# Winter Reading 2003-2004

Imbued with the rhythm of cycling, *The Immortal Class* reads at times like a text for a course in Political Economy or Urban Planning, at times like a tale of high adventure. Readers must pedal hard up steep, uneven grades between downhill glides on new asphalt. It may not always be easy reading, but like the bicycle that inspired it, Culley's book works.

"In time, I too would learn that an experienced messenger can see anywhere from five to thirty seconds into the future." It's a bold assertion, but delivering messages on a bicycle in a city is no easy way to make a living, and couriers need all the advantages they can get.

Motor traffic is the most obvious danger to a bicycle messenger, but it isn't the only one. Exhaustion and dehydration are subtle threats to couriers. While Culley describes kind and helpful police officers, they are far outnumbered by ignorant bullies. When the author is badly injured in a collision with a taxi door for which the cab driver is clearly responsible, the officer on the scene asks, "What were you riding a bike for, anyhow?" It gets worse. Police harassment of couriers is routine, and police brutality toward cyclists peacefully expressing their opinions is not uncommon.

That's not all. When a road hazard that posed no threat to motorists but grave danger for cyclists was left unsigned, and a cyclist was seriously injured, the courts ruled that bicycles were "permitted but not intended" on the road in question. Yet "cities first began paving roads in the early 1890s under the lobbying pressure of an organization called the League of American Wheelmen," a cycling group.

*The Immortal Class* is ultimately an ironic title. Culley has a gift for foreshadowing, and throughout the narrative, the reader senses the approach of tragedy. When it strikes, the author knows that "only sad, meaningless chance" has kept him from being the victim.

Culley has retired from his career as a bicycle messenger, but he remains an advocate for all cyclists and for his vision of the city of Chicago. "I am trying to imagine," he writes, "what it could be like to live both dense and peaceful." Amen.

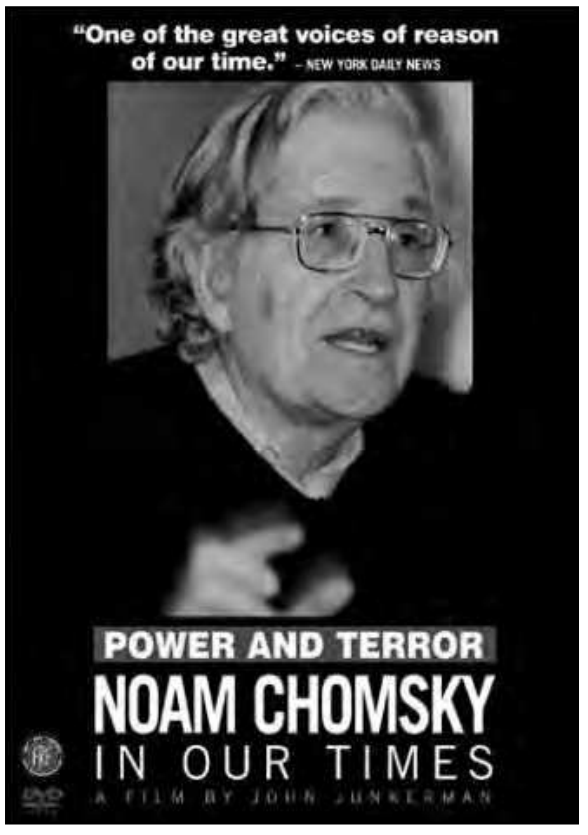
— *Josephine Bridges*

## Outside the Cocoon

***Power and Terror: Post 9/11 Talks and Interviews* by Noam Chomsky. Edited by John Junkerman and Takei Masakazu. Seven Stories Press, 2003. Paperback, $11.95.**

Inspired by Noam Chomsky's book, *9-11*, John Junkerman undertook a project to document Chomsky's views on terrorism and American power. In spring 2002 Junkerman and his team interviewed Chomsky and filmed his speeches; the twin result is a film and book, both titled *Power and Terror*.

Chomsky's optimism intrigued Junkerman. What I get from Chomsky's speeches is not optimism but realism. Until recently, my literary forays explored pure imagination: fiction, science fiction, fantasy. The events of the last couple of years have jarred me awake. I've expanded my reading to many news sources as well as current non-fiction, and like other newcomers to a near-disastrous scene, my initial response was panic. Oddly enough, the way that Chomsky puts current events into historical context calms me.




Using examples such as the correlation between US military aid and torture over the last 20 years and US involvement of terrorist activities since the 1980s, Chomsky indicates some roots of the 9/11 attacks. He says the best way to prevent terrorism is to stop participating in it. His ideas provide a perspective that removes my panic without lulling me back to sleep. The closing words of his March 22, 2002 speech sum it up:

"So if you want to listen to some voices outside the cocoon, it's not hard to hear them, and they'll answer the questions about why there's a campaign of hatred against us, whether it's now or in 1958, and in a good part of the rest of the world where people just don't enjoy being ground to dust under somebody's boot. They don't like it, and it leads to hatred. You can indulge in the fantasies if you like, but that's a choice. You certainly don't have to."

*Power and Terror* reads well; the speeches and interviews flow in a logical, conversational way. And Chomsky's look at terrorism without the lens of hypocrisy is refreshing. – *Paula Hoemann*


KIDSTUFF
OUTSIDE SHOP THE BOX
Great Stuff for Families From Maternity through Middle School !
62 West 13th, Eugene, OR 97401 (541) 484-4488

JAMES von BOECKMANN
Attorney at Law

GENERAL PRACTICE, INCLUDING:
Family • Business • Criminal Law
Civil Rights • Immigration
* **COST-FREE** INITIAL CONSULTATIONS
* **HOME VISITS** AT YOUR CONVENIENCE
FOR AN APPOINTMENT, PLEASE PHONE: 968-0781
OR EMAIL: JLVONBO@MSN.COM

Indigo District
CAFÉ • BAR • MUSIC
Full Bar
Organic Café Mam Coffee
Organic Menu for Lunch & Dinner
Wireless Internet
Locally Owned & Operated
13th & Oak (formerly Field's) • 434-6553

Midtown Pipe & Tobacco
SMOKIN' GIFTS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY
HUNDREDS OF GIFTS $25-
PIPES
LOCAL GLASS ART
CIGARS
INCENSE
T-SHIRTS
HATS
MUCH MORE...
133 EAST 13TH AVE. (BETWEEN OAK AND PEARL)

Meena IMPORTS
PERSONALIZED CARTOUCHES
Great Gifts for the Holidays.
Order yours today
5th St. Market • 2nd Floor
687•0099