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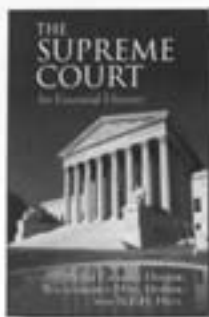
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

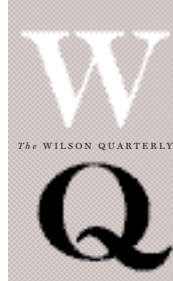
A Prisoner in Iran

Of all the memorable people I've met at the Wilson Center, none have made a more powerful impression on me than those whose convictions and commitments have brought them harassment, exile, or prison. It is humbling simply to be in the presence of a man like Saad Eddin Ibrahim, whose persistent advocacy of democracy and human rights cost him more than a year in an Egyptian jail. But Saad and others have come to the Center as visiting fellows from abroad. Never in my wildest imaginings did I think that a member of the Center's staff, a colleague and friend, would endure a similar travail. Yet that is exactly what has befallen Haleh Esfandiari, director of the Center's Middle East Program.

As I write, Haleh has spent a month and a half in an Iranian prison, after more than four months of virtual house arrest during which she was prevented from leaving the country and subjected to interrogations by Iranian authorities. Haleh was in her native country for the purely personal purpose of visiting her aged mother, but apparently her role as director of the Middle East Program made her a target and led to her arrest as an alleged threat to Iranian national security. The charges are, of course, ridiculously transparent lies. One of the remarkable things about Haleh, reflected in the program she leads, is her steely commitment to scholarly values: dispassionate inquiry, concern for facts, and free and open debate. Her own scholarship is measured (see her article "The Woman Question" in our Spring 2004 issue), and the highly regarded program she directs, in a field charred by partisan passions, has provided the rare patch of common ground where people with very different views can comfortably meet and debate.

It pains all of us at the Wilson Center to imagine this small-framed, large-spirited woman we admire in such awful circumstances, and to share the suffering of her family. Yet we also know her to be courageous and strong, and we believe that the international effort on her behalf (see the website www.freehaleh.org) will lead to her safe return. I can't help thinking how pleased she will be to see this issue's articles on women's leadership, and how amazing it is that a generation ago we likely would have been deprived of the leadership of women like Haleh Esfandiari.

— STEVEN LAGERFELD



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Dr. Bart D. Ehrman is the James A. Gray Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received his Master of Divinity and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He has won several teaching awards, including the Students' Undergraduate Teaching Award and the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Ehrman has written or edited more than 15 books, including the New York Times bestseller, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story of How Christian Bibles Got to Where They Are Today*.

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LETTERS

CLIMATE CONTROL

JAMES R. FLEMING IS CERTAINLY right: Those of us interested in the potential of geoengineering must be careful not to underestimate the limits of our knowledge [“The Climate Engineers,” *WQ*, Spring ’07]. However, in contrast to the scientists of the past whom Fleming examines, today we must work with the knowledge that human activities already are changing the climate.

In Fleming’s historical examples, the early proponents of geoengineering tried to create new types of changes—changes that humans had not been shown to be capable of making. Today’s “climate engineers” are instead trying to undo the inadvertent but very real climatic changes caused by humans’ burning of fossil fuels.

We would all prefer that there was a simple way to stop global warming. But fossil fuel energy has become so important to human survival and societal well-being that it would be irresponsible not to explore potential approaches to counterbalancing the climatic effects of fossil fuel combustion.

We can only advance our understanding if we do some careful research, at first primarily with numerical models and then, possibly, with very limited field projects, all much less substantial in their impact on the climate than a volcanic eruption.

Right now, the world is like a one-legged driver in a car going downhill, with a cramp causing that foot to push harder and harder on the accelerator, heading toward catastrophe. We don’t know if we can stop the car by pulling on an untested hand brake, but we might be able to slow or stop it while also hoping to alleviate the leg cramp. True, we may swerve a bit, even dangerously, as we try to slow down, but should we not try to do something? The real question is whether the risk of geoengineering is worse than the risk of global warming.

Michael MacCracken

Chief Scientist for Climate Change Programs

Climate Institute

Washington, D.C.

JAMES R. FLEMING IS WRONG when he says of me in his account of the NASA conference we both attended, “He, like his fellow geoengineers, was largely silent on the possible unintended consequences of his plan.” I simply point readers to the workshop’s final report, which they can find online at <http://amesevents.arc.nasa.gov/main/index.php?fuseaction=home.reports>.

Fleming is also wrong to conflate early rainmaking and meteorology with trying to offset global warming by reflecting sunlight. The science and the situation are both very different.

The bottom line here is to carefully use our ability to attack warming at its

roots—incoming sunlight now, carbon dioxide later. Given the magnitude of the warming threat to all societies, such preparations are merely prudent, not radical. Having only one slow-acting tactic—emissions reduction—is a huge gamble.

We can study approaches to blocking sunlight now when costs seem low—perhaps a few hundred million dollars for an Arctic experiment. The idea is to learn from small perturbations how the natural system responds. Both science and engineering progress this way when dealing with complex, interactive systems.

But it’s not as though we don’t already know what high-altitude aerosols do. Volcanoes have cooled our world repeatedly, notably after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991. That event ejected enough aerosols into the stratosphere to reduce temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere by several tenths of a degree Celsius for years.

When we get into trouble with an ever-warming climate, we will need to act. The time to do the research is now. As *Washington Post* columnist Robert Samuelson recently wrote in a different context, “The trouble with the global warming debate is that it has become a moral crusade when it’s really an engineering problem. The inconvenient truth is that if we don’t solve the engineering problem, we’re helpless.”

Gregory Benford

Professor of Physics

University of California, Irvine

Irvine, Calif.

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HOW IRONIC THAT AFTER YEARS in which scientific uncertainty was invoked as justification for inaction on greenhouse-gas emissions, uncertainty about the unintended consequences of geoengineering is now blithely swept aside by technophiles.

Now that the reality of global warming has become indisputable, we see proposals to address it through compensatory action, such as blocking the sun's rays. Yet these ideas are in some ways an extension of the denial mode. They deny the overwhelming historical and sociological evidence that technological interventions typically have unanticipated consequences. They deny the importance of plant and animal species that will be affected by a reduction of sunlight. And they implicitly deny the rights of other nations to have a say in the future of our planet—as we (Americans) assert that a milky-white sky, filled with reflective particles, is “acceptable.”

It may well be possible to block incoming sunlight. It may even be affordable. But the world produced will not be the same as the one that humans have lived in and loved for more than 100,000 years. Personally, I would like to see a future in which the sky is still blue.

Naomi Oreskes

Professor of History and Science Studies

University of California, San Diego

San Diego, Calif.

WHY ARE SO MANY BRILLIANT scientists ultimately so unimaginative when it comes to the social and political consequences of their ideas? Today's theoretical climate engineering seems like a macho sport in which the boy who comes up with the most splendid and daring idea wins. [Continued on Page 7]

CRITICAL ISSUES. REAL IMPACT.

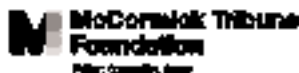
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FROM THE CENTER

THE ORDEAL OF HALEH ESFANDIARI

SINCE MAY 8, OUR COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND Haleh Esfandiari has been held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison on utterly unfounded and outrageous charges. Haleh, director of the Wilson Center's Middle East Program, has been accused of espionage and attempting to subvert Iran's government. As *The Wilson Quarterly* goes to press, there is reason to be hopeful that this gross injustice will be reversed, but Haleh has already endured 46 days of imprisonment.

In her work at the Wilson Center, Haleh has gained international respect for her scholarship, her balanced judgment, and her determined attempts to foster understanding between Iran, where she was born, and the United States, which has been her home for the past quarter-century. At the Center, she has sponsored free and open dialogue on a wide variety of Middle Eastern issues and has convened meetings notable for including participants and attendees whose perspectives span a broad spectrum of views.

Haleh's ordeal began months before her imprisonment. A diminutive, soft-spoken woman, a mother and grandmother, Haleh was returning to Tehran's airport on December 30, 2006, after a visit to her 93-year-old mother, when her taxi was stopped by three masked, knife-wielding men who robbed her of her belongings, including her Iranian and American passports. When she applied for replacement documents, Haleh was invited to an "interview" by a man who turned out to represent Iran's Ministry of Intelligence. A series of interrogations followed that stretched over the next six weeks and sometimes lasted as long as eight hours a day.

It is our understanding that the questioning focused almost entirely on the activities and programs of the Middle East Program at the Wilson Center, which are a matter of public record. Her interrogators could have obtained almost everything they wanted to know from the Center's website and publications.

Haleh's lengthy interrogations stopped on February 14. In early May, she received another phone call and was



again invited to "cooperate"—which we believe meant, in effect, to make a confession. She refused. She was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence once again, and when she arrived the next day, May 8, she was taken to Evin Prison. Reportedly she is being held in Section 209, a shadowy wing of the prison that strikes particular fear in the hearts of Iranians because it is where political prisoners are subjected to interrogation, solitary confinement, and perhaps harsher treatment.

Since her incarceration, Haleh has been allowed only very brief phone calls to her mother. She has been denied access to her family, Swiss officials representing the U.S. government, and others. Her lawyers' attempts to meet with her have been repeatedly rebuffed.

At the end of May, Iran's judiciary spokesman issued a statement declaring that the Ministry of Intelligence had charged Haleh with espionage, actions against national security, and propaganda against the Islamic Republic. Three other Iranian-Americans, two of whom are also

imprisoned, are said to face similar charges.

Haleh is a scholar, not a spy. She has never sought to undermine the Iranian government or any other; the Wilson Center does not engage in such activities. The Center receives no funding from the U.S. government's fund to promote democracy in Iran. Haleh's detention has no legal basis, and violates any international standard of justice and human rights.

Haleh's ordeal has been a tremendous strain on her family and on all of us who know and admire her. The numerous efforts by many countries, organizations, and individuals on Haleh's behalf—quiet and diplomatic at first, then, when that failed, full-throated—are heartening. More information on her case can be found at the Center's website, www.wilsoncenter.org, and at the independent website www.freehaleh.org. We have one message: Let Haleh go.

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THE WILSON CENTER is the nation's living memorial to Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States from 1913 to 1921. It is located at One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Created by law in 1968, the Center is Washington's only independent, wide-ranging institute for advanced study where vital cultural issues and their deep historical background are explored through research and dialogue. Visit the Center at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>.

[Continued from page 5] James R. Fleming invokes history to show how climate engineers utterly fail once they try out their ideas, due in part to their total disregard for the unintended consequences of their actions. A few intelligent people should not be allowed even the illusion of imposing their ideas globally, so easily dispensing with the imperatives of fraternity and democracy.

However, I am not as sure as Fleming is that history provides the best lessons for how we should handle matters today and in the future. Future challenges may require bold approaches, and engineering projects unthinkable in one age have been successfully carried out at a later time. Nevertheless, historians' hindsight certainly exposes the limitations of simplistic technocratic approaches to weather and climate control, as with so many other public questions.

Our ultimate courses of action should arise from the broadest consensus possible, taking into account the multiple and often conflicting interests of stakeholders around the world. Beyond think tanks and small scientific communities, the real world is muddy, and scientists cannot pretend to be above multifaceted debates, dirty national and international politics, and general mudslinging.

Matthias Dörries

*Professor of History of Science
Université Louis Pasteur
Strasbourg, France*

JAMES R. FLEMING RIGHTLY emphasizes the uncertain ramifications of "declaring war on the stratosphere" in order to combat global warming. But there are a few things that we can be sure of if one of the best-known geo-engineering scenarios comes to pass.

The scientific debate around Paul J. Crutzen's proposal to use reflective aerosols to thwart the sun's rays has focused on what would happen in the upper atmosphere, but no one seems to have considered the amount of air pollution produced here on the surface by using artillery to launch the particles.

Ironically, Crutzen built his career as an atmospheric chemist in the 1970s by demonstrating how nitrogen oxides contribute to the formation of photochemical smog. Thus, the world's best-known advocate of geo-engineering has not considered the most basic environmental ramifications of his proposal in his own area of expertise. This is symbolic of the myopia of the geoengineers' plans to create "a planetary thermostat."

Gregory T. Cushman

*Assistant Professor of International
Environmental History
University of Kansas
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IN *THE REVENGE OF GAIA* (2006), scientist James Lovelock gives a more sympathetic portrait of some of the climate engineers criticized by James R. Fleming, which may interest readers as a comparison. Lovelock's view—one Fleming shares—is that scientific discussions can veer off into fantastic scenarios unless grounded by informed criticism. One hopes that historians like Fleming, as well as scholars from other disciplines, will continue to be invited to scientific meetings to raise these concerns and to place scientific debates in a broader context.

Sharon Kingsland

*Chair, Department of History of
Science and Technology
Johns Hopkins University
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HOMELAND SECURITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

PAUL C. LIGHT'S ARTICLE "THE Homeland Security Hash" [*WQ*, Spring '07] offers the wrong answer to the wrong problem at the wrong time. It is outdated and inaccurate, and, at bottom, fundamentally misconceives the nature of homeland security today.

Light calls for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to be given the authority to regulate the chemical industry. It already does this. After many years of effort by the Bush administration, on October 4, 2006, Congress granted DHS the authority to regulate high-risk chemical facilities.

Light condemns the lack of personnel to reduce the immigration caseload backlog, but the backlog for the immigration benefits that are within our control, such as the allocation of green cards, was reduced last September.

He calls for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to rebuild and to absorb the Fire Administration, the preparedness bureaucracy, and the state and local grants programs. Congress mandated that reorganization in the same bill that granted chemical security authority, and the work was completed on March 31, 2007.

It's a calumny for Light to condemn DHS for a lack of agility or adaptability. When the London transatlantic bomb plot was discovered last August, the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection changed their operational systems within a matter of hours.

And what Light sees as stasis at the border is anything but. In less than two years, we have completely reworked the detention and removal process, changing the old practice of "catch and release" to the new rule of "catch and

return." As of last fall, 100 percent of illegal aliens caught entering the United States at the southern border were returned to their country of origin.

But most seriously, Light simply doesn't see or appreciate the synergies that have arisen from the creation of the department. If he could sit in one of the weekly "gang of seven" meetings of DHS's major component heads, he would observe the intrinsic coordination that the merger has created—coordination which will only grow stronger with the passage of time.

Light's prescriptions for change are almost laughable. Most shockingly, he would undo the single greatest success of the merger—our ability to provide a unified approach to border security. Prior to the creation of DHS, the United States had multiple faces at the border—border patrol, customs, agricultural protection, and maritime border control. Light would break up that unity of effort by removing the agricultural and maritime pieces.

Little could be more damaging to homeland security. But perhaps most remarkable of all, Light, perceived by some as an expert in governmental organization issues, fails to understand the damage that following his advice would cause, or the inconsistency at the core of his analysis. At one point he argues, correctly in my view, that the department's components suffered a loss of productivity because of the "churn" of reorganization. That loss of productivity has continued through two additional substantial reorganizations—nearly three wholesale changes in bureaucratic structure over four years.

And what is Light's remedy for the inefficiencies caused by reorganization? Yet another reorganization! As experience has shown, every change costs us

at least a year in effective operations. Now is the time for DHS to be allowed to settle in, develop its internal structure, and work to make America safer.

Paul Rosenzweig

Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Policy

Department of Homeland Security

Washington, D.C.

Paul Light replies: Paul Rosenzweig is correct that Congress recently moved the Fire Administration into FEMA. However, instead of merging the Fire Administration's major units into their appropriate FEMA counterparts, the change left the Fire Administration standing as a quasi-independent subsidiary of what the department has called the "new FEMA."

Congress also gave DHS limited authority to regulate chemical plants, but it set aside a much stronger measure, which, among other things, would have given DHS the power to require plants to replace highly toxic chemicals with much safer alternatives.

These examples only serve to illustrate that much remains to be done in order to create the strongest and most effective possible defense of the American homeland.

PAUL C. LIGHT ANALYZES A NUMBER of structural problems with the large conglomerate (or holding company) that constitutes the Department of Homeland Security. He points out that some of the flaws are due to the department's initial design by five isolated and inexperienced staffers in the White House basement. I would add that this genesis also led to flaws in the personnel provisions enabled by the DHS bill. The department's architects had no experience in personnel, and the director of the federal govern-

ment's Office of Personnel Management was not even notified of the bill's provisions in this area until the day before they were announced. The results were unfortunate.

Embedded in the DHS bill was a revolutionary provision allowing the administration to modify the regulations that govern the federal personnel system. The new rules gave DHS managers much more latitude than executives elsewhere in the federal government to hire, fire, and transfer personnel. Congress and employee labor unions had blocked such personnel measures each time they were introduced in previous years, but the 9/11 crisis provided the necessary momentum for their approval.

The problem was that the resulting regulations eliminated some of the protections against arbitrary personnel actions that had been won in hard bargaining over the years by public employee unions. Predictably, the unions went to court to challenge several of the changes, and won decisions in their favor. This forced the Bush administration to conduct negotiations after the fact in a more contentious and difficult atmosphere than it would have faced if it had bargained earlier.

As Light concludes, fixing some of these problems is possible, but it will not be easy.

James P. Pfiffner

Professor of Public Policy

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ENDING POVERTY, ONE VILLAGE AT A TIME

SAM RICH'S ARTICLE "AFRICA'S Village of Dreams" [*WQ*, Spring '07] is short on hard data, but he clearly

did some probing, and his account rings true. It is particularly telling on the differences between "micro" approaches to economic development and "macro" approaches like Jeffrey Sachs's. As one of Rich's subjects says in the article, change must be led by local people themselves—"only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches." Rich neglects only one key area: the importance of simply keeping bellies full. People freed of hunger are liberated from lethargy, disease, and the time-consuming quest for their next meal; the incentive for crime is reduced.

My own experiences working with several villages in rural South Africa have led me to several observations that complement Rich's. Westerners often unrealistically want fast solutions to problems that have in some cases existed for centuries. We are perpetually impatient with the pace of change. In a similar vein, throwing money at a problem does not fix it. Giving poor people valuable assets without their having done anything to earn them does not make a viable program. People must earn what they receive. A microloan program that requires payback, for example, gives people dignity and self-respect and empowers them to take control of their own destinies. And donated assets such as equipment, vehicles, and buildings often go to waste because poor people lack the resources to maintain them. Or worse, they will trade goods they are given for something else they would rather have—sometimes food, other times alcohol or drugs.

In any development effort, there must be top-down and bottom-up programs in place at the same time, and they need to be implemented at a pace set by the people receiving the assis-

tance. Top-down efforts include changes in government policies and business practices to promote and support the flow of resources. Bottom-up programs include those that teach practical skills for adults and children and provide sufficient resources to kick-start the production of food or the ability to earn a living.

The Sauri experience as Rich describes it is Africa in microcosm: political confusion, bureaucracy, corruption, ethnic conflict, farming practices that continue to deplete the soil, inadequate roads, no electricity, poor distribution and communication. What happens when Sauri leaves the Millennium Villages Project nest in 2009? Will the Kenyan government take over? It seems unlikely. The same underlying issues, from poor infrastructure to local (and Western) cultural complications, will still be there.

Ed Jesteadt

Chairman, Mission at the Eastward/

Macfarlan South Africa Partnership

Farmington, Maine

CORRECTIONS

The map of "the Shia world" on page 17 of the Autumn '06 *WQ* should have included Yemen, whose population is approximately one-half Shia Muslim.

In "Lines in the Sand" [*WQ*, Winter '07], the year of Baghdad's founding was incorrectly stated as 762 BC rather than AD 762. Also, the T. E. Lawrence article quoted on page 62 originally appeared in *The Sunday Times*, not *The Times*.

In "Scatteration" [*WQ*, Spring '07], "low suburban density" should have been defined as one family per half-acre, not one family per acre.

We regret the errors.

FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

The Great Pretenders

Night of a thousand stars

As if gravitationally drawn together, Marilyn Monroe and Sophia Loren joined Dolly Parton, who fiddled with her low-cut dress and twittered, “They’re hangin’ in there—literally!” Don Knotts snapped photos of Roy Orbison. Bing Crosby and George Burns got caught up, as did John Belushi and Anna Nicole Smith (hey, something new in common). *Edward Scissorhands* Johnny Depp towered over the room and looked for someone to talk to, perhaps envying the crowd around *Pirates of the Caribbean*



Moonstruck: Rising star Lisa Irion as Cher ...

Johnny Depp. Leaning against a wall, *Godfather* Marlon Brando glowered.

In late May, one of Las Vegas’s tattier hotel-casinos hosted the 16th annual ceremony honoring celebrity impersonators, the Reel Awards. Winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award was Jay Koch, a Ronald Reagan impersonator who in 2006 performed the ultimate act of mimicry. “We’re presenting it,” explained a George W. Bush look-alike, “post-humorously.”

The Rising Star Award went to Lisa Irion, 47, an eerily spot-on Cher. Later, still in her Cher get-up, she waved away a stream of photo implorers—“You get a sense of what it must be like to be the real one, just to have everyone feel they have access to you”—and recounted her rise to Cherdom.

In 2003, after Irion had devoted 20 years to community theater in Abbeville, Louisiana, “middle of Cajun country,” an Elvis impersonator—“he made pretty good money, just in our area”—urged her to try Cher. Her first critic, her four-year-old son, saw her in wig and makeup and squawked, “You look like an alien!”

Irion studied Cher’s videos and interviews, rehearsed intensively,

and started performing, first with the Elvis and a Frank Sinatra impersonator, then solo. At a producer’s urging, she hired a Mardi Gras drag queen to refine the makeup. “I’m a blue-eyed blonde—nothing like Cher except for her cheekbones,” she said. “Doing the makeup takes two hours. I blank out my face and draw her face over it, change the shape of my eyes, everything.” Irion polished her act by doing fundraisers for community theaters all over Louisiana.

Now, having spent more than \$15,000 on costumes and wigs, she performs at two or three corporate conventions and parties a



... and au naturel.

month, mixing singing and comedy—a sheepish audience member always ends up in Sonny Bono wig and moustache for a duet of “I Got You, Babe.” Bookers find her through her website, www.lisaascher.com. Charging up to \$3,000 plus expenses for each appearance, Irion makes nearly as much as her lawyer husband.

Money, yes; respect, no. “People think we’re a bunch of freaks who believe we’re really the artists we impersonate,” she said. “I am a housewife, a mother—I have no desire *whatsoever* to be Cher. I respect her but I don’t idolize her. Or else they think it’s singing telegrams and glorified karaoke. It’s not that at all. We spend years and thousands of dollars studying someone else’s look, voice, mannerisms, the whole persona.”

After a pause, she added, “It is kind of weird. But if you think about it, I am an entertainer, providing a service to the corporate market. It’s a *profession*. It may not be a conventional profession, but it’s a profession.”

Movin’ on Down

Stature stops here

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Americans were the tallest people on earth. Not anymore, according to a *Social Science Quarterly* article (June 2007) by John Komlos, of the University of Munich, and Benjamin Lauderdale, of Princeton. American height has remained relatively stable since 1950—for the latest cohort, those now aged 24 to 27, average heights are about 5’10½” for

men and 5’5” for women—whereas folks in parts of Europe have kept growing. In the Netherlands, relative to Americans of the same sex, men are now almost 2 inches taller and women nearly 2½ inches taller. “Native-born U.S. white men are shorter than their counterparts in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Belgium, and Germany, and black men are even shorter than that,” the authors write. As possible causes of the height gap, they cite nutrition and health care. Whatever the reasons, some Europeans are looking down on Americans in more ways than one.

The Shipping News

Getting there first—or at all

Since 2003, John Bartholdi and his logistics students at the Georgia Institute of Technology have put UPS, DHL, and Federal Express to the test. The school sends identical parcels to especially challenging addresses. This year’s included Yangon, Myanmar; Tikrit, Iraq; Harare, Zimbabwe; Apia, Samoa; and the island of Florianopolis, Brazil. DHL is 2007’s big winner, reaching all five sites, three of them first and the other two second. FedEx reached three locations, and UPS two. The remaining packages were returned as undeliverable or, in one case, lost.

Results vary from year to year, according to a Georgia Tech news release. In the past, one shipper insisted that a particular country didn’t exist, and a parcel made nine roundtrips across the

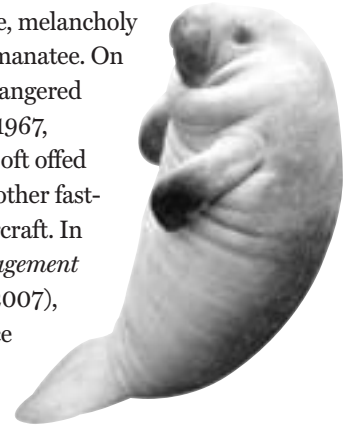
Atlantic before delivery, as if madly collecting frequent-flyer miles.

Slow and Slower

The life and death aquatic

En route to their summer feeding grounds in the Antarctic, most humpback whales swim about 2.5 miles per hour, but a few males amble at a stately 1.5 mph and sing. Why? Michael Noad and colleagues at the University of Sydney think they have the answer, *New Scientist’s* website reported in May: At the twilight of mating season, the male humpbacks are looking for one last hookup. They dawdle, at the risk of arriving late for the buffet, so that more females can hear their serenades.

Meanwhile, melancholy news for the manatee. On the list of endangered species since 1967, manatees are oft offed by boats and other fast-moving watercraft. In *Coastal Management* (April–June 2007), Michael Sorice and two colleagues from the Florida



The menaced manatee

Fish and Wildlife

Conservation Commission summarize an attempt at manatee salvation. They tested the speed of watercraft in a manatee-heavy zone, then erected six signs cautioning “WATCH YOUR SPEED/MAX FINE \$500,” with a sketch of an oblivious-looking manatee, that, they write, enhances the sign’s “attractiveness and thus the proba-

bility of its being read.”

The results? Watercraft sped up. “Blatant noncompliance increased from eight percent to 14 percent,” the authors observe glumly. Gainesville-based ThreadPit sells a T-shirt that may encapsulate the boaters’ attitude: “The Manatee—Nature’s Speed Bump.”

Touchy Shoppers

Contagion in the cart

Another kind of product placement can affect consumers’ decisions, according to Andrea Morales and Gavan Fitzsimons. In the *Journal of Marketing Research* (May 2007), Morales, of Arizona State University, and Fitzsimons, of Duke University, relate several experiments involving products resting in carts. In one test, participants expressed less interest in trying a cookie if its package was touching a box of feminine napkins. In a second experiment, participants estimated a higher fat content for rice cakes if the transparent package was resting against a container of lard. The authors recommend making shopping carts with dividers and compartments. Making shoppers rational, it seems, isn’t an option.

Remains of the Day

A lost species speaks

In *The World Without Us* (St. Martin’s), Alan Weisman ponders a macabre but improbable scenario: the sudden disappearance of Homo sapiens, perhaps wiped out by a pandemic. Stonehenge has lasted an estimated 5,000 years. What would

we leave behind?

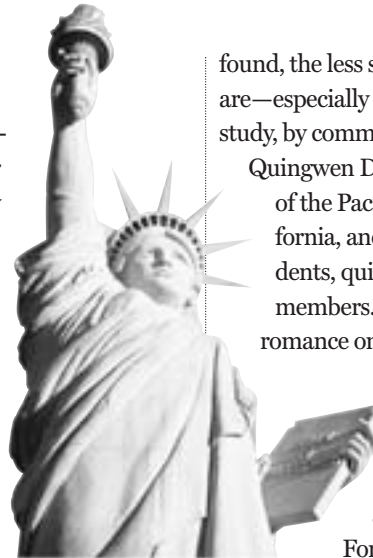
According to Weisman, a journalism professor at the University of Arizona, a few human creations could last millions of years. One is Mount Rushmore, carved in granite that erodes only an inch every 10,000 years. Other objects would survive for millennia, though wind, rain, and geological shifts would bury many of them: tires, fire hydrants, and anything copper or bronze.

Scanning the onetime United States, an extraterrestrial tourist would find giant visages of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, plus, some 1,500 miles away, the bronze Statue of Liberty. All in all, not bad relics.

Your Space or Mine?

Geek love

Membership in MySpace and other social-networking websites has soared. Two new studies suggest that, perhaps unsurprisingly, such sites may especially appeal to the socially maladroit. In the first study, Rob Nyland and two fellow graduate students at Brigham Young University surveyed 146 members of networking sites. The more time users spend on the sites, the researchers



Survivor

found, the less socially involved they are—especially women. The other study, by communication professor Quingwen Dong of the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, and two graduate students, quizzed 240 MySpace members. Users seeking romance online, Dong et al.

report, tend to lack self-esteem.

“Only connect!” admonishes a character in E. M. Forster’s *Howard’s End* (1910). For some of us today, human connection may first require electronic disconnection.

Coke Heads

Big names, but not the biggest

Not long after its creation in 1886, Coca-Cola called itself the “Intellectual Beverage.” An early Coke ad, reprinted in Fred Basten’s *Great American Billboards* (Ten-Speed Press), features Lillian Nordica, diva of the Metropolitan Opera. Coke’s more recent celebrity endorsers include actress Courteney Cox Arquette, Washington Redskin Clinton Portis, and hip-hop singer Common, but not, so far as we can tell, a single opera star.

Coke recently declined a gratis endorsement from a one-of-a-kind celebrity. In the first cut of the Italian film *7 Km da Gerusalemme* (*Seven Kilometers From Jerusalem*), a modern-day Jesus quaffs a Coke, and an ad executive exults, “My God, what a testimonial!” But Coca-Cola objected, and the film was released sans Coke scene. A company representative told *Variety*, “We are not

interested in this kind of product placement.”

A Kick to Cocaine

Just say no

In September 2006, Nevada-based Redux Beverages started selling a cherry-flavored energy beverage called Cocaine. Each eight-ounce drink had 280 milligrams of caffeine—more than three Red Bulls, though less than a Starbucks “grande” coffee. Cocaine cans featured the name in powdery-looking

does,” Redux partner Clegg Ivey told the Associated Press. Elsewhere he maintained that the drink’s target demographic, people in their twenties, “love our sense of humor, our attitude.”

But humorless officialdom prevailed, and Redux pulled Cocaine from the shelves in May. “We tried to contact Yves Saint Laurent to warn them that Opium perfume could be next, but they were too busy enjoying the freedom of expression guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution,” groused Redux’s Jamey Kirby.



Hyper-caffeinated Cocaine OD'd on its name—so now it doesn't have one.

letters against a red backdrop, and, in smaller print, “The Legal Alternative.” The outré name made the drink a hit with consumers, as sales topped \$1.5 million in three months, and a provocation to pols.

Attorneys general in Texas, Connecticut, and Illinois banned the beverage, and the Food and Drug Administration sent a warning letter. “Our product doesn’t have any cocaine in it. No one thinks that it

Cocaine has since become a collectors’ item—the street price has tripled.

While continuing its legal battles to redeem the name Cocaine, Redux came up with an interim strategy. “The new concept is to use no name at all,” Kirby told us. “When a customer purchases a can, they can select from a series of names on stickers, or they can use a marker and write in their own name.” Redux’s

earlier plan flopped, when it turned out that a Florida company had already trademarked Censorship as a brand name for energy drinks. Misfortune redux.

Techno Tête-à-tête

A chatroom of one’s own

Alan Turing famously said that a computer can be said to “think” when people using a keyboard to communicate can’t tell whether there’s a machine or a person on the other end. Two widely regarded “chatbots” today are ALICE (Artificial Linguistic Internet Computer Entity), the work of Richard Wallace, and Jabberwacky, created by Rollo Carpenter. Wallace gave ALICE “thousands of possible conversational gambits,” according to *Discover’s* special issue on the brain (Spring 2007), whereas Jabberwacky “keeps track of everything people have said to it, and tries to reuse those statements.”

Discover had the bots converse with each other. None of the interchange would have satisfied Turing, but bits of it might have appealed to Samuel Beckett.

ALICE: What is consciousness?

Jabberwacky: It is the great immaterial thing, the mystery at the heart of each of us.

A: I’ve heard of it before.

J: Where are you from?

