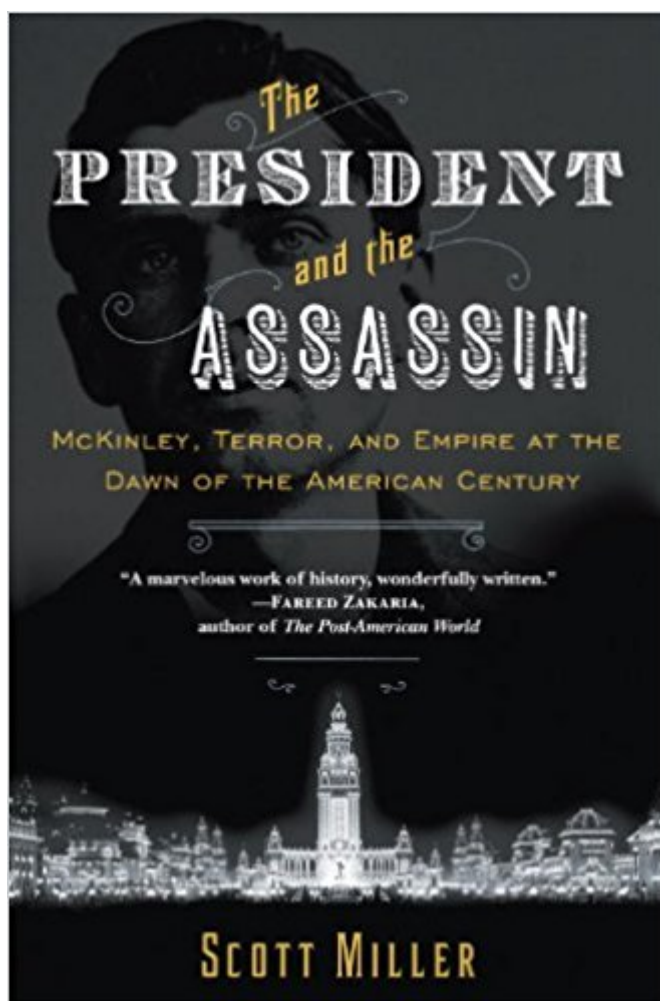


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The President And The Assassin: McKinley, Terror, And Empire At The Dawn Of The American Century



Synopsis

A SWEEPING TALE OF TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY AMERICA AND THE IRRESISTIBLE FORCES THAT BROUGHT TWO MEN TOGETHER ONE FATEFUL DAY

In 1901, as America tallied its gains from a period of unprecedented imperial expansion, an assassin's bullet shattered the nation's confidence. The shocking murder of President William McKinley threw into stark relief the emerging new world order of what would come to be known as the American Century. *The President and the Assassin* is the story of the momentous years leading up to that event, and of the very different paths that brought together two of the most compelling figures of the era: President William McKinley and Leon Czolgosz, the anarchist who murdered him. The two men seemed to live in eerily parallel Americas. McKinley was to his contemporaries an enigma, a president whose conflicted feelings about imperialism reflected the country's own. Under its popular Republican commander-in-chief, the United States was undergoing an uneasy transition from a simple agrarian society to an industrial powerhouse spreading its influence overseas by force of arms. Czolgosz was on the losing end of the economic changes taking place—a first-generation Polish immigrant and factory worker sickened by a government that seemed focused solely on making the rich richer. With a deft narrative hand, journalist Scott Miller chronicles how these two men, each pursuing what he considered the right and honorable path, collided in violence at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Along the way, readers meet a veritable who's who of turn-of-the-century America: John Hay, McKinley's visionary secretary of state, whose diplomatic efforts paved the way for a half century of Western exploitation of China; Emma Goldman, the radical anarchist whose incendiary rhetoric inspired Czolgosz to dare the unthinkable; and Theodore Roosevelt, the vainglorious vice president whose 1898 charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba is but one of many thrilling military adventures recounted here. Rich with relevance to our own era, *The President and the Assassin* holds a mirror up to a fascinating period of upheaval when the titans of industry grew fat, speculators sought fortune abroad, and desperate souls turned to terrorism in a vain attempt to thwart the juggernaut of change. Praise for *The President and the Assassin* "[A] panoramic tour de force . . . Miller has a good eye, trained by years of journalism, for telling details and enriching anecdotes. The Washington Independent Review of Books "Even without the intrinsic draw of the 1901 presidential assassination that shapes its pages, Scott Miller's *The President and the Assassin* [is] absorbing reading. . . . What makes the book compelling is [that] so many circumstances and events of the earlier time have parallels in our own. The Oregonian "A marvelous work of history, wonderfully

written. [Fareed Zakaria](#), author of *The Post-American World* [“A real triumph.](#) [BookPage](#) [“Fast-moving and richly detailed.](#) [The Buffalo News](#) [“\[A\] compelling read.](#) [The Boston Globe](#) [One of Newsweek’s 10 Must-Read Summer Books](#)

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Customer Reviews

Miller, a correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and Reuters, faithfully captures the turbulent time at the turn of the 20th century when America faced discord from within and without, and war and an assassin altered America’s history. President McKinley, then the most popular U.S. president since Lincoln, rose from humble beginnings in Ohio to become a Civil War hero and hardworking congressman, and as president determined to govern with a nonconfrontational style and maintain a peaceful foreign policy. In telling the stories of McKinley and his killer in alternating chapters, Miller uses sharp parallels between the president and his anarchist killer, Leon Czolgosz, a factory worker who lost his job in the crash of 1893 and was something of a loner who found an emotional outlet following the anarchist movement and [activist Emma Goldman](#). Goldman’s words inspired the depressed man to violence. With a smoldering labor crisis, foreign woes with Spain and Cuba, and a harsh media barrage, McKinley finally thought things were going his way until the fateful day he was shot. Miller’s polished and vivid narrative of these complex, dissimilar men makes this piece of

Americana appear fresh and unexpected. (June) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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Miller does an excellent job of talking not just about the assassination itself, but also about the anarchy movement in the United States that served as the backdrop of Leon Czolgosz’s decision to kill the President. He very cleverly interspaces the running commentary on McKinley’s life and that of Czolgosz so that each conclude at the same time. One also gets a picture of the U.S. during a period that is often poorly chronicled in history books-- the final 20 years of the 19th century. In writing about Carnegie and Frick’s actions against the steel workers, Miller again reminds of the greed and brutality that seemed to permeate all of the great industrialists of that era.. Only when they became great charitable benefactors did their image get whitewashed. It is also worth noting the relatively laxness with which the secret service operated; one would think that having had another Presidential assassination only 20 years earlier, more protection might have been afforded McKinley. This is an extremely well written book that greatly expands one’s knowledge of not just McKinley, but also a neglected period in U.S. history. Highly recommended.

An excellent read. Most of my generation doesn’t know who these people are, much less what they were like and where public opinion positioned them when they were alive. President historians probably know all this stuff, but if you are not a President historian, you need to check this out.

excellent review of the McKinley presidency and his contribution to the country’s development including its initial steps to set foot on the international stage, alongside the rise of anarchism and

the social forces behind it

The McKinley and Garfield assassinations receive little historical overview and analyses and unlike many books on the Lincoln and Kennedy assassinations, which tend to focus on mindsets and conspiracy theories, Miller takes a different approach with *McKinley: How globalization, commerce, expansionism and labor funnel together for the events that led to the Buffalo shooting*. This approach spreads wide amid a rapidly changing world entering a new century and bogs down at points in the narrative. Assassination buffs wanting more long-winded play-by-play will be disappointed. But in the end, it's a very clear confluence of events and an effective way of history-telling. The story is simple and Miller allows us to see why.

This was a fascinating book. As I started reading it, I thought I was reading a book about contemporary America. The corporate hold on the government is just as strong today as it was during McKinley's day. I was also completely unaware of the anarchist movement in the US. This history is not taught in school. All together a great read.

What I love about history is that it illuminates how human beings behave, over and over again. When I read ancient history, I keep seeing contemporary behavior, and it helps me keep a balance. When I read about the nineteenth century, veils are lifted from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In a time (2011) when we see the gap between rich and poor broadening and the seemingly bewildering rise of terrorism, it is good for us to read about the age of the robber barons and American imperialism and the stirring of home-grown terrorists. I knew a little about the McKinley administration, mainly as the precursor to the Roosevelt years, but I didn't know didley about the anarchist movement, and Scott Miller opened my mind with his cogent and horrific story of American terrorism. This is a good read, well-written and informative. I don't believe in lengthy reviews so I'll just say, thanks for this great book.

An in depth insight into American history, politics and industry! The turn of the last century eerily parallels today's America. History does in fact repeat itself!

For a President that is rarely brought up in conversation Mr Scott Miller does a great job of bringing to life an era when the United States was coming into its own. It was a defining time for Manifest Destiny, a time of labor unrest, a time of brilliant new inventions and seedy politics. The

author brings it all together in this book. A great read !

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