

The reissued novel as introduced by Dana Seitler is refreshing at an historical moment in which questions about the purpose of American studies demand transcultural responses, but where the mention of race, class, and gender often sounds to many scholars, teachers, and students like a tired litany of political correctness. The crux of the matter is perhaps expressed well in Toni Morrison's observation that color has had a persistent presence in the white American literary imagination, both as historically perceived peril, and, in our time, as much-needed promise.<sup>15</sup>

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Melvin G. Holli, *The Wizard of Washington: Emil Hurja, Franklin Roosevelt and the Birth of Public Opinion Polling*. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002. 123 pages; ISBN 031229395X; £ 37.50 cloth.

Emil Hurja (1892-1953) came to Washington, DC in 1933, having begun his career as a provincial journalist and sometime Democratic Party worker. But he was a man of various trades: between 1917 and 1933, Hurja edited a newspaper in Texas, published a string of California newspapers, and worked as a stock analyst on Wall Street. In 1932 he became an advisor on Franklin Roosevelt's first election campaign. Moving to Washington, he became a political advisor to Roosevelt and, Holli argues, exerted a powerful influence on the shaping of FDR's 1936 re-election campaign. After that Hurja switched sides, working for Wendell Wilkie during his 1940 presidential bid. When that campaign failed, Hurja fell into relative obscurity – especially after the newsmagazine he purchased, *The Pathfinder*, failed to compete successfully with its competitors.

Holli rests his book on Hurja's seminal work as a pollster,<sup>16</sup> making a case for Hurja as a formative figure of twentieth-century American politics. For me, however, the book is of interest as an American success story that brings together ethnicity, business and politics – and is remarkable, I think, as a narrative of a kind of mid-twentieth-century political entrepreneur:<sup>17</sup> a chronicle of the successes and struggles of a man who made his own breaks – or to be less prosaic, a man who managed to make important political connections almost entirely on his own – in a relentless climb toward political influence and social acceptability.

15. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992).

16. "Hurja is not as well known to historians or political scientists or political writers as [are] George Gallup or Louis Harris . . ." because his polling techniques were developed in the service of the Roosevelt administration and the White House did not want to reveal the extent to which political opinions were framed in reference to polling. A second reason rests on George Gallup – widely recognized as the father of modern opinion polls – was a tireless "self-publicist" (122).

17. I came across the term in John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

Holli gives us a thorough account of Hurja's origin and upbringing – though we are never given a theoretical frame for understanding its significance to the larger story. Emil's father, Matt Hurja's (formerly Matti Pitkakangas) had emigrated from Finland in 1886 finding work as a miner in Crystal Falls, Michigan, before finding a modicum of success as a small shop keeper. Holli rehearses the story well, recounting the particulars of Finnish American life and arguing that the "Hurja family life centered on Finnish institutions" (11), particularly the Finnish Lutheran Church. He characterizes the Finns as "rural oriented, conservative, and centered on family" (13). Yet it was Matt Hurja's entrepreneurial good sense, strong ambition and surprising luck that fashioned the family's life in America. In 1890, he had suffered a serious accident at work, terminating his employment and resulting in a small cash compensation paid out by the company. Hurja seized his chance and invested that money, opening a dry goods store, thereby turning a tragedy into a minor triumph.

Like his father, Emil was ambitious, but unlike the father the son had an opportunity to press his talents through schooling. Education became his vehicle for upward social mobility. But geographical mobility figured in the story as well. Leaving Michigan after graduating from high school in 1909, Hurja rode the rails west, stopping along the way at the frontier towns of Butte, Seattle, and Yakima before ending up in Fairbanks. In Alaska he quickly found a job as a newspaperman reporting on mining issues and later managed to get himself to the University of Washington in Seattle.

As a college man, Hurja excelled both as a student of journalism and a leader of student social and civic life. He contributed to building student support for the University's new intercollegiate football program – on one occasion organizing a trip to Berkeley and even went so far as to write the lyrics of an early UW fight song. All this helped secure him the job of editor of the student newspaper.

Well connected at both the University and in Alaska, he managed to get himself named to a Ford-funded peace expedition in 1915. A hopelessly idealistic undertaking aimed at talking the European powers out of the First War, the mission nevertheless turned out well for Emil Hurja. Traveling throughout Europe he took time to investigate journalistic standards in Scandinavia. Obviously a proud American steeped in confidence about the superiority of American methods and techniques, Hurja felt the need to censor Norwegian journalists for their "provincialism" and backwardness, while praising the Swedes for their rapid assimilation of American practices. Was it a case of Hurja's "Americanism" coming through, or was his assigning of praise and blame motivated by feelings of ethnic rivalry? Holli doesn't raise the issue, much less address it, but he does point out that Hurja was quick to profit from his experience in Europe, organizing a speaking tour when he returned to America.