A: I am originally from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Now I live in Oakland, California. Where are you?

J: We have some unsettled business, my friend.

—Stephen Bates

Brazil's Impossible City

For the first time in history, a majority of the world's population now lives in cities. In the developing world, the names of vast new megacities—Dhaka, Lagos, Calcutta, Jakarta—are synonymous with human misery. But São Paulo is seeking to show that a megacity can work.

BY NORMAN GALL

SÃO PAULO IS A GREAT CITY, BUT NOT A BEAUTIFUL city. The soot-darkened buildings of its old business center resist all claims of glamour or novelty. Its periphery is an oceanic sprawl, bursting with gaudy commerce and neighborhoods where many thousands of shacks have become, within a generation, sturdy but nondescript houses of brick and concrete. Its residents are

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regularly shocked by corruption, prison revolts, failing public education, truck hijackings, armed robberies, and murders at traffic lights. The author-journalist Roberto Pompeu de Toledo described São Paulo as “frightening, giddy, tentacular. São Paulo does not inspire admiration in a benign or gentle way. It provokes amazement in a way that admiration becomes fear, a consequence of its enormity, its omnipresent sense of urgency, its disturbing awareness of being in an urban labyrinth that reaches toward the infinite.”



A view of central São Paulo, a vast area around the old downtown and one of several districts where skyscrapers have sprouted in the past few decades.

Yet for all that, São Paulo is a complicated, qualified success. Because of the dynamism and diversity of its economy, and despite its many contradictions, it now may be the most successful “megacity” in the developing world.

The city has benefitted enormously from positive changes in Brazil as a whole for which it can claim little responsibility: the consolidation of Brazilian democracy since 1985; the country’s subsequent opening to the world economy; the end of decades of chronic inflation under the Brazilian government’s Real Plan, launched in 1994 (and

named for the national unit of currency); and a reduction in the influx of uneducated rural migrants. São Paulo has made strides toward subduing crime, easing poverty, and creating opportunities for its people. But now the city has reached a point where it must learn to govern itself if it is to move ahead. Even its blessings—its vitality and dynamism—threaten to become curses.

In recent decades São Paulo has become a multicentered metropolis, akin to Los Angeles, Houston, and Atlanta, with new hubs independent of the old business

core and a new generation of spectacular office towers, luxury apartment buildings, and shopping malls. The frantic paving of streets, the opening of new traffic arteries, and the continuous addition of tunnels and cloverleafs cannot keep up with the proliferation of motor vehicles, whose number has soared from one million in 1980 to nearly six million today. Some 20,000 new cars, trucks, buses, and motorcycles are licensed every month. Because there are few maps of the city's underground infrastructure, work gangs frequently drill into gas, power, sewage, and water lines, causing poisonous gas leaks, blackouts, explosions, and flooding. On the periphery of the metropolis, where poor migrants from the countryside swarmed in the decades after 1950, acres of precarious shacks, erected on the banks of reservoirs and on other land supposedly protected by environmental laws, have evolved into vibrant if amorphous communities, studded with supermarkets, schools, bus terminals, and hospitals, as well as thousands of small businesses, linked to the city's core by crowded motorways.

The population of Greater São Paulo, which now embraces 39 municipalities, has mushroomed from only 31,000 in 1870 to some 20 million today, growing by 4.8 percent yearly, perhaps the fastest long-term rate of big-city growth in human experience. According to United Nations estimates, São Paulo is virtually tied with New York, Mexico City, Seoul, and Mumbai (Bombay) for second place in population among the world's giant cities, the five of them far behind Tokyo, with its 35 million people. The global total of "megacities," defined as cities with populations of 10 million or more, grew from two (Tokyo and New York) in 1950 to 20 in 2005. As a result of rapid urbanization in the late 20th century, more than half of the world's 20 biggest cities now lie in poorer countries, with more sure to come. Their progress and consolidation are being severely tested, just as in the fast-growing cities of the past.

Some historical perspective is helpful. Between 1700 and 1800, London's population doubled, from 550,000 to 1.1 million, causing surges of crime and chaos in local government. London's growth rate was a fraction of what São



Guns drawn, two military policemen patrol one of São Paulo's sprawling slums. Law enforcement is marginal in many areas, and is hampered by the fact that São Paulo has two separate police forces. But, like New Yorkers in the 1990s, many Paulistanos have become fed up with crime and are demanding change.

Paulo and other megacities in the developing world have experienced. Government corruption in 18th-century London was at least as rampant as what one sees in São Paulo today. Crime was widespread and law enforcement and other essential municipal services were painfully slow to develop. London was swept by terrifying epidemics of smallpox and other diseases, a fate spared São Paulo by better nutrition and public health efforts.

São Paulo's population growth has been fed by migrants from all over the world: Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Japanese, Poles, Germans, Russians, Ukrainians, Lebanese, Koreans, Bolivians, and Chinese, as well as waves of poorly educated but ambitious people from backward regions of Brazil and other Latin American countries. Generally speaking, the foreign-born newcomers have quickly learned Portuguese and avoided ethnic frictions, though they remain vulnerable to lure of criminality and other snares of poverty.

São Paulo is now often classified by urban specialists as a "world city" or "global city," linked to a handful of others in Asia, North America, Europe, and Africa in what the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has called "a common market of metropolitan economies" that transcends national borders. Trade, financial flows, and connectivity are important, but most "world cities" are shaped by peculiar historical forces. All must manage a legacy of poverty and inequity, and São Paulo has fared better than most. Its history as an industrial city goes back more than a century, but unlike Detroit, Gdansk, and other depressed cities it has held on to most of its industries while diversifying its economy.

The village of São Paulo de Piratininga was founded in 1554 by Jesuit missionaries seeking to convert Indians to the Roman Catholic faith. The village lay at the rim of Brazil's great Central Plateau beside the Tietê River, which Portuguese *bandeirantes* used as a route to penetrate the continental interior in their hunt for gold and native slaves. Over the course of five centuries, the flood-prone village of

thatched huts underwent a series of metamorphoses. The village became a town, the town became a city, and the city became a metropolis.

São Paulo remained a primitive place until the coffee boom of the late 19th century, when it became the main supply and trading center and railroad hub serving the expanding plantations of the interior. In the 20th century, it developed into an industrial powerhouse. Its rise began during World War I and the years soon after, with immigrant manufacturers, mainly

THE POPULATION OF GREATER São Paulo has mushroomed from 31,000 in 1870 to nearly 20 million today.

Italians, producing bulk and consumption goods too unwieldy and expensive to import: tiles, cement, nails, lumber, plate glass, beer and soft drinks and their bottles, shoes, boilers, coarse textiles, flour, pots and pans, etc. In the 1950s, when the Brazilian government implemented a policy of import substitution, promoting industrialization in order to curb dependence on foreign goods, São Paulo became the center of a new auto industry, as Volkswagen, General Motors, and Ford, as well as many parts manufacturers, built plants.

Building upon its existing industrial base, São Paulo has since expanded its range of specialized and creative strengths to become South America's leading center of corporate management, engineering, legal and financial services, trading and logistics, marketing, publishing, design, advertising, and software production. The worldwide ethanol boom is adding to the city's winnings, enlarging its role as the entrepreneurial hub of a vast hinterland of agribusinesses—producing sugar, soybeans, oranges, corn, cotton, cattle, and other commodities—that makes Brazil the world leader in ethanol development. São Paulo serves as South American headquarters for most blue-chip U.S. and European multinationals and as the decision-making center for 40 percent of the 500 biggest Brazilian companies, as well as most of Brazil's largest

banks. São Paulo's stock exchange, the Bovespa, once derided as a casino for insiders, has cleaned up its act and now attracts huge volumes of foreign money. Share prices have quadrupled since 2002, corrected for inflation, rising twice as fast as those of the Shanghai stock exchange. Yale economist Robert J. Shiller,

THE RICH, AND MANY others, fear violence, but it is mainly the poor who suffer its effects.

author of the best-selling *Irrational Exuberance* (2000), wrote after a recent visit to São Paulo that "there are reasons to believe that Brazilians might be rationally exuberant."

São Paulo added to its economic preeminence a new role as Brazil's cultural capital beginning in the 1960s, when the federal government departed from Rio de Janeiro to the new inland capital of Brasília, sapping the great port city of vitality. São Paulo today is a city of theaters, art galleries, museums, and nightspots for jazz and Brazilian popular music. An elegant old railroad station was remodeled during the late 1990s into the Sala São Paulo, which houses an excellent symphony orchestra and is acclaimed as one of the world's finest concert halls.

São Paulo's rich entertain themselves at the city's multiplying world-class restaurants, galleries, and boutiques. Tiffany, Louis Vuitton, and other high-end vendors have opened shops in order to capitalize on a luxury goods market that grew by 32 percent in 2006. But the wealthy seek refuge from the city's perils and inconveniences in an expensive infrastructure of armored cars, bodyguards, and protected condominiums. The very rich take to the air—São Paulo has the world's second-largest fleet of helicopters, outdone only by New York. The rich, and many others, fear violence, but it is mainly the poor who suffer its effects.

Last year on a weekend in May, the entire city was stricken with fear by a powerful prison gang called Primeiro Comando da Capital, which controls a vast

criminal network reaching into the slums. The PCC reacted to a sudden transfer of its imprisoned leaders to a more secure jail by ordering a revolt by inmates in 73 prisons in tandem with an urban guerrilla offensive. Its members in the metropolis responded by burning buses, banks, and public buildings and murdering policemen in hit-and-run attacks. The police responded by killing more than 100 people, several of them found later to be innocent.

Obscured by horror stories such as the PCC attack is São Paulo's progress in reducing crime. In

the first half of the 1990s, homicide was the main cause of death of children between ages 10 and 14. São Paulo's periphery was known as a kind of Wild West, a squatters' zone where everything was up for grabs and government authority was ineffective or simply absent. The murder rate was a cocktail brewed by population density, drugs, alcohol, short tempers, and widespread possession of firearms. Since 1999, however, the number of killings has dropped by more than 50 percent, to levels still above what may be called civilized but nevertheless following the dramatic downward curve in murders experienced by New York City during the 1990s.

Organized social movements, an aroused public fed up with violence, and action by city authorities account for a good share of the improvement. But longer-term trends working in favor of the poor made a significant difference. As the benefits of democratic stability and low inflation gradually emerged, public investment flowed into schools, health posts, waterworks, the electricity infrastructure, and sewage treatment. Few streets on São Paulo's periphery today lack paving and lighting. Primitivism and violence in outlying areas are giving way to rising living standards and to consolidation of communities and institutions.

Cash incomes of poorer people have risen, aided by the reduction of inflation after 1994, which has made life more predictable, stopped the erosion of salaries, and made possible the accumulation of savings. Those

savings can be invested in improving homes and opening small shops. The official unemployment rate is 11 percent, but that number doesn't capture the complex reality of a city in which roughly half of all workers remain in the informal economy.

As an indicator of the improvement in human welfare, the infant mortality rate in São Paulo has plunged from 51 per 1,000 live births in 1980 to 12 today. Since the late 1970s, the share of population served by piped water has expanded from 50 percent to 99 percent, while the sewage network has grown to reach 88 percent of homes, against only 39 percent in 1978. Nearly all families now have refrigerators and televisions, and more than 60 percent of homes have washing machines, compared with 46 percent in 1992.

Much of São Paulo's story can be seen in microcosm in the suburban municipality of Diadema, where my organization, the Fernand Braudel Institute of World Economics, recently conducted monthly forums on public security with citizens' groups, local officials, and police chiefs. Between 1950 and 1980, Diadema's population grew at an average annual rate of 16 percent, three times as fast as that of metropolitan São Paulo, thanks to the migration of poor people from all over Brazil, lured by jobs in the auto industry and related businesses. One of the migrants was Brazil's current president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose left-wing Workers Party won its first election in Diadema in 1982 and has subsequently run the local government most of the time since.

The three decades after 1950 brought fevered construction and disorder on São Paulo's outskirts. Wooden shacks and crude houses of hollow brick formed a densely packed jumble on Diadema's hilly terrain, where conflicts constantly erupted, often settled by hired killers called *justiçeiros*. At the entrance to two bakeries in an area called Jardim Campanário, macabre lists were scrawled on rough signs that announced the names of those to be murdered in coming days. Graffiti bearing the names of those marked for murder also appeared on walls along Jardim Campanário's streets.

In 1999 Diadema recorded one of the world's highest homicide rates, 141 per 100,000 population. But

murders dropped by 80 percent over the next seven years. More and better policing and greater efforts to confiscate unregistered weapons partly explain the big decline in violence. But there were deeper causes as well. One was a rise in incomes and the expansion of commerce at all levels, seen in the blossoming of new supermarkets, street vending, small neighborhood repair shops, and even home-based bakeries where women sold candy and cake. The people who capitalized on these economic opportunities became stakeholders in the cause of peace and stability. The fact that more young people between ages 15 and 25 are in school and off the streets, notwithstanding the poor quality of teaching, also helps to explain the decline in homicides (as well as teenage pregnancies).

One of the success stories belongs to Reni Adriano Batista, 25, who came to Diadema with his family from the rural state of Minas Gerais in 1990. "I didn't know what . . . a city was. I thought São Paulo was a place for rich people where I could study beyond the fourth grade and where we could have TVs, fridges, and cars," he says. "We plunged immediately into a struggle for survival. We lived in a noisy shack that was so crowded that I had no place to study, so I read by the light of our kitchen stove while the family was asleep. For me and my friends, São Paulo was a place to dream of new professions: doctors, journalists, engineers. For some of us, this is beginning to happen." Batista is now a philosophy student at São Paulo's Catholic University.

One should not exaggerate the progress in Diadema. Its broad and prosperous-seeming central avenues, with bus terminals, supermarkets, fast-food restaurants, and automobile distributorships, mask continuing poverty. The average monthly income of heads of households in Diadema in 2000 was half the average for the municipality of São Paulo. Yet Diadema's example shows that serious crime can be reduced fairly quickly when new community interests combine with more effective action by local authorities. In Diadema, poor people developed a stake in stability through a more accessible political structure, stronger public institutions, and the expansion of commerce, which denied space to



Street vendors and small shops have multiplied thanks to Brazil's growing economy, creating a new generation of entrepreneurs with a stake in stability.

criminal activity. Four decades after the start of the migratory surge, Diadema no longer is a city trapped in a downward spiral of apparently insoluble crises. Instead, it is showing the strength of democracy and is engaged in the process of civilization.

In Brazil, as in many other countries, public education is the main instrument for achieving social justice. But São Paulo has a long history of educational neglect. "Differences will widen if there's no improvement in education," says Francisco Vidal Luna, an economic historian who is São Paulo's planning secretary. "Hunger here is no longer an issue, but poor people lack opportunities, and there are few opportunities without better schools. São Paulo operates one of the world's largest school systems, but we don't even have a uniform curriculum, so there's little coherent teaching, and teachers are absent much of the time. It's no wonder we do so badly on standard tests."

Despite impressive growth in enrollments in the recent past, the public schools of São Paulo operate within a culture of failure that pervades public edu-

cation in almost all of Latin America. In 1980, only 38 percent of children in Diadema finished four years of schooling, and only eight percent completed eight years. Today primary schooling is nearly universal, as in the rest of Brazil. Secondary education has expanded rapidly, but one-third of adolescents still remain outside the classroom. The main problem, however, is the low quality of teaching. Until recently, there was little popular pressure to improve public education and a general indifference to the issue on the part of the political class. The system has not collapsed entirely because the public demands some kind of schooling and because the education system provides an abundant source of jobs and pensions for teachers and administrators, who in turn provide a useful bloc of votes for political elites.

But now there are opportunities for change. They have been created because school enrollments are no longer expanding rapidly, thanks mainly to declining fertility rates and lower rates of migration to São Paulo. In March, Brazil's federal government an-

nounced a broad program of reforms in public education, including literacy testing for young children and minimum salaries for teachers, but much still depends on whether the political system can actually produce and implement such badly needed reform policies.

Despite its successes and great vitality, São Paulo is being challenged as never before by problems of scale and political disorganization. Demands for social justice—job opportunities, better schools, improved mass transportation, and other public services—are aggravating problems of scale and increasing pressure on the city's weak political institutions. Here, as in other megacities in the developing world, governance is a key issue.

São Paulo's colossal growth during the 20th century overwhelmed the city's capacity for institutional development and bred political disorganization and corruption. Paulo Maluf, twice mayor and once governor of the state of São Paulo, was indicted earlier this year for allegedly stealing \$11.6 million from a construction project. Maluf could not explain how he came to possess some \$900 million in offshore deposits in Switzerland and other financial havens.

Political representation in the city is as badly distorted as income distribution. All 55 members of the São Paulo City Council are elected at large, leaving each of them responsible not to specific local electorates but to the whole city of 11 million people. There is little incentive for them to deal in depth with the problems of specific neighborhoods and organizations. Between quadrennial elections, most council members concern themselves chiefly with raising money to finance their next citywide election campaign and wrestling for power within the incestuous political class. The system deters educated people, more capable of managing a complex metropolis, from entering politics at all. The problem is widely discussed, but

there is little prospect for change in the near future.

Confused and overlapping lines of political authority and inadequate resources also contribute to the city's failures. São Paulo differs from most of the world's other giant cities in that it is neither an imperial nor a national capital. Tokyo and Mexico City, for example, are national capitals with status as self-contained states within their countries' political structure. Both those cities receive generous transfers of funds from their national governments, while São Paulo transfers money to the federal treasury to support Brazil's poorer regions. The 11 million people of the municipality of São Paulo, less than six percent of Brazil's population, pay 28 percent of all Brazil's

SÃO PAULO, A BENEFICIARY of good fortune, must seize control of its destiny if it is to avoid decay and disintegration.

taxes. Even as the city sends a huge share of revenue to the state and federal governments, it also has the third-largest public budget in Brazil, smaller only than those of the federal government and the state of São Paulo. But local taxes are low for a metropolis of its size and unmet needs. São Paulo collects 2.5 percent of its gross product in municipal taxes, against the 5 percent that local governments in New York City and Tokyo take in. Because of low local taxation and meager transfers from the federal government, São Paulo lacks the public investment that usually benefits a political center. It depends, more and more, on its own skills and economic vitality.

Great cities have always been hard to manage. Like other complex systems, they grow spontaneously but then demand more management and investment if they are to avoid decay and disintegration. A time comes in the lives of big cities when the need for regulation and rational allocation of space, money, and other resources prevails over impulsive processes. For São Paulo, the beneficiary of so much good fortune, that time is now. ■

Coasting

Why do we flock to the beach? For some fun, a break from the heat, an escape from familiar routine. But “it’s always ourselves we find in the sea,” E. E. Cummings observed.

BY JAMES MORRIS

HOW LONG TILL AMERICAN BEACHES, LIKE American cigarette packs, carry a government warning label? “Danger: Exposure to the sun may cause skin cancer. Sand in amounts sufficient to block breathing passages will cause asphyxiation. Prolonged submersion beneath the surface of water without countervailing apparatus causes death. The one-hot-dog limit is enforced by radar.”

The innocence is off the excursion. Remember when a day at the beach was something to look forward to, an occasion for the family to participate in a ritual as fixed as any in a house of worship, or for teenagers to gather in pairs to confirm a passion or shift its allegiance? Now the immortalitarians have had their say: A sunny afternoon at the beach—heck, a bright hour—is pretty much a crapshoot with death, as alarming as trans fats or Dr. Phil. The blithe old song might as well have been advising seppuku: “Just direct your feet/To the sunny side of the street.” Sure, you can coat yourself in lotions with SPF numbers approaching triple digits and names like

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Mummy and Burka, but can you be absolutely certain you haven't left a fleshy chink in the chemical armor?

On the other hand, as in response to so much other good advice—vote; learn to tell the difference between Kurdistan and Kyrgyzstan; come to terms once and for all with the Brussels sprout; adopt a glacier—we may choose instead to follow our wayward hearts. And pack the cooler and grab the blanket and folded lounge chairs and iPod and indispensable little phone unit, and make straight for the sand.

But don't take a poet. Beaches cause poets to inflate like vatic bullfrogs. Matthew Arnold, for instance, staring at the pebbly, moonlit beach in Dover, saw the "naked shingles of the world," and heard "the eternal note of sadness" and the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the Sea of Faith, and imagined a world where there was "neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain." I'm guessing there was no smoothie shack on Dover Beach.

Even Robert Frost wasn't immune:

Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before. . . .
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.

("Once by the Pacific")

For me, unlike for an agitated poet, a beach has always been a perfect setting for lazy reverie, for thoughts drifting in and out of focus. The origin of the word "beach" is itself unclear, having been wiped from the record as if . . . as if it had been written on sand in the path of a wave. Water has its way with a shore; if you can't step into the same river twice, neither can you step twice onto the same beach. No matter how familiar, the place is always new. An empty beach can have the purity of a blank page, on which anything might be set down; a crowded beach, the expectancy of a stage with lots of players enacting simultaneously their tiny individual dramas. Most of the playlets will end with the afternoon, but while they're being enacted, they're all-consuming. That's because a beach is a self-contained world, at an absolute remove from the settings of ordinary life. It's a Janus-y world, too, and edgy. It positions you at the end

of land and its beginning, at the beginning of water and its end. But the division—land here, water there—is always under negotiation, resulting in a sometimes unpredictable mingling of the two. In that damp conjunction, somewhere, surely, there's a lesson for life.

It may be time to go indoors.

You may not think of beaches when you think of New York City, but you should. Manhattan and Staten are islands, after all, and Brooklyn and Queens sit on the western end of Long Island. The southern edge of that island, starting in Brooklyn and extending far beyond the city limits toward the El Dorado of the Hamptons, is strung with Atlantic beaches. Within the city's bounds are Coney Island Beach, Brighton Beach, Manhattan Beach (which is in Brooklyn), Breezy Point, Jacob Riis Park, and Rockaway Beach (Far Rockaway, too). And not far past the city line are Long Beach and maybe the best of them all, Jones Beach, where, to a small boy 60 years ago, the sand seemed cleanest and the waves tallest, and where a vast, glistening pool with deck and diving boards was a refuge from the roughneck ocean.

Twentieth-century photos of some of those beaches show subway-car crowds, and generally suggest a golden age of beachgoing from the 1920s to the 1960s. My memories from the years around the end of World War II are of great stretches of sandy shore—"great" to a child being a very flexible measure—with no room for a single additional blanket. Where did all these people come from? Surrounded, minimized, overlooked, I learned on a New York City beach—probably on a Sunday—that I was not the center of the universe after all.

The beach was a schoolroom before I knew what a schoolroom was. There I learned socialization ("Why don't you go and play with that little boy over there?"), and skills that would come in handy in later life ("Why are you crying?" "He said he doesn't want to be my friend anymore. So I smashed his truck.")

I learned independence. I would go alone with pail and shovel to the water's edge, where the sand was wettest and pocked with small, scaly creatures. I was perhaps 50 feet from my parents, having sworn to them to go no farther and having marked the location of their umbrella by color and angle and position along the line

of lampposts on the boardwalk in the distance. I would dig for 10 minutes, though bored after two, then decide to return to home base. But uh-oh, the landscape had shifted. Someone had moved the umbrellas, or maybe the boardwalk, because nothing was where it had been. Then a mother more caring than my own, who should never have let me go in the first place, would read the message on my alternately pinched and tremulous face: “Are you lost?” And riding some maternal broadcast frequency, the surrogate mother would home in on my own.

And I learned shame. Near the end of the day, like others of my age up and down the beach, I heard a variant of the same threat: “You’re not sitting in the car in those wet trunks. Do you want a rash?” So we were ordered to stand on blankets and hold towels round our waists. Our trunks were yanked down, we were patted to aridity with the towels, and clean underwear was yanked up. Never soon enough. But

sometimes a kid would wriggle free of a parent during the drying phase and dance, jump, hop, and yell—naked! “That’s stupid,” I would think, taking refuge in the catchall critical adjective that for a five-year-old expresses, *inter alia*, confusion, disgust, exasperation, and dismay. I was just too young to recognize a future celebrity in the making.



A dozen or so years later, I began to visit a beach that had been carved from several hundred feet of woods on a shore of Lake Champlain in upstate New York, not far from the Canadian border. The beach was on the property of a former resort hotel, and an old brochure boasted that the exceptionally fine white sand had been brought from Florida. It was “singing sand,” said the brochure, and if you put your ear to a small mound as it settled and ran, you would hear its song. Thanks to the brochure’s encouragement, many swore that they did, though no two ever described the same sweet susurrus.

A white wooden boardwalk and row of cabanas had

once run the length of the beach, on either side of a central, pennant-flying picnic pavilion. But by the time I knew the beach, the boardwalk and cabanas were no longer maintained, and, year by year, the one-two punch of glacial northern winters and surprisingly full-bore summers had taken a toll on the wooden structures and felled another section. The huge lake lapping the beach froze solid each winter, to a depth that allowed cars to be driven on portions of its steely-smooth surface in the perfect gray stillness before snow.

That snow inevitably covered the beach as well, and come spring, when the snow left, more of the virtuosic sand had left too, or had had its purity diminished by a new admixture of ordinary dirt. The sand went a little

SURROUNDED, MINIMIZED, overlooked, I learned on a New York City beach that I was not the center of the universe.

more offkey; left ungroomed, it would eventually go mute. Lying on that anomalous swath of shore late one spring, reading T. S. Eliot for a term paper (in those days the poet was at the height of his regard), I came to the passage that promises to show a reader fear in a handful of dust. Such is the risk in sunlit reverie that I wondered what the poet would have made of a handful of our singing sand. Would it have sung to him? Would he have walked on it with his trousers rolled? Would those vocal granules, displaced from their natural home, have told him that by no means is our end always in our beginning?



Of course, not every sunlit beach is conducive to reverie. A couple of decades later still, I stood on the deck of a house overlooking a beach south of Los Angeles that appeared to enforce an age restriction: Be under 35 or be gone—and start having second thoughts at 32. The area was probably posted for dreaming. Between the deck and the start of the beach, which extended hun-

dreds of feet to the ocean, was a large expanse of paved surface, and on it a nonstop cavalcade of joggers, power walkers, cyclists, rollerbladers, and skateboarders, each cohort in its delineated row, passed in a spandexed blur. Beyond them, on the beach itself, teams of volleyballers jumped, lunged, and fell, and past the volleyballers, in the distant ocean, kayakers struggled and surfers bobbed, rose, and tumbled. (But for the sand and ocean, I might have been in Boulder, an immortalitarian stronghold, where to be still is grounds for deportation.) You'd have needed Hieronymus Bosch to put this California scene on a canvas, and even he might have been flummoxed by the ranks of busy figures to the horizon.



In another decade, I was thigh deep and thought free in the placid waters off a gulf coast Florida beach, when I noticed just ahead of me in the shallows first one fin and then a second, attached to what were plainly not porpoises. The two circling sand sharks, perhaps five feet long, were not man-eaters, but maybe man-samplers, and certainly man-bruises. A hundred feet to my left was a stretch of water filled with dozens of adults and children. I walked to the closest couple of parents watching the kids. "I don't mean to alarm you, but I just saw two sharks right over there. Maybe you should get the kids out. . . ." "Where?!" "Right there." "Hey kids! Sharks! Over here!" And in the best moth-to-flame, floatie-to-fin, limb-to-jaw tradition, the curious families laughed and splashed their way toward an additional holiday memory.

Recently I returned to that same gulf beach, on a perfect May Sunday. I watched a group of teenagers, male and female, all more-or-less 16, begin to gather in early afternoon some 75 feet from where I sat. An initial six spread two blankets, and they were joined in leisurely course by more than a dozen others with blankets of their own. The patchwork encampment grew by the hour and took its mood from the raucous music of a boom box set atop a sky-blue Styrofoam cooler. Unable to hear more of their talk than the occasional stray phrase or squeal, I invented a history for the group. They were school friends, I decided, or at least

school acquaintances, who had suspended for the afternoon the narrow alliances by which they lived during the week in favor of a weekend UN-ish coalition of the willing and frisky.

A minimalist aesthetic dictated the girls' attire, which was scarce as the day's clouds, while a preference for maritime hip-hop dressed the boys in slack baggy trunks to below the knee. Boys ran into the water and returned to shake their wet bodies above recumbent, unaware girls, who were perfectly, gratefully aware. Lithe forms, male and female, lay prone and supine in calibrated proximity, stirring occasionally for the oh-so-matter-of-fact mutual application of a suntan product. The concentration of hormones dancing above the site reduced visibility to zero.

Then the boys advanced to the water to put on a show for the girls. To strut. To skim. But not on surfboards—wrong coast of Florida for that. No, the small, brightly colored boards the boys carried merely slid along the surface of the wavelets at the gulf's edge. After gauging the force and direction of the ripples as painstakingly as a golfer judging a showdown putt, a boy would sprint a short distance along the shore, throw down his board, jump on, and be carried a car's length. Or not. Most attempts ended in disaster, an opportunity to fall one way onto the sand and roll a bit, or the other into the shallow water and make a sprawled-arms splash. The girls sat upright on the grandstand blankets, cheering or razzing their champions. While awaiting their turns at a run, boys wrestled one another or did handstands, and the sunshine behind them, bouncing from the water, turned them momentarily dark against the light. They were all exultant, eternal, oblivious.

And the reverie began. Looking up and down the beach, I could see who many of them would become: large—way too large—adults, variously tattooed, their handstand days long past, their bikinis tucked under yearbooks in a drawer. They would become parents, like those responsible folks down there close to the water, with the little kids and an assortment of pails. And soon enough they'd be middle aged, like those couples up near the dunes with no kids but with hats and an assortment of newspapers. And fast as a wave recedes they'd be old, like, well, like someone with a mind vagrant and addled, and sometimes bleached blank by too long a stay in the sun. ■

One Hundred Years of *Pragmatism*

William James's provocative answer to the problem of maintaining religious belief in the modern age remains perhaps America's most significant contribution to philosophy and a source of inspiration for contemporary thinkers.

BY THEO ANDERSON

WHEN WILLIAM JAMES RETIRED FROM HARVARD in 1907, after 35 years on the school's faculty, it felt like the beginning of a new life. As Professor James, he once confessed to his brother, Henry, "I always felt myself a sham, with its chief duties of being a walking encyclopedia of erudition. I am now at liberty to be a *reality*." Perhaps no retirement has ever begun more productively than James's. *The New York Times* ran a long article about his new book, *Pragmatism*, and

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"Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with," observed William James, shown here in a 1910 portrait, "but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found?"

reported that his ideas were taking the public square by storm. “When he appears on the lecture platform, breathlessly listening crowds greet him as the messenger of some new gospel. Business men are caught disputing over their lunches about the correct meaning of the word employed to designate the new faith.” *Pragmatism* went through several printings in its first year and helped set the agenda for James’s brief retirement. He spent much of his time refining aspects of his philosophy and defending it from critics, until he succumbed to a chronic heart condition in 1910, at the age of 68.

WILLIAM JAMES WITNESSED the dawn of American modernity—and also helped to shape it.

The interest swirling around *Pragmatism*’s publication was not wholly unexpected. James had been a renowned American intellectual since at least 1890, and several of his works on religious themes—notably, *The Will to Believe* (1897) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)—had gained a wide readership. But no one could have predicted just how momentous *Pragmatism*’s publication would be—no one, that is, but James himself. Not long before the book’s appearance, he wrote to Henry that the intellectual currents it contained were “something quite like the protestant reformation.” He wouldn’t be surprised, he said, if the book were someday “rated as epoch-making.”

For all its half-joking hubris, that prediction proved well founded. *Pragmatism* became America’s most important contribution to the life of the mind in the 20th century. Filtered through scores of later interpreters, it percolated across a broad segment of academic culture and influenced disciplines as diverse as literary criticism and legal theory. And, in sharp divergence from the typical trajectory of scholarly works and theories, its importance has only increased with the passage of time, particularly

among scholars of a postmodernist persuasion. Like these contemporary academic thinkers in literature, history, and other humanistic disciplines, James always insisted that the human capacity to grasp reality is radically limited—that there is no “God’s-eye” perch available to us. “Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with,” as he once put it, “but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found?”

