

*Zero History*, by William Gibson (Putnam; \$26.95). Gibson, the progenitor of cyberpunk, turned to a different strain of fiction after September 11th, neither speculative nor wholly realist. His recent books read as giddy fantasias of esoteric technology and mass cultural manipulation, yet the world they depict is recognizably ours. His new novel is the third in a series loosely connected by theme (ubiquity versus the individual) and by the recurring character of an unscrupulous advertising magus bent on global domination via the commodification of cool. Gibson's restless intellect flits from urban anthropology (the supplanting of cigarettes by cell phones in "the gestural language of public places") to the omnipresence of surveillance cameras ("a symptom of autoimmune disease," protective mechanisms gone destructive). The particulars of the plot—the hunt for an off-the-grid denim brand; industrial espionage in the design of military uniforms—matter less than its propulsion. The book is best experienced as a joyride, albeit with philosophical reverberations.