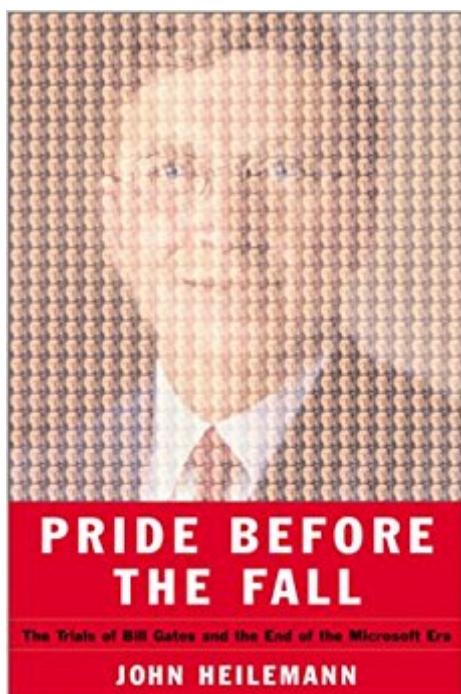


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Pride Before The Fall: The Trials Of Bill Gates And The End Of The Microsoft Era



Synopsis

John Heilemann's *Pride Before the Fall* uncovers the secret history of the antitrust trial that shook an economy: *United States v. Microsoft*. Drawing on years of reporting -- including extensive interviews with Gates and other top Microsoft executives, Justice Department trustbuster Joel Klein, superlitigator David Boies, Intel chief Andy Grove, Sun Microsystems CEO Scott McNealy, and scores of lesser-known but pivotal players -- Heilemann lays bare the chaotic confluence of forces that shattered Microsoft's aura of invincibility and the climate of fear that held an industry in thrall. Based on an acclaimed *Wired* magazine cover story, *Pride Before the Fall* is packed with rich personalities, dramatic scenes, and explosive revelations. It tells the stories of the largely unknown men and women who turned their opposition to Gates's company into a crusade, laboring for years to persuade the government to indict Microsoft for its monopolistic practices. *Pride Before the Fall* explains in compelling detail how the high-tech kingpins whose businesses Gates had tried to destroy or strong-arm (Netscape, Apple, Sun, and even Intel) worked in secret to help the Justice Department bring down Microsoft. It explores the lasting damage the trial has inflicted on the first great empire of the Information Age. And Heilemann offers a vivid and sometimes shocking portrait of Gates himself -- describing a man who in 1993 told his friends, "I have as much power as the president," only to be thrown into rage and depression a few years later, when he discovered just how wrong he'd been. Like a figure from Greek tragedy, Heilemann writes, Gates sowed the seeds of his own undoing. From lengthy visits to Redmond before, during, and after the trial, Heilemann paints a picture of a culture that can only be described as the Cult of Bill, a culture that had few limits when it came to eviscerating the competition, a culture that grew out of Gates's fiercely single-minded determination to keep Microsoft from meeting the fate of a company that he had studied, admired, rivaled, and then surpassed: IBM. But when that culture came under scrutiny on Capitol Hill, in the halls of the Justice Department, and in the courtroom of Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson, it provoked a verdict far harsher than anyone could have predicted -- and guaranteed for Microsoft the very fate that Gates had struggled so desperately to avoid. With *Pride Before the Fall*, John Heilemann confirms his reputation as one of Silicon Valley's most talented and respected journalists. Years of inside access to the Valley's boardrooms have given him a unique understanding of the technology industry, just as his years as a reporter in Washington have informed his grasp of the political currents that swept the U.S. government into a battle it never wanted to fight. But what sets *Pride Before the Fall* apart isn't simply Heilemann's mastery of the dynamics of business, public policy, and the law. This superbly gifted writer has also given us a revelatory tale of human ambition and human frailty -- a timely saga of arrogance, ruthlessness, and

revenge.

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Customer Reviews

Like other "totemic firms" of recent years, Microsoft attained astounding power and profitability in stunningly short order--along with a slew of rivals who desperately wanted it broken into less threatening pieces. Few really believed it would happen when the U.S. Department of Justice first began looking into its operations, however, which made the eventual judgment against the company even more significant. "The humbling of Microsoft is the last great business story of the 20th century and the first great riddle of the 21st," writes John Heilemann in *Pride Before the Fall*, his insightful examination of the epic antitrust battle that began as a *Wired* magazine cover story. "There are fancier ways of putting it," he adds, "but the riddle is: how did it happen?" In the pages that follow, Heilemann examines the behind-the-scenes machinations that drove *United States v. Microsoft*, based largely on exclusive interviews he conducted with Bill Gates and his top lieutenants, Justice Department prosecutor Joel Klein, special trial counsel (and lead Democratic Florida recount litigator) David Boies, Intel chief Andy Grove, Sun Microsystems' Scott McNealy, and various "unknown soldiers" who arguably played the biggest role of all. With Microsoft's future still uncertain, *Pride* helps reset the tone in a case that will shape our high-tech future. --Howard Rothman

