cans—the journalist George Washington Williams and the missionary William Shepherd—whose impassioned activism helped launch the 20th century's first international human rights campaign. By focusing on characters such as these, Hochschild manages to transform what might have been dry history into a page turner.

"Did the Congo reformers . . . save millions of lives?" Hochschild asks. "It would be a fitting climax to our story if this were so, for a splendid movement deserves splendid results." But that wasn't exactly the case. Although reports of atrocities dropped off after the king was forced to sell his colony to the Belgian government in 1908, the reduction resulted primarily from such changes as the shift from wild to cultivated rubber. And forced labor, hostage taking, and beatings with the infamous hippopotamus-skin whip called the *chicotte* continued until World War II. Still, Hochschild argues, the movement succeeded in making Leopold's atrocities part of the historical record and in keeping alive the "human capacity for outrage."

—*Rebecca A. Clay*

ATHENS: A Portrait of the City in Its Golden Age.

By Christian Meier. Trans. by Robert and Rita Kimber. Metropolitan. 640 pp. $37.50

The great 19th-century historian Jacob Burckhardt no doubt had it right: "Conditions in Periclean Athens were such that no sensible and peaceful person of our day would want to live under them." But Burckhardt's judgment has not kept us from endlessly revisiting the Athens of the fifth century B.C. in our minds. We recognize how much poorer we would be without the ancient Athenians' intellectual, cultural, and political legacy, the brilliance of which remains undimmed by the darker aspects of the era—the city's ceaseless belligerence, the limits to enfranchisement (only men could be citizens), the slavery.

The Greek city-states, petty and contentious and cruel, were in seemingly continuous conflict with one another. The mystery, the wonder, is that in this shifting, rocky soil there took root the beginnings of Western democracy. Meier, a professor of ancient history at the University of Munich, sorts out the strands of this astonishing development with clarity and intelligence. He makes it possible for the contemporary reader to return with new confidence to the dense pages of Herodotus and Thucydides and to feel again the lasting power of those formidable first histories.

The notable figures of golden age Athens who crowd Meier's pages—the for-better-and-for-worse politicians, the vexing sophists and philosophers, the poet-dramatists who interpreted the world for their audiences, the architects and sculptors who dressed the city in physical glory—are all participants in the monumental development that is the author's principal concern: the progression of Athenian political institutions toward democracy.

Through a process for which the historical documentation is incomplete, there occurred a radical transformation of political thought in Athens at the close of the sixth century B.C. and on into the fifth. The Athenians took control of their destiny and gradually came to identify themselves with the polis and the interests of the polis. The citizens *were* the city. Athenian democracy grew in accordance with two fundamental principles: first, all decisions were to be made as openly as possible on the basis of public discussion; second, as many citizens as possible were to take part in the political process and hold office.

Meier frames his narrative with two great encounters at sea. In 480 B.C., the Athenians abandoned their city and took to ships for a battle near the island of Salamis with the invading forces of the Persian king Xerxes. The Athenians defeated the Persians and saved Greece, and the stage was set for Athens's subsequent domination as a naval power in the Aegean. In 416, during the long war with its military rival Sparta, Athens sent a fleet to the island of Sicily to conquer the city of Syracuse. It was a mad enterprise, and the Athenians awoke too late from delusion to defeat and humiliation far from home. Though Athens continued to fight Sparta for another 10 years, until losing the naval battle of Aegospotami in 404, the Sicilian expedition was an emblematic disaster.

The rise and fall of the Athenian empire—in the decades between Salamis and Syracuse—is in the grand tradition of cautionary tales. Meier does not labor to draw lessons about the perils of unrestrained striving for power, but they are everywhere apparent. The city could no longer function democratically once it succumbed to the temptation of irresponsible policies. Not all fifth-century politicians were Pericles, and, in the end, the

Athenians were persuaded by their ambitious leaders to overreach. Athens did not disappear after the fifth century: Plato was not yet 30 years old at century's end, and Aristotle had not been born. But henceforth, and to this day, the city would matter for the might of its mind.

—*James Morris*

THURGOOD MARSHALL: American Revolutionary.

By Juan Williams. Times Books. 459 pp. $27.50

In the latest addition to the substantial literature on the first black Supreme Court justice, Williams charts Marshall's transformation from a child of rather humble but middle-class origins (his mother was a schoolteacher, his father a steward at an all-white yacht club) into an "American Revolutionary" honored by blacks as "Mr. Civil Rights." Spurred on by his mother's unwavering support and reoriented (temporarily) from parties to studies in college, Marshall found his life's focus under a hard-driving Howard Law School mentor, Charles Houston. Houston drew Marshall into NAACP work in the deep South, immersing him in the fight against the white primary, lynching, segregated transportation, restrictive covenants, and school segregation. It all culminated in Marshall's triumph in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (1954), in which the Supreme Court unanimously declared that segregated public education violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Marshall was rewarded for his accomplishments, first with a federal judgeship in 1961 and then with a place on the Supreme Court in 1967.

As the years passed, though, Marshall became increasingly bitter. He lamented the civil rights movement's shift from law to other tools of reform. He bridled not only at Black Power militants but, privately, at the nonviolent protests of Martin Luther King, Jr., as well. Later, the growing conservatism of the Court and the White House seemed to seal Marshall's view that the country had breached the promise of the civil rights revolution.

Williams provides a lively and readable introduction to the justice's personal and professional life, drawing on Marshall's correspondence, other primary documents, and extensive interviews (but, surprisingly, neglecting the existing literature on Marshall and the civil rights movement). A *Washington Post* journalist and the author of the book companion to the PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, Williams proceeds case by case through Marshall's extensive legal career, offering helpful summaries but little sustained analysis of the justice's brand of civil rights activism.

In the final chapter, the author suggests that Marshall's approach rested on a belief that individual rights are paramount. How did this philosophy affect other aspects of Marshall's life, such as his personal indulgence or his distaste for King? Williams never says. His thin rendering of Marshall's beliefs also fails to account for the justice's descent into bitter isolation, given his legendary successes. While Williams depicts Marshall as a straightforward believer in individual rights, the evidence points toward some more strained individualistic ethos that emphasized the personal dimension of offense and grievance, individual rights and redress, law as the only solution to social wrongs, and the autonomous nature of human achievement—not all of which are easily reconciled with the collectivist underpinnings of civil rights and social life more generally. The author provides the details of Justice Marshall's life without fully reflecting on its ultimate meaning and trajectory.

—*Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn*

THE BRITISH MONARCHY AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

By Marilyn Morris. Yale Univ. Press. 229 pp. $28.50

As French revolutionaries toppled the Bourbon monarchy, many Britons, including Edmund Burke and Edward Gibbon, worried that their throne might be next. For the British crown, the 18th century had not been the best of times. Jacobites, supporters of the Stuart pretenders, incited rebellions in 1714 and 1745. During their collective reigns (1714–60), George I and George II proved altogether inept at public relations, and they were frequently subjected to satirical attacks. George III lost the American colonies, a defeat that left him so despon-