



## Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars

By Henry Louis Gates

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Multiculturalism. It has been the subject of cover stories in *Time* and *Newsweek*, as well as numerous articles in newspapers and magazines around America. It has sparked heated jeremiads by George Will, Dinesh D'Souza, and Roger Kimball. It moved William F. Buckley to rail against Stanley Fish and Catherine Stimpson on "Firing Line." It is arguably the most hotly debated topic in America today--and justly so. For whether one speaks of tensions between Hasidim and African-Americans in Crown Heights, or violent mass protests against Moscow in ethnic republics such as Armenia, or outright war between Serbs and Bosnians in the former Yugoslavia, it is clear that the clash of cultures is a worldwide problem, deeply felt, passionately expressed, always on the verge of violent explosion. Problems of this magnitude inevitably frame the discussion of "multiculturalism" and "cultural diversity" in the American classroom as well. In *Loose Canons*, one of America's leading literary and cultural critics, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., offers a broad, illuminating look at this highly contentious issue. Gates agrees that our world is deeply divided by nationalism, racism, and sexism, and argues that the only way to transcend these divisions--to forge a civic culture that respects both differences and similarities--is through education that respects both the diversity and commonalities of human culture. His is a plea for cultural and intercultural understanding. (You can't understand the world, he observes, if you exclude 90 percent of the world's cultural heritage.) We feel his ideas most strongly voiced in the concluding essay in the volume, "Trading on the Margin." Avoiding the stridency of both the Right and the Left, Gates concludes that the society we have made simply won't survive without the values of tolerance, and cultural tolerance comes to nothing without cultural understanding.

Henry Louis Gates is one of the most visible and outspoken figures on the academic scene, the subject of a cover story in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* and a major profile in *The Boston Globe*, and a much sought-after commentator. And as one of America's foremost advocates of African-American Studies (he is head of the department at Harvard), he has reflected upon the varied meanings of multiculturalism throughout his professional career, long before it became a national controversy. What we find in these pages, then, is the fruit of years of reflection on culture, racism, and the "American identity," and a deep commitment to broadening the literary and cultural horizons of all Americans.

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## Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars By Henry Louis Gates Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Gates, probably the best known and most controversial proponent of African American studies, has gathered here a group of his essays on the timely topic of multiculturalism. Selections fit the broad categories of "Literature," "The Profession," and "Society," discussing issues of curricular modification and the ramifications beyond the academy of such changes. While most of the material is reprinted from other sources, some of the essays are slightly revised, and two were originally given as talks, including the MLA address, "Goodbye Columbus?" In addition to cogent essays on the value of cultural pluralism, there are two delightful Dashiell Hammett-style investigations into the literary canon that first appeared in the New York Times Book Review. An excellent addition to all academic libraries and a necessity for any library interested in a serious discussion of multiculturalism.

- Marie F. Jones, *Muskingum Coll. Lib., New Concord, Ohio*

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From Kirkus Reviews

A distinguished scholar fires his salvo in the Battle of the Books now raging in academe over opening core curricula to non-Western works by women and people of color. In these collected essays, Gates (African-American Studies and English/Harvard; co-ed., *The Slave's Narrative*, 1984) notes that the analysis of texts has become "a marionette theater of the political"--but thinks that it has been ever thus for conservatives, who have long sustained "the hegemony of the Western tradition." Gates feels that the fruits of his specialty should be integrated into the teaching of all students of all races--a centrist position between separatists of the left such as Leonard Jeffries and the inevitable academic bogeymen of the right, Allan Bloom and William J. Bennett. Gates makes the case for multiculturalism as persuasively and eloquently as any advocate has to date: "If we relinquish the ideal of America as a plural nation, common sense tells us that we've abandoned the very experiment that America represents." Yet while at times these pieces throw off such strong reminders of their author's passion, wit, and immense talent that one can forgive his facile, shrill caricature of opponents (do all critics of multiculturalism really want to return to "the thrilling days of yesterday, when God was in His heaven and all was white with the world"?), only in his MLA address, "Goodbye, Columbus? Critical Remarks," does he acknowledge excessive political correctness among multiculturalists. Two Sam Spade parodies that name a group of canon conspirators provide the only stylistic relief among these essays, which generally are repetitious and overloaded with eye-glazing phrases from critical theory ("autotelic artifacts," "discursive subjects," and "tropes," etc.). Ironically, Gates's attempt to broaden the audience for the excluded fails for the simplest of reasons: It is written in narrowly constricting academic jargon. -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

"In clear language and well thought out examples Gates brings us all closer to a needed dialog."--Jean Bissonnette, *Texas State Network*

"In the 10 pieces collected in *Loose Canons*, Gates, writing for the most part in a genial, conversational style, endorses multicultural education as a way of expanding social tolerance....A reformer, not a revolutionary, he wants to use the institutions that are in place, the university in particular, to further his plans for social progress....Gates the academic is more accessible than Morrison the popular novelist."--*The Washington Post*

## *Book World*

"Should prove especially illuminating and reassuring to nonacademics."--*The New York Times book Review*

"A good source of clear thinking and sensible reasoning on [multiculturalism]."--*The Boston Globe*

"Gates, probably the best known and most controversial proponent of African American studies, has gathered here a group of his essays on the timely topic of multiculturalism....An excellent addition to all academic libraries and a necessary purchase for any library interested in a serious discussion of multiculturalism."--*Library Journal*

"Lucid, stimulating, and often entertaining. Gates is one of the very few contemporary critics whose work is actually fun to absorb."--*Newsday*

"In these incisive and readable essays, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is at once sympathetic, funny, and cautionary in making the case for cultural pluralism and the revision of the literary canon."--Gerald Graff, *University of Chicago*

"*Loose Canons* is an inside job, the work of a man who has mastered the arcane politics and encoded language of the canon makers; it's an arsenal of ideas in the cultural wars. But it is also the outpouring of a humane, witty, and truly civilized mind--and that's exactly why *Loose Canons* strikes so hard and true."--*Los Angeles Times*

"Witty and laced with anecdotes...these readable essays serve well as an introduction to an often daunting field."--*Voice Literary Supplement*

"Gates...has brio, deep learning, and wit....He is also a gift to his readers and a rarity in contemporary critical circles."--*Commonweal*

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Claudia Fox:**

Now a day people that Living in the era where everything reachable by talk with the internet and the resources inside can be true or not demand people to be aware of each facts they get. How a lot more to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Reading a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specially this Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars book as this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it everbody knows.

**Alita Schmidt:**

The guide with title Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars includes a lot of information that you can find out it. You can get a lot of benefit after read this book. This kind of book exist new information the information that exist in this e-book represented the condition of the world today. That is important to yo7u to understand how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you in new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on your own smart phone, so you can read the item anywhere you want.

**Andrea Lampkin:**

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**James Bouchard:**

What is your hobby? Have you heard which question when you got college students? We believe that that question was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, All people has different hobby. And also you know that little person similar to reading or as studying become their hobby. You need to know that reading is very important as well as book as to be the matter. Book is important thing to include you knowledge, except your teacher or lecturer. You discover good news or update regarding something by book. Amount types of books that can you choose to use be your object. One of them is this Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars.

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