HNavigating the myriad twists and turns of the landmark antitrust suit against Microsoft, Heilemann forges a gripping, breakneck account of contemporary law applied to business conduct, peopled with rival visionaries, guardians of the public interest and brilliant trial lawyers. A former staff writer

for the *New Yorker* and the *Economist*, Heilemann covered the case as a special correspondent for *Wired* in November; this is an expanded version of that extensive article. Having gained the trust of almost every major player, Heilemann vividly depicts the adversaries and their positions. In July 2000, Bill Gates told him, "We believe that what we've done is absolutely pro-competitive, and it's our right to stick up for that." Joel Klein, the Justice Department's assistant attorney general during the trial, is equally forthcoming: "What we found in Microsoft was a serious pattern of practices and behavior that... was predatory, lawless, and indefensible." Heilemann's insight into the legal process and his analysis of Gates's videotaped deposition, overseen by chief government counsel David Boies (now representing Vice-President Gore on ballot issues), are themselves worth the price of admission. Wherever readers' sympathies lie, Heilemann's careful timeline illuminates the points at which the case could have been settled. With journalistic panache, Heilemann explices the reasons that both sides chose to await the ruling of the U.S. Court of Appeals in spring 2001. (Jan. 23) Forecast: A major marketing campaign including national print and broadcast coverage as well as author appearances in West Coast cities will raise this title's profile. Display alongside U.S. v. Microsoft: The Inside Story of the Landmark Case by New York Times reporters Joel Brinkley and Steve Lohr could draw people to both titles, with the edge probably going to Heilemann's book.

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This book puts out a lot of factual information while keeping the read interesting. I've used this in a college ethics class, and most students liked it. I know of an attorney's office that used it to familiarize their staff with the case. The book is biased against Microsoft, but shows enough of their side that it doesn't come across as a shallow review. Lot's of interviews keep the book interesting.

The good news: this is a very well-written, very readable, entertaining take on the trial. The book grabs you. The bad news: it's quite short, basically an expanded set of *Wired* magazine articles. I finished it all in two evenings, though they were two evenings devoted to the reading (as I said, it pulled me right in).

This is an extraordinarily lucid, crisply-written account of the Microsoft trial and the circumstances leading up to it. Heilemann sets the scene with masterful depictions of the environment in Silicon Valley and especially at Microsoft, as well as of the various characters involved. Be aware, however, that this fascinating charting of Microsoft's rise to power and the complicated road to eventual government prosecution takes up almost 2/3 of the book. The subsequent trial scenes, while highly

entertaining, may seem short by comparison. Heilemann covered the case as a reporter and interviewed practically all the major players. The result is a balanced, even tale in which Heilemann remains mostly objective but is still able to comment critically and insightfully on the happenings. The story, even with its high level of depth, is propelled quickly by Heilemann's sophisticated writing, replete with erudite metaphors and colorful quotations. Any recent books about the Microsoft case are handicapped to a certain degree because the appeals process is not over and a final remedy, yet to be determined. Still, this book provides an excellent foundation for understanding future developments in the case, as well as simply a great read. Heilemann truly makes the trial, and the world, of Microsoft, come alive.

Pride Before the Fall is an excellent account of a company brought to its knees as much by its megalomaniac founder Bill Gates, as by the brilliant David Boies and the DOJ. Yet with all the overwhelming evidence of its guilt as outlined in the Findings of Fact on the case, as well as the "avowedly pro-Microsoft economists, culled from a list provided by the company itself - who flayed the firm for not conceding the obvious: that it did indeed try to eliminate competitors; that it was indeed a monopoly." Yet astonishingly, to this day Microsoft continues to believe, in the words of its CEO Steve Ballmer, "We have done nothing wrong." HELLO? Heilemann is by no means a Silicon Valley Microsoft-Basher. He also chronicles the ways in which the valley's elite (Sun, Intel, Apple) clandestinely provided witnesses and encouragement for the DOJ's attack on Microsoft. This case really has nothing to do with inhibiting Microsoft's ability to innovate (as their PR spin doctors would like you to believe) but rather Microsoft's behavior and lack of contrition. A good, quick and balanced read.

This book was more than "based on" the Wired article, it was the Wired article. I read both the article and the book, and in my opinion there was very little added to the book. I would suggest buying the Wired Magazine that had this article, Excluding that, the book was well written and entertaining, but somewhat disappointing. The amount of access the author had provided great visibility into the trial, but I felt the author squandered that information. There was very little analysis, and often the author missed humorous/interesting snippets that other books/articles had picked up (e.g. in "The New New Thing" and Upside's news coverage of the trial). This book felt more like a synapse or a chronology, and it left me wanting more...

Heilemann has done a fabulous job with this book. The Wired article was really gripping and the full

length book is just as difficult to put down! It really makes you wonder what they're thinking in Redmond - at the end of the book I couldn't help feeling that Gates (as Heilemann presents him) seems a lot like Mr. Burns in the Simpsons episode where Lisa teaches him about recycling and he ends 'recycling' all the fish in the sea for livestock feed. He couldn't figure out why he was wrong and Gates seems to have the same difficulty.

No superlative is adequate to describe the high quality of this incisive reporting. How did this author ever stitch all of this story together? Incredible sources, great insights, and to think Gates almost pulled off the monopolistic crime of the century! Thank you U.S. government for protecting us from this abuse. Thank you John for taking time out of your busy schedule to clue the rest of us in to how this proud giant was humbled, for his own good.

I've tired of explaining to people the Bill Gates/Microsoft monopoly to non-techies. I'm very surprised and happy of this writer's grasp of the core subject and lays it out in an interesting manner. Most books gloss over the "real" Bill Gates preferring to stick with his promotional machine's image but not this one.

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