The international anti-war mission also marked the beginning of Hurja's involvement in politics. In my view, there was really very little remarkable about the positions he took on various policy questions. Like most Americans he began with strong anti-war

sentiment and expressed extreme reluctance to see the USA involved in what was widely viewed – and not without reason – as a European folly. His perspective on the War lay in sharp contrast, for example, to the principled stance which characterized either the Socialist or “Lyrical” Lefts of the 1910s – movements which remained opposed to American involvement throughout the war; or for that matter in contrast to the position of Theodore Roosevelt, who strongly supported intervention from the beginning. Again Hurja seemed to drift along with public opinion. His early opposition to the war, strong enough to prompt his participation in the pacifist Ford expedition, melted away when exposed to the demonstrations of patriotic chauvinism in 1917.

As Holli suggests, Hurja is best characterized as an early twentieth-century progressive. Indeed Hurja had attended lectures by V.L. Parrington and Frederick Jackson Turner while at the University – and Turner’s frontier thesis was particularly influential on the development of Hurja’s thinking. Holli points out that Hurja, who “moved from one frontier to another” – both geographical and occupational – could not help but be impressed by Turner, and the two men spent some time together (37). Hurja’s progressivism played out in his strong support of pro-business and pro-development strategies for Alaska, for which he often played the role of booster.

His Alaska connections won him a spot on the State’s delegation to the 1932 Democratic convention. From there he managed to get the ear of Democrat politicians, impressing them with what seems to me to have been Hurja’s sound political horse sense, combined with his ability to manipulate numbers – a skill earned, as Holli tells us, during Hurja’s stint as a Wall Street stock analyst. Hurja argued that political campaigns must adapt themselves to public opinion, which he characterized as a “moving picture of sentiment.” The theory depended on two observations: first that emotional resonance, rather than reason and argumentation, is what drives most voters; the second was that sentiment is indecisive and continually changing. These changing feelings must be accounted for, a polling process Hurja named “trend analysis.” Hurja also understood that sentiments varied considerably by geography and social grouping. He noted, for example, the opening of a “gender gap” in the 1932 campaign, but interestingly unlike today’s gender gap, then it was male, not female, voters who disproportionately favored Democratic candidates, probably as a result of the anti-Prohibition position of the Democratic Party. To correct for this problem, Hurja recommended soft-pedaling the “wet” position in certain sections of the country. Interestingly, Hurja’s own ethnic background may have contributed to his ability to see beneath the apparent continuities of the electorate, but unfortunately Holli chose not to discuss this question or was unable to find any documentation of how Hurja arrived at understanding of the American electorate. Nor was there any real documentation of the extent of Hurja’s influence on the more famous pollsters – such as George Gallup – who emerged in the same period.

My biggest complaint is that I found nothing in the book that prepared me for Hurja’s swing to the Republicans and his desertion of the New Deal. Former New York

Governor and 1928 Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith's defection from the New Deal may have influenced Hurja (he had been a long-term admirer and acquaintance from the New York days), although apparently the increasing opposition of business interests and the widespread public outcry against FDR's "court-packing" scheme may have swayed Hurja. It is hard to say because Holli never investigates the rationale for Hurja's political positions, nor does he offer an explanation for why he does not do so.

Having burned his bridges to the administration, Hurja soon found himself operating a Washington, DC public relations firm, later buying and becoming editor-publisher of *The Pathfinder*. He was also a part-time consultant to both Democratic and Republican political campaigns. A successful businessman, a political entrepreneur, a good American – Emil Hurja spent an increasing percentage of his civic energies from the late 1930s onward promoting the legacy and contributions of Finnish Americans to American life. He spearheaded the effort to have the Finns' role in the founding of New Sweden (Delaware) duly publicized. He did what he could to build support for Finland after the Soviet attack of 1940. Having succeeded in the terms laid out by Anglo-Saxon America, Hurja could afford to spend his civic energies on his ethnic heritage.

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David Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003. 400 pages; ISBN 0-262-14081-0; \$29.95 cloth.

To anyone familiar with his earlier work on the social and cultural meanings of technological development in America – *Image Worlds* (1985), *Electrifying America* (1990), *American Technological Sublime* (1998), *Consuming Power* (1998) – the publication of another study by David Nye can only come as welcome news.

The present work, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings*, is a large-scale, ambitiously conceived study of the role of technology in the nation's "creation stories," as they took shape in the post-Revolutionary period. The initial chapters set out the shared core meaning of these narratives: America's origin understood as a "second creation" built in harmony with God's first creation and in sharp contrast to European and colonial American conceptions of the nature of social and economic organization. Nye is careful to distinguish these technologically based foundation stories from earlier tales of "regeneration through violence" (Richard Slotkin's term) in which pioneers and explorers narrated their hardships or conflicts with Native Americans – tales of violent conquest and definition of the self against an alien "other," embodied in captivity narratives or popular songs and stories of such heroes as Daniel Boone, David Crockett, and Buffalo Bill Cody. Nye's concern is with a second order of narratives which tell the story of how Americans – set-