

orously since 9/11, drifted away from a "soft" universalist imperialism of culture and toward a "hard" military imperialism. This military imperialism, however, is too weak to put on more than "micro-theatrical military displays"—intermittent spectacles—against limp opposition. Resorting to such "Triumphal Arch" imperialism, Todd points out, is always a sign that the empire is finished. (One of his cleverer points is that the trappings of a service economy—lawyers, bards, and attendants—replicate the condition of a Roman imperial household more than that of an industrial community.) Todd's book is actually rather compassionate. It's all over, and has been for years. We're just too dumb to know it.

Far more lucid and arresting, and just as likely to sell books and get attention, are the views of the anti-anti-Americans—that small but loud bunch of philosophers and journalists who share the American conviction that September 11th was an epoch-marking event,

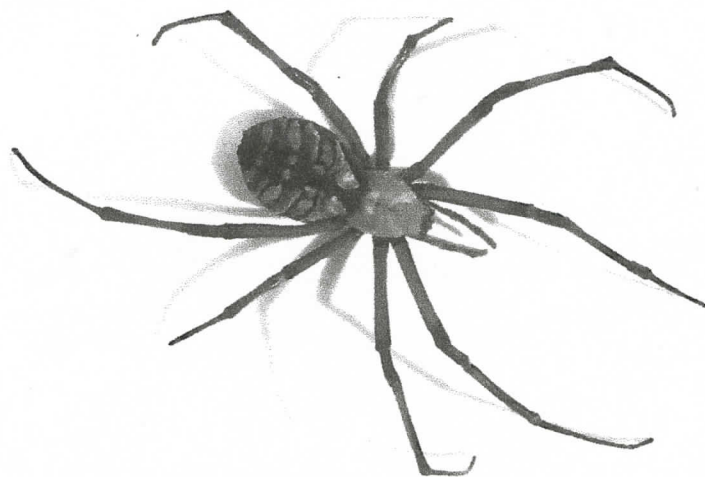
and that how open societies react to it will help determine how open they get to remain. Though members of this group can be counted on the fingers of one hand (with room left over for a thumb and a pinkie), they are in a way the most potent of contemporary French thinkers.

There are at least two kinds of anti-anti-Americanism, though the first, represented by Jean-François Revel, the old lion of French liberalism, is simply displaced nationalism. Revel's new book, "L'Obsession Anti-Américaine" ("The Anti-American Obsession")—which was a No. 1 best-seller in France for a month last fall—is a defense of the American nation so enthusiastic that it would embarrass George Washington's mom. More interesting—for an American reader and observer, at least—are those thinkers who, because they have to defend American behavior without being in any way American nationalists, are forced to define a new kind of international liberalism.

"Anti-Americanism in France is always a magnet for the worst," Bernard-

Henri Lévy said one evening in July. He was sitting in the study of his apartment on the leafy Boulevard Saint-Germain, and even for a casual meeting he wore, as he has done in public for thirty years, an elegant uniform of black suit and open white shirt, the collar lapping over his lapels. B.H.L., as everyone calls him, who remains one of the central media figures in France, has had a great critical success with a book entitled "Qui A Tué Daniel Pearl?" ("Who Killed Daniel Pearl?"), which is, in a way, the most vivid and intensely realized of all the "pro-American" texts. It is an inquiry into the kidnapping and murder in Pakistan last year of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter, and will be published next month in English by Melville House Books. Unapologetically personal, the book recounts B.H.L.'s own investigation in Pakistan and India, and also in America, with sidelights on his previous campaigns in Bosnia and Bangladesh. One reason for its success in France is that it is written almost in the tone of what the French call a *polar*, a

{ *Along came a spider and sat down beside her and enlightened Miss Muffet as to the many benefits of a strongly diversified portfolio.*



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noirish police thriller, full of one-sentence paragraphs and portentous cliff-hangers ("He was the man who knew too much. But what did he know?"). It also attempts, on a deeper level, to paint a character portrait of the man who did kill Danny Pearl, or, at least, arranged his kidnapping: Omar Sheikh, the Islamist who was convicted in Pakistan last year. Like Mohammed Atta, he turns out to be not a barefoot wild-eyed Mahdi but a child of the West, London-raised and educated—the New Naipaulian Man, lost between two cultures, enraged at the West and mesmerized by a fantasy of Islam, only now armed with a total ideology and an A-bomb.

On a third level, "Who Killed Daniel Pearl?" is a demonstration piece, a deliberate embrace by a French intellectual of an American journalist, and a book that insists that the death of an American journalist (and one who worked for the *Wall Street Journal*, at that) was as important for France as for America. B.H.L.'s purely political, or forensic,

conclusion is that it is naïve to speak of Al Qaeda as an independent terrorist organization. At most a band of Yemenis and Saudis, the Al Qaeda of American imagination and fears—the octopus of terrorism capable of bringing tall buildings down in a single morning—is largely controlled by the Pakistani secret service, he says, and he concludes that Pearl was kidnapped and murdered with its knowledge. Pearl was killed, B.H.L. believes, because he had come to understand too much about all of this, and particularly about "the great taboo": that the Pakistani atomic bomb was built and is controlled by radical Islamists who intend to use it someday. (He writes that Sheikh Mubarak Gilani, the cleric whom Pearl had set out to interview when he was kidnapped, far from being a minor figure, is one of Osama bin Laden's mentors and tutors and has a network in place in the United States. John Allen Muhammad, the Washington sniper, Lévy claims, in a detail that, if not unknown, is unpublicized in the

United States, had transferred from the Nation of Islam to Gilani's sect shortly before he began his killing spree.)

The essential conclusion of this central Parisian thinker and writer is, therefore, not that the American government ought to be more conciliatory toward the Islamic fundamentalists but that our analysis of the situation and its risks is not nearly radical enough. "I am strongly anti-anti-American, but I opposed the war in Iraq, because of what I'd seen in Pakistan," Lévy said. "Iraq was a false target, a mistaken target. Saddam, yes, is a terrible butcher, and we can only be glad that he is gone. But he is a twentieth-century butcher—an old-fashioned secular tyrant, who made an easy but irrelevant target. His boasting about having weapons of mass destruction and then being unable to really build them or keep them is typical—he's just a gangster, who lived by fear and for money. Saddam has almost nothing to do with the real threat. We were attacking an Iraq that was already largely disarmed. Meanwhile; in

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