James’s embrace of uncertainty goes to the heart of the pragmatic philosophy, which denies the existence of fixed, absolute truth and seeks to under-

mine the notion that first principles are reliable guides to human behavior. For the pragmatist, truth is not a static essence but rather a provisional, ever-evolving relationship between ideas and their consequences. A true idea is

one that, if put into practice, achieves its intended result. “The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it,” James wrote in his most famous summary of pragmatism. “Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events.” Consider a simple example James once gave. When you meet a new person, there are several possible results: She might like you, dislike you, or be indifferent. Whatever outcome you anticipate, it can only be made true in the actual encounter. And—a critical point—your idea about what her response will be often shapes that response. Believing she will like you makes that outcome more likely, and vice versa.

We don’t passively experience reality, in other words. We actively *shape* it. This idea at the core of pragmatism has deeply radical consequences when translated into a comprehensive vision. Pragmatism holds that traditional philosophy’s quest to discern the “really real” is misguided—a waste of time that leaves humans ill equipped to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. What we need are not first principles that line up with some dubious, pre-ordained truth about the way things are; rather, we need better methods for creating and testing our

ideas, so that they help us become the kind of people we want to be and build the kind of world we hope to live in. “It is both astonishing and depressing,” wrote John Dewey, the most influential proponent of pragmatism after James, “that so much of the energy of mankind has gone into fighting for . . . the truth of creeds, religious, moral and political, as distinct from what has gone into effort to try creeds by putting them to the test of acting upon them.” In *Pragmatism*, James wrote that abstractions such as God and Reason become existential security blankets: “You can rest when you have them. . . . But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such words as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be *changed*.”

This definition of truth as a provisional, evolving relationship between ideas and consequences stands as a direct challenge to orthodox religion. For the religiously orthodox, truth is something to be accepted and defended rather than “made” in the realm of human experience. And therein is a curiosity worth exploring on the centennial of *Pragmatism*’s publication. In light of the book’s radical conception of truth, it might appear to clash with the religious interests that occupied much of James’s time and energy. Yet his reference to *Pragmatism*’s publication as an event akin to the Reformation was apt, because the overriding aim of James’s career was to defend religious faith from the onslaughts of modernity. *Pragmatism*, far from a departure from that project, was its culmination.

Recovering the sources of James’s radical reimagining of truth and religion must begin with a brief account of the family and the culture in which he came of age.

In 1878, when he was 36 and preparing to move out of his parents’ home, James signed a contract to write his first book, a survey of the fledgling field of psychology. He told his fiancée, Alice, that royalties from its publication would help support them, but by the time he completed it he had buried both

parents, held appointments in three different academic departments, and fathered five children. The manuscript took 12 years to finish, ran to more than 1,000 pages, and was a decade overdue. The sight of it nauseated him. James grumbled to his publisher that with another decade of tinkering he could trim it by half, but “as it stands it is this or nothing—a loathsome . . . mass, testifying to nothing but two facts: 1st, that there is no such thing as a *science* of psychology, and 2nd, that W. J. is an incapable.” Despite these misgivings, production proceeded throughout the summer, and *The Principles of Psychology* appeared in September 1890. It instantly established James’s reputation as one of the most formidable psychologists in the world. Encouraged by its reception, James revised and condensed the book into a text for college courses, *Psychology: The Briefer Course*.

The renown that James achieved with *Principles* and *The Briefer Course* opened up a new world of opportunities in public lecturing. In late 1891, the Harvard Corporation commissioned him to deliver a series of 10 lectures in the university’s new Department of Pedagogy. In subsequent years, he repeated these talks at Harvard’s summer programs and took them on the road, speaking to teachers across the nation. But James set his sights far higher than simply translating academic psychology into practical advice for educators. Throughout the 1890s, he also developed a set of popular lectures that were religious in the widest sense. They were aimed mainly at college students, and their openhearted earnestness, vaguely embarrassing in this more ironic age, is captured in their titles: “Is Life Worth Living?” for example, and “What Makes a Life Significant.” James began the former essay with a reference to the “deepest heart of all of us,” where “the ultimate mystery of things works sadly.”

He had personal reasons for broaching basic existential questions with audiences poised on the brink of adulthood. His own experience had taught him just how lonely the “lonely depths” could be, and how fragile one’s psychic resources in the face of shattering depression. In one of his books, James included the striking story of a correspondent. Going about his business one day, the man was thunderstruck by the

memory of an epileptic patient he had once seen in an asylum: a “black-haired youth with greenish skin, entirely idiotic, who used to sit all day on one of the benches. . . . He sat there like a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy, moving nothing but his black eyes and looking absolutely non-human.” As James later admitted, this harrowing experience was actually his own: “*That shape am I, I felt, potentially. . . . After this the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before, and that I have never felt since.*”

James was so deeply affected by this experience because the boy in the asylum had become an embodiment of the philosophical question of free will: Do we control our own behavior and fate, or is the feeling of control only an illusion? James had suffered bouts of depression throughout his twenties, but in 1870, at the age of 28, he sank into the suicidal despair described above. Its source was the dread of being an utterly determined creature. “Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate,” he wrote of the mental patient, “if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him.” The example was extreme, perhaps, but for James it pressed home the horrifying idea that all his behavior might be driven by mental processes that lay beyond his conscious control.

In late April 1870, while reading an essay by the French philosopher Charles Renouvier, James had a sort of secular conversion experience. As he explained it, he “saw no reason why his definition of free will—‘the sustaining of a thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts’—need be the definition of an illusion. At any rate I will assume for the present—until next year—that it is no illusion. My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will.” Though he cast this decision as little more than a thought experiment, he clung to it for 40 years as the only hope of sanity and survival.

This was the context for James’s foray into popular lectures on existential questions in the 1890s. They apparently met a widespread need. He first delivered his lecture “What Makes a Life Significant,” for example, at Stanford, Bryn Mawr, and other college campuses in 1898. It was then collected with

some of his educational psychology lectures and published the following year as *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals*. The book went through two printings in its first two years and was reprinted every year but one until James’s death.

Sensitive to the charge of being a mere popularizer, James vowed often to write another traditional academic monograph like his *Principles of Psychology*. The closest he ever came was an unfinished introduction to basic philosophical questions for college students. Instead, he spent most of the last decade of his life tacking between two poles. If *Principles* was a formidable monograph, and his public lectures in the 1890s had a distinctly homiletic flavor, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and *Pragmatism* were serious works of scholarship that were highly accessible to general audiences. The continuing appeal of both books is partly explained by James’s graceful, lively prose. But many gifted writers from James’s era have long since been forgotten, and the vast majority of scholarship is outdated within a few decades. Why, a century hence, is James’s work still read, and why does it still seem relevant? Audiences turned to him because he addressed fundamental questions during a period of wrenching changes and shifting foundations. James remains important because he witnessed the dawning of American modernity—and also helped to shape it. The issues he confronted were, and are, anything but academic.

William’s father, Henry James Sr., once said that skepticism was utterly foreign to him: He had never experienced it, not for a moment. And it does seem unlikely that Henry ever suffered much doubt. He had neither the time nor the energy, consumed as he was with refining and proclaiming his spiritual vision of reality, which was based on the writings of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. According to Henry, the divinity wasn’t so much an omnipotent being as the working out of a process: the evolution of humanity toward a higher, perfect state of being.

Henry never found much satisfaction in his labor,

yet he persevered year after year, trying to make his ideas clear while living off the fortune left to him by his father, a wealthy businessman in upstate New York. For his effort, he was repaid with nearly total indifference by the general public. Some of the Transcendentalists, particularly Ralph Waldo Emerson, did offer him friendship and gave him a sympathetic hearing. But eventually, even they grew tired of his eccentricities and constant hectoring. Trying to put a brave face on the matter, William once observed that if his father had been born in a different era, he “would have played a prominent, perhaps a momentous and critical, part in the struggles of his time, for he was a religious prophet and genius, if ever prophet and genius there were.” Whatever the truth of that assessment, Henry’s work became increasingly irrelevant as the years wore on.

Henry’s ambitions were thwarted, as William recognized, not only by his difficult personality but by the cultural context in which he wrote. Henry came of age in an antebellum milieu of intense religious ferment, but the revival was driven by the growth and spread of established denominations—mainly the Baptists and Methodists—and by the formation of new groups that proposed to restore “authentic” New Testament Christianity. It was a revival with theologically conservative implications. By contrast, William and his contemporaries began their adult lives in the aftermath of the Civil War and in a situation utterly foreign to his father’s experience: one of drift and doubt. The primary culprit was Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which dealt a devastating blow to natural theology, the 19th century’s chief religious anchor. It held that the most persuasive proof of God’s existence can be seen all around us, in the intricacies and regularities of nature. But Darwin’s theory of natural selection destroyed the need for a designing deity and an ultimate purpose to reproduction. Noah Porter, the highly orthodox Christian president of Yale, summed up the rising unease

within religious circles when he lamented, in 1882, that “multitudes are drifting into the half-formed conviction that the reasons for faith seem one after another to be dissipated by the advance of science and culture.”

At the same time, a tide of centralization and standardization was sweeping American society. The rise of large corporations and the birth of “scientific management” meant that Americans were increas-

ADRIFT AND UNCERTAIN in the intellectual and religious spheres, America embraced new methods and means of standardization and control.

ingly brought within the compass of large organizations. Industrialization drove people from farms to cities and reduced to mere factory hands workers who had once possessed a degree of autonomy built on intimate knowledge of a craft or trade. A managerial class emerged to oversee the massive new corporate enterprises, and along with managers came new methods of tabulating, analyzing, and managing large populations. The corporate executives were joined by growing numbers of academics, bureaucrats, and other knowledge workers. By reducing the anonymous masses to hard numbers, administrators and reformers aimed to render society more orderly and rational—and thus more amenable to control and improvement.

This was the American scene that confronted James in his youth: adrift and uncertain in the intellectual and religious spheres, while at the same time embracing new methods and means of standardization and control. Throughout his life, James’s driving ambition was to answer the twin challenges of modernity, which meant fashioning a philosophy that could embrace the uncertainty of the modern condition

while also resisting the forces that undermined personal autonomy. His writings hang together as separate facets of this single project. *Pragmatism* was its most eloquent summation, but that “epoch-making” book was inseparable from the more frankly religious writings that preceded it, particularly *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

The question of conversion occupied a central place in *Varieties*, and Leo Tolstoy served as one of James’s central case studies. He drew on Tolstoy’s autobiography to

it,” he wrote, religion “shall mean for us *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.*” This was unmediated Protestantism in its purest, most unfettered form. But what was the source of transcendence or redemption in such an unorthodox faith?

Here James turned to his background in psychology. He described the discovery of subconscious activity in the human mind as the most important development in

that discipline since his youth. Its existence led him to conclude that conversion resulted from eruptions of subconscious mental life into the “normal, waking consciousness.” This process had nothing in common with Christian conversion in any traditional sense. It

THE SUSPICION THAT JAMES was only a sympathizer with religion, not a true believer, remains difficult to shake.

describe the pall that descends over life when meaning disappears. “The questions ‘Why?’ and ‘What next?’ began to beset him more and more frequently,” James wrote. “At first it seemed as if such questions must be answerable, . . . but as they ever became more urgent,” they resisted resolution. Though physically healthy, Tolstoy was psychically and spiritually shattered by his late forties. “I sought like a man who is lost and seeks to save himself—and I found nothing,” Tolstoy said in describing his descent into depression. “I became convinced, moreover, that all those who before me had sought for an answer in the sciences have also found nothing.” He finally gained some peace by converting to Christianity in the late 1870s, and by extolling the simple faith of Russian peasants as the essence of true religion for the remainder of his long life. (He died in 1910.)

Tolstoy’s conversion account appealed to James on many levels, not least because churches and clergy played no role in it. Though James sometimes self-identified with Protestant Christianity, that label was accurate only in the narrowest cultural sense. Theologically, he was as heterodox as he was unsystematic—he theorized, for example, that there might be multiple deities. But if he was at most a marginal Christian, James was enthusiastically a Protestant. In *Varieties*, he pointedly reduced religion to its minimalist essence. “As I now ask you arbitrarily to take

didn’t result from divine intervention or effect eternal salvation. And yet it did have implications for religious faith, James believed. The existence of subconscious life suggested to him that other forms of consciousness might exist in the universe, hovering beyond our grasp. “The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist,” James wrote in the concluding paragraph of *Varieties*, “and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in.”

By the logic of James’s pragmatism, the idea that other realms of consciousness and higher energies exist in the universe cannot be taken on faith alone, and it can have no meaning outside the push and pull of human affairs. Like all other ideas, it must prove itself in the realm of experience. How, then, do humans put it to the test?

James resisted giving systematic formulation to his religious ideas, but perhaps his most explicit answer to that question is his discussion of prayer. It is, he wrote in *Varieties*, the “soul and essence” of religion. “Through prayer, religion insists, things which cannot be realized in any

other manner come about: energy which but for prayer would be bound is by prayer set free.” This seems, at first glance, like the traditional relationship between an all-powerful God and supplicating humans. But James’s understanding of the human-divine relationship was reciprocal. We need the help of the higher energies, but the divinity needs our help as well. For James, the moral striving of an individual does matter in some ultimate sense; it lends power to the forces of light in the universe. Human existence, as James wrote in a remarkable passage in one of his popular lectures, “*feels like a real fight—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem; and first of all, to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears. For such a wild, half-saved universe our nature is adapted.*”

James thus inverted one of Christianity’s central themes. He focused not on God’s redemptive work on behalf of humanity but rather on humanity’s redemptive work in cooperation with God. And he added another twist: The final result of all human struggle and striving might be a redeemed universe that does not include

individual salvation. His speculations on personal immortality were contradictory, and he finally settled on a hopeful “maybe,” but he never expended much energy on the question. True to his pragmatism, he treated eternal life as beside the point. What ultimately mattered for James was not the possibility of eternal life in some other realm but human behavior in this one. His redeemed universe served as an ideal for which humans should fight—a goad to moral effort—but the exact nature of that redemption remained mysterious.

James’s inversion of some religious tenets and indifference to others is difficult to square with his own self-identification as a believer. One of his colleagues and former students at Harvard, George Santayana, once wrote that his mentor “did not really believe; he merely believed in the right of believing that you might be right if you believed.” Commentators ever since have speculated on the authenticity of James’s faith. If we credit him with any sincerity at all, James genuinely did believe in the power of prayer and the existence of higher energies. Still, the suspicion that he was only a sympathizer with religion, not a true believer, remains difficult to shake. The question



“In prayer, spiritual energy, which otherwise would slumber, does become active, and spiritual work of some kind does become effected really,” James wrote.

lingers: Did James make a case for faith, or a case for faith in faith? Is the ultimate object of belief simply one's own will to believe?

In *Pragmatism*, James didn't so much answer this question as come down on both sides of it. The book's driving, deeply personal ambitions were to affirm human

FOR A THINKER so focused on the implications of human struggles, James devoted remarkably little attention to the political debates of his era.

freedom and help humans navigate the uncertainty of this earthly realm. James's theory of truth addressed the latter goal by denying recourse to divine revelation as a guide for human action. Rather than being vouchsafed from an eternal realm, James said, truth "grows up inside of all the finite experiences. They lean on each other, but the whole of them, if such a whole there be, leans on nothing." *Pragmatism's* later, secular uses flow from this aspect of James's thought, which is his most important philosophical contribution and his most controversial idea. By denying truth's transcendent essence, he seemed to undermine the foundations of faith. But if he did so, it was for the purpose of creating a new foundation. In James's vision, truth making was bound up tightly with the practice of prayer, the harnessing of higher energies, and the possibility of cosmic redemption, whatever form it might take.

In *Pragmatism's* closing pages, he asked readers to imagine a deity who, before creating the world, had issued a challenge to humans. The world it intended to create was "not certain to be saved" but was "a world the perfection of which shall be conditional," that condition being the good-faith effort of individuals. "I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwaranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?" This was quintessential James. If we begin with

the premise of uncertainty, as he thought we must, we can find hope and courage by believing that our daily struggles contribute to an unfinished cosmic battle.

Nothing could be further from skepticism or determinism. Where orthodox religion posits certain answers and an all-controlling God, James's religious vision offers only uncertain answers and an uncertain future. The details—the nature of the deity, the fate of individual souls and of the universe—remain veiled in mystery. Perhaps there is nothing behind the veil but a void, after all. And yet: Perhaps believing in the existence of higher energies—and *acting* on that belief—helps make them true, helps the redemptive forces in the universe to ultimately "win through."

For a thinker so insistently focused on the implications of human struggles, James devoted remarkably little attention to the political debates of his era. His own youthful struggle against despair, and the leap of faith that saved him from suicide, were always the wellsprings of his thought, and he focused mainly on the broadest macro and narrowest micro levels: the cosmos and the individual.

Nonetheless, James's work did have profound consequences for American politics and society. In his own time, his theory of truth gave momentum to a wave of reform measures that aimed to make American institutions more responsive to human needs. Progressive theorists recognized that American corporations and government bureaucracies had grown too big, too fast, while their practices remained caked over with 19th-century laissez-faire economic and social theory. As Walter Lippmann wrote in *Drift and Mastery* (1914), "We can no longer treat life as something that has trickled down to us. . . . In endless ways we put intention where custom has reigned. We break up routines, make decisions, choose ends, select means."

Lippmann judged this new way of thinking to be the "profoundest change that has ever taken place in human history." The claim is dramatic but nonetheless correct, and it goes to the heart of why pragmatism was—and remains—

enormously influential and controversial. In the pragmatic philosophy that the young Lippmann took as his gospel, nothing is certain but the fact of perpetual change. There are no final truths, no fixed meanings, no extrahuman foundations on which to build human societies and construct moral systems. The pragmatic method—rooted solely in human experience and intelligence—is our only guide.

Lippmann was among the scores of students James taught and befriended as they passed through Harvard. Others included W. E. B. DuBois and Gertrude Stein, suggesting the range of his influence on early-20th-century political and artistic movements. The effect of his ideas took unanticipated forms, though, because James's vision of pragmatism barely survived his death. In Lippmann's writings, and more important in John Dewey's, the supernatural element was displaced by an emphasis on scientific method. But here is the curious thing about James's work. His religious vision and his theory of truth not only survived the decoupling. They flourished. And their influence has only risen in the wake of the anti-authoritarian political, religious, and academic currents that swept America in the 1960s.

On the religious side, James's writings contain glimmerings of the spirituality industry that would burgeon in the later 20th century. He posited other realms of consciousness and higher energies as agents of human "empowerment," themes that have become ubiquitous among self-help authors. James likely would have deplored much of this genre, yet it is in some ways a logical outgrowth of his emphasis on the pragmatic consequences of faith. The ecumenism of the self-help genre is also quintessentially Jamesian: Spirituality is presented as an unmediated relationship between the individual and the divine. Institutions only get in the way.

On the other side, James's influence endures among theorists who have borrowed and built on his pragmatism. Though most are frankly secular in outlook, they are in fact grappling with ancient religious themes in new guises, circling around the same pressing questions that James faced: Is there an absolute grounding for truth? Is there any hope of redemption? Do humans possess free will in any meaningful sense? Many of the 20th century's eminent intellectuals and theorists of modernity—from the German sociologist Max Weber to the French theorist Michel Foucault—found little reason

to answer those questions affirmatively. Weber saw an "iron cage" of soulless, bureaucratic rationality descending over the West. Foucault described a world in which Enlightenment rationality, far from delivering on its promise of human liberation, circles back and ensnares the liberated in ever-constricting webs of coercion and control.

James's pragmatism departed decisively from this critique. It was a forceful statement that human efforts do matter, and that humans are fundamentally free beings. He was hardly blind to the perils of an increasingly bureaucratized, centralized, and numbingly impersonal world. On occasion, he could be as bleak and acerbic as the most despairing of cynics. Yet he finally came down on the side of faith and hope. It was an uncertain faith and a hard-won hope, and orthodox believers and thoroughgoing skeptics alike have found much to deride in James's thought. "His wishes," as the wry Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. once wrote, "made him turn down the lights so as to give miracles a chance."

But James wasn't hoping for miracles—not of the divine sort, in any case. His point was that humans make miracles happen by individual initiative. He persistently directed his audiences' attention to their own free will, navigating between the dogmatism of materialistic science and orthodox religion by yoking the earthly focus of science to the eternal hopes of religion. Without the possibility of some higher purpose underwriting human efforts, James feared, life becomes meaningless. But the grounds for hope and faith cannot be objectively and certainly true, given our limited perspective on "this moonlit and dream-visited planet." The onus rests on us to make them true.

James's thinking drew heavily on the work of many who came before him, of course, and a complex line of descent runs from his work to the modern pragmatists and self-help gurus who can claim him as their spiritual godfather. Still, the men and women who greeted James as "the messenger of some new gospel," as *The New York Times* reported in 1907, were on to something. *Pragmatism* did indeed herald a new way of thinking—indeed, a new way of being and acting—and James was the most eloquent prophet of the new age. Through various channels, his gospel "truth" has shaped and reshaped American life for a century, an epoch maker after all. ■

Rerunning Film Noir

As Americans embraced the future after World War II, they entertained themselves with cinematic visions of mean streets and sordid pasts. The tale of film noir's rise and fall has a few twists of its own.

BY RICHARD SCHICKEL

SOMETIME RIGHT AFTER THE END OF WORLD War II, they staged a parade in Milwaukee, where I was uneasily entering adolescence. The theme of the event was "Don't Buy Another Depression." Ads for it featured a shiny apple, a reminder of the fruit some people had desperately sold for a nickel on street corners in the previous decade.

I was too young to understand the anti-inflation message. Two other attractions drew me to the parade. One was its grand marshal, Jim Thorpe, the great Native American athlete who had been stripped of his Olympic medals because he had taken a few dollars for playing semipro baseball, a punishment my father (and everyone else I knew) thought was mean-spirited and hypocritical. The other was that the parade was to feature large inflatables (get it—inflation: inflatables?) of the kind that were the heart of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York.

The event proved to be a disappointment. The day was cold and windy, and the march down Wisconsin Avenue was rather paltry: two or three high school bands, about the same number of big balloons. Jim Thorpe was indeed on view—waving genially to the sparse crowd—but in retrospect, of course, the occasion seems even more pointless. We didn't buy another depression; we bought (and bought) the longest period of prosperity America has ever known, one that extends to this day and has encompassed virtually my entire senescent lifetime.

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It might seem odd to evoke this silly parade to introduce a piece about film noir, but hear me out. Noir, at that same historical moment, was establishing itself as *the* American movie genre, the predominant style, both visual and narrative, of almost all our seriously intended films, whether or not their subject was crime, in the first postwar decade. There's some dispute about what the first noir film was, but in my opinion the first truly great one was 1944's *Double Indemnity*, which displayed most of the genre's stylistic tics and narrative tricks. Among the classics that followed, we'd have to name *Out of the Past*, *The Big Sleep*, *The Big Heat*, and literally hundreds of others—with their seductive women and seducible men, their betrayal-upon-betrayal plots, and their wee-hour lighting.

Noir, despite its Frenchified name, is a truly American form, as Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward observe in *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style* (1979). Yes, many of its leading directors (Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Jacques Tourneur, André de Toth) were born in Europe and well versed in expressionism. But their source—often directly, always at least indirectly—was the American crime fiction of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, W. R. Burnett, and others. Almost all noir actors and many of the directors' significant collaborators (cameramen, editors, etc.) were American born and certainly American trained.

How, then, to square the dark visual and psychological designs of this thoroughly American genre with the general mood of the country in the immediate postwar years?



A new girl and an honest job can't rescue Jeff Bailey, played by Robert Mitchum, from his former life in the 1947 noir classic *Out of the Past*.

Screenwriter and director Paul Schrader thought that was easy. In his seminal 1972 article “Notes on *Film Noir*,” he wrote, “The disillusionment many soldiers, small businessmen and housewife/factory employees felt in returning to a peacetime economy was directly mirrored in the sordidness of the urban crime film. . . . The war continues, but now the antagonism turns with a new viciousness toward the American society itself.” I’ve never seen this rather casual bit of sociology disputed, mostly because the many commentators on noir tend to focus on specific films, with little interest in the society that produced them.

Granted, there were a number of movies, especially in the mid-1940s, about servicemen returning to civilian life to find that their wives or girlfriends had betrayed them, or that they had been cheated out of their pre-war jobs or prospects by scheming former associates. Sometimes, lingering issues from their military years had to be resolved in civilian life. And tainting the nation’s overall mood were the Bomb, McCarthyism, and, on the Korean peninsula, our first muscular confrontation with communism. All of these matters were touched upon in the movies, though not often in pictures we can clearly identify as film noirs.

But despite these clouds, the good times were starting to roll, particularly for the middle class. A number of books, television shows, and films nostalgically recall this period as the last “American High” (to quote the title of one popular history)—an era when we hustled heedlessly forward, spending freely, optimistically, on everything from the new lake cottage, complete with powerboat, to European vacations, to better educations for our children, and forget those darned Russkies.

Let me return to that 1946 parade. What it was addressing was not our promising future but our dark and anxious past. It was simplistically suggesting that the inflationary 1920s had so overheated our economy and our expectations that we had stupidly “bought” the inevitable retribution of the Depression. In other words, the parade, like film noir, was directing our attention backward, not forward. After the war, we were not so much disillusioned by our prospects as giddily illusioned by them, and the message of film noir was curiously at odds with the national mood.

Noir films, with their greatly intensified visual style and their stress on perverse psychology, weren’t reflecting our

misery in a peacetime economy, as Schrader suggests. Instead, their aims were quite different (don’t forget, they were meant to entertain). For one, they were trying to give the traditional crime film a new lease on life—particularly in the way it represented the city’s place in the postwar world. Somewhat more originally, they were placing a new stress on the power of the past—something most of us thought we had buried—to reach out and twist our fates when we least expected that to happen.

Noir is a rich genre, and I don’t want to imply that these were the only themes it took up. They are, however, the two I find the most interesting. Let me begin with the metropolis. In the early 1930s, it had been portrayed in grimly realistic terms—in gangster pictures and in a surprising number of movies about the working poor, struggling to survive. But by the late ’30s, the city had by and large become a much happier and more promising place—penthouses, white telephones, dressing for dinner—a setting for romantic comedies and Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers musicals. It was a place where young provincials came to escape the narrowing constraints of their small-town pasts.

After the war, however, the city’s glamour became much darker and more menacing. Noir quickly noted the gathering flight to the suburbs and the countryside. Or, at least, the desire of many people to join that flight. The genre began to offer this dichotomy: the suburbs as a clean, spare, safe, if not very interesting place to love a plain little woman and to raise healthy, normal children, versus the city, whose glamour was at once more menacing and more tempting than it had ever been. This new noir *mise en scène* (rain-wet streets, blinking neon signs, fog-enshrouded alleys) often gave the metropolis the aspect of a wounded beast. It was either attempting to entangle people who thought they had made their escape from it, or it was obliging these refugees to return to its mean streets in order to free themselves of some past terror or transgression that now haunted their dreams of happiness.

Two crucial noir sequences illustrate this point: One occurs in Fritz Lang’s *The Big Heat* (1953), in which we find Glenn Ford, giving one of his typical mumbling, stumbling, imitation-Method performances, as a cop investigating the local criminal syndicate. Off duty, he lives with his wife (Jocelyn Brando) and child in suburban primness. This is quite novel—until then, most movie cops were duty obsessed and not permitted “normal” lives. But one morning, Ford’s wife borrows his automobile and is blown up by

a car bomb intended for him, permanently shattering the illusion of peaceful anonymity the couple had embraced. More colorfully, in a more self-consciously “artistic” way, the noir city was sometimes seen as something like the hellmouth in medieval mystery plays, yawning, fiery, ever ready to swallow sinner or innocent. In King Vidor’s *Beyond the Forest* (1949), Bette Davis’s character, murderous and sexually voracious, is shown wandering Chicago’s streets, clawed at or, worse, treated with indifference by its heedless denizens in a brilliantly orchestrated portrayal of urban cruelty.

Such expressionistic sequences were slightly feverish attempts to imbue the city with a power it no longer had. In the real postwar America, the city was increasingly viewed as a place we were putting behind us, a locale of disorganized rather than organized crime—of small-scale muggings and large-scale slum clearances. Daddy was now, in popular culture, the Organization Man or the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit. He might still visit the

metropolis in order to earn a living, and we were encouraged to worry about its sapping effect on his soul. But at five o’clock, he beat a hasty retreat to his safe suburban haven.

Noirs doubtless overstressed the city’s menace and perverse seductiveness. And they perhaps underestimated the bucolic attractions of the hinterlands. Moviemakers are, at heart, melodramatists. In a curious way, their defense of the city’s power was a defense of the turf they had always loved better than they did, say, the backyard barbecue, and sex in the city is much more exciting to them—and perhaps to us—than suburban adultery.

Two noir films particularly underscore the residual yet still-potent malevolence of the postwar city. One is John Huston’s *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), the title of which accurately and colorfully suggests the director’s vision of the sordid and labyrinthine city, clutching at his antiheroic protagonist (that hardest of movie hard guys, Sterling Hayden) as he tries for one big, final score that will buy his way back to the sylvan horse country of his idealized boyhood—a goal he realizes only in an ironic-tragic way.

The other is Jacques Tourneur’s masterly *Out of the Past* (1947), which, as it opens, shows its protagonist, Jeff

Bailey, played by Robert Mitchum at the peak of his doomy-romantic powers, as an urban escapee running a gas station at a spare desert crossroads, his mysteriously wounded self apparently on the mend and romantically involved with a plain but sensible local woman. In noir, however, you can run but you can never hide, and his former criminal associates find him. Jeff is forced to recall his past in the long flashback that forms the film’s central passage, which takes place in a hellishly realized San Francisco, where our protagonist’s every encounter is with a liar or a betrayer.

In both of these films, the leading figures are old enough to know better than to succumb to their dark side. But another fairly standard noir conceit was to place less worldly victims at the center of a corrupt urban environment—

SEX IN THE CITY is much more exciting to moviemakers—and perhaps to us—than suburban adultery.

young folks struggling to find a better life, but being dragged back into the urban nightmare. A good example is Anthony Mann’s 1947 poverty row film *Railroded*, made before he moved up the Hollywood ranks to produce more-polished noirs such as the beautifully styled *Side Street* (1950), which, incidentally, also takes up the theme of innocents desperate to escape the clutching city.

In *Railroded*, a nice young man named Steve Ryan has his car stolen, and it is then used in the commission of a murderous crime. Falsely accused of the deed—the lad lives with his mother and sister and was puttering peacefully in his garage when the crime occurred—Steve is jailed, and it is up to his sister and a good cop who was once romantically interested in her (and soon will be again) to clear him. The Ryan family lives on a modest, shady street in a trim little house, well away from the corrupt center of the city.

But that suburban idyll won’t be sustained if Duke Martin, played by John Ireland, the only actor in the film who may have some dim claim on your memory, has anything to do with it. He’s the crime’s mastermind, and he represents a new kind of movie villain. His habit is to perfume his bullets and lovingly polish his revolver before dispatching his



Suburban boredom drives *Pitfall*'s Dick Powell into the arms of Lizabeth Scott, but a menacing Raymond Burr is more excitement than he bargained for.

victims. (He incidentally wants Steve's sister, and in one delicious sequence, in which she tries to entrap him into admitting his crime, she dresses up like a noir tart and pretends to seduce him in a nightclub.)

In the past, crime movie miscreants had mostly been dull brutes, with the genially demonic James Cagney the notable exception. There had been no psychosexual component to their criminal calculations. Now these creeps were everywhere. In 1947, the same year *Railroaded* was released, Richard Widmark famously pushed the old lady in the wheelchair down the stairs in *Kiss of Death*, and Raymond Burr was a sadistic nightclub owner in Mann's very good *Desperate*—his work with a hot chafing dish prefiguring Lee Marvin's more famous disfiguring of Gloria Grahame with a hot coffeepot in *The Big Heat*.

These characters are personifications of the evil city, suggesting that its dark nights hold deeper menaces than a few guys planning some dimwit heist or other. They also represent the movies' postwar discovery that psychopathy could reach out and maim ordinary lives. Oh, these people

were bad—so much badder (and more bent) than movie villains had ever been. At the time, we enjoyed their new styles of transgressiveness, but on the whole they did not present a realistic threat to our well-being.

I agree with Paul Schrader that you can detect an obvious American unease in classic noir, but it is very symbolically represented. Despite the fact that the cars and clothes and furniture are up to date, the world of noir is most often portrayed as a kind of alternative universe—sort of like America, but not quite so. For example, much noir ends, as we've seen, in tragedy. Indeed, I know of no major American genre that so often ends with the people we've been encouraged to sympathize with quite simply—oh, all right, quite complicatedly—dead. But they end up that way not because noir was reflecting what Schrader calls “the acute downer” that hit the United States after the war, but because in these films the past still sometimes exerts a force on their destinies, just as it catches up with Mitchum's character in the aptly named *Out of the Past*.

The past had not been much of a presence in pre-war

movies, in part because the movies had not yet discovered Freudian psychology. Whatever personalities we encountered had been shaped—by the slums, by the orphanage, by mysterious fate—before the movie began. There were few flashbacks, and almost no references to earlier incidents that might condition a character's actions in the present. But once Alfred Hitchcock made the noirish *Spellbound* in 1945, that would no longer do. Explanations were required, and the noir style was ideal for dark dream and memory sequences. Middle-class America might be engaging in mass amnesia, but noir, bless its twisted little heart, could not forget anything.

In my opinion, the best noir to take up the malign influence of the past on the present is Fred Zinnemann's *Act of Violence* (1948). When we meet Frank Enley (the always earnest and generally trustworthy Van Heflin), the small California town where he and his family have taken up residence is celebrating his achievements as a builder of GI housing and nascent civic leader. However, he is being stalked by the dark and limping Joe Parkson (Robert Ryan, without whose brooding presence one sometimes doubts there would have been a film noir genre). Joe intends to kill this paragon, and he terrorizes Frank's wife (a subdued but persuasively scared Janet Leigh, appearing in one of her first films).

At first, we think Joe is just another psycho on the loose, but it turns out that during the war he was assigned to a bomber Frank piloted. When they were shot down and imprisoned in a Nazi camp, most of the crew was killed in an escape attempt that Frank betrayed. Only Joe and Frank survived. Frank's story is that he thought he was saving lives: He had considered the plan doomed and believed the Germans' promise that they would not kill the recaptured escapees. The movie, however, leaves little doubt that he gave up his comrades for more generous rations and better treatment.

Frank is a fully flawed hero, and we quickly realize that we aren't going to discover some redemptive behavior in his past. He will have to redeem himself in the here and now. He attends a builder's convention in Los Angeles, and Joe follows him there. But the convention is a hellish shambles, and it's clear that there's no safety for Frank in its drunken

numbers. He stumbles out into the night city, where he meets a hard-used prostitute (a brilliant cameo by Mary Astor) who introduces him to a man who, for a price, will kill Joe. Frank, Joe, and the hired gun meet in a darkened train yard, and Frank, at last, achieves his only available redemptive destiny by taking the bullet meant for Joe.

The film's greatness derives from the several balances it achieves: between the haunted, desperately denying Enley and the half-mad Parkson; between the placidity of the small town and the nightmare energy of the decadent city;

**MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICA had amnesia,
but noir, bless its twisted little heart,
couldn't forget anything.**

between the hope of creating a postwar morality as promising and innocent as a spanking new housing development and the power of dark memory to insist on original sin's remorseless power.

There is one great (and infuriatingly unavailable, therefore neglected) film that, I think, fits Schrader's theory of the 1940s and early '50s as an American bummer. That is André de Toth's *Pitfall* (1948). The picture begins in, and keeps circling back to, a suburban tract house. The street where the Forbes family—John, Sue, and son Tommy—lives reeks of compromise and conformity; this is the best they can obtain of the American dream. John (Dick Powell) reeks of dissatisfaction, too. He had an unheroic war and now has an unheroic job as an insurance claims adjuster. He and his wife (Jane Wyatt) play in a weekly bridge game, and that's about it for excitement. John talks wistfully about the boat they once dreamed of building and sailing around the world, but that's a lost fantasy. From their curb, the Forbeses can see the city looming in the distance, a vague menace to Sue's fragile happiness and to John's weary compromises.

One day, a private detective named MacDonald, played by the epicene Raymond Burr, appears in John's office. His evidence has put an embezzler in jail, and now he has

traced goods purchased with the money to the embezzler's girlfriend, Mona Stevens (Lizabeth Scott). MacDonald suggests that John go retrieve them. John does so, and finds a hurt, vulnerable woman. Included in her loot is a sassy little motorboat. She gives John a ride in it—it's as close as he's ever going to get to his dreamboat—and that sun-splashed sequence brings him back to life. They begin an affair.

Which is shadowed by a jealous MacDonald. Burr is strangely confident, even domineering, in his scenes with Mona. But of course, MacDonald must terrorize John Forbes, too. He stalks John to his suburban castle, and mercilessly beats him up in his driveway. Later MacDonald returns, murder on his mind, but it's John who kills him. Eventually, John confesses to the whole tangled web of his

the gathering unhappiness over the choices middle-class America made than the noir films of the classic era (roughly 1945–55) do. It took us something like a decade to come to grips with the downside of our suburban exodus.

Half a lifetime ago, after the genuine disillusionment of the 1960s and '70s had set in, I knew several families who were rather like the Forbeses—people who had left the city so their kids could enjoy fresh air and decent schools. The husbands endured their commutes stoically. The wives were culturally restless, perhaps restless in other ways, too. We would visit these refugees on a Sunday, perhaps watch a golf tournament on TV, have a barbecue, and leave at a reasonable hour for the journey home. It is just barely possible to imagine some scarring

event in these couples' pasts—an infidelity, perhaps, but one with less than deadly consequences—but even that's a reach. The true tragedy of postwar American life was how ahistorical it was, how quickly those who lived it forgot the war and the Depression, how

THE SPIRIT OF NOIR has never died.
The greatest noir of all, *Chinatown*, did not appear until 1974.

relationship with MacDonald, and is conditionally forgiven by the police and his employers. The picture ends in cleansing early-morning light, with Sue proposing a fresh start on their marriage. But we leave *Pitfall* without any confidence that the Forbeses' life will regain even its former grousing stability, or that this sequence, despite its implicit ambiguities, is more than a conventional Hollywood ending—its optimistic text runs counter to its much gloomier subtext.

This taut little movie reflects more than any noir film the worminess of the postwar American apple, indicating that the split-level is no anodyne for sexual restlessness or for the anomie of dead-end jobs. The other noirs we have considered are sometimes marked by presumptive postwar optimism; there is often a faint ray of hope in their morning light. But the Forbeses have no meaningful future. They are trapped in the encircling present.

If the Forbeses prefigure anything, it is not the future of noir. Rather, they suggest the kind of restless, unhappy figures in the suburban angst movies of the later 1950s—*No Down Payment*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *All That Heaven Allows*, *Imitation of Life*. These movies, full of bourgeois misery, much more clearly support Schrader's thesis about

easily they settled for comfort, routine, and passivity.

This possibly accounts for the fairly abrupt ending of the noir cycle in the mid-1950s. The cities were in a decline more pathetic than menacing, crime was represented in popular culture by the parodistic corporatism of "The Syndicate" (never, in those days, the Mafia), and great, late noirs like *The Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) were first-run failures. It became impossible to imagine deadly melodrama emerging "out of the past" to intrude on our contentment, though we were still several decades from gentrification and its implicit optimism about city living.

The spirit of noir has never fully died. Indeed, the greatest noir of all, *Chinatown*, did not appear until 1974. Then there are the *Godfather* films and HBO's recently concluded series *The Sopranos*. But the former relocated the criminals to the suburbs, and they commuted to work in the city as if they were so many accountants. And the oft-noted genius of *The Sopranos* lies in its normalization of the criminal life. Tony Soprano lives in a New Jersey McMansion, goes to a psychiatrist, and has problems with his children and his wife just like any other suburban pop.

But it has taken well over a half-century for this rep-



When TV crime boss Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) isn't fighting with his wife (Edie Falco), he's kvetching about his panic attacks to a therapist.

representative American figure to achieve that condition, as we're reminded when we glimpse the old crime movies and film noirs that often play on the televisions in Tony's home. Ah, those were the days—when screen crime had a certain dark glamour and emerged from a carefully constructed aesthetic context that granted it a power not found at the Bada Bing Club.

A few wistful suburban gangsters aside, film noir is now largely a cult interest for cinephiles and cineastes. But still we must wonder: Was noir simply a way of reanimating the tired conventions of the pre-war crime film? Or did we need melodramatic illusions potent enough to overcome whatever disillusion strayed briefly into our minds as we surrendered to the mighty engines of prosperity? Or was it one of those cycles—like biopics, westerns, sci-fi, etc.—that Hollywood mysteriously embraces and then just as mysteriously abandons? Very likely all of these factors account for noir's brief dominance. But today, it is noir's remarkable style that we most revere. What the genre said or did not say about American reality

in the late 1940s and early '50s remains much more ambiguous than Paul Schrader and other critics suggest.

In the end, tailfins and picture windows, the NBC peacock and the Boeing 707, became the irresistible forces of the postwar era as it played out—precisely because they didn't seem to be forces at all. They were merely the brave new reality the Organization Man had to deal with. Yes, by the 1960s the war in Vietnam and the struggle for racial equality were roiling the nation, but before that, the discontents of American civilization were modest and local: juvenile delinquency, the dead-end job, the rising divorce rate, the prefeminist restlessness of the American housewife.

These were matters beyond the purview of noir. But still . . . it is possible for us to imagine *Pitfall's* John and Sue Forbes, older, but not necessarily wiser, in the 1970s, divorced and living in different states, drinking a little too much, perhaps considering the adulterous possibilities in the new couple down the block—and watching nice Raymond Burr on television as Perry Mason and Detective Ironside. Surely that was never him beating John to a pulp out there in the driveway. He must have been the figment of someone's overheated imagination. As indeed he was. ■

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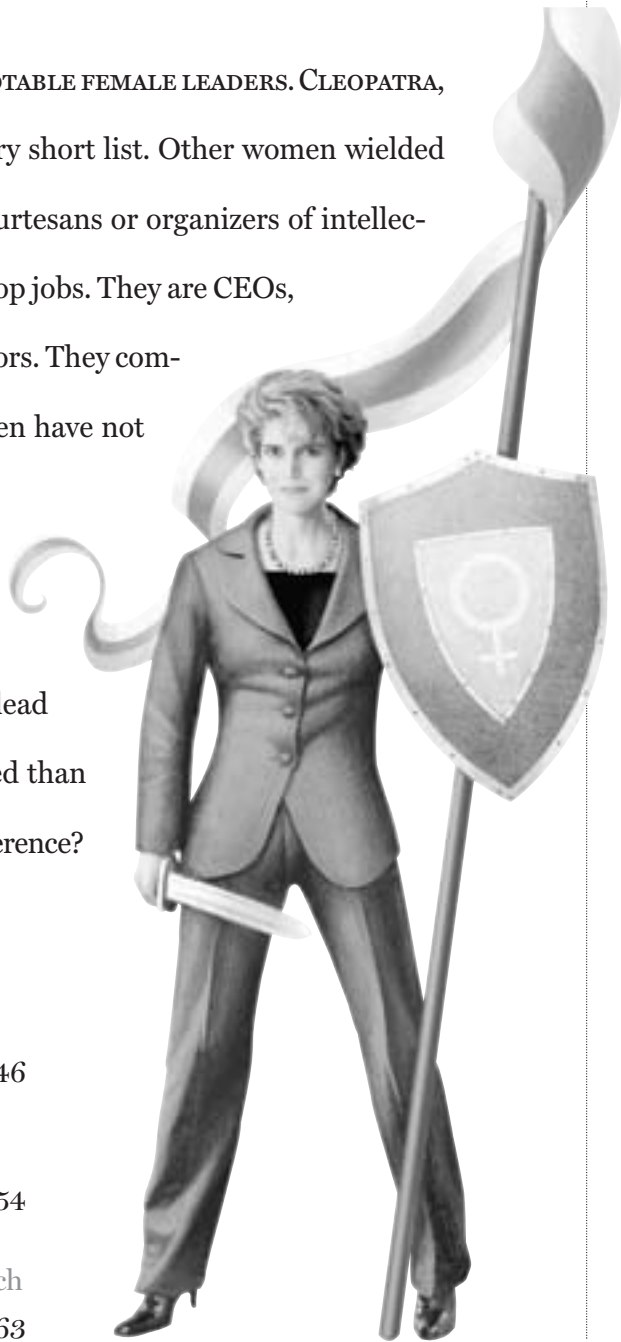
Women in Charge

ONCE IT WAS EASY TO NAME THE WORLD'S NOTABLE FEMALE LEADERS. CLEOPATRA, Elizabeth I, and Joan of Arc headed a very short list. Other women wielded power, but only indirectly, as wives or courtesans or organizers of intellectual salons. Now, legions of women hold top jobs. They are CEOs, generals, university presidents, and senators. They command attention; they lead nations. Women have not yet achieved equality, but there are enough at the top that we can approach questions about female leaders anew, from the old charge that women are not fit to lead to the new claim that they are better fitted than men. Does women's leadership make a difference?

JUDITH M. HAVEMANN looks at women in the corner office p. 46

HOLLY YEAGER appraises the rise of women in the officer corps p. 54

SARA SKLAROFF imagines a future in which women rule..... p. 63



Great Expectations

Women now hold half of all management jobs in America. Business books and magazines tout their superior leadership style. What's really changing in the country's corner offices?

BY JUDITH M. HAVEMANN

ON JULY 17, 1975, LESS THAN A YEAR AFTER President Richard M. Nixon resigned in the Watergate scandal, *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham threw open the doors of her Georgetown mansion for one of her trademark dinners, with strolling violinists and elegant cuisine. Along the right-hand wall of the foyer, a wheel of tiny envelopes held the table numbers of the 58 guests. On the terrace, Graham, in a pink hostess outfit, greeted people from five different levels of the paper's management by name, introducing each newcomer flawlessly. Then everybody sat down for a gourmet dinner served on her mother's hand-painted china.

It was a virtuoso performance by one of the masters of gracious entertaining. But Graham was applying her formidable social skills to a different arena: her company's business. Although the *Post* was then at the height of its influence and glamour, several of its 13 unions were fighting for their lives. Union contracts were up for negotiation, and Graham, who had become an instant corporate president 12 years earlier on the suicide of her husband, was preparing for trouble. She fretted that the newspaper's managers, on whom she would have to rely to publish the paper in the event of strikes, didn't think of themselves as a team. She wanted her staff to

work together and get along. So on a hot July night, Katharine Graham did a stereotypically female thing: She threw a party.

Today her management method is called "transformational," or cooperative—as opposed to the "transactional," or authoritarian, manner then supposedly employed by the men who ran America's biggest companies. But her style was just that—a style. When it came to making decisions, Graham was as tough as any man. She fired former secretary of the Navy Paul Ignatius when he disappointed her as president of the company, hustled his successor upstairs, and ousted a subsequent replacement. When the pressmen's union went on strike in the middle of the night three months after her garden party, she got the paper out with a crew of managers and volunteers. When the pressmen turned down her contract offer, she replaced them with nonunion workers.

True, she talked stirringly about women's issues—sensitized by a friendship with Gloria Steinem, no less. But the *Post* implemented little of the feminist's agenda. It had no daycare center and offered only a bare-bones maternity leave. Part-time schedules to accommodate child rearing were a rare privilege, and part-time employees were ineligible for raises. Although the paper was often generous in family tragedies, it had to issue checks to its female news employees to settle an Equal

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Katharine Graham, Chairman of the Board, the Washington Post Company, Washington, D.C., March 11, 1976

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Employment Opportunity Commission sex discrimination suit over hiring, pay, promotions, and leave. Graham was sympathetic to women, but the pay, benefits, and day-to-day operations of the nation's most famous female-led company broke no feminist ground. Today, Graham's longtime executive editor, Ben Bradlee, cannot think of a single decision that she made because she was a woman.

The corporate world of Graham's era was a men's club, by and large, staffed with female worker bees. Little had changed since William H. Whyte wrote his classic midcentury dissection of corporate conformity and bureaucratic culture, *The Organization Man* (1956). Whyte's index includes a single entry for women: "slenderness progression." But under pressure from a growing women's movement and the federal government, by the 1970s businesses were promoting a few women, although it wasn't at all clear how they would fare when they took charge. At the beginning of the decade, Dr. Edgar Berman, a Democratic national committeeman and close confidante of Vice President Hubert Humphrey, created a minor uproar when he opined that "raging hormonal imbalance" rendered women too unstable to hold top jobs, such as president of the United States.

But Berman's view was not all that unusual, at least among men. Women held only a tiny fraction of supervisory jobs, a category that included management of secretarial pools and other ghettoized occupations. They were simply excluded from elite downtown clubs, golf courses, and other institutions. Leading companies ran advertising campaigns portraying women as playthings—and they worked. The National Organization for Women was outraged by the 1971 "I'm Cheryl, Fly Me" ads for National Airlines, but the number of passengers grew 23 percent in the first year of the campaign.

Today's corporations are as different from their predecessors as 45-rpm records are from iPods. Women hold half of all management, professional, and related jobs in the United States, and—although some of their companies are small—nearly one-quarter of all CEO positions. Between 1997 and 2002 women started an average of 424 new ventures each day, and by 2004 about 6.7 million privately held businesses were majority owned by women, says *The Journal of Small Business Management*. At the very top of

the corporate heap, among the country's Fortune 500 companies, women hold 15.6 percent of corporate officer positions (defined as board elected or board appointed), according to Catalyst, a business research institute in New York. They occupy 14.6 percent of the seats on boards of directors. And they run 13 of the corporations.

That's not the revolution many had hoped for, but it's a significant change. The leadership positions held by women are not only in the corporate world but in the non-profit sector, the military, higher education, and other fields. They sit on boards and campaign for public office. One of them even stands a good chance of making Edgar Berman's worst nightmare come true. In fact, now the shoe is sometimes on the other foot. A handful of management gurus in the business world are proclaiming that possessing a pair of X-chromosomes equips a person to be a *superior* leader.

In books such as *Enlightened Power* (2005), *Why the Best Man for the Job Is a Woman* (2000), and *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* (1990), to say nothing of *Secrets of Millionaire Moms* (2007), writers are advancing what some call the "great woman school of leadership." Magazines now assure women that their feminine style will give them an edge in the new "transformational" corporation. *BusinessWeek* has declared that women have the "right stuff" and, even more sensationally, that a "new gender gap" might leave men as "losers in a global economy that values mental powers over might."

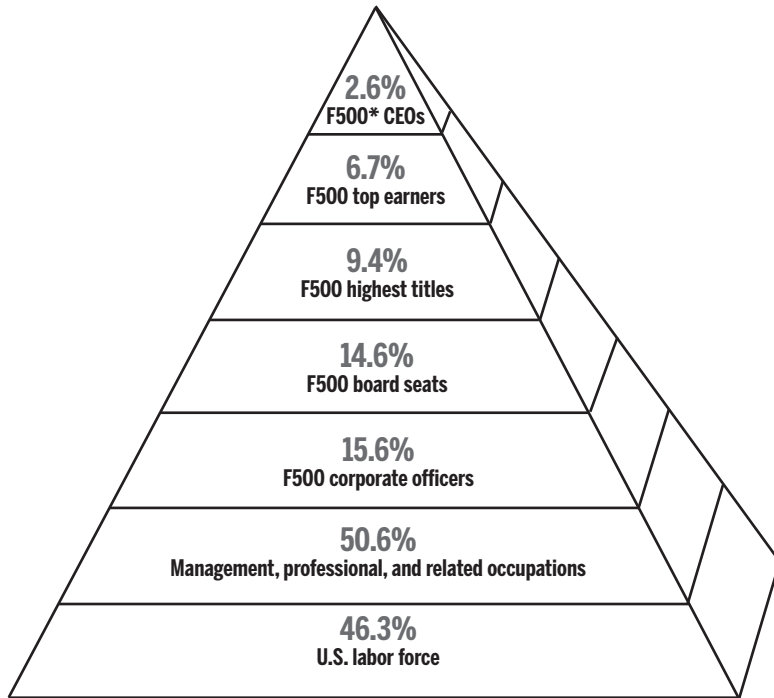
After several decades of experience and enough studies to fill a sizable hard drive, there ought to be answers to some basic questions about women's leadership: Does difference make a difference? Are women more effective leaders, producing more successful companies? Are female-led firms better places to work?

Increasingly, research shows that women—surprise!—are indeed different from men. They do a better job, on average, of collaborating, coaching, teaching, and inspiring others to be creative. Yet it is far from clear that gender in the corner office makes a momentous difference. Evidence that female-led organizations produce superior results is scant. A leadership style that works well in certain fields may bomb in others. And as people climb closer to the top of an organization, gender-related styles of management seem to matter less than other factors in determining who wins the race and what they do as leaders.

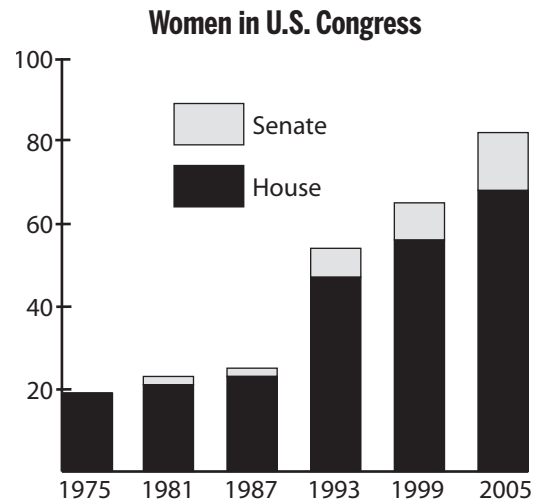
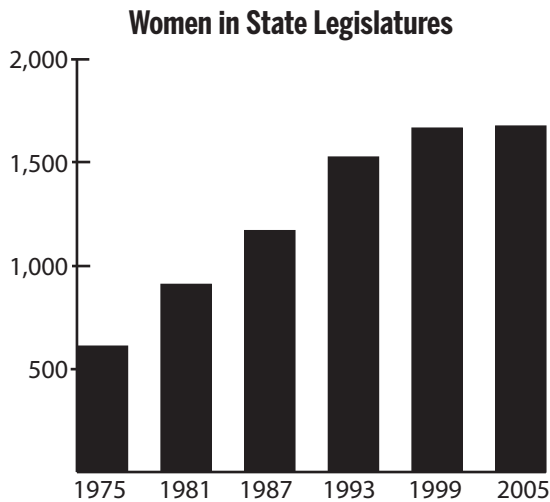
Alice H. Eagly, chair of the department of psychology

Women at the Top

Women CEOs by Industry	
Nonprofit	29.6%
Health Care	22.1%
Law Firms & Legal Services	17.7%
Finance	9.6%
Real Estate	9.1%
Insurance	8.9%
Pharmaceutical	8.3%
Construction	7.4%
Software	7.3%
Manufacturing	5.2%
Aerospace	4.5%
Automotive	4.2%
Semiconductor	3.1%



*Fortune 500



Moving up: Women tend to be judged as more effective in industries where there are more of them. Female state legislators have increased five-fold since 1971, with Democrats outnumbering Republicans by more than two to one. In Congress, the party ratio is roughly the same.

Sources: (top left) *ZoomInfo Insite Report: Gender in the Executive Suite—A Quantitative View of Gender Roles in Business Leadership*, May 2007; (top right) Catalyst Research, *The Catalyst Pyramid: U.S. Women in Business*, 2007; (both bottom charts) Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

at Northwestern University and perhaps the most commonly cited scholar on gender-based leadership differences, finds in a recent overview of many studies in the field that superiors, peers, and subordinates generally rate women better leaders than men. Women are more “interpersonally oriented,” a key ingredient in the transformational leadership style, now the *modus du jour* in the American corporation. Transformational leaders lead by example, empower their subordinates, and focus on the future. They stress cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration rather than a top-down, authoritarian structure. Many of these attributes are exactly the traits associated with women, even if not all women exhibit them.

IN MALE-DOMINATED occupations, from the military to auto sales, women are still judged less effective than men.

But there are wrinkles. Leaders face expectations that they must meet to persuade others to get behind them, and what peers and subordinates look for can vary according to circumstance. “Neither men nor women are better,” Eagly says. “Effectiveness is contextual.” Women are ranked higher as leaders in fields such as education, government, and social services, where there is more focus on interaction and—some say—less on the bottom line. And since women are already more numerous in the upper ranks of these fields, those on the way up have an easier time persuading others to accept them as leaders. But in male-dominated occupations, from the military to auto sales, women are still judged less effective than men.

In many industries, stereotypes about leaders are ripped from the playbook of men, and women are at a disadvantage because they don’t look “usual or natural” in a leader role, Eagly says. “Women in highly masculine domains often have to contend with expectations and criticisms that they lack the toughness and competitiveness needed to succeed.” When they do show grit, they are accused of being unfeminine. Just ask Hillary Clinton, who is criticized for being both too steady and

controlled and not emotional *enough*.

Recalling her stint as the head of the troubled computer giant Hewlett-Packard, Carly Fiorina said in a recent interview that her enemies in the corporate and tech worlds routinely referred to her “as either a bimbo—too soft, or a bitch—too hard.” She shook up the entire company, eventually laying off 36,000 people and attracting almost as much media attention as the executives who bankrupted Enron and went to jail. “It broke my heart every time we had to do it,” she says of the layoffs. “It was tearing what people thought was the heart of the company. But it had to be done to save more jobs. Once I was fired, they said I didn’t do enough of it.” Hewlett-Packard has since gone from

being a laggard to a leader, but Fiorina’s successor, rightly or wrongly, has reaped much of the credit.

Barbara Krumsiek, CEO and president of the Calvert Group, a \$14 billion mutual fund company, said in an interview that advancement after a cer-

tain point “is not a matter of competence, it is how you are perceived.” After her first daughter was born, Krumsiek, then still climbing the corporate ladder, began hearing comments suggesting that she should step aside. A colleague flat out told her, “Women who really love their children stay home with them.” Feeling that she had to produce still more signs of her commitment to work, she hired an executive coach and became active in professional organizations. Her climb resumed.

While perceptions matter a great deal, the problem with research such as Eagly’s is that it only goes so far. It is one thing to ask people whether the female bosses they know are good leaders, another to find hard evidence that female leadership produces results that are better. Scholars have been able to provide correlations, but no proof. The research group Catalyst, for example, divided the Fortune 500 companies into quartiles based on the share of top management jobs held by women, and found that the companies in the top quartile performed 35 percent better (judged by return on equity) than those in the bottom quartile. But the study didn’t show that women were responsible for that success. It may be, for example, that successful companies tend to hire more women.



Doing it her way: As CEO of Amylin Pharmaceuticals for four years, Ginger Graham (here, at the opening bell at the NASDAQ) didn't shrink from displays of emotion when her two new drugs won FDA approval. She says, "At some point you have to make the transition from being a collaborator to a decision maker."

It is hardly surprising that scholars have not been able to identify a precise "female difference." Just consider the political agendas of these leaders: Israel's Golda Meir, Britain's Margaret Thatcher, India's Indira Gandhi, Germany's Angela Merkel. In the U.S. Senate, what common adjective could describe the leadership of California's Barbara Boxer and North Carolina's Elizabeth Dole?

In the Darwinian world of the contemporary corporation, survival of the fittest requires ambitious men and women to adapt whatever methods work, even if they are soft, "feminine" methods. Under the pressure of competition and globalization, the modern corporation has gone from fat to lean, from vertical to horizontal, and from homogeneous to diverse. Status and hierarchies are out, team building, "open innovation," and learning are in. The corporation's work force is better educated, more mobile, and more demanding than it was only a few decades ago. In this new world, the top-down leadership

paradigm of the past looks only a little less outdated than a watch fob. The new mantras, propounded in books such as *Leading at a Higher Level* (2006), *Wikinomics* (2006), and *True North* (2007), are mass collaboration, "authentic" leadership, and becoming a "learning" organization through communication, vision, and shared power. And who's better at collaboration and communication than women? Well, sometimes men are, or at least they are no worse.

Analyzing the results of 50-to-80-minute interviews with male and female owners of 229 firms in the mid-1990s, management scholars Jennifer E. Cliff, Nancy Langton, and Howard E. Aldrich found striking evidence that gender had "no effect" on the organizational design and management of companies. The traditional explanation would have been that women were forced to adopt a more stereotypically masculine approach. In fact, the researchers found that "the male owners in our sample were just as likely as their female counterparts to have implemented

archetypically feminine organizational arrangements and practices in their firms.” Both male- and female-headed firms, for example, had reduced the levels of hierarchy and cut back on formal policies in favor of more open and informal procedures and modes of communication—actions associated with women leaders.

What was different between men and women, the authors wrote in 2005 in the journal *Organization Studies*, was the way they *talked* about leadership. Men said they wanted to be thought of “as God . . . as capable . . . as the captain of the ship who calls the shots.” Women wanted to be thought of as “someone who’s here to work for my employees . . . as a resource . . . [as having] their well-being at heart.” But despite these contrasting self-evaluations, the management methods men and women adopted were, on the whole, “indistinguishable.”

Female business leaders interviewed recently tended to stress that while gender bias often posed special challenges every step of the way, the leadership qualities needed near the top transcended gender. “We don’t have a real meritocracy in this country, although we have made great progress,” Fiorina says. “Women face barriers and have to work harder to get ahead. Men and women have different styles, and people focus on the style of women and the substance of men. But the fundamentals of leadership are not gender specific.”

Ginger Graham, a former Arkansas state rodeo queen with a Harvard MBA, has had an unusual career. She got her first job selling herbicides to local farmers as an agricultural economics major at the University of Arkansas, rose at Eli Lilly, and eventually was named CEO of Amylin, a biopharmaceutical company. When Graham (no relation to Katharine Graham) took over at Amylin in 2003, she adopted a management style that would be unusual, perhaps inconceivable, for a man. The morning after the company’s diabetes drug, Symlin, was finally approved by the federal government after 18 years of research and development, she arrived in the office in a Sleeping Beauty costume and handed out copies of the fairy tale. She wanted to inspire a company that now needed to set up a manufacturing operation and hire a sales force almost overnight. When a second drug was approved six weeks later, Graham jumped into the fountain at corporate headquarters. She punctuated company sales meetings with shouts of “whoo-hoo!”

By the time Graham stepped down, this past March, the price of Amylin’s stock had nearly doubled. But while her style may have been flamboyant at times, her management moves were classic. “You stand alone in these jobs,” she says. “Obviously they are well paid and very fulfilling. They call for an element of collaboration, but at some point you must make the transition from being a collaborator to a decision maker. You have to transform empathy and engagement to accountability and decisiveness.”

Finally, there is the touchiest question of all: If women are such effective leaders, why aren’t more of them leading? The percentage of the 500 biggest firms with women at the helm is not even close to cracking the three percent barrier, and women’s advances in a number of fields have come to a standstill.

After Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* reignited feminism in 1963, women poured into politics, medicine, the clergy, and the military. Most all-male college enrollment policies crumbled within a decade. Today, more than half of all college graduates are women. They are a majority in many fields of graduate study. Affirmative action policies have helped women move into many occupations. But after early increases in the 1970s and ’80s, some of the advances have stalled. The percentage of married mothers of preschool children who are in the labor force has dropped four points since 1997.

In politics, despite the emergence of stars such as Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, and Nancy Pelosi, gains are uneven. Female representation in state legislatures hasn’t budged much since topping 22 percent of legislative seats in 2001. Even some advances are colored by puzzling setbacks. While young women’s level of participation in college sports has soared, thanks in part to federal Title IX legislation, the number of female coaches has dropped. Coaches often travel three or four days a week and must go on many recruiting trips during the off-season, a schedule that particularly puts off women who have, or want to have, a family, according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Anxiety over this stalled progress may explain the firestorm touched off by Princeton graduate Lisa Belkin’s 2003 article in *The New York Times Magazine* describing what she called an “opt-out” generation of highly edu-

cated women like herself who said, “The heck with it, I’d rather stay at home with my kids.”

At first dismissed by some as a luxury confined to elite wives with well-paid husbands, the “opt-out” phenomenon has found some support in statistical evidence, notably the data that show a dip in employment among women at every income level who have younger children. (Sixty percent of these women are now in the labor force.)

“Women naturally don’t like this hard-driving competitive atmosphere that is part of business and law firms,” argues Phyllis Schlafly, president of the conservative Eagle Forum and a lawyer who played a prominent role in the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment. It isn’t really motherhood that makes women drop out, she says; “they just get tired of it.”

Belkin’s passionate critics scoff that the moms-go-home theme has been “discovered” at least four times in the last half-century by *The New York Times* alone. They say it’s no surprise

that women in jobs with no flexibility, forced to choose between feeling they aren’t good mothers or aren’t good workers, elect to stay home. “If women feel undervalued and stalled in their jobs, no wonder they opt out,” says Sally J. Kenney, director of the Center on Women and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota. At the same time, many advocates surely worry that the opt-out phenomenon will reinforce the negative expectation that women won’t go the distance, harming the prospects of those who remain in the race.

For more than a hundred years, women have explained their lack of power by citing barriers: laws that bar women from certain jobs, prejudice, a pay gap that saps the incentive to keep working, the unequally shared burden of child care and housework, the “mommy track.” In addition to the “glass ceiling,” British writers have identified a “glass cliff”—the overrepresentation of women in nearly impossible high-level jobs in which the risk of failure is high. It is said that women are denied plum assignments because they’re thought likely to opt out. They choke in emergencies. (Now making the rounds is a study of professional tennis—whose methodology has been vehe-

mentally assaulted—showing that women make more unforced errors on crucial points than on others, a difference absent in men.) They won’t work as many hours as men. (A recent *Harvard Business Review* survey of “extreme jobs” found that women in these high-pressure white-collar occupations “are not matching the hours logged by their male colleagues.”)

Many barriers still exist in some form, but increasingly the question of whether women get to the top of the heap hinges on their own choices and actions. It’s possible that the ascension of more women will produce a tipping point, dramatically easing the way for future female leaders in every field. Perhaps the continuing

INCREASINGLY THE QUESTION of whether women get to the top of the heap hinges on their own choices and actions.

transformation of the corporation and other institutions will make them more female friendly and humane. Maybe Americans three decades from now will look back on our present-day conundrums with the same disbelief with which we view “fly me” advertisements.

Yet a consistent message from women who have reached the heights is that gender does not make a big difference in conducting the essential business of leadership. Katharine Graham had to fire executives and crush unions. It was her son and successor, Donald, who added female-friendly benefits such as family leave, tax-deferred accounts for dependent care, and part-time schedules when they were needed to attract and retain talented people. For mother and son alike, the task was the same: Keep their company healthy and growing.

Just when women have the greatest opportunities in history, top jobs have become more demanding than ever. The pace of change has quickened, the rigors of competition have increased, and the scrutiny of leaders has grown more intense. The route to the top may remain even more difficult than it is for men, but the decision that women face now is whether they want to enter—and perhaps hope to alter—the demolition derby. ■

Soldiering Ahead

Since women began advancing into its upper ranks, the U.S. military has become both a more humane workplace and a more lethal fighting force. What role has female leadership played?

BY HOLLY YEAGER

WHEN DYMETRA BASS WAS A DRILL SERGEANT, she had no trouble proving her mettle to the fresh Army recruits she pushed through basic training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. “Every private would tell me, the meanest drill sergeants were the women drill sergeants,” she says with a touch of pride. “We had to be so tough because people come from all walks of life. Some people, women have never told them what to do before.”

Bass enlisted in 1989, right after high school, where she had been a cheerleader, and she arrived with an essential drill sergeant’s tool: a booming voice. She also knew how to keep her soldiers motivated. “I like control, so it was easy for me. I like being in the front. I like leading. I believe in leading by example.”

But things changed when Bass moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in 1999 as part of the first group of female drill sergeants assigned to train new members of field artillery units—one of the few areas still closed to women. “It was the drill sergeants who couldn’t accept us, because they were artillery, and then you bring these women in here to teach these civilians how to be soldiers, and teach them combat skills. . . . They didn’t believe it could be done, or done the right way.”

HOLLY YEAGER, a Washington journalist, was until recently the U.S. politics correspondent for *The Financial Times*. She previously covered the Pentagon for the Hearst newspaper group and *Defense Daily* and now writes frequently about women’s issues.

Bass had no background in artillery, but that didn’t matter. Her job was to do basic training. But her male colleagues still worried that the women wouldn’t be able to carry their load and that to pick up the slack, men would always have to run with the fastest group and demonstrate the most demanding drills, such as scurrying under barbed wire and using a rope to maneuver across water. “We had to prove ourselves a lot more,” Bass says.

Female leaders up and down the U.S. military’s chain of command—from noncommissioned officers such as Bass, who deal most directly with troops, to two- and three-star generals and admirals—talk about having to prove themselves, again and again. But slowly, and rather quietly, more and more women have been doing just that. Women make up 14.4 percent of enlisted personnel and 15.9 percent of the officer corps in the 1.4-million-strong active-duty U.S. military, according to the most recent Defense Department figures. That is a marked increase from the 1.6 percent of the military that was female in 1973, when the draft ended and new recruitment goals for women were set.

The war in Iraq has been a major test of women’s new role in the military, and while a full assessment has yet to be completed—the RAND Corporation is at work on one—they seem to have performed well in the field. Women are now permitted to serve in more than 90 percent of military occupations, though they are still barred from jobs or units whose main mission is direct ground combat. But the fluid



The Few. The Proud. A Marine drill instructor presents sword to acknowledge a squad leader's report on her recruits at Parris Island.



Some of the first women to respond to these World War II posters were assigned repetitious communications jobs. Army leaders said men might become impatient and make careless mistakes.

lines of conflict in Iraq have put the units in which women serve, such as military police, supply, and support, in the line of fire, challenging traditional ideas about what constitutes a “combat” position. “Women are fighting, they are in the streets and on the patrols,” says Pat Foote, a retired Army brigadier general. “They are running the convoys, getting shot at and shooting back.” The war’s death toll reflects this battlefield reality: As of early June 2007, the nearly 3,500 U.S. servicemembers who had lost their lives in Operation Iraqi Freedom included more than 70 women.

“Critics speculated a lot about what would happen if we let women in these jobs,” notes Lory Manning, a retired Navy captain who directs the Women in the Military project at the

Women’s Research & Education Institute in Washington, D.C. “[They speculated that] the men couldn’t do their jobs, that everyone would be pregnant, that they’d be so busy having sex that they couldn’t do anything else.

“We now have units under fire with men and women in them,” Manning says. “We have experience of women firing weapons. They don’t fall to emotional bits.”

Nor has the American public fallen to bits. The sometimes-dramatic footage of women on the front-lines, of women returning home to military hospitals, even the too-good-to-be-true story of the capture and rescue of Jessica Lynch, have prompted little popular outcry against women’s role in the war, and little evidence that the public is somehow less willing to tolerate their suffering than that of men. And while Lynndie England drew public attention and outrage for her role in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, advocates of women in the military say critics have been on the lookout for any systemic failure of women to perform well in Iraq—and have found little to point to. Instead, just as the invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf War led to reviews of women’s role in the military—and expansions of the positions open to them—Iraq will likely prompt another reconsideration. Any increase in their

combat role would improve women’s opportunities at the top of the command structure, where their numbers are small today in part because of their lack of combat experience.

More important than how uniformed women and the public have reacted is how America’s armed services have fared. After more than 30 years of experience with women in leadership positions and in the ranks, what may be most surprising is how little the rise of women has actually affected the American military. Make no mistake, the armed services have experienced enor-

mous changes, including the incorporation of both devastating new killing technologies and more family-friendly personnel policies. But just as women's distinctive contribution to the forging of today's highly effective fighting force is hard to identify, so is it difficult to say what part they have played in enhancing some of the military's "softer" features.

Technological advances, new thinking from outside the military, changes in the attributes of senior leaders, and the demands of the all-volunteer force have resulted in adjustments in the way the military is led. Women as well as men have had to change. "It used to be that you ordered somebody to do something," says Darlene Iskra, a retired Navy officer who runs a leadership training program for young Navy and Marine Corps officers at the University of Maryland. "Now, it's more that you ask them to do it, but they understand it's an order, or you have meetings and ask people's opinions, ask for their input, and help them to own the solution, rather than dictating."

That shift to a more collaborative approach—which some may attribute to the growing role of women—is in part explained by the fact that new technology has given junior officers more access to information, which used to be the purview of age and experience. "Women have in some measure changed the culture, but the access to information, and the horizontal nature of how information is managed and controlled . . . came at about the same time," Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau says. In addition, because of the war in Iraq, "the average junior officer in the military today has more operational experience in war than the average senior officer." As young officers bring their real-life experience and information to the table, "I think there is a move toward collaboration that would normally be seen as a feminine leadership trait," Rondeau says. She prefers to see this tendency as a democratic product of the speed with which information flows.

A 2004 study of four Army divisions that had just returned from tours in Iraq found that most leaders had strong technical and tactical skills. What set the best leaders apart was interpersonal skills. The study, headed by

Walter F. Ulmer Jr., a retired Army general and leadership specialist, identified what it called the "Big 12"—a set of behaviors exhibited by officers best able to achieve operational excellence and motivate good soldiers to stay in the Army. At the top of the list: keeps cool under pressure; clearly explains missions, standards, and priorities; sees the big picture, provides context and perspective. The ability to make "tough, sound decisions on time" was also among the most prized skills. Despite the growing value of collaboration, military leaders know better than most that, ultimately, hard choices need to be made—sometimes with

"WE NOW HAVE units under fire with men and women in them," a retired female Navy captain says. "They don't fall to emotional bits."

lives hanging in the balance—and only one person can be in charge. The study did not say that the decider shouldn't be a woman.

Today's general acceptance of women on the battlefield is a far cry from the skepticism—and sometimes outright hostility—that greeted the opening of the services to women after the end of the Vietnam War. Faced with manpower shortages when the draft ended in 1973 and expecting that the Equal Rights Amendment would be enacted, Pentagon officials set aggressive goals for recruiting women and started changing the rules that governed the jobs female servicemembers were allowed to do. American women already had a long military history, but it was a history that had largely seen them confined to separate branches such as the WAVES and WAAC, which called on women to enlist during World War II in order to "free a man to fight." Now women were to be integrated into regular service units. Could they really carry heavy packs on their backs? What would happen if they got pregnant? Would military wives put up with their presence in the ranks?

A question posed in a 1976 study by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences provided a gauge of prevailing attitudes: "What percentage

of women will it take to degrade unit performance?" But the results of a three-day field exercise with units ranging from all-male to 35 percent female, and a follow-up study the next year, surprised nearly everyone. "When properly trained and led, women are proving to be good soldiers in the field, as well as in garrison," the Army concluded. A research brief titled *Military Readiness: Women Are Not a Problem*, published by RAND in 1997, showed that the tone had shifted a little in 20 years. It found that gender integration in military units "had a relatively small effect on readiness, cohesion, and morale," but that a unit's leadership, training, and workload had a much deeper influence.

In the heat of the 1970s debate, researchers' findings that women would not wreck the joint did little to cool the fury of traditionalists. Perhaps the most dramatic statement of opposition—one that still rankles some women in uniform—came from James Webb, a decorated ex-Marine who would go on to become secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration and get elected to the Senate from Virginia as a Democrat in 2006. Webb, a Naval Academy graduate, took particular offense at the decision to admit women to the service academies beginning in 1976. In an emotional 1979 screed in *The Washingtonian* titled "Women Can't Fight," Webb argued that women were unsuited to be military leaders and unfit for the trenches. "There is a place for women in our military, but not in combat," he wrote. "And their presence at institutions dedicated to the preparation of men for combat command is poisoning that preparation. By attempting to sexually sterilize the Naval Academy environment in the name of equality, this country has sterilized the whole process of combat leadership training, and our military forces are doomed to suffer the consequences."

Such public declarations against women in the military are rare today. During his Senate campaign, Webb apologized for any "hardship" his article had caused and said he was "completely comfortable" with the role women play in the military. But on-the-record comfort does not mean the question is settled. The day I met Bass, she said that one of the officers in her command had told her in casual conversation earlier in the day that he did not think women belonged anywhere near combat, because he would be so concerned about protecting them that he would be distracted from his own duties.

International comparisons don't offer much useful guid-

ance about how to integrate women into the armed services. The United States has more women in the military than any other country. Those with the fewest barriers to women in combat, such as Sweden and Norway, also have small forces with fundamentally different missions. In Israel, women are automatically conscripted into the armed forces, but many receive exemptions for religious or family reasons. Some ground combat units include women, and an army commission is currently studying whether infantry, armor, and special forces should be opened to women. The Israeli military's highest echelons still include no female officers.

In the United States, one of the main complaints of critics is differing physical standards for men and women. (To get a perfect score on the Army fitness test, a 22-year-old man must do 75 pushups, 80 situps, and run two miles in 13 minutes. Women soldiers must do 46 pushups, 80 situps, and run two miles in 15:38.) The promotion system is another sore spot. Boards that meet each year to consider which officers from each service will be promoted make their decisions based on the information they find in a file about each candidate, including work history, training, honors, performance evaluations, any disciplinary action—often a photograph. They are also given equal opportunity goals, designed to ensure that the number of women and minorities promoted in each group of officers reflects that group's representation in the promotable pool. Such guidelines urge board members not to penalize candidates because they lack certain job experiences, such as combat assignments, if they were barred from such positions. But race and gender are not the only concerns. The promotion boards are pulled in many other directions as well, needing to keep a balance between, say, helicopter and fixed-wing pilots. Most analyses find the promotion system to be widely accepted by men and women within the military.

For many of the women who entered the military in the 1970s and are senior officers today, it is simply the access to that merit system, the chance to succeed or fail based on their own performance without first being discounted by others and denied opportunities because of their gender, that may be the biggest change they have seen.

Despite that opportunity, and their larger numbers, women face a "brass ceiling," with only the thinnest representation at the highest ranks. The limited range of combat-related jobs open to women until the 1990s meant that many lack the experience that is highly valued in promotion



Members of a construction battalion in Iraq attend the Lioness Program, which trains them in self-defense and the proper way to search female Iraqis.

decisions. At the same time, the arc of a military career is long, and because the service academies only opened their doors to women in 1976, the cohort of female officers with both those top credentials are only now in position to use them to help push their careers to the highest levels.

In the face of such institutional limits to advancement, it can be difficult to understand why so many women entered the military in the 1970s and '80s. Many say they did so because they wanted the chance to serve their country, just like men, and to explore interesting career paths. But there was something else. Vice Admiral Rondeau, one of just five female officers with three stars currently serving in the U.S. military and frequently mentioned as a candidate to become the first four-star woman in the country's history, explains: "There were glass ceilings. There were prejudices. There were barriers. But . . . there was equal pay for equal work."

Even as they prove themselves and parry occasional resistance to their presence, some women have brought their personal—and sometimes decidedly feminine—approaches to this most masculine of institutions. While none would

argue that they are fundamentally changing the culture around them, they are finding different ways to lead.

Barbara Bell, a Navy captain who graduated from the Naval Academy in 1983, says it took many years in uniform before she came to a simple realization: "I recognize that I'm different. I recognize that I stick out, and I'm not going to fight it," she says with a smile. Bell, a pilot who now works in acquisitions, recently told an audience that included young servicewomen that she tries hard to establish a respectful office environment and to pay attention to the work-life balance for her staff and herself. Most days she leaves work by 4:30 to pick up her 7-year-old son.

While many senior women in uniform say they had few female role models and mentors, their ascendance is beginning to change that, too. The mere presence of more women in the senior officer grades has made a difference. "It just helps everyone to know what the art of the possible is, and that they can continue to move up the ranks," says Lieutenant General Ann E. Dunwoody, deputy chief of staff of the Army.

Bass—now a first sergeant, the top enlisted soldier work-

ing at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.—says that when she was in Iraq in 2005, she and her unit's commander, also a woman, “did things a little differently.” Sitting in her office at Fort McNair, she pointed to a photograph of a young female soldier. When Bass and her commander got the news that the soldier had been killed on

dents are women, they must make difficult adjustments. But perhaps more important in maintaining the military's ethos than tradition and machismo, haircuts and pushups, is the fact that much of what the military does is determined by its well-defined mission to be ready, as the Army field manual puts it, “to fight and win the Nation's wars.”

SOME CHANGES IN the military may be seen as a more “feminine” approach to leadership, but they reflect the demands of attracting and retaining the all-volunteer force.

Successful women in the military are well aware of that basic fact, and many say they did not arrive with a desire to change the institution. “You are joining an institution that has doctrine, that has tradition, and you either appreciate it and come to love that aspect of the institution, or at some point

duty, “we woke everyone up—it was at night—so they wouldn't wake up to it [in the morning], so they could deal with it.”

After addressing them in formation, Bass stayed with her soldiers, talking to them, listening to them cry, trying to let them know that she understood their sadness and, at the same time, that their work had to continue. “I think we were more nurturing, which also motivated the troops to do well, and when they had problems, they knew they could come into our offices and talk to us, compared to the male first sergeants, who were so hard.” There is growing evidence that the military is putting new emphasis on just the kind of interpersonal skills Bass displayed.

Day-to-day standards for behavior have also changed. Pinups are gone from barracks walls and dirty language has been cleaned up. “It's definitely had an impact on the social culture of the military, which used to be one of the great boys' clubs of the world,” says Phillip Carter, a military analyst and former Army officer. “It's not just this Spartan legion of men. Now it's much more like society at large.”

For all that, it is hard to find anyone, male or female, in or out of uniform, who would assert that the ascendance of women to leadership positions has fundamentally changed martial culture. “The military is still not just overwhelmingly male, but its ways of doing things are still very male,” says Mady Segal, a sociology professor at the University of Maryland whose work focuses on women in the military. Top leaders go to the service academies, where traditional culture is reinforced. Even though about 20 percent of new stu-

you say, ‘No, this really isn't where I want to be in life,’ and you go back to civilian life,” says Rear Admiral Michelle Howard, who graduated from the Naval Academy in 1982, a member of the third class to include women.

The strength of that tradition does not mean that the organization has not changed since the 1970s. But while those changes—in management style, family-friendliness, and other areas—may be seen as a shift toward what management gurus call a more “feminine” approach to leadership, they reflect other factors at work—most important, the demands of attracting and retaining the all-volunteer force. Younger people in all walks of life are less willing to sacrifice everything for their careers, and are more concerned with preserving their lives outside work. As in the corporate world, military leaders have recognized the need for policies to protect investments in careers and training with benefits for families, as well as for soldiers themselves. But the prospect of losing skilled professionals—in an organization that wants its leadership to be as diverse as its enlisted corps—is in some ways more troubling for the military. As Howard explains, “We don't have the luxury of a corporation, of hiring in someone with this skill set. . . . So then the issue becomes, how do we retain this talent?”

Recent research indicates that the departure of female officers, largely due to such issues of work-life balance, poses a particular challenge to the Pentagon. A study published early this year of officers at several career points by the

Government Accountability Office found that “all services encountered challenges retaining female officers.” The difference was most marked in the Navy, with its increasingly long spells of duty at sea, where continuation rates among female officers with four or five years of service averaged nine percentage points lower than those of male officers.

A 2005 report from the Army Research Institute found that the gap between male and female Army officers who said they intended to stay in the service until retirement age had held relatively steady over 10 years. In a 1995 survey, 66 percent of male officers and 51 percent of female officers said they planned to stay; in 2004, the numbers were 69 and 53 percent, respectively.

Male and female officers agree that women face special challenges in pursuing military careers, but they differ over the reasons, according to a 2001 RAND report. Male officers offered researchers three main explanations: “Women are inherently less capable, physically and mentally, to perform a military job and lead troops,” in the study’s words, and the ban on women in combat jobs has kept them from occupations with the greatest opportunities for advancement. The men also said that male superiors fear that they will find themselves unable to refute an unwarranted charge of sexual harassment and therefore hold back from interactions, such as mentoring, with female subordinates.

Female officers said their chances to perform and the recognition they received were “diminished by expectations that they are less capable,” according to the study. Female officers reported “difficulties forming peer and mentor relationships,” and said they “receive fewer career-enhancing assignments.” They also cited a conflict between work demands and family responsibilities, and



Major General Ann E. Dunwoody became the first woman to command Fort Lee, Virginia, in 2004. Today she's an example of the “art of the possible” as a lieutenant general and the Army’s deputy chief of staff.

a lack of consensus on the appropriate role for women in the military. The female officers said sexual harassment leads to an uncomfortable working environment for women who are harassed, and they agreed that male fears of harassment charges had inhibited interactions between men and women.

Officers of both sexes cited the amount of time they spent away from their families and the enjoyment they got from their jobs as the most important factors influencing their decision about whether to leave the Army. But family issues appear to have a special effect on women officers. In the research institute study, time away from family was listed as the most important reason by 43 percent of women planning to leave, and 27 percent of men. One reason for the difference is that female officers are much more likely than their male peers to be married to another person in the military, who can’t easily follow when a new posting comes along. Another study, conducted in 1997 by the Army Research

Institute, found that 80 percent of male officers were married, but just seven percent of them had wives in the military. Among female officers, 58 percent were married, and more than half of their spouses were also in the military.

For women in the military, there are plenty of easy reminders of how much things have changed. Female Marines in the 1940s were strongly encouraged to wear lipstick, but it had to match the red cord on their winter caps—a requirement that prompted Elizabeth Arden to make Montezuma Red for just that purpose. As recently as 1989, when Bass enlisted, it was assumed that women would remain far away from combat zones. “When I first came in the Army,” she says, “my supervisor told me, ‘If you’re firing your weapon, the war is over.’”

Of course, this sort of vision of slow, steady, and accepted progress for women is not the only way to look at the recent past. In 1990, Darlene Iskra, the now-retired naval officer who provides leadership training to recently commissioned Navy and Marine personnel, became the first woman to command a Navy vessel. She remembers the stack of congratulatory messages that awaited her when she arrived at her ship, the USS *Opportune*, and the way her male colleagues showed new respect when she wore her command pin. But 10 years later, something had changed: “The reason I got out was because I felt like an ensign again. They just did not respect me. It was awful.”

Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, a nonprofit advocacy group, complains that career-minded female officers have been behind the decades-long push to open more jobs to women, and that the changes have come at the cost of dangerous “double standards involving women.” A case in point, she said, was the treatment of Lamar Owens Jr., a former star quarterback at the Naval Academy, who was accused of rape by a female classmate. Owens and the classmate were both drinking and ended up in bed together. He said their sex was consensual; she said she was raped. Owens was acquitted of the charge but dismissed from the academy and ordered to repay the cost of his education after being found guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer. His accuser admitted to breaking academy

rules but was granted immunity as a witness and permitted to remain enrolled.

But even Donnelly, perhaps the most outspoken conservative critic of the Pentagon’s gender policies, doesn’t directly call for a rollback of women’s role in the military. As a practical matter, it is hard to see how the Army and other branches could be staffed without a significant complement of women—and some politicians in both parties are calling for an expansion of troop strength.

Does all this mean that it is only a matter of time until women are fully integrated into the armed services leadership? New technology, fresh attention to inclusive leadership styles, and societal attitudes all favor a greater role for women in the top ranks.

Deeper changes in military culture, however, are likely to be difficult. Along with the physiological fact that most women cannot develop the upper body strength thought to be needed in traditional warfare, general questions about their fitness for the most direct combat assignments remain. Lory Manning, of the Women’s Research & Education Institute, says that the issue of women in combat will still be politically sensitive, but she expects it to be re-examined after the Iraq war. She singles out the “co-location rule,” which prohibits women with noncombat jobs, such as medics and mechanics, from being based with combat units, as one that will likely be changed formally after the war. “Sheer necessity made it go away” in Iraq. But Manning does not foresee a sweeping removal of the remaining bans on direct combat.

The career of Erin Morgan, who graduated from West Point in May and is now a second lieutenant in the Army Intelligence Corps, is off to a promising start, with wide opportunities and the open doors that a degree from the academy can secure. But a few weeks before graduation, she said that women still do not have an easy time fitting in. “Soldiering is a masculine trait, something that separates the men from the women and the men from the boys,” she says. “That is something that cadets still struggle with.”

Amid the constant reminders of great warriors of the past embodied in statues and paintings at West Point, Morgan saw depictions of Douglas MacArthur, George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower, and other fabled generals. But she was only able to find one woman: Joan of Arc, whose image is part of the mess hall mural. ■



A Woman's World

Fresher salads? No more war? A look at our feminine future.

BY SARA SKLAROFF

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BOYS GONE? COLLEGE admissions officers would sure like to know. Less than three decades ago, men dominated the nation's campuses. Today, they are significantly outnumbered by women, meaning that administrators have to choose between skewed male-female ratios and affirmative action for the Y-chromosome. But colleges are merely the first responders to what could be an

unprecedented societal event. That's right: Women are taking over.

Already, traditionally male occupations from medicine to bartending are heavily populated by women. We have our second female secretary of state, our first female Speaker of the House, and the first viable female presi-

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dential candidate in the nation's history. Young women today grow up with far more career options than even their supposedly liberated mothers did (though these "options" are often not quite what they promise). What were formerly "feminine" weaknesses are even being retooled as strengths: According to a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, crying—once taboo on the job—is becoming acceptable in the workplace, as a way to express emotion and promote "healthy debate."

So let's run out the trend lines for a moment, and imagine this future female planet. It will certainly be a nicer place to live—more attractive, friendlier, and much, much cleaner. You'll be able to find a decent public bathroom wherever you go. Delicious, high-quality salads will be sold everywhere—not the wilted, uninspired packages grudgingly offered at corner delis or Starbucks, but fresh, innovative compositions that will make dieting a snap.

This will be a woman's world, and men will have to learn to fit in. Industrial design will be based on an average woman's size, not a man's, so men will have to squeeze themselves into public bus seats and crouch down to reach items on supermarket shelves. Standard portion sizes at restaurants will be smaller; those who wish to eat more (usually men) will have to pay more. Other pricing schemes that currently favor men will be reversed: Dry cleaning and haircuts, for example, will conform to a flat-fee system.

Schoolteachers, most of whom are women, will finally get the higher salaries they deserve for nurturing the next generation, but it will suddenly become apparent that hedge fund managers, almost all of whom are men, don't really need to make millions of dollars a year for moving some numbers around on a computer screen. There will be more police on the streets, so women can walk alone at night without fear. In public, it will be socially unacceptable to spit, litter, scratch oneself, shout, urinate, or wear shorts with loafers.

Yes, it's a lovely picture—but it doesn't say much about the greater mechanisms of society. What really happens when women rule? History offers few clues. The great female rulers we read about in grade school—Cleopatra, say, or Elizabeth I—are too anomalous to offer much insight. Most mainstream scholars don't believe that matriarchies have ever even existed in human civilizations, despite the feminist appeal of the Amazons and other mythologized creatures. (Indeed, there is evidence that lore of an unruly, female-dominated past is used by some

cultures as an object lesson to keep women out of power.) Anthropologists have identified societies that are organized into female-dominated domestic structures, but these are considered "matrifocal" or "matrilineal," mere hiccups in the great march of male dominance.

Those definitions may not tell the whole story, however. By looking only for mirror images of patriarchies that happen to have women on top, says Peggy Reeves Sanday of the University of Pennsylvania, anthropologists may have failed to spot the different forms that female-dominated societies take. Sanday lived on and off with the Minangkabau people for more than 20 years. Known throughout Indonesia for their business savvy, and overrepresented in the country's intellectual and political life, the four million Minangkabau in West Sumatra also happen to call themselves a matriarchy, Sanday writes in *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy* (2002).

As far back as Alexander the Great, according to their legends, the Minangkabau have been a matrilineal people. Land is passed on through the maternal line, and when a man and a woman marry, the husband moves in with his wife's family. Young men are encouraged to leave their villages for a while to travel and experience the outside world while young women stay at home learning how to run the farms. Though devoted Muslims, the Minangkabau simultaneously follow a traditional religion that is resolutely female oriented, focused on maternal ideals of growth and nurturance. In their history, queens are preeminent, Sanday says: "Male aggression plays a subordinate role to the maternal authority of the divine queen." She also reports a "near absence of rape and wife abuse."

Indeed, gender politics look very different in Minangkabau society. "In answer to my persistent questions about 'who rules,'" Sanday says, "I was often told that I was asking the wrong question. Neither sex rules, it was explained to me, because males and females complement one another." Decisions are made by consensus, and the Minangkabau keep one another in line by enforcing their custom of acting for the common good. Each sex has its own, well-defined realm. Men perform starring roles in religion and governance (though clearly within a domain constructed by women), while women are leaders in culture, education, and ceremony—and "hold the keys to the rice house," making the important economic decisions.



Women call the shots among the Mosuo in the Himalayas, but they still have to dig potatoes. Here a young woman contemplates her matriarchal future.

A better-known matrifocal culture can be found among the Mosuo, an agrarian group of about 50,000 who have lived for almost two millennia in a remote corner of China, high in the Himalayas. Their fame derives from the practice of “walking marriage”: A woman does not take a husband, but once she turns 13, she is given her own bedroom (or “flower chamber”) and can invite any man to spend a night with her, so long as he leaves before dawn. In practice, this usually doesn’t result in wild promiscuity; it’s more like serial monogamy, kept strictly private and separate from the daily workings of the family. But walking marriage demolishes the traditional concept of matrimony as a means of protecting a sexually active woman. As one Mosuo woman told a documentary filmmaker, “Why would you want the marriage license to handcuff yourself?”

Although men assume important roles in the community, Mosuo fathers do not live with their children, remaining instead in their own mothers’ homes. Uncles shoulder a large portion of child rearing, and many children don’t even know who their fathers are. There are no jails; instead, a powerful sense of group-enforced propriety maintains

order. Yang Erche Namu, a Mosuo-born singer famous in China, described the code of conduct in her 2003 memoir *Leaving Mother Lake*: “We must not speak ill of others or shout at people or discuss their private affairs. When we disapprove of someone, we must do so in halftones or use euphemisms or, at worst, mockery. . . . We must repress jealousy and envy, and we must always be prepared to ignore our differences for the sake of maintaining harmony.”

Outsiders, of course, are more interested in the sex. The idea that a female-dominated culture could promote sexual freedom flies in the face of most cultures’ assumptions about women’s sexuality. But the animal world offers an even more fascinating example: the bonobo. Along with chimpanzees, bonobos are humans’ closest animal relatives, sharing more than 98 percent of our DNA. Yet they couldn’t be more different from the warlike chimps. Bonobos live in matriarchal tribes, in which conflicts are settled by sex, and lots of it. They have sex to greet one another and to make friends; they use it to resolve conflicts and then they have makeup sex afterward—all in an impressive variety of positions. Partners can be male or female, of literally any

age, and are often taken from within an individual's immediate family as well as outside of it.

Within each tribe, even the lowest-status female is considered superior to the highest-status male. Older bonobo females keep younger females in check by snubbing them: walking away from a grooming attempt or refusing to share food. Grown male bonobos cling to their mothers

WOMEN AREN'T THAT much less aggressive than men—they're just better at hiding it.

in order to attain status and protection. The kicker: Male bonobos live longer and are generally healthier than male chimps, since they aren't required to fight for status and don't live with the stress that chimps do.

This is not to say that human males would actually be better off in a matriarchy. Women regularly show themselves to be every bit as cruel as men, and sometimes even more savage. Like the bonobo elders rejecting their daughters, human women can wield their considerable emotional intelligence to nasty effect. Teenage girls were known to be trouble well before we started talking about "queen bees" and "mean girls." And we all know plenty of female bosses who hamstringing the success of women who work for them.

In fact, there's evidence that women aren't that much less aggressive than men—they're just better at hiding it. Psychologists have found that while men channel their aggression through purported "rationality" (interrupting, criticizing unjustly, questioning others' judgment), women are more likely to use "social manipulation" (gossiping, backbiting, ostracizing) to get what they want. Remember that in both the Mosuo and Minangkabau cultures it is unacceptable to criticize another person directly. But passive aggression is aggression nonetheless.

One thing that's troubling about the widening gender gap in college is what it will mean for relations between the sexes down the road. Will the resulting imbalance between educated women and a shrinking pool of potential mates create a world in which upper-

class professional women dominate an underclass of working he-men? That's certainly good fodder for science fiction, but it's also a vision predicated on one narrow idea about how a society works. The Minangkabau who chided Sanday perhaps have a message for us, too: "Who's on top?" may no longer be a meaningful question if women rule the world. The real effect of female domination may be felt less

in the boardroom than in our day-to-day existence. While the greater availability of salad greens may not seem like a revolution, it connotes a culture that cares deeply about the well-lived life, and the indi-

vidual experiences of those who live it.

Which is not to say that the first generations of female leaders won't concern themselves with power. After all, Margaret Thatcher didn't become Britain's prime minister by seeking consensus and expressing her feelings, and it's not clear that Hillary Clinton would be well-advised to use those techniques either, should she reach the White House. But decades on, when women born into a female-dominated society come of age, hierarchy might be less important than group welfare and consensus. We might have less war and more behind-the-scenes politicking. Or, given that women have never been in charge before, there may be societal structures we can't yet imagine.

Still, we've sort of been here before, if you consider that some proponents of the women's vote argued that, if enfranchised, the more "moral" fairer sex would make the world a better place. Conversely, there were dire predictions about the effects of women's suffrage. In 1853, a *New York Herald* reporter described his state's suffrage convention as "a gathering of unsexed women, . . . all of them publicly propounding the doctrine that they should be allowed to step out of their appropriate sphere to the neglect of those duties which both human and divine law have assigned them." His desperate conclusion: "Is the world to be depopulated?" Well, not so far. But women's suffrage also didn't put an end to war, and it certainly didn't fully achieve equality for the sexes. What it did show is that women are as diverse, as incisive, and, yes, as fallible as men. And that's worth remembering as the scales of leadership tip in the other direction. ■

In ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Living on \$1 a Day

THE SOURCE: “The Economic Lives of the Poor” by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2007.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE ON LESS than \$1 a day? More than one billion people in the developing world scraped by below this global line for the “extremely poor” in 2001, and their lives were hard—but not as devoid of choices as they might seem.

In Udaipur, India, according to a recent survey, only 10 percent of the poor own a chair and just five percent own a table. More than a third report that adults in their household went without food for a whole day at some point during the past year. Anemia and other illnesses are rife. Yet the same survey shows that the city’s poor spend five percent of their money on alcohol and tobacco, 10 percent on religious festivals, and almost 10 percent on “sugar, salt, and other processed foods.” In India as a whole, the share of income the poor spent on food declined between 1983 and 2000.

Researchers around the world have consistently found that “even

the extremely poor do not seem to be as hungry for additional calories as one might expect,” note Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and directors of its Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. Their review of surveys of the poor in 13 countries confirms that fact and turns up other insights.

There are wide country-to-country variations. Hardly any of Udaipur’s poor own a radio or television, but in countries where festivals and other public entertainments are rare, ownership rates are much higher. More than 70 percent of poor households in South Africa and Peru own a radio. A quarter of Guatemala’s poor households and nearly half of Nicaragua’s own a television. It’s not an absence of self-control that leads to such outcomes, the authors say. Poor people often skimp on food so that they will have enough money for things they consider valuable. Like everybody else, they let comparisons with what their neighbors have powerfully

influence their sense of well-being.

Landownership among the very poor varies widely—four percent of Mexicans living on less than \$1 a day own land, while 30 percent of Pakistanis and 65 percent of Peruvians in similar circumstances do—but farmers, like other poor people, are often engaged in multiple occupations. Why not settle on a single occupation, or improve the farm? Why spend time selling trinkets on the street when so many others are doing the same thing? People living on the edge are reluctant to put all their eggs in one basket, the authors explain. More important, they rarely have access to credit or safe places to save their money.

Poor people could earn “much more” by longer and more frequent migrations to find work elsewhere, but surprisingly few follow this path. In Udaipur, 60 percent of the households have a member who has traveled elsewhere for work, but usually not far (the majority stay in the state of Rajasthan, which is roughly the size of New Mexico) or for long (the median stay is one month). Permanent migration the world over is “rare.” Only four percent of very poor households in Pakistan included someone who was born elsewhere and moved permanently for work; in Côte

d'Ivoire and Peru, the numbers are six and 10 percent, respectively. Images of teeming cities may give the impression that the countryside has been drained of people, but a few million city dwellers added over the course of decades is a drop in the bucket in a country of many millions.

One explanation for the disinclination to migrate is that earning more money simply is not the highest priority of many poor people, the authors say. But there's more to it than that. A study in Kenya showed that while farmers who used fertilizer could vastly increase crop yields, few chose to do so, pleading poverty. Yet when aid workers offered to sell them a fertilizer voucher at harvest time (when they do have cash) good for later redemption, many took the deal. Then something even more curious happened. Most immediately redeemed their vouchers, and stored the fertilizer for later use—the very option they'd always declined in the past. They seemed to need a little push. “One senses a reluctance of poor people to commit themselves psychologically to a project of mak-

ing more money,” Banerjee and Duflo write. “Perhaps at some level this avoidance is emotionally wise: Thinking about the economic problems of life must make it harder to avoid confronting the sheer inadequacy of the standard of living faced by the extremely poor.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Outsmarting the Market

THE SOURCE: “What Are Stock Investors’ Actual Historical Returns? Evidence From Dollar-Weighted Returns” by Ilia D. Dichev, in *The American Economic Review*, March 2007.

“BUY AND HOLD” IS THE MANTRA of many investment gurus. Rather than try to time the market or pick winners and losers, they say, individual investors should put their money into a representative basket of stocks and forget about it. Good advice, says Ilia D. Dichev, an economist at the University of Michigan’s Stephen M. Ross School of Business. What a pity it’s too simple for most people to follow.

The NASDAQ market, the main crash site of the Internet boom of the 1990s, would have produced handsome returns (9.6 percent annually) for a person who invested in 1973 and did nothing until 2002.

But even committed “passive” investors have a hard time sitting tight. People tend to put more money into stocks when the market soars and pull it out when it turns south. Most wind up buying high and selling low. In order to find out how investors actually fared, Dichev adjusted historical market returns to reflect the flows of money in and out of the market. That juicy 9.6 percent return on the NASDAQ? In fact, investors reaped only 4.3 percent on average. Results were better in other markets. A capitalization-weighted basket of stocks on the New York and American stock exchanges held from 1926 to 2002 returned an average of 9.9 percent annually. Investors who tried to outsmart the market saw an 8.6 percent annual increase.

Dichev’s lesson: There can be a big difference between how *stocks* perform and how *investors* perform.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Eisenhower Way

THE SOURCE: “Learning From Ike” by Jonathan Rauch, in *National Journal*, April 13, 2007.

A NEW ADMINISTRATION ENTERS the White House, succeeding an unpopular president and inheriting a failing war in a volatile region,

while being challenged on several fronts by the specter of nuclear confrontation. Such is the scenario that awaits the president who will take office in 2009, yet it bears many similarities to the situation when Dwight D. Eisenhower entered the White House in 1953. Though few

presidents seem to look toward Ike as a foreign-policy model, his “brand of realism,” says Jonathan Rauch, a *National Journal* senior writer, has “never been more relevant than it will be in the post-Bush cleanup that is about to begin.”

In today’s America, Rauch says, foreign policy is divided between hawks, who “think that peace comes from American strength,” and doves, who “think that peace comes from international cooperation.” Both camps, in his opinion,



President Eisenhower talks with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles after a 1958 press conference about Formosa (Taiwan). Congress had authorized the use of force to defend the island three years earlier.

are blinded by “misguided sentimentality.” Realists in the mode of Eisenhower are rare. (Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser, is their “éminence grise.”) They value both strength and diplomacy, but “believe that peace ultimately comes from something else: equilibrium.”

In the 1950s, Eisenhower accepted stalemate to end the Korean War, “double-crossing Republican hawks who demanded the ‘rollback’ of Communism and to whom his campaign had pandered.” From then on, Rauch writes, his “unsentimental realism rarely wavered,” although it led to questionable covert operations, as in Guatemala and Iran. Eisenhower rejected calls to make a preemptive nuclear strike against the saber-rattling Chinese, saying that “a preventive war, to my mind, is an impossibility today. . . . I don’t believe there is such a thing, and, frankly, I wouldn’t even listen to anyone seriously that came in and talked about such a thing.”

How would Eisenhower have approached Iraq? Rauch believes that rather than view the conflict as a test of wills or simply end U.S. involvement, Ike probably would have favored the approach championed by Edward N. Luttwak, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies: stop trying to suppress Sunni-Shia conflict, and use U.S. military and diplomatic power only to contain the conflict. “Play Sunnis and Shiites against each other,” Rauch says, “both within Iraq and around the region, to foster and exploit a sustainable balance.”

The chief flaw of Eisenhower-style realism, Rauch says, is “that in a pious, warm-blooded world, it is as unpalatable as atheism.” When confronted by the kind of genocide witnessed in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s and in Darfur today, realists are “inclined to hide behind the United Nations and buck the problem to regional powers.”

Realism is “a lens, not a road map,” Rauch says. Its advocates differ among

themselves over complex, unpredictable situations such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some regard “America’s attachment to Israel as sentimental,” while others believe that the United States must stand firm with Israel “until Palestinian militants understand that they can never win.” A third camp, Luttwak among them, believes that the only choice is “but to muddle on with diplomatic efforts to calm the situation.”

Can a realist win the presidency in 2008? “One recently did—in 2000,” Rauch notes. A pre-9/11 George W. Bush said, “I just don’t think it’s the role of the United States to walk into a country and say ‘We’ll do it this way; so should you.’” But just as the cool-headed Eisenhower ended the Korean War even as he “embraced the principle of containment”—and in the process salvaged many of his predecessor Harry S. Truman’s policies—so Bush may need to hope for a realist successor to save his historical reputation.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Five Percent Problem

THE SOURCE: “The Irrelevance of the Middle East” by Philip E. Auerswald, in *The American Interest*, Summer 2007.

SINCE THE END OF THE COLD War, America has boosted its military presence in only a single region, the Middle East. The area holds half the world’s oil reserves, sits astride crucial international shipping lanes, and makes up the heartland of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. It’s almost universally assumed to be central to American

The Middle East's long-term importance to American foreign policy is roughly proportional to its share of the world population—"less than five percent."

foreign policy. But that assumption is wrong, and getting less true with each passing year, argues Philip E. Auerswald, an economist at George Mason University and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Petro-alarmism is exaggerated, he says. When oil prices more than doubled between 2002 and 2006, the crippling effects on the U.S. economy were precisely none. While rising prices hurt particular groups, such as low-income residents of rural areas, the impact on most consumers has been minimal. Oil is an "inherently feeble strategic weapon" because the "economies of the oil-producing [states] are even more dependent on oil revenues than the economies of consuming countries are on the crude they import," he says. The higher the price soars, the more the oil-importing nations are likely to come up with substitutes. As prices rise, new sources of energy, such as ethanol and oil from Canada's tar sands, become more viable. Smart producers will keep prices from rising so high that investors pour money into developing alternatives that threaten the economic foundation of their nations.

Catastrophic scenarios of a sudden cutoff of oil from Saudi Arabia because of an abrupt regime change ignore history, according to

Auerswald. When the Ayatollah Khomeini took over Iran, its oil production decreased for a year but has grown ever since. Since 1980, Islamic Iran's decisions on how much oil to pump have been "no more menacing or unpredictable than Canada's or Norway's."

Threats to international shipping lanes in the Middle East such as the Suez Canal are real, but no more serious than threats to the Cape of Good Hope or the Strait of Malacca. Middle East nuclear terrorism is a legitimate concern, but no more so than a nuclear-armed North Korea. America can maintain its irrevocable commitment to Israel's right to exist and its support for a viable Palestinian state even as it reframes its priorities in the Middle East as a whole. "The long-term importance of the Middle East is roughly proportional to the share of the world population for which the region accounts—less than five percent," Auerswald contends. "Sometimes, simply paying less attention leads to better outcomes."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

A New Race in Space

A SURVEY OF RECENT ARTICLES

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S new National Space Policy, released unobtrusively late on a Friday afternoon before a long holiday weekend last October, took some time to percolate through the foreign-policy establishment. But its forceful assertion of U.S. rights in space has sparked a passionate argument that mirrors the ongoing debate over

America's international strategy: Bold or belligerent? Essential in a world of instability or dangerously unilateral?

Freedom of action in space is now as important to the United States as air and sea power, the space policy states. As recently as the end of the Cold War, the chief military function of space was reconnaissance. Now, satellites guide precision strikes from a distance to put fewer soldiers in harm's way, reduce confusion on the ground, make the U.S. military more effective and lethal, and reduce casualties among troops, writes Jeff Kueter, president of the George C. Marshall Institute, in *The New Atlantis* (Spring 2007). Just about all phases of military operations, from planning to execution, involve space, says Marc J. Berkowitz, former assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for space policy, in *High Frontier* (March 2007), a journal of the U.S. Air Force Space Command.

The new National Space Policy has raised alarms both in the United States and among its allies because of "undiplomatic and unilateral" language, according to Theresa Hitchens, director of the Center for Defense Information, writing in the same issue of *High Frontier*. The policy states that the United States will "deny, if necessary, adversaries the use of space capabilities hostile to U.S. national interests." And it opposes arms control agreements that might impair American ability to "conduct research, development, testing, and operations, or other activities in space."

The blunt words of the policy cemented concerns that the United States "intends to use force both in space and from space," Hitchens says, and they were met with dead silence

from America's closest allies. An editorial in *Aviation Week and Space Technology* called the policy "jingoistic," and *The Times* of London described it as "comically proprietary in tone about the U.S.'s right to control access to the rest of the solar system." Administration officials responded flatly that the policy is "not about developing or deploying weapons in space," but the language of the new policy "muddied the waters," Hitchens maintains.

The Bush policy is more a beginning than an end, in Berkowitz's view. It's virtually inevitable that America's freedom of action in space will be forcibly challenged, he says, and national leaders must "undertake serious preparations to preserve" U.S. rights to operate in space without interference. "It may not be a choice for U.S. policy-makers to decide whether or not space will be made a battlefield; that decision could be made by an adversary." The United States is already party to agreements that limit its activities in orbit. These pacts bar the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, detonation of nuclear weapons, and interference with methods used to verify arms treaties. Further treaties, Berkowitz contends, would not be "verifiable, equitable, effective, or compatible with the nation's security interests."

Already, he says, enemies have attempted to cripple U.S. combat effectiveness by jamming global positioning signals and blinding reconnaissance satellites. Developing "active and passive defense measures" to

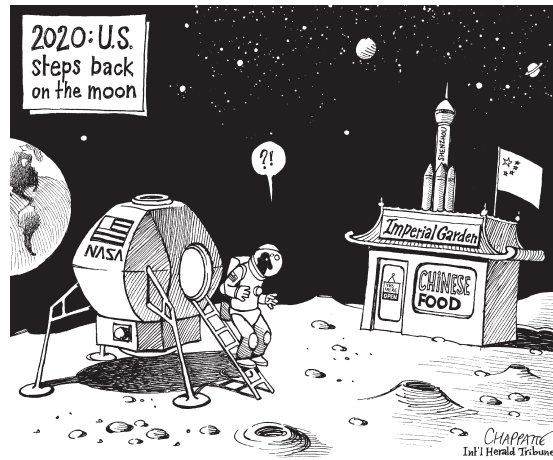
protect America's "assets" in space is merely prudent, he writes. The danger of "inciting an arms race" is considerably less than the risk involved in leaving the nation with an "Achilles' heel."

America's space vulnerability was made clear in January, when, three months after the release of Bush's National Space Policy, the Chinese launched a missile that rose 537 miles and slammed into an obsolete weather satellite, turning both missile and satellite into 900 chunks of space debris. Was this a shot over the bow in reaction to the new space policy, a ham-handed effort to demonstrate

Kueter says: taking a wait-and-see attitude rather than risk overreaction, changing its mind about treaties and using negotiation and diplomacy to ban the introduction of weapons into space, or adopting an "active defensive posture"—Kueter's recommendation. "The industrial and academic base on which U.S. space prowess depends is not currently capable of surging production of existing systems or developing new ones to meet such demands," he says. This capacity needs to be built up. An "active defensive posture" might well require investing in the development of small satellites and rapid launch capabilities so that satellites could be speedily replaced. Moreover, he says, Washington needs to sort out who within the government is in charge, talk frankly about threats and potential responses with its allies, and stop the shrinkage of the pool of rocket scientists.

One more uncertainty: Two researchers argue in *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2007) that the true explanation for China's satellite-destroying stunt might be that it was a rogue action of the Chinese army. The right hand of the Chinese foreign-policy establishment—which has built up a "peacefully rising" image of its nation as a "responsible great power"—may not know what the other hand of the Chinese military is doing.

The military has kept information from others in Beijing before, such as when a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S.



The Chinese plan to launch their first mission to the moon this year.

Chinese space prowess, or an attempt to stamper the United States into a treaty to ban space weapons?

Whatever the Chinese motivations, Kueter writes in *The New Atlantis*, "China is now unquestionably a first-tier space power, comparable to the United States and Russia." China put its first satellite into orbit in 1970, and sent up its first astronaut in 2003. It plans an unmanned lunar orbiter mission this year.

America has three options,

reconnaissance plane collided, and when the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) infection spread inside China, write Bates Gill and

Martin Kleiber of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Diplomats now believe, they say, that the Chinese Ministry of Foreign

Affairs was simply not informed of the test, raising questions about China's reliability as a global partner in more fields than just space.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

A Low-Wage Dead End

THE SOURCE: "Economic Development and Globalization in South Carolina" by Lacy K. Ford Jr. and R. Phillip Stone, in *Southern Cultures*, Spring 2007.

FEW SOUTHERN STATES WERE more successful in the economic development derby of the 20th century than South Carolina. Its per capita income rose almost fivefold between 1950 and 1980. Its population increased by half. And its economy underwent the most remarkable growth since the cotton boom of the early 19th century, as officials pursued a low-wage, low-tax policy that lured heavy industry to the nonunion state. But now the jig may be up, write historians Lacy K. Ford Jr. of the University of South Carolina and R. Phillip Stone of Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina. The state's "staggering" educational shortcomings leave it straining to compete in a knowledge-based world economy.

South Carolina's great leap forward ended more than 25 years ago, and relentless tax cutting, government shrinkage, and industry courting ever since have served only to stabilize its position as one of the 10 or 11 poorest states. The state dodged the dot-com economic meltdown only because it had never par-

ticipated in the dot-com boom. "Smokestack chasing" stopped working long ago. "Neither labor costs nor overall business expenses are lower in South Carolina than in Mexico or China," Ford and Stone write.

For a while many officials preached protectionism, but when foreign-owned BMW located its roadster assembly plant in the state in 1992, politicians could no longer easily rail about imports and the perils of foreign competition, according to the authors. The Palmetto State relies on foreign investment capital, and by 2004 China was the state's sixth-largest foreign customer.

Two recent studies have fingered education as the weak link in South Carolina's development. The state has the largest share of urban adults without a high school diploma and ranks near the bottom nationally in the percentage of all adults who have finished high school. Only about one in five adults has a bachelor's degree or higher. Per pupil spending for public elementary and secondary education in the 2004–05 academic year was \$7,555, compared with a national average of \$8,701—and \$14,119 in New York. The state lacks skilled workers and has no top-tier research university. It also lags in two other

areas thought critical to economic growth: patents and venture capital funding. South Carolina companies, universities, and individuals were granted only 3.6 patents per 10,000 workers in 2001, half the national rate. Available venture capital stood at \$3 per worker in 2002, compared with \$155 per worker nationally.

South Carolina, the authors conclude, must abandon the "easy political posturing of seeing the answer to all problems in irresponsible tax cuts and the savaging of a public sector that creates the bulk of the state's human capital." It must invest "heavily and patiently" in education so that, instead of slipping into a new era of stagnation and decline, its residents can attain "an American standard of living."

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Presidential Paralysis

THE SOURCE: "Personal Tragedy and Presidential Performance: Calvin Coolidge as Legislative Leader" by Robert E. Gilbert, in *Congress and the Presidency*, Autumn 2006.

SCHOLARS NOW KNOW THAT King George III, the monarch who lost America, was profoundly impaired toward the end of his reign by a disease that caused progressive insanity. Robert E. Gilbert, a political scientist at Northeastern University, argues that more than a century later America was led by a president

who was also afflicted by a misunderstood and untreated mental condition that destroyed his authority and undermined his judgment. Calvin Coolidge, rated by historians as among the worst presidents in history, strode boldly into the White House in 1923 only to lose his young son 11 months later and plunge into clinical depression.

Following President Warren G. Harding's sudden death of a heart attack, vice president Coolidge proceeded confidently to dominate the capital. He met almost daily with members of Congress, entertained them at breakfast and on the presidential yacht, corresponded extensively with influential government leaders, and upon the death of the wife of an important farm bloc leader, invited the senator to live at the White House for a while.

In his first State of the Union message, which was delivered in person at the Capitol and was the first such address to be broadcast on radio, Coolidge made 44 requests, including the establishment of a world court, creation of a cabinet-level department of health and welfare, tax cuts,

the reopening of intercoastal waterways, and a constitutional amendment to limit child labor. Many of these proposals were enacted. The redoubtable Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R.-Mass.) praised Coolidge for the ratification of 32 treaties—"no such record . . . has ever been made by any administration." The former governor of Lodge's home state was elected to the presidency in his own right with 54 percent of the vote in 1924, and brought in 25 more Republican members of Congress on his coattails.

In the midst of that campaign, however, Coolidge endured a personal tragedy that would change his life. On June 30, Coolidge's two sons played a game of tennis on the White House court. Sixteen-year-old Calvin Jr. developed a blister on his foot that became infected, and, in that era before antibiotics, he was dead within a week. Coolidge became hysterical at his son's deathbed. He broke down sobbing when the body was removed from the White House, began sleeping 15 hours a day, and seemed to be on the verge of collapse. His secretary described him as "mentally ill," and

his surviving son said, "My father was never the same again." Coolidge had already lost his 39-year-old mother to tuberculosis when he was 12, and his only sibling, Abbie, to appendicitis when she was 14.

After Calvin Coolidge Jr.'s death, the president lost interest in working with Congress for the remainder of his presidency. He was indifferent to enemies and friends, Gilbert writes. When allies brought up his cherished world court proposal from his first State of the Union address, he was mute. When a congressman visited him at the summer White House, Coolidge went off fishing and left him waiting. The president now sent up vague and tentative State of the Union addresses to be read by a clerk. His few proposals were often holdovers, or trivialities—such as providing a location for a statue commemorating the victims of the explosion on the battleship *Maine*. Congress considered Coolidge easy to ignore and safe to challenge. There was little disappointment when "Silent Cal" declared, with characteristic brevity, "I do not choose to run for president in 1928."

SOCIETY

Let Them Sue

THE SOURCE: "Doctors and Juries" by Philip G. Peters Jr., in *Michigan Law Review*, May 2007.

DESPITE DOCTORS' LOUD COMPLAINTS about medical malpractice suits, there is little evidence that

juries are awarding unjustified bonanzas to lawsuit-happy patients. If anything, jurors have a slight bias in favor of doctors, even when they are negligent, writes University of Missouri, Columbia, law professor Philip G. Peters Jr.

Nevertheless, Congress is again considering legislation to experiment with "health courts" staffed by judges with health expertise and intended to eliminate irrational and unjust verdicts. Such verdicts are thought to contribute to the high cost of medical care by forcing doctors to pay expensive malpractice insurance premiums and to practice defensive medicine by ordering extra tests and procedures to protect themselves in the

event of a suit.

Actually, Peters writes, doctors win most malpractice cases—twice as many as they lose. They are much more likely to win in the courtroom than other kinds of defendants accused of causing injury. “Juries are so reluctant to hold physicians liable that they render defense verdicts in half of the cases that medical experts think plaintiffs should win,” he says.

Peters analyzes seven studies of large numbers of malpractice cases conducted in the last three decades. Generally, the studies compared jury decisions with the private assessments of cases made for insurance companies by outside medical or legal experts. Juries did give patients victories in about 10 to 20 percent of the cases reviewers felt they should lose, but patients won only 20 to 30 percent of the cases rated as tossups and about 50 percent of cases with strong evidence of negligence.

Many doctors, however, are horrified over the effect on their livelihood and reputation of facing even a 10 to 20 percent chance of losing a case in which experts think they have not been negligent. Peters sees this fear as exaggerated. “Easy” cases in which liability is clearly present or absent are most likely to be settled before going to trial. The court docket contains a preponderance of “weak cases” in which the evidence is ambiguous and experts disagree on the quality of care.

Peters contends that juries may frequently be right in ruling

for the patient in the 10 to 20 percent of cases in which experts find no negligence. This is because experts review the cases shortly after they are filed, while juries hear the cases after lawyers have gathered more evidence. Juries may hear “more complete and stronger evidence of medical negligence,” he notes.

It’s unclear why doctors have such an edge in court. Jurors may be skeptical of patients who sue their doctors, because physicians are high-status professionals whose role is to heal. Doctors seem to be much more likely to have experienced attorneys and superior experts, and juries apparently take the burden of proof very seriously when it comes to medical malpractice, giving physicians the benefit of the doubt in close cases.

In the end, the “health courts” for which some doctors are clamoring might backfire, according to Peters. Trained “health judges” might well wind up being tougher on physicians than today’s supposed hanging juries.

SOCIETY

The History of History

THE SOURCE: “History’s Struggle to Survive in the Schools” by Diane Ravitch, in *OAH Magazine of History*, April 2007.

IT’S EASY TO IMAGINE THAT American children in some golden period of the last century got a thorough grounding in history. They didn’t. The subject came to

the U.S. high school curriculum in the late 19th century, bloomed swiftly, then declined precipitously. Only now is it making a slow recovery from the dark days of the 1930s to the 1980s, writes historian Diane Ravitch of New York University.

History entered high school alongside science as a “modern” subject in the 1880s. For more than four decades schools tended to offer a Eurocentric course that started with ancient times, focusing on the Greeks and Romans, and moved through medieval and some modern history. But as the curriculum grew, leading educators became alarmed about the helter-skelter increase in courses. In 1893 came the first in a series of prestigious commissions to guide the nation’s schools toward a goal that remains elusive today: a core curriculum.

The Committee of Ten, led by Harvard president Charles W. Eliot, recommended the study of biography and mythology in the fifth and sixth grades, American history and civil government in the seventh, Greek and Roman history in the eighth, French history in the ninth, English in the 10th, and American again in the 11th, with an intensive study of a selected period in the senior year. As historical study then mostly involved memorization and recitation, the committee called for student participation, more critical discussion, and the use of primary documents and even historical novels rather than a single textbook.

Critics contended that the committee was trying to force an academic education on all children, and

a new group, the Committee of Seven, was soon convened. But it echoed the earlier recommendations. More groups emerged, a Committee of Eight and a Committee of Five, each recommending that history be part of every student's education. But by World War I, critics were beginning to complain not only of history but of algebra and literature, and most other courses that did not prepare students for their future jobs.

Public high school enrollment during this period grew 22-fold, from 200,000 in 1890 to 4.4 million in 1930. Overwhelmed schools began to offer academic courses only to future professionals, and vocational courses to those who would become "common wage earners." David Snedden, Massachusetts commissioner of education, ridiculed the study of history. The only reason to teach it, he said, was to train stu-

In 1893, American educators formed the first of many commissions to guide the nation's schools toward a goal that remains elusive today: a core curriculum.

dents for good citizenship, defined as "submission to established political order [and] cooperative maintenance of same."

As "reformers" pushed for vocational education, Ravitch says that the history profession "capitulated" to social studies advocates who favored a mish-mash of civics, history, and social science. By 1929, historian A. C. Krey, president of the American Historical Association, would write that history was far beyond the competence of the average student, and that it had little

value in preparing students for "effective participation in society."

In the 1980s, Ravitch writes, the "vapid" nature of social studies came under fire in reports such as *A Nation at Risk*, and the writings of Secretary of Education William Bennett. And though recent efforts to develop voluntary national history standards have been widely ridiculed, many states have written their own solid curriculum requirements and students are beginning to be taught serious history once again.

Although a "slow recovery" is under way, Ravitch says, there is still much to improve. When the National Assessment of Educational Progress tested students' knowledge in 1994 and 2001, high school seniors did worse in history than in any other subject. A majority scored "below basic," the most abysmal score possible.

EXCERPT

Another Day, Another Kidnapping

The kitchen table serves as the connecting hub to all other points in my house. The day's mail, the children's toys, and assorted reading materials sit in neat heaps before finding their way to the appropriate recipient, toy chest, or shelf, usually within a day. However, the magazines and newspapers inevitably linger longer. My husband and I like to poke through the articles over the course of a few mornings, so the magazines will often be opened to an interesting article, perhaps marred by a

stain or two, and the newspaper sections will be scattered like leftover napkins from a previous night's party. . . .

[One morning] I took note of all that had collected in the hearth of my home, and I saw the repulsive. I cringed at the violent war photos and blaring headlines about the newly kidnapped, terrorized, and dead. . . . I realized that what had previously made me despair had, over the course of a few years, become the topic of breakfast conversations. These pictures and articles had become—along with the cheery greetings and hugs with my husband and children—part of my morning routine.

—PAULINE W. CHEN, author of *Final Exam: A Surgeon's Reflections on Mortality* (2007), in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Spring 2007)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Three Philosophers Walk Into a Bar

THE SOURCE: "What's So Funny? Or, Why Humor Should Matter to Philosophers" by Camille Atkinson, in *Philosophy Today*, Winter 2006.

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE NEVER been much for jokes. It's not that they can't crack a smile, but that they don't see much philosophical value in humor, writes Camille Atkinson, a philosophy instructor at Central Oregon Community College. She thinks that's a mistake.

There are three general theories of humor. The superiority theory, which prevailed from Plato's time to the 18th century, holds that humor involves feeling superior to somebody else—or wanting to. The Athenians may have had jokes about how many Spartans it takes to light a torch; we have our own endless varieties, ranging from harmless stereotypes of absent-minded professors to stinging put-downs of ethnic groups.

Sigmund Freud favored the relief theory, which posits that laughter is "the release of nervous energy." Self-deprecation—the airing of insecurity through humor—is the clearest example, as in Woody Allen's quip, "My one regret in life is that I'm not someone else."

Both these forms of humor—which often overlap—aren't much use to philosophers. They tend to emphasize "the anxieties or con-

cerns" of individuals, according to Atkinson. Such jokes may be grist for sociologists or psychologists, but philosophers seek universal truths. And to find them, writes Atkinson, they would be wise to seek inspiration in the third category of humor, the humor of the incongruous.

Jokes of this sort pit our expectations of what should happen against what actually happens: Don Quixote persists in his grand delusions; Inspector Clouseau blithely acts as if he were a genius

The Athenians may have had jokes about how many Spartans it takes to light a torch; we have our own endless varieties.

detective. We know better, but in the end, Atkinson says, we are laughing not at "someone but at something." In these cases it is the human tendency to take oneself too seriously. But other incongruities—e.g., the comedian who takes on the characteristics of a machine or an animal—can spur us to examine large questions: "Why don't kangaroos go into bars?" might lead us to ask why we use intoxicants

to alter human consciousness.

"Laughter has no greater foe than emotion," wrote the philosopher Henri Bergson. He meant that humor requires a certain disinterest, or "the ability to look at something from a more distant, abstract, or rational point of view," Atkinson explains. Incongruous humor thus draws us closer to the philosopher's stance.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Catholic School Deficit

THE SOURCE: "Can Catholic Schools Be Saved?" by Peter Meyer, in *Education Next*, Spring 2007.

THE NUMBER OF ROMAN CATHOLICS in the United States, now nearly 77 million, has grown by more than 70 percent in the past four decades, but in the same period the nationwide network of Catholic schools has shrunk by more than half. Some 600 parochial schools have closed in the last six years alone, and the student population receiving a Catholic education has decreased by nearly 300,000, or 11 percent. Everything but a plague of locusts has afflicted the nation's Catholic schools, writes Peter Meyer, former news editor of *Life* magazine. Catholic schools will have to become expert fundraisers to survive. "And marketers. And promoters. And lobbyists. And miracle workers."

Studies by scholars at the University of Chicago, Northwestern, the Brookings Institution, and

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Holy Redeemer High School supporters march to save their school, one of 15 shuttered by the Archdiocese of Detroit in 2005. Only two Catholic schools, both boys-only, remain open in the city.

Harvard have all concluded that Catholic schools, on average, do a better job of educating children, especially poor and minority students, than public schools do, Meyer notes. Parochial schools never had to go back to basics because they never left them. Catholic schools have always required correct grammar, uniforms, homework, good posture, proper skirt lengths, and a balanced lunch, including peas and carrots, Meyer writes.

Even so, an unholy trinity has descended on modern Catholic education: financial distress,

declining enrollments, and falling test scores. Teaching nuns, who provided virtually free labor, constituted 90 percent of all Catholic school teachers in the 1950s; they account for less than five percent today. As a result, costs have soared, with tuition rising from next to nothing to about \$2,400 for elementary school and \$6,000 for high school. Middle-class Catholic parents who might have paid the difference have largely evacuated the city neighborhoods many schools serve. Enrollment dropped from 5.2 million in 1960 to 2.3 million in 2006. The chil-

dren who slid into the empty desks in cities where Catholic schools have been hardest hit were disproportionately poor and had low incoming test scores.

Then came the sex abuse scandals, Meyer writes: a shattering, “endless parade of headlines about priests abusing children.” One in four Catholics told pollsters they withheld donations, even as the church faced millions of dollars in claims. Four dioceses have already declared bankruptcy, and others are on the brink.

Meyer, who attended a parochial school himself, says that he’s not counting them out. Two new developments may help stabilize the situation. Education reform is one. While a growing charter school movement has sucked away students, a second reform vehicle, vouchers—public grants that parents can use to send their children to private schools—are providing an antidote in the cities where they are offered. And several archdioceses have launched successful fundraising campaigns to reopen inner-city schools and revive others. The schools are a missionary undertaking, not one aimed solely at providing a sectarian service for members (although religion classes are part of the curriculum). Most of the children who would attend the schools the parishes are struggling to keep open are not Catholic. “We don’t educate these children because *they* are Catholic,” Meyer quotes Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C., as saying, “but because *we* are Catholic.”

HISTORY

Winner's Justice

THE SOURCE: "The Trial of General Homma" by Hampton Sides, in *American Heritage*, Feb.-March 2007.

TALL, ENGLISH-SPEAKING, AND aristocratic, General Masaharu Homma was a familiar figure in English society before Pearl Harbor. Openly pro-Western, he had lived in Oxford, London, and India; met Gandhi, Churchill, and Mussolini; and been escorted to the top of the Empire State Building by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. A brilliant student and friend of writers, painters, and dramatists, he lacked the temperament for the military career that family tradition required him to pursue.

Nevertheless, in April of 1942 he succeeded in wresting the Philippines from General Douglas MacArthur, becoming the only Japanese general ever to decisively defeat a U.S. army. When the Americans surrendered, about 70,000 starving and malarial men staggered out of the jungle into prisoner of war compounds administered by a much smaller force of Japanese, also short of food and medicine. The movement of this unexpected number of POWs to a concentration camp some 60 miles away became universally known as the Bataan Death March, conducted with unimaginable cruelty. About 10,000 U.S. and Filipino soldiers perished.

Three months after World War II ended, as the Allied forces were beginning to prepare cases against government leaders such as Prime Minister Hideki Tojo in Tokyo, Homma stood before a five-man U.S. Army tribunal in Manila and was charged with 48 counts of violating the international rules of war. MacArthur himself selected "the venue, the defense, the prosecution, the jury, and the rules of evidence in the trial of a man who had beaten him on the battlefield," writes Hampton Sides, author of *Ghost Soldiers* (2001). "The army would not unilaterally administer a war crimes trial like this until the cases now being prepared for the Iraq and Afghanistan war detainees at Guantanamo."

Day after day, prosecutors introduced descriptions of beheadings, live burials, shootings, and acts of gratuitous torture on the Death March route, which was within 500 feet of Homma's headquarters. At first, Homma shook his head, but after several days he took out his handkerchief and wept.

No evidence was presented that Homma knew of the atrocities, though an American master sergeant testified that he saw Homma in an official car on the Death March route. Homma's subordinates told the court that the general had tried to improve

conditions for the prisoners of war. When Homma was informed of the dire conditions in the camp, he relieved the camp commander, freed great numbers of Filipino prisoners, and approved a plan for improving sanitation, installing water pipes, and attempting to procure more food. He received only "one-thirtieth of what was requested."

Taking the stand, Homma testified that he neither knew about nor condoned—let alone ordered—any of the crimes with which he was charged. He told the tribunal that he was not allowed to select his own staff officers and could rarely interfere with subordinates' work. Staff officers, he said, would not presume to distract a commanding general with minutiae. His own army was running out of medicine and food and did not have enough for the prisoners.

On February 11, 1946, Major General Leo Donovan, handpicked by MacArthur to head the tribunal, read Homma the guilty verdict: "The Commission sentences you to be shot to death with musketry." The U.S. Supreme Court refused to intervene in the case, although two justices strongly dissented, with Justice Frank Murphy suggesting that the government was descending to the level of "revengeful blood purges." When Homma's wife appealed personally to MacArthur, he responded that the general's crimes "have become synonyms of horror and mark the lowest ebb of depravity of modern times." Fourteen days

later, Homma was executed by an Army firing squad.

Robert Pelz, now 88, is the last surviving member of Homma's legal defense team. He believes Homma did not receive a fair trial. But that doesn't mean he was morally innocent. "I'm convinced that he was not aware" of the atrocities, Pelz says, but "as the military commander he *should* have known." Brilliant, well educated, and patrician, "he should have sought out that intelligence. He of all people."

HISTORY

The Shining Factory Upon a Hill

THE SOURCE: "Beyond 'Voting With Their Feet': Toward a Conceptual History of 'America' in European Migrant Sending Communities, 1860s to 1914" by Max Paul Friedman, in *Journal of Social History*, Spring 2007.

OVER THE CENTURIES, THE European peasants who stayed behind when their neighbors boarded ships for America developed strong views

about the New World: It was a distant, rough, demanding land. People could get lucky and strike it rich. Quite a few would give up in disgust and come back with a bad attitude. Refinement would be lost, morals often undermined. America as a society was "immediate and present" to ordinary Europeans, writes Max Paul Friedman, a historian at American University. Letters, songs, games, slang, epithets, dictionaries, even place names flesh out a "history of concepts" about the United States that were remark-

EXCERPT

Legacy of the Frontier

We came as pioneers, we worked extremely hard, for a time we prospered; then the old folks died and their children died; little by little the hard-

acquired land got sold and vanished, making it a close question as to what exactly we won. Strong lives, I suppose.

—LARRY MCMURTRY, author of 29 novels and other works about the American West, quoted by Hillsdale College vice president Douglas A. Jeffrey in *Claremont Review of Books* (Spring 2007)



This sod house on the North Dakota prairie sheltered John and Marget Bakken and their children, Tilda and Eddie, shown here about 1896.

ably detailed, and which shifted from place to place and in time.

Most commonly, America was seen as remote. In the German grand duchy of Hesse, the field furthest from the house was called the *Amerika-feld*. A town in Bohemia was nicknamed *Amerika* because flooding often cut it off from nearby villages. A farmer in Mecklenburg might be teased about “trying to get to America” when he plowed an especially deep furrow.

A sleeping person might be said to inhabit *Kamerika*, someone packed off to jail might be described as being *nah Amerika*. Columbus’s discovery was occasionally an oath or a threat: *Geh af Amerika!*—go to hell. A parent in Klentnitz might say to a naughty child, “Do you want to see America?”

Children’s counting rhymes, marble games, and hide-and-seek all referred to going to America. In many parts of Italy, to find one’s America meant to strike it rich. Figures of speech sometimes contained an element of defiance. In Hesse, *Er hodd hie Amerika funn* meant that somebody got rich right in Hesse and didn’t need to go to

America to succeed.

Communities that had undergone high rates of migration knew that making it in America was a struggle and not always a genteel pursuit, Friedman says. In French-speaking Switzerland, to have “the American eye” meant to be avaricious. America was rendered in some songs as *Misery-ca*, a land of bad luck. Departure ceremonies in Ireland were called an “American wake” because most who emigrated were never seen again. The Japanese had a nickname for their country’s emigrants to America: *kimin*, meaning the discarded.

In the Italian Piedmont, an American was a stranger to be wary of. To commit an *americanata* was to act in an eccentric or tasteless manner. In Umbria, an *amerikanu* was a spendthrift, most likely a reference to free-spending immigrants who returned with money in their pockets. One in three immigrants eventually turned around and came home. When the U.S. government began keeping records in 1908, return immigration rates were about 70 percent for people from

the Balkans, 58 percent for Italians, 22 percent for Germans, and 12 percent for the British.

Although there is evidence in surviving letters that some immigrants spoke of their new land as a haven of religious freedom, Puritan John Winthrop’s vision of America (famously quoted by Ronald Reagan) as a shining city upon a hill was only a small part of the Europeans’ image of the continent. Immigration research shows that most immigrants came to America in search not of liberty, but work. Even most of the Puritans were seeking economic betterment, not primarily religious freedom, Friedman says.

European idioms about the upstart nation were extensive and varied, envious and contemptuous. “The vernacular has no monopoly on truth,” Friedman says. But the traces of meaning that are found in the everyday lives of European villagers can serve as a corrective to platitudes, such as the one asserting that 30 million immigrants all voted with their feet for freedom and liberty.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Monster Math

THE SOURCE: “The Future of Proof” by Ian Stewart, in *Prospect*, March 2007.

WHEN JOHANNES KEPLER’S inquiry into the structure of snowflakes led him in 1611 to propose the most efficient method for stacking items in three dimensions, little did

he guess that nearly 400 years would pass before his solution would be proven—nor that the proof, by mathematician Thomas Hales, would be about as long as 10,000 full-length novels. It would take “about 30 years merely to read it,” according to mathematician Ian Stewart. Not only are

computers needed to create such monster proofs, Stewart says, but only computers can verify them. And that calls into question the very nature of mathematical proofs.

Ever since Euclid of Alexandria invented proofs in the third century BC, most people have gotten their introduction to them in geometry class. Later mathematicians followed Euclid’s method of writing down proofs so that others could verify their work. There was “an unspoken assumption that the verification

process could, and should, be carried out by one unaided human brain.”

But mathematicians, Stewart says, are “much more interested in solving problems than in philosophizing about their methods.” There is no reason to think they can’t accommodate computer proofs. Even without electronic help, proofs often get incomprehensible, so mathematicians frequently reduce them to essentials. Stewart compares the process to giving driving directions from point A to point B. We leave out details such as “Exit your house, go down the walkway, open your car door, get in.” In the same way, mathematical proofs often begin by jumping ahead to a “signpost” spot.

Mathematical proofs are really narratives, Stewart says. “Poetic” proofs—short, snappy, and sometimes elegant—are the discipline’s delicacies. The mathematician Paul Erdős once speculated that such proofs reside in a book owned by God, who occasionally offers mere mortals a glimpse. More common are the “novel-like” proofs, such as the one occupying several hundred pages in Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead’s *Principia Mathematica* (1910–13) showing that $2+2=4$. (Russell is said to have come close to a nervous breakdown verifying it.) Today’s computer proofs are more like a “telephone directory.” Yet even they can contain bits of poetry. At the bottom of Thomas Hales’s massive proof of Kepler’s idea is a “poetic” insight that reduces the proof to “a very large list of routine computations.”

At worst, Stewart concludes, computer-driven proofs are “acceptable.” At best, they “open up new realms of discovery, relieving the hum-

an brain of routine tasks, leaving it free to concentrate on the big picture.”

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

How Many Dead?

THE SOURCE: “The Number” by Dale Keiger, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, Feb. 2007.

WERE NEARLY 700,000 CIVILIANS killed in the first three years of the Iraq war? When epidemiologists Gilbert H. Burnham and Leslie F. Roberts of Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health published that estimate in the British medical journal *The Lancet* a few weeks before the 2006 U.S. congressional election, it made headlines around the world, reports Dale Keiger, a senior writer for *Johns Hopkins Magazine*. British prime minister Tony Blair and President George W. Bush both rejected it. “I don’t consider it a credible report,” Bush said.

Around the time the study appeared, the U.S. and Iraqi governments were citing 30,000 Iraqi deaths, while other sources put the death toll up to several times greater.

Official estimates are based only on reports from hospitals and morgues, and it’s generally believed that they understate the total. Burnham and Roberts used the “cluster survey” technique epidemiologists employ to track the spread of disease to arrive at their estimate. Eight Iraqi surveyors interviewed people from nearly 2,000 households in 47 selected areas in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq to determine how many deaths had occurred in their families. Then Burnham and Roberts calculated a mortality rate for the entire country. Their conclusion: Iraqis had

died at the rate of 1,000 per day during the previous year.

The new study’s methodology was quickly questioned. Lurking in the background was a political question: Was it just a coincidence that an earlier controversial Burnham-Roberts estimate had appeared just before the 2004 U.S. election? An article in *Science* (Oct. 20, 2006) highlighted objections by British researchers Neil Johnson, Sean Gourley, and Michael Spagat. “When a survey suggests so much higher numbers than all other sources of information, the purveyors of this outlier must make a good-faith effort to explain why all the other information is so badly wrong,” Spagat said. That was missing. The three argued that the Johns Hopkins researchers had introduced bias by focusing their Baghdad interviews in areas near main-street intersections, where violence is centered. Another British researcher questioned how so large a survey could have been done so quickly.

Burnham and Roberts counter that their researchers *did* sample away from main streets, but say that the records were destroyed to protect the identity of respondents. Since that eliminated the possibility of reproducing or checking the results, it made Spagat, Gourley, and Johnson more suspicious. Spagat, an economist at the University of London, has called for an investigation.

A colleague of Burnham and Roberts, Scott Zeger, believes that the two researchers did “the best science that could be done under the circumstances.” Iraq, after all, is a war zone, not a laboratory. Says Zeger: “Noisy data is better than no data.”

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Speeding Up Memories

THE SOURCE: "Schemas and Memory Consolidation" by Dorothy Tse, Rosamund F. Langston, Masaki Takeyama, Ingrid Bethus, Patrick A. Spooner, Emma R. Wood, Menno P. Witter, and Richard G. M. Morris, and "Rapid Consolidation" by Larry R. Squire, in *Science*, April 6, 2007.

ANYONE WITH AN UNUSUAL name has experienced the frustration of trying to get it across to a new acquaintance: The hearer betrays bewilderment, seems to be mentally shuffling through a card file of all previously known names, and settles on some remote approximation or gives up entirely. It's as if names can only be remembered if someone is already familiar with similar appellations.

The notion that the ability to remember new information often depends on prior knowledge of the topic is well known. Now, researchers in Edinburgh, Tokyo, and Trondheim, Norway, have conducted a study that helps answer one of the most important

questions in neuroscience: Why is it that the more people know, the more they can learn?

Long ago, British psychologist Frederick Bartlett laid out a framework for how people remember. In a 1932 paper, he identified frameworks of existing knowledge or "schemas" in the brain into which newly acquired information could be incorporated, writes neuroscientist Larry R. Squire. What wasn't clear was how the biology of the mental circuitry actually worked.

Subsequent research showed that the initial learning of facts and events is recorded in a part of the brain called the hippocampus. As time passes, a permanent memory is constructed in a different, deeper part of the brain, the neocortex. It is the neocortex that holds the framework of knowledge that has been built up from many experiences, and the neocortex was, until now, considered a slow learner.

The research conducted by the eight authors of "Schemas and Memory Consolidation" investigated how rats remembered to find food in a maze. The rats were given a sample of

one of six different-flavored pellets such as bacon or banana in a "start box" and could get more of the same treat by going to the correct sand pit and digging it up. The rodents practiced for six weeks, during which a "schema" of how to remember the locations of each flavor (even when the experimental arena was rotated slightly) built up in their long-term memories. Then two new flavors were introduced, and the rats remembered the locations after only a single trial.

When researchers removed almost all of the rats' hippocampus where initial memories are stored, the rodents not only still found their way to the original six locations but to the two new ones, even though they had been introduced only two days earlier. Previously, research had shown that the buildup of a schema for remembering took at least a month in rats, and several years in humans. Dorothy Tse, Rosamund F. Langston, and their colleagues theorize that the rats beat the clock on remembering the two new flavor locations because a framework for remembering them was already in place.

EXCERPT

The Glamour of Ink

Because progress has made communication so efficient, the prestige of inconvenience extends to personal life. . . . Just as luxury watches remain in demand while most people carry cell phones that give the time with virtually observatory-standard accuracy, the Web will never destroy older media, because their technical difficul-

ties and risks help create glamour and interest. . . . The possibility follows that the more sophisticated students become as users of search engines and online databases, the more likely they will become readers, and perhaps buyers, of books. The knowledge-hungry person will need and appreciate print, just as many serious readers of traditional books in an older generation became the gurus of today's electronic scholarship.

—EDWARD TENNER, author of *Our Own Devices: How Technology Remakes Humanity* (2003), in *The Chronicle Review* (March 9, 2007)

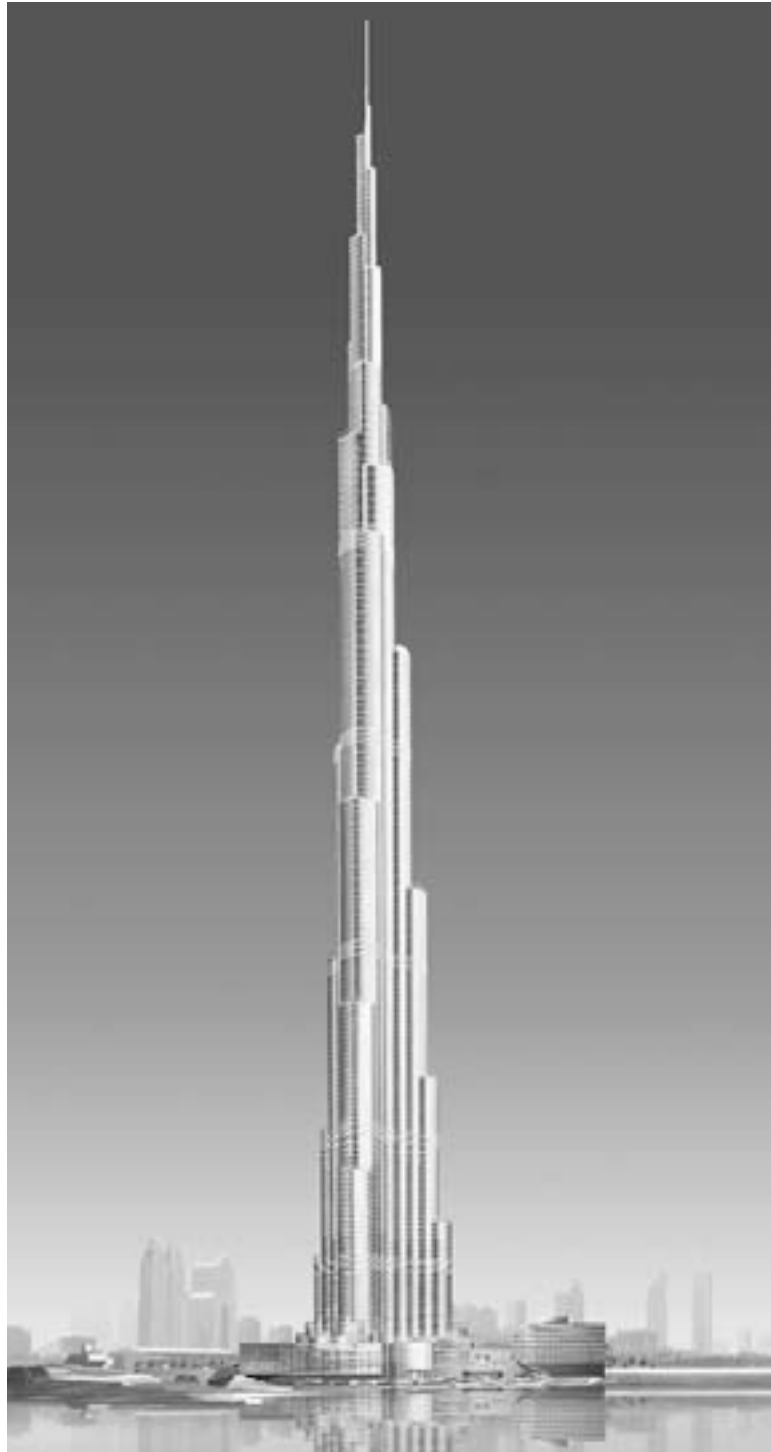
ARTS & LETTERS

Tall Tale

THE SOURCE: "Lust for Height" by Philip Nobel, at *American.com*, Jan.-Feb. 2007.

THE HEIGHT OF THE BURJ
Dubai, the Persian Gulf mega-skyscraper slated for completion in 2009, is a closely guarded secret, but it is rumored that the structure will soar more than 160 stories, to around 2,600 feet. So much for fears that the World Trade Center attacks doomed tall-building construction. Freedom Tower, to be built at Ground Zero, will stand a symbolic 1,776 feet tall—408 feet more than the original towers. Even a mile-high building—proposed by Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1950s—no longer seems preposterous. According to Philip Nobel, author of *Sixteen Acres: Architecture and the Outrageous Struggle for the Future of Ground Zero* (2004), "The technologies are waiting for the money and the willing client."

Today's tallest building—a 101-story tower in Taipei standing 1,666 feet—will be eclipsed next year by the Lotte World II Tower in Busan, South Korea, which "will edge seven feet higher," Nobel reports. The Dubai tower will then claim the title, almost guaranteeing that another future building in nearby Doha "will likely make little news: At 1,460 feet it is a baby—only 10 feet taller than the Sears Tower."



The precise height of the Burj Dubai, a 162-story hotel, office, residential, and retail tower in the United Arab Emirates, is a secret, but it is expected to be the world's tallest building—at least temporarily.

According to Nobel, such gigantic structures are built for only two reasons: “to make money, responding to existing demand, or to advertise and flaunt the money one already has.” Tellingly, six of the 10 tallest buildings in the world are in China, and in booming Shanghai nearly 100 buildings over 500 feet tall were built in the past decade. The twin Petronas Towers, which took the world’s-tallest title from the Sears Tower in 1998, “were built primarily to make visible the roar of Malaysia’s Asian Tiger.” A planned new tower at the Shanghai World Financial Center, though it will not surpass the Burj Dubai, may reach 2,200 feet and snatch “Asia’s tallest” back across the Taiwan Strait.

The original catalyst for skyscrapers was population density, Nobel says. “Limited space to build forced land values, and therefore building heights, through the roof.” Such forces still drive some of the megabuildings in the high-

growth cities of Asia. Not so in the Middle East, where oil-rich countries such as Dubai are building big partly just to make a statement. But the Burj Dubai project will also make money. “It filled in three days when space went on sale several years ago,” says Nobel.

Commercial success often eludes such huge projects; the Petronas Towers, for example, “didn’t make a dime, and they still stand largely vacant.” Likewise the Empire State Building “so outstripped economic necessity that for years it was referred to as the Empty State Building.” More often, Nobel concludes, “we see the most primal motivation for skyscraper construction: to stake a claim, to mark the land, to show how your power (read: money) can change the world. . . . Nothing says ‘I am the master of the universe’—the natural, societal, and financial universes—more clearly than the erection of a tall building.”

ARTS & LETTERS

Mind Traveling

THE SOURCE: “Head Is as Good as Feet” by Mark Lawson, in *The Guardian*, Feb. 9, 2007.

“WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW.” IT’S the gospel preached in today’s many fiction-writing workshops. The reading public’s appetite for nonfiction—biography, memoir, histories of everything—also encourages novelists to rely on factual material. Imagination, once free to roam distant continents, is relegated to conjuring up the interior life of the odd character. Obviously made-up stories risk consignment to “slightly disreputable bookshops, or academic categories called ‘fantasy’ or ‘magic realism,’” writes *Guardian* commentator Mark Lawson.

Occasionally, however, a book tacks against the prevailing literary winds. This year, debut novelist Stef Penney won Britain’s prestigious Costa Book of the Year Award (previously the Whitbread Prize) for *The*

EXCERPT

Latin Divorce

A certain issue prowls the tricky by-paths of Latin American culture: the abysmal contradiction between its social and political reality and its literary and artistic production. . . . While cultural elites were modernizing, opening themselves to the world, renewing themselves by constant intercourse with the great intellectual and cultural centers of contemporary life, Latin American politics, with

very few exceptions, remained anchored to an authoritarian past of caudillos and cliques who practiced despotism, looted public funds, and kept economic life frozen in feudalism and mercantilism. A monstrous divorce resulted: Small redoubts of cultural life—tiny spaces of liberty left to their own fate by a usually dominant political power that disdained culture—stayed in contact with modernity, evolving and producing writers and artists of high quality, while the rest of society remained practically immobilized in self-destructive anachronism.

—MARIO VARGAS-LLOSA, novelist and former Peruvian presidential candidate, in *Salmagundi* (Winter–Spring 2007)

Tenderness of Wolves, a murder mystery set in snowy 19th-century Canada. Penney, a former agoraphobe, hadn't spent a minute on Canadian soil. She researched the story entirely at the British Library. And she isn't the first Costa/Whitbread winner to substitute a library card for a passport. For example, Sid Smith won the 2001 Whitbread First Novel Award for *Something Like a House*, set in China during the Cultural Revolution. Smith had never been to the country.

But there are limits to the imagination, Lawson says. Historical fiction must, of necessity, rely upon the mind of an author—often stocked with armchair research. However, “realistic contemporary fiction benefits from

We shouldn't be surprised when writers astound us with worlds they build entirely in their fertile minds.

having been there. A clever writer can fake it from printed sources—few readers could have guessed that Sid Smith was a stranger to China—but his writing style is impressionistic. A more documentary prose-stylist needs a few jab-marks in the arm.”

The disrepute into which Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* has fallen in some circles tracks a growing cultural prejudice against novels that depart from autobiographical or journalistic models.

Bellow had never been to Africa when he wrote the book, about a millionaire who finds spiritual inspiration among primitive African tribes. “Bellow's book, broadly accepted at the time of its publication in 1959, came to be regarded by some as contemptuous or even frankly racist,” Lawson writes.

The vivid, concrete fiction of “traveler-novelists” such as Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, and their contemporary counterparts John Le Carré and Paul Theroux can't be duplicated with a sun-dappled imagination. But we shouldn't be surprised when writers astound us with worlds they build entirely in their fertile minds. Where their heads can take them, Lawson concludes, “is finally more important than where their feet did.”

OTHER NATIONS

Why China Won't Be No. 1

THE SOURCE: “The Sources and Sustainability of China's Economic Growth” by Gary H. Jefferson, Albert G. Z. Hu, and Jian Su, in *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, No. 2, 2006.

WILL CHINA OVERTAKE THE United States to become the world's largest economy? At \$2.2 trillion (in 2005), it is already the fourth largest, behind Germany, Japan, and the world leader, at \$12.5 trillion, the United States. If China can sustain its nine percent annual growth rate of the past two decades, versus the U.S.

rate of about three percent, it will catch up in 25 to 30 years.

Don't hold your breath, say economists Gary H. Jefferson, Albert G. Z. Hu, and Jian Su. China's surge is almost entirely the product of rapid gains in industries along the Chinese coast. That growth is likely to slow as their productivity catches up with that of the rest of the world. The remainder of China's economy is growing much more slowly.

China's growth is “being

driven by the ongoing reduction of two productivity gaps,” the authors say. One is the gap between industries in thriving coastal cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou and the international economy. The other is the gap between those booming industries and the rest of the Chinese economy, including non-coastal industries and the nation's large and lagging services and agricultural sectors. About 80 percent of China's workers are employed in this “other” economy.

Compared with South Korea and Taiwan at similar stages in their development, “China leans more heavily on its coastal industrial economy for overall catch-up,” Jefferson and colleagues say.

The region's factories are benefiting from an inflow of workers from the countryside, reallocation of capital to more efficient enterprises, and the demise of inefficient businesses. But labor productivity is still only about one-fourth of the U.S. industrial average, and diminishing returns are going to set in, just as they did in other developing nations in the past, predict Jefferson (of Brandeis University), Hu (the National University of Singapore), and Su (Beijing University). When that happens, the economists say, "China's GDP growth can be expected to slow sharply."

China's future growth will largely depend on developments in other sectors and regions. The authors find evidence that noncoastal industry is slowly catching up with the success stories of Shanghai and Guangzhou, although its labor productivity is still 30 to 40 percent behind. But the gap between industry and the huge services and agricultural sectors widened between 1995 and 2004. Getting those two sectors moving faster will require deep institutional reforms, from an overhaul of banking laws to the establishment of more firmly grounded property rights. Even if that happens, however, the benefits will be limited

Labor productivity in China is still only about one-fourth of the U.S. industrial average, and diminishing returns are going to set in.

by diminishing returns.

There are some caveats to all this. The authors compare the size of the U.S. and Chinese economies using today's exchange rates, assuming no change in the future. And by an alternative measure of gross domestic product called purchasing power parity, China will likely overtake the United States "as early as 2010."

EXCERPT

Just Visiting

Our apartment—a five-minute walk from the bridges over the Rhone River, at the point where it emerged from Lake Geneva—had been rented furnished. This was how I came to associate living in another country with sitting at tables where others had sat before, using glasses and plates that other people had drunk from and dined on, and sleeping in beds that had grown old after years of cradling other sleeping people. Another country was a country that belonged to other people. We had to accept the fact that the things we were using would never belong to us, and that this country, this other land, would never belong to us, either.

—ORHAN PAMUK, Turkish novelist and Nobel laureate, in *The New Yorker* (April 16, 2007)

OTHER NATIONS

After Fidel

THE SOURCES: "Rethinking the Cuban Embargo: An Inductive Analysis" by Douglas A. Borer and James D. Bowen, in *Foreign Policy Analysis*, April 2007, and "Castrated: The Bush Administration's Aversion to Dealing With Cuba Is Reducing Our Influence on the Island—Just When There's a Chance to Encourage Change," by Joshua Kurlantzick, in *Washington Monthly*, April 2007.

FIDEL CASTRO MISSED HIS 80th-birthday party in August, the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution in December, and the annual workers' parade on May 1. He hasn't been seen except on television since undergoing emergency intestinal surgery last August. Could his apparently grave illness mean the imminent end of the Fidel era, the

lifting of the U.S. embargo, and the normalization of relations with the United States? Don't count on it, judging by Cuba's recent actions, say Douglas A. Borer of the Naval Postgraduate School and James D. Bowen of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. And America's tactics are making such a happy ending even less likely, writes Joshua Kurlantzick, former foreign editor of *The New Republic*.

The Cuban government "does not want to see the embargo lifted," Borer and Bowen contend. The ban on trade gives Castro an excuse for the country's poverty, and an enemy to blame it on. Although the

European Union has twice successfully challenged the legality of the U.S. sanctions against Cuba before the World Trade Organization, Cuba hasn't bothered to press its advantage. Indeed, it failed even to sign on to the cases as they were being argued. This "inaction at the WTO is potent evidence of Havana's true policy preferences," Borer and Bowen write.

Ever since Castro handed over power to his brother, Raul, last summer, the interim leader has been consolidating his authority and making high-profile visits to military installations, Kurlantzick writes. Meanwhile, the United States is acting as if Cuba will rapturously embrace democracy, just as it expected in Iraq. President George W. Bush has already appointed a director of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba to help oversee the transformation of Cuba's political system, the privatization of Cuban industries, the possible transfer of property to returning exiles, and even the management of Cuban programs such as national retirement funds and traffic safety initiatives. "In Iraq at least we waited to invade the country before appointing a transition coordinator," Kurlantzick quotes a former U.S. diplomat in Cuba as saying.

The commission is seen as a pay-off to the older, vehemently anti-Castro Cubans who supported Bush during the 2000 election, and marched on his behalf to stop the Florida ballot recounts his campaign opposed. In the years since, America has tightened its embargo and stepped up its television and radio broadcasting into the island, as if

pursuing a civilian version of "shock and awe." Maintaining the embargo, however, plays straight into the hands of the current regime, Borer and Bowen say.

In strengthening hard-line policies against Cuba, "the U.S. prepared for the least likely scenario, a democratic revolution, and didn't prepare for the most likely, a gradual hand-over," Cuba scholar Daniel Erikson told Kurlantzick. The United States has squandered its potential influence by allying itself with only the most extreme faction of Cuban exiles, according to Kurlantzick: "The prospect of instability upon Castro's death is not outlandish, and the Bush administration's failed policy has reduced our ability to ensure things go smoothly."

OTHER NATIONS

Who Is Sakamoto Ryōma?

THE SOURCE: "History's 100 Most Influential People, Hero Edition" by Nippon Television Network, April 1, 2007, at *Japan Probe*, www.japanprobe.com/?p=1471.

FURTHER CONFIRMATION, IF any were needed, that we all have a firm sense of our own place in the world is the release of "History's 100 Most Influential People, Hero Edition," a survey conducted by the Nippon Television Network, Japan's largest broadcast system. Thirteen of the top 20 slots on the list, and about half overall, are occupied by Japanese people, an impressive—if somewhat ethnocentric—sprinkling of samurai, daimyo, and shoguns.

In the place of honor, at number one, is Sakamoto Ryōma, a revered

samurai who helped negotiate the resignation of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1867, which led to the Meiji Restoration. Ryōma's plum position sets a pattern; many of the revered Japanese figures seem to have a rebellious and certainly warlike bent, and many who had a hand in toppling the high and mighty appear to have sturdier reputations than even the emperors. Oda Nobunaga, at number three (Napoleon managed to grab the second slot), was the son of a 16th-century minor warlord who almost managed to unify Japan. On the cusp of achieving his goal, though, he was forced to commit seppuku, many believe by one of his own generals, Akechi Mitsuhide (No. 10).

Japan's fascination with heroes from its own past means that many figures who might be considered



Japan's greatest hero, Sakamoto Ryōma, wearing the *hakama* and sword of a samurai warrior, beat out Napoleon as history's most influential person in a Nippon Television Network survey.

“influential” in the West get left out: There’s no place for Jesus, Buddha, or Muhammad; no Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin; no Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud. There are, however, some eyebrow-raising entries: Walt Disney (40), Audrey Hepburn (46), Freddy Mercury (from the rock group Queen, at 52), and Elvis Presley (70). William Shakespeare—highly regarded in *some* literary circles—languishes at number 87, well behind Arthur Conan Doyle (69), the creator of Sherlock Holmes.

Some mystical symmetry seems to be suggested by the list’s book-ends, however. In the final slot, at number 100, is Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, who forcibly opened Japan to Western trade by sailing his gunboats into the harbor of Edo (now Tokyo) in 1853–54. The Japanese leaders with whom Perry “negotiated”? Those same Tokugawa shoguns brought down by number one—ranked Sakamoto Ryōma.

OTHER NATIONS

An Ethical Cup of Joe

THE SOURCE: “Fair Trade Coffee Enthusiasts Should Confront Reality” by Jeremy Weber, in *Cato Journal*, Winter 2007.

ALONG WITH SCREWING IN compact fluorescent bulbs and lacing up running shoes made solely in factories following fair labor practices, a growing number of socially conscious Americans are drinking “Fair Trade” coffee, hoping to improve the lot of farmers around the world. While there is little doubt that Fair Trade coffee has improved

While Fair Trade coffee has improved living conditions for many growers, a researcher finds a “disconnect between promotional materials and reality.”

living standards for many growers, there is a “disconnect between promotional materials and reality,” writes Jeremy Weber, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

The Fair Trade system, he writes, promises a living wage to poor farmers organized in cooperatives. In reality, it guarantees organizations of producers a minimum price. By eliminating “unnecessary” intermediaries who siphon off large fees for financing, sorting, processing, and exporting the coffee, the Fair Trade system is designed to funnel coffee profits straight to the people who grow the beans. But tossing out the middlemen means that someone within the cooperative must handle the same tasks. “Each of those activities . . . if not managed effectively and efficiently, can consume much of the higher Fair Trade price before it reaches growers,” Weber says. Moreover, while many Fair Trade drinkers believe that the system guarantees minimum wages to coffee pickers, wage requirements cover only “employees”; many hired laborers on small coffee farms are not covered because their work is “seasonal.” While the Fair Trade Foundation urges farmers to take steps to improve working conditions for all

workers, there is no requirement that coffee harvesters be paid a minimum wage, and some are not.

The Fair Trade movement aims to eradicate “sweatshops in the fields” by guaranteeing co-ops about \$1.26 a pound for coffee regardless of the international price, which dropped below 65 cents a pound in 2001, according to supporters of the effort. But because Fair Trade prices are higher than market prices, there is not sufficient demand for all the available coffee. The Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International estimated that in 2002 the supply of Fair Trade-certified coffee in Latin America, Asia, and Africa was seven times greater than the amount exported as Fair Trade coffee. The rest had to be sold on the conventional market at the market price, Weber says.

To give themselves an edge, many producers have switched to growing organic coffee, but the years-long organic certification process is expensive and demanding and the Fair Trade process itself requires capital. Basic certification costs \$3,200, and most coffee-producing organizations need about \$15,000 in financing to export a cargo container of Fair Trade coffee. The costs threaten to shut out some of the smallest producers Fair Trade wants to help, and to protect the cooperatives that are already operating.

Ask practical questions and spend less time searching for enemies, Weber advises: “If Fair Trade is dominated by those who see mainstream for-profit companies as intrinsically destructive, the movement will remain a fringe, niche market that supports a few privileged groups.”

Also in this issue:

Martin Walker on Nixon and Kissinger

Florence King on Abe Lincoln mania

Russ McDonald on Shakespeare's big ideas

Emily Bernard on the N word

Andrew Burstein on Virginia's decline

Ruth Levy Guyer on how doctors think

David Lindley on the Smithsonian's mysterious founder

Claude R. Marx on Aimee Semple McPherson

CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

Father of Journalism

Reviewed by Rajiv Chandrasekaran

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS OFTEN haul around something that reminds them of home and serves as a talisman in chaotic places. Long before the days of iPods, a colleague at *The Washington Post* lugged a separate attaché case containing a phonograph and speakers so that, wherever he went, he could listen to opera while he wrote. A friend at *The New York Times* packs a Scrabble board in his bag. When I was reporting from overseas, I carried a bottle of wine from my native California. It was thoroughly impractical to do so as I trekked through Borneo or arrived in Pakistan, where my libations were smashed by customs inspectors, but my Napa Valley cabernet comforted me on long journeys.

Ryszard Kapuściński, the indomitable Polish correspondent and author who died in January at age 74, traveled the world with a copy of Herodotus's *Histories*, a grand and sprawling account of the first great war between East and West. Herodotus (484?–425? BC), the Greek historian who became known as the Father of History, wore out his shoe leather traveling throughout the Middle East to produce his account of the fifth-century BC conflict between the Greeks and the Persians.

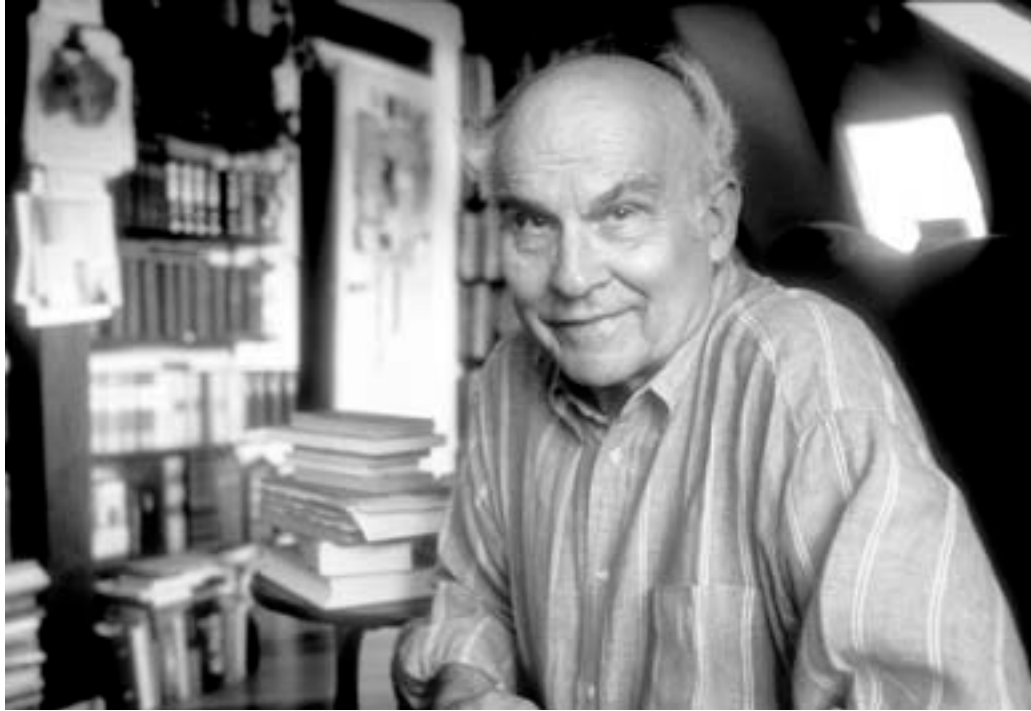
For Kapuściński, whose spare style and risk-defying reportage have been models for successive generations of correspondents,

the book was far more than a salve in the hinterlands. Herodotus became his muse, mentor, and faithful companion on journeys to Benares, Beijing, Tehran, and much of Africa. Kapuściński's final book, part memoir and part homage to his favorite historian, is replete with the subtle-yet-revealing insights that make Kapuściński's work so powerful. This time, however, his subject is not some colonial backwater, but his own life. Though Kapuściński was too self-effacing to write an outright autobiography, the story of his love for the *Histories* is very much a tale of Kapuściński himself.

Kapuściński did not have role models at home in Poland, or even in the insular world of foreign correspondents. He often traveled alone. "I was quite consciously trying to learn the art of reportage and Herodotus struck me as a valuable teacher," Kapuściński writes. "From the very outset," he says elsewhere, "the author of the *Histories* enters the stage as a visionary on a world scale, an imagination capable of encompassing planetary dimensions—in short, as the first globalist." In the

TRAVELS WITH HERODOTUS.

By Ryszard Kapuściński.
Knopf. 288 pp. \$25



Generations of foreign correspondents idolized Ryszard Kapuściński (1932–2007) for defying death to report his spare, evocative stories.

same tradition, Kapuściński had the temerity to tell his newspaper editor at *The Banner of Youth* in 1955, when he was in his early twenties and Poles were still in Stalin's Gulags, that he wanted to travel abroad.

His first trips took him to India, where language was a barrier, and to China, where government minders kept him on a short leash. Yet on his later expeditions he struck off, not for Poland's more comfortable neighbors to the west, but instead for Africa and Latin America (the Polish Press Agency appointed him its only Third World correspondent in 1962). So as not to run afoul of his communist editors in Warsaw, he confined much of his early reporting to cultural and arts subjects, and the political stories he later wired from African countries were contextually distant enough that they didn't draw the attention of censors.

During a career that spanned four decades, Kapuściński probably traveled to more parts of the developing world than any other journalist of the 20th century. The biographical note on the flaps of his books might make the average reader cringe,

but it prompts a bit of envy among his fellow correspondents: Over the years, Kapuściński witnessed 27 coups and revolutions and was sentenced to death four times. "I was tempted to see what lay beyond, on the other side. . . . I wanted one thing only—the moment, the act, the simple fact of *crossing the border*," he writes in *Travels With Herodotus*. "The desire to *cross the border*, to look at what is beyond it, stirred in me."

Because he produced much of his best work when Poland was still behind the Iron Curtain, Kapuściński never achieved the acclaim of journalists such as George Orwell, David Halberstam, or David Remnick. But he was one of the very best at describing for his countrymen what lurked in foreign lands. And with the translation of several of his books into more than two dozen languages, he garnered admirers around the world. *The Emperor* (1978), an account of the decline and fall of Haile Selassie's authoritarian regime in Ethiopia, was his first book to appear in English, in 1983, and is perhaps his most famous. Others include *The Soccer War* (1978), about a six-day conflict that erupted

between Honduras and El Salvador over a soccer game; *Shah of Shahs* (1982), on the 1979 Iranian Revolution; and *Imperium* (1993), about the fall of the Soviet Union.

Though obsessed with the ancient history recounted in Herodotus's tales, Kapuściński doesn't dwell on history in his own work. *Another Day of Life* (1976), his marvelous account of Angola in the grip of civil war, explains little about the roots of the conflict, but through his encounters with ordinary people, his perceptive observations, and his casual chats with Marxist rebels, he reveals something about what it is to be human. As fleeing Portuguese colonists converge on the capital, Luanda, and prepare to leave the country, he writes, people can talk of nothing but the wooden shipping crates they are building to pack out their belongings, and "this dusty desert city nearly devoid of trees now smells like a flourishing forest." Pet dogs, once their owners abandon them in the emptying city, roam in great, pedigreed packs, scavenging for food.

Kapuściński was accused of at times embroidering what he had observed to build a better story—not wholesale fiction, but little embellishments here and there. It is not clear why he did so. Perhaps he was emulating his idol—some have called Herodotus the father of lies—in inventing details to flesh out the narrative and get at some larger truth. Or perhaps he worried that if he didn't produce vivid dispatches, he'd be relegated to the obituary desk in Warsaw. We cannot forget that he was a product of a different era, of a different system, when such liberties were not regarded as firing offenses.

His obsession with Herodotus, Kapuściński admits, sometimes proved a distraction. When he was covering a civil war in Congo, he found himself "infected with the contagion of war—not the local one, but another, distant in place and time." Later in the book, he continues: "As I immersed myself increasingly in Herodotus's book, I identified more and more, emotionally and cognitively, with the world and events that he recalls. I felt more deeply about the destruc-

tion of Athens than about the latest military coup in the Sudan, and the sinking of the Persian fleet struck me as more tragic than yet another mutiny of troops in Congo."

I would like to believe that Kapuściński was exaggerating. Here he sounds like a narrow-minded Eurocentrist, but it is impossible to read his books and come away convinced that he does not care about all that he experienced. He probably spent more days in Africa, and wrote more about the continent, than any of his European and American contemporaries. Yet his admission highlights his book's principal shortcoming: He fills pages with lengthy recapitulations of Herodotus's tales rather than concentrate on the fascinating story of his own journeys. I complain only because I opened *Travels With Herodotus* as his other admirers may, hoping for one full, final dose of his adventures. It is because that expectation wasn't entirely fulfilled that I am disappointed.

I wish that Kapuściński had been healthy enough to travel to Iraq before he died. I can only imagine the trenchant observations he would have delivered from Baghdad's Green Zone—the rumpled Polish reporter walking around, not bothering with geopolitics or military strategy, but vacuuming up the sorts of stories nobody else was. He would have spent a week with the Indians and Pakistanis hired by Halliburton to serve food in the cafeteria. He would have gotten into the cab with a truck driver from Texas and navigated the treacherous convoy routes.

In the years since Kapuściński's travels, many other books have been written about the places he visited. But few have had the staying power of his. Though this may not be his finest, it does not attenuate the power of his life's work. When young journalists ask me whom they should read, I'll continue to tell them to immerse themselves in Kapuściński. Now, however, I'll add: Read him as he read Herodotus.

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The Odd Couple

Reviewed by Martin Walker

THE COVER OF THIS MAMMOTH BOOK DEPICTS the odd couple in what seems a characteristic pose. Two middle-aged men in suits and proper leather shoes are walking up a path toward the White House. Their backs are to the camera. Richard Nixon is on the right, in trousers a little too short for him. He strides stiffly, his head lowered and his hands clenched behind a back that appears rigid with tension. On the left, both deferential and tutorial, Henry Kissinger seems relaxed as he bends slightly toward his president, making some long-forgotten point. They could almost be friends, but there is a distance between them, a palpable lack of intimacy.

In Dallek's view, Nixon and Kissinger were "rivals who could not satisfy their aspirations without each other."

When apart and in private, they could be cruel about each other. My "Jew boy," Nixon called his gifted national security adviser. According to

presidential historian Robert Dallek, Nixon "accurately suspected that Kissinger saw himself as a superior intellect manipulating a malleable president." Kissinger in turn called Nixon "that maniac" or "our drunken friend" or "the meatball mind." Of his trials during his first year in the Nixon White House, Kissinger confided to British ambassador John Freeman, with whom he was far more candid about American foreign policy than he ever was with the State Department (at least until he became secretary of state), "I have never met such a gang of self-seeking bastards in my life. . . . I used to find the Kennedy people unattractively narcissistic, but they were idealists. These people are real heels."

Yet nobody was closer to Nixon, the self-made son of California Quakers, than Kissinger, the child of German-Jewish refugees. In the first 100 days after Nixon took office, the White House log recorded that Kissinger had 198

meetings with the president; the nominal secretary of state, William Rogers, and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had just 30. But Kissinger clearly saw the president as a loner.

"Isolation had become almost a spiritual necessity to this withdrawn, . . . tormented man who insisted so on his loneliness and created so much of his own torment," Kissinger wrote in his memoirs. "It was hard to avoid the impression that Nixon, who thrived on crisis, also craved disasters."

Kissinger, for his part, craved dramas. He was a prima donna, furious at any slight, even the military aircraft assigned to him for his 1971 secret trip to Beijing, though a more prestigious presidential plane would have attracted unwanted attention. He threw legendary tantrums, and could be cruel to his overworked staff. When future secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger was driven to a state of nervous collapse and fell to the floor, Kissinger literally stepped over his prone form, until he finally realized the seriousness of the situation. Dallek describes Kissinger as a match for Nixon in ambition and deviousness, playing up to both Democrats and Republicans, and to Nelson Rockefeller as well as Nixon, as he maneuvered for political power in the 1960s. In Dallek's view, the two men were psychological twins, "a union of two outsiders who distrusted establishment liberals. . . . Their cynicism would also make them rivals who could not satisfy their aspirations without each other."

Dallek briskly covers the lives of his two subjects before they came together in the White House, with so little initial understanding between them that Kissinger was not even sure he'd been hired. But *Nixon and Kissinger* is not a double biography; rather, it's a study in mutual seduction, mutual dependence, and shared power. Strikingly little that is truly new

**NIXON AND
KISSINGER:**
Partners in Power.

By Robert Dallek.
HarperCollins.
740 pp. \$32.50



President Richard Nixon (left) was a loner, and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, was a prima donna. Together, they toppled governments, waged war in Vietnam, opened China—and unwittingly launched the nation into a decade of crippling inflation.

emerges from the 20,000 pages of Kissinger's telephone transcripts, hundreds of newly released Nixon tapes, and the diaries of White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman upon which Dallek relies. He has, however, gleaned some useful nuggets, such as Kissinger's grumble to Nixon, "In the Eisenhower period, we would be heroes," regarding their role in overthrowing Salvador Allende's elected Marxist government in Chile. They swiftly congratulated themselves for keeping their part in the coup at least semisecret.

Most of Dallek's new details are of this unsavory and personal nature, and suggest that the current fashion for "realism" in U.S. foreign policy in the Nixon-Kissinger style, rather than the naive or flawed idealism of liberals and neo-conservatives, carries its own costs in ruthlessness and denial of democratic principles. Mainly, however, this material reinforces Dallek's contention that in crises such as the secret bombing of Cambodia, the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, or

the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Kissinger acted as a kind of co-president.

In broad terms, we knew this already. Even putting aside the fresh material, Nixon's is and may well remain the best-documented presidency in history because of the Watergate tapes. Dallek, who has already written solid accounts of the Franklin Roosevelt, Kennedy, Johnson, and Reagan presidencies, tries honorably to present Nixon's first term in office without the tarnish of Watergate, but the task is impossible. Whatever the interim triumph, be it the opening to China or the launch of détente with the Soviet Union or the signing of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the dark clouds gather ominously ahead.

So much of Nixon's ruthless and anguished character came out in Watergate and the eponymous tapes that any attempt to assess his personality, hopes, and ambitions depends on the hindsight made possible by the scandal that ruined him. This is true of all the memoirs written by figures who

knew Nixon at the time, all the interviews dutiful historians have assembled, and all the histories. And yet it was a fresh, confident morning when Nixon came into office in January 1969, promising to bring the nation together again after the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy the previous year, after the campus riots and the burning of American cities. There was even hope that he would, as promised, end the Vietnam War on plausibly honorable terms.

Nixon's failure to resolve the Vietnam conundrum poisoned his presidency from the beginning. He had no "secret plan" to end the war, as was reported at the time; his only scheme was to use back-channel contacts with South Vietnam president Nguyen Van Thieu to sabotage any prospect for success for the Johnson administration at the Paris peace talks. (In an aside that is new, at least to this reviewer, Dallek reveals that Lyndon Johnson knew of this from bugs on Spiro Agnew's campaign plane and elsewhere, but dared not publicize the information because of the illicit way it had been obtained.) Like Johnson, Nixon was reduced to bombing even harder and then to escalating the conflict into Cambodia, when the North Vietnamese made it clear that the war would end only on their own terms, with an American withdrawal and a united Vietnam under their control.

In the end, what Nixon and Kissinger both realized was that however dominant the Vietnam War seemed in American public life, it was essentially a second-order issue on the wider strategic map. The agony of Vietnam loomed so large because it was a matter of American self-esteem, made acute by anger and incredulity that the nation was committing half a million of its troops yet being defeated by a small and backward state. But once Nixon and Kissinger realized that no important dominoes were falling in Asia and that the United States remained a superpower despite its apparent humiliation, they turned to the grander matters of the Soviet Union and China. In effect, they compensated for the apparent strategic reverse America was suffering in Vietnam by playing the China card against the Soviets, a move that was

all the more alarming to the Soviets because their troops were skirmishing with Chinese soldiers along the Amur and Ussuri river borders between the two countries.

The result was a remarkable success, not only in Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972, but also in the way that event unlocked so many avenues of superpower diplomacy with Moscow. The era of détente, in regard to both Europe and arms control, and the eventual withdrawal of the Soviets from Egypt and their relegation to a secondary role in the Middle East, followed. But the price turned out to be much higher than expected—and it receives unusually scant attention in Dallek's history.

The real American weakness in the early 1970s had less to do with Vietnam (though the costs of the war made matters worse) than with the U.S. dollar and the apparent faltering of America's economic dominance, which eroded Washington's influence over its increasingly affluent European allies. Even the ever-loyal British began to distance themselves. Prime Minister Edward Heath limited the traditional openness of Anglo-American diplomatic and intelligence conversations on the grounds that as a new member of the European Economic Community, Britain should be able to share what it learned from Washington with its European partners.

In retrospect, the crucial non-Watergate date in Nixon's presidency was the weekend of August 14–15, 1971, when a meeting was held at Camp David that Kissinger did not attend. The discussion was led by Federal Reserve chairman Arthur Burns, and the issues on the table were the weakness of the dollar, the balance-of-payments gap, and the prospect of serious inflation. With his eyes firmly on his reelection campaign the following year, Nixon decreed the most draconian economic measures ever enacted by a president in peacetime. He froze prices and wages, imposed surcharges and other controls on imports, and severed the link between the dollar and gold that had endured since the New Deal. Kissinger's absence was understandable; at the time, he knew

little, and cared less, about economics. Once he understood the effect of the economic crisis, he asked the new British ambassador, Lord Cromer, a former chairman of the Bank of England, for some private tutorials on the topic.

If in the early 1970s Kissinger did not fully understand how economic weakness would affect the United States' strategic role, he and the rest of America soon learned better. The nation's abandonment of the gold standard devalued the dollar against other currencies, which meant that oil-exporting countries received less real money for their oil, traditionally priced in dollars. The OPEC countries immediately agreed to confer about steps they might take to restore their income, and their opportunity came in 1973 with the Yom Kippur War, when U.S. support for Israel triggered an oil embargo. The price of oil subsequently tripled, sharply exacerbating the inflation that had been gathering speed since Johnson's presidency. The Great Inflation of the 1970s, which has emerged as one of the gravest legacies of the Nixon years, roared into being. It was the weakness of the dollar, far more than the Vietnam War, that colored the presidencies of Nixon's successors, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. Indeed, the United States was not to recover its economic self-confidence until the Reagan years.

It may soon be considered peculiar to write books like *Nixon and Kissinger* that give so little prominence to the economic forces that underpin

the diplomacy and strategy of political leaders. The United States was uniquely powerful in the decades after World War II because it was uniquely rich, and in the end it was the ability to pay for both guns and butter that allowed America to prevail in the Cold War against a much poorer antagonist. The heirs of Kissinger and Nixon, however skillful they may be in diplomacy, must engage a world in which Europe already operates from a base of similar financial strength, and eventually China and then India will as well. The emergence of these separate poles of economic might is already squeezing American freedom of maneuver as sole superpower.

In this new world that is upon us, the skills of a Kissinger, who made his name as a scholar with his study of Prince Metternich's diplomacy in the era of Europe's concert of great powers after 1815, could come into their own once more. But any future Kissinger had better know much more about global economics than the original. It is no accident that the only American figure in the last two decades other than a president to achieve international status as a sage and global guru equal to Kissinger's has been central banker Alan Greenspan. What we know about America's future challenges suggests that the abilities of both a Kissinger and a Greenspan will be required. But we can certainly do without another Nixon.

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Our Inner Abes

Reviewed by Florence King

LOOKING FOR THE REAL ABE LINCOLN IS like looking for Moby Dick, Rosebud, and the silver lining, all at the same time. Do not be fooled by the title of this book. Some stores will inevitably stock it under Travel, but its real purpose is to explore why America's most complex, contradictory president still exerts such a psycho-

logical hold over us.

While a boy growing up in Illinois, *Weekly Standard* senior editor Andrew Ferguson collected the usual artifacts and memorized the Gettysburg Address, but he

LAND OF LINCOLN:

Adventures in Abe's America.

By Andrew Ferguson.
Atlantic Monthly Press.
279 pp. \$24

had become a Lincoln buff in remission. It seemed to him that Lincoln no longer belonged to the ages but to special pleaders, such as bipolar sufferers who latched on to his melancholia, or imaginative gay-rights advocates who saw a connection between his hellish marriage and the long circuit rides he made with other young lawyers in his Springfield days.

Then in late 2002, Richmond, Virginia, erupted in controversy over the city council's proposal to erect a statue of Lincoln and his son Tad commemorating their brief visit to the Confederate capital at the end of the Civil War. Ferguson covered the story and found that Lincoln was once again the man of the hour, the bee in every bonnet, and the fork in every tongue. On one side were the pro-statue diversity buffs of the "healing power" persuasion, and on the other, hot-eyed cavaliers of the Sons of Confederate Veterans trailed by paranoid homeschoolers who eagerly bought their educational materials (e.g., an "Arm Yourself With the Truth" booklet).

Ferguson realized that the dispute was not about the Civil War itself but about what kind of man Lincoln was. The cavaliers, citing his proposal to repatriate blacks to Africa, saw him as a hypocritical closet racist and a war mongering Big Government dictator, while the pro-statue crowd saw him as approachable, introspective, nuanced, and comfortable with ambiguity—or, in Ferguson's delicious analogy, "If Lincoln had been born 125 years later, he could have been Bill Moyers."

Americans, it seems, still need Lincoln to love or to hate, to explain or to excuse, to identify whatever it is about ourselves we consider essential. To understand ourselves we must first understand Lincoln, Ferguson suggests, and so he embarked on an American odyssey in search of people and places whose inner Lincoln lives on.

He gained entrée to memorabilia collectors

such as Louise Taper of Beverly Hills, who owns one of the largest private collections of Lincolniana. Her interest in Lincoln began when she read *Love Is Eternal*, a 1950s historical romance novel by Irving Stone based on the Lincoln marriage. She began to haunt rare-books-and-manuscripts outlets, in part, she speculates, as a way to escape the fate of being one of the ladies who lunch. She got so good at identifying Lincoln's authentic handwriting that today she is an expert in the field.

Taper couldn't quite nail down the reason she's so taken with Lincoln, except to say, "He was just an amazing man." She came closer to the truth when she spoke about Mary Todd Lincoln, Lincoln's wife and the heroine of the novel that started it all: "People hated her because she didn't fit the mold." Ferguson insightfully connects her Lincoln obsession with the pains she takes to avoid becoming another typical Beverly Hills matron. For Mrs. Taper, Lincoln plays a seemingly unlikely role: He's the inspiration for a feminist-style journey by this woman who is determined to chart an individual course.

The last place Ferguson expected to find Lincoln was in a management training seminar held in Gettysburg, but there he was, presented as the ultimate successful executive. Lincoln as business guru is, Ferguson points out, a stretch. His brief career as clerk of a frontier store ended when "the store went broke so spectacularly that its proprietor felt compelled to flee the territory." All his closest associates spoke on record about his dearth of money sense, his chaotic law office, his disregard for systems, and his lack of any head for figures. He forgot to cash his paychecks and kept important papers in his hat.

What could a corporate seminar do with such a man? Ferguson, who published a hysterical essay on the self-improvement industry in his first book, *Fools' Names, Fools' Faces* (1996), mimics the way PowerPoint software might boil down one of the most exquisite prose styles in the English language:

VISION: BIG PICTURE

- $4 \times 20 + 7 = 87$ years ago
- Forefathers \Rightarrow continent \Rightarrow new nation
- Key Proposition: *Everybody Equal*
- Civil war \Rightarrow long endurance test
- Battlefield = cemetery (final resting place) = hallowed ground
- Caveats: cannot dedicate
cannot consecrate
cannot hallow
- Action step: new birth of freedom

Ferguson figured that the Lincoln facilitators would merely teach history from a different angle, but by the seminar's end he realized that they weren't just teaching history, or even business techniques, but "something else that, nowadays, is harder to come by, and harder to make stick": "They've taken the most American of pursuits, and potentially the most crassifying—getting ahead, making lots of money, climbing the greasy pole of success—and turned it into an occasion for painless, gentle moral instruction. Lincoln lets them do it."

Spending a couple of days studying this man who talked about "the better angels of our nature," who felt malice toward none and charity to all, who personified our ideal of equality, is bound to have a positive effect on people committed to the workshop mindset of conflict resolution, anger management, and group decision-making. And better people, so the thinking goes, make better leaders. At the very least, Ferguson suggests, dwelling on the kindness, sympathy, and patience Lincoln so often displayed might in some small way help stem the tide of coarseness overtaking American life.

The same regard for a blend of money-making and personal growth pervades the Lincoln Presenters—they reject the label "impersonators" as too show-biz. They're mostly tall, lanky men who were told so often that they looked like Lincoln that they decided to turn it into a career. Headquartered in Cincinnati, the group was founded in 1990 and now numbers more than 250. Presenters hire themselves out



The clothes make the man: On special occasions, the Lincoln Presenters wear the hat of the former president.

to speak to organizations, march in parades, and in general make history pay. In these re-enactment-happy times, some of them even make a living at it: \$50 for cutting a ribbon and \$200 for a major appearance. The job requires them to log a lot of time on the road, and sometimes they have to sleep in their cars, but they feel a calling. "Lincoln is as close to perfect as a human being could be," said one. "That's what gives us a sense of mission."

The only place Ferguson visited that is immune to inspiration and beyond redemption is the Lincoln homestead in Springfield, now part