years, each new section is foreshadowed by a collage of words - snippets of movie and music quotes and headlines from newspapers - that Packer uses to expertly capture the mood of each year. The genius of this book is that Packer doesn't tell you what to think. Instead, he presents indisputable facts by way of the stories of real people to show both sides of this "unwinding." At the end, you can draw your own conclusions. Packer is simply using his amazing powers of shaping narratives to capture this unique time of upheaval in America. It's easy to lose track of the drastic changes that have taken place over the last few decades unless you read a book like this, which captures the transformation of American institutions to American individualism. If you are liberal and mourn the loss of these institutions, Packer will force you to consider the opening of opportunities that came with these losses. If you're conservative and applaud the rise of the rugged individual, he will also make you recognize the price some people have paid due to the loss of security. I would recommend this book to anyone that sees the change that has happened in the U.S. Although it is never stated, I think Packer is asking his readers a seemingly simple question: what does it mean to be an American, and what do we want this country to be? Is the price of freedom the loss of the common bonds that kept us all together, or is the overriding right to be free paramount to all else? I can guarantee that anyone who finishes this book will have a lot to think about and will have enjoyed reading these profiles.

283 of 299 people found the following review helpful. Split Personality By Robert Taylor Brewer George Packer, we learn from the book's jacket blurb, is a staff writer at The New Yorker magazine which means he has access to that publication's marvelous fact checking apparatus that is so good, many fact checkers at The New Yorker have gone on to write their own non fiction books. Packer has borrowed liberally from the John Dos Pasos U.S.A. Trilogy, especially its "Camera Eye" sequences to produce a book with an artistic sense of the possible, and the creative interpretations that go along with them. Through a series of glimmering short essays, Packer has put together a story of how wealth has concentrated itself in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, and the first decade of the 21st. One lesson most of us learned about the Great Depression was that the wealthy, by themselves, could not sustain the U.S. economy in 1932. One commentator wrote that every person making over \$100,000 would have had to buy 32 cars in order to stave off the economic consequences of the 1929 stock market crash. On the contrary, the lesson drawn by Packer about the 2008 Great Recession is that today, the wealthy are so wealthy they can indeed sustain the U.S. economy almost by themselves. This staggering conclusion is brought home to readers in Packer's brief but luminous essay on Sam Walton where he writes that six of Walton's descendants had as much money as 30% of the least well off Americans. The story of how America's other top income earners fared until the onset of The Great Recession is told in the essay on Robert Rubin: the top 1% of wage earners saw their incomes triple. People in the middle enjoyed a 20% income increase, people at the bottom had flat income which means on an inflation adjusted basis, they lost money. For his part, Robert Rubin argued against regulation of derivatives. Then, after derivatives killed America in 2008, Robert Rubin argued against any responsibility. When a Congressional investigator told Rubin he couldn't have it both ways, Robert Rubin hurriedly left the room. Stop the cameras, stop the book. The fact that Robert Rubin was allowed to leave the room comes off as a major thesis of this book. The gap between what Americans have and what they cheer for is another layer of Packer's analysis, although the book's commentary is somehow less successful when ordinary Americans like Tammy Thomas and Dean Price are Packer's subjects and I was less willing to follow their stories than I was when household name personalities like Joe Biden and Newt Gingrich were under Packer's microscope and his work on them seemed spellbinding. This is a deeply unsettling book, and in the end, Unwinding seems an inappropriate description for it - The Great Adjustment seems more specifically geared to what actually took place in the country - those with more struggle to adjust to unfathomable wealth, those with less struggling with their new reality.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read for All Americans By D. E. Lawrence This book is one of the most instructive, educational and enlightening on what has happened in America the past 30 years. If one wants to know the why behind the factory closings, the effects of racism, the disparity in incomes, the rise and bursting of tech and housing bubbles, the machinations of Wall Street to the detriment of their country, the rise of some celebrities such as Oprah and Jay-Z, politics being money and not people driven and much, much more, read this illuminating book. It is also, as a bonus, written novelistically so to be extremely hard to put down. Bravo! Mr. Packer.

The 2013 National Book Award Winner A New York Times Bestseller American democracy is beset by a sense of

crisis. Seismic shifts during a single generation have created a country of winners and losers, allowing unprecedented freedom while rending the social contract, driving the political system to the verge of breakdown, and setting citizens adrift to find new paths forward. In *The Unwinding*, George Packer tells the story of the past three decades by journeying through the lives of several Americans, including a son of tobacco farmers who becomes an evangelist for a new economy in the rural South, a factory worker in the Rust Belt trying to survive the collapse of her city, a Washington insider oscillating between political idealism and the lure of organized money, and a Silicon Valley billionaire who arrives at a radical vision of the future. Packer interweaves these stories with sketches of public figures, from Newt Gingrich to Jay-Z, and collages made from newspaper headlines, advertising slogans, and song lyrics. Packer's novelistic and kaleidoscopic history of the new America is his most ambitious work to date.

From Booklist*Starred * How have we come to feel that neither the government nor the private sector works as it should and that the shrinking middle class has few prospects of recovering its former glory? Through profiles of several Americans, from a factory worker to an Internet billionaire, Packer, staff writer for the *New Yorker*, offers a broad and compelling perspective on a nation in crisis. Packer focuses on the lives of a North Carolina evangelist, son of a tobacco farmer, pondering the new economy of the rural South; a Youngstown, Ohio, factory worker struggling to survive the decline of the manufacturing sector; a Washington lobbyist confronting the distance between his ideals and the realities of the nation's capital; and a Silicon Valley entrepreneur pondering the role of e-commerce in a radically changing economy. Interspersed throughout are profiles of leading economic, political, and cultural figures, including Newt Gingrich, Colin Powell, Raymond Carver, Sam Walton, and Jay-Z. Also sprinkled throughout are alarming headlines, news bites, song lyrics, and slogans that capture the unsettling feeling that the nation and its people are adrift. Packer offers an illuminating, in-depth, sometimes frightening view of the complexities of decline and the enduring hope for recovery. --Vanessa Bush
From Bookforum Though *The Unwinding* is manifestly an homage to the U.S.A. trilogy of John Dos Passos, Packer attempts something far more ambitious and original. The book, an epic retelling of American history from 1978 to 2012, is a kind of fantasia--a set of variations on themes without the support of an overarching narrative. This is a brilliant and innovative book that transcends journalism to become literature. --Michael Lind [The Unwinding] hums--with sorrow, with outrage and with compassion . . . Packer's gifts are Steinbeckian in the best sense of that term . . . [Packer has] written something close to a nonfiction masterpiece. Dwight Garner, *The New York Times* Gripping . . . deeply affecting . . . beautifully reported. David Brooks, *The New York Times* Book Remarkable. Joe Klein, *Time* Packer's dark rendering of the state of the nation feels pained but true. He offers no false hopes, no Hollywood endings, but he finds power in . . . the dignity and heart of a people. The Washington Post [The Unwinding] has many of the qualities of an epic novel . . . [a] professional work of journalism that also happens to be more intimate and textured--and certainly more ambitious--than most contemporary works of U.S. fiction dare to be . . . What distinguishes *The Unwinding* is the fullness of Packer's portraits, his willingness to show his subjects' human desires and foibles, and to give each of his subjects a fully throated voice. Hector Tobar, *The Los Angeles Times* A monumental work that is both intimate and sweeping . . . Packer's writing dazzles . . . [his] reporting excels . . . The cumulative effect is extraordinary. Ken Armstrong, *The Seattle Times* Brilliant. Harrowing. Gorgeously written . . . The Unwinding is a lyrical requiem for a lost time, for downsized dreams and surrendered hopes. It's beautiful . . . but also . . . heartbreaking, a lush work of art that hurts all the more for being about the loss of hope and promise in America. The Daily Kos This is a work not just of fact, but of wit, irony, and astounding imagination. The Paris A work of prodigious, highly original reporting . . . [Packer] demonstrates that the future of reporting out in world isn't in eclipse . . . Packer's arduous venture commands attention. Joseph Lelyveld, *The New York of Books* Wide ranging, deeply reported, historically grounded and ideologically restrained . . . Instead of compelling us to engage with his theory of the past 35 years of the American experience, Packer invites us to explore the experience itself, as lived by our fellow citizens. They're human beings, not evidence for an agenda or fodder for talking points. Understanding that is the first step toward reclaiming the nation we share with them. Laura Miller, *Salon* [Packer is] among the best non-fiction writers in America . . . [he] weaves an unforgettable tapestry . . . In its sensibility, *The Unwinding* is closer to a novel than a work of non-fiction. It is all the more powerful for it. Edward Luce, *The Financial Times* Fascinating . . . elegant . . . A richly complex narrative brew. The Chicago Tribune [An] awe-inspiring X-Ray of the modern American soul. The Millions A brilliant and innovative book that transcends journalism to become literature. Bookforum [S]uperbly written and consistently thought-provoking . . . The Unwinding is long-form journalism at its best. Dallas News Masterful . . . thoughtful, thorough, and persuasive . . . the payoff comes when Packer's various elements combine in powerful and startling ways . . . What will stay with you . . . are the book's people, people Packer never turns into ideological mascots, people who struggle to survive, to create, to improve, even as the systems of support erode around them. The Christian Science Monitor Packer writes . . . beautifully and precisely; respectfully and, when warranted, critically. There is a straightforward and generous humanity in his prose. Michael Tomasky, *The Daily Beast* Packer's strength as a storyteller lies in his ability to marshal a diverse range of voices from across the class divide, in a nation deeply divided by social status. NPR Books.org Packer's is an American voice of exceptional clarity and humanity in a tradition of reportage that renders the

quotidian extraordinary. When our descendants survey the ruins of this modern imperium and sift its cultural detritus, American voices like this will be the tiny treasures that endure. The Independent (UK) This angry, wise and moving state-of-the-union address is too subtle and clever to be prescriptive. Packer offers no simplistic solutions. But here's the thing. The writing in this fine work showcases the very same qualities of democratic generosity and fair-mindedness whose supposed disappearance in America its author most laments. The Telegraph (UK) Exemplary journalism . . . A foundational document in the literature of the end of America. Kirkus (starred review) A broad and compelling perspective on a nation in crisis . . . an illuminating, in-depth, sometimes frightening view of the complexities of decline and the enduring hope of recovery. Booklist (starred review) Trenchant . . . [the] brief biographies of seminal figures that shaped the current state of affairs offer the book's fiercest prose, such as in Packer's brutal takedown of Robert Rubin, secretary of the Treasury during some key 1990s financial deregulation that amplified the severity of the Great Recession of 2008. Packer has a keen eye for the big story in the small moment, writing about our fraying social fabric with talent that matches his dismay. Publishers Weekly (starred review) The Unwinding . . . echoes the symphonic rage of the celebrated television series The Wire . . . a tremendous work of reporting that pushes past abstractions and recycled debates . . . Whatever one's views on American decline generally, it is difficult to put the book down without . . . a conviction that we can do better. And yet if it is a story of despair, it is also a story of resilience. Packer's subjects make good and bad decisions, enjoy lucky breaks and misfortune, eke it out, give in, and try harder. The lives they lead are worth describing in detail, not only because they are instructive but also because they are beautiful. The Washington Monthly [A] sprawling, trenchant narrative . . . Packer is a thorough, insightful journalist, and his in-depth profiles provide a window into American life as a whole . . . The Unwinding is a harrowing and bracing panoramic look at American society--things are bad everywhere, for everyone, but there's still a sense of optimism. Through hard work and dedication we can pull ourselves out of the financial, political, and social mess we've created and become stronger as individuals and ultimately as a society. The Brooklyn Rail George Packer has crafted a unique, irresistible contraption of a book. Not since John Dos Passos's celebrated U.S.A. trilogy, which The Unwinding recollects and rivals, has a writer so cunningly plumbed the seething undercurrents of American life. The result is a sad but delicious jazz-tempo requiem for the post-World War II American social contract. You will often laugh through your tears at these tales of lives of ever-less-quiet desperation in a land going ever-more-noisily berserk. David M. Kennedy, Pulitzer Prizewinning author of Freedom from Fear and Over Here The Unwinding is the extraordinary story of what's happened to our country over the past thirty years. George Packer gives us an intimate look into American lives that have been transformed by the dissolution of all the things that used to hold us together. The result is an epic--wondrous, bracing, and true--that will stand as the defining book of our time. Dexter Filkins, author of The Forever War The Unwinding presents a big, gorgeous, sad, utterly absorbing panorama of the relentless breakdown of the American social compact over a generation. George Packer communicates the scope and the human experience of the enormous change that is his subject better than any writer has so far. Nicholas Lemann, author of Redemption and The Promised Land Original, incisive, courageous, and essential. One of the best works of nonfiction I've read in years. Katherine Boo, National Book Awardwinning author of Behind the Beautiful Forevers George Packer serves us the history of our own life and times in a magisterial look at the America we lost. Lawrence Wright, Pulitzer Prizewinning author of The Looming Tower and Going Clear The hearts and lives broken in this second great depression have now found their eloquent voice and fierce champion in George Packer. The Unwinding is an American tragedy and a literary triumph. David Frum, author of Comeback and Why Romney Lost As with George Orwell's, each of George Packer's sentences carries a pulse of moral force. The Unwinding is a sweeping and powerful book that everyone should read. David Grann, author of The Lost City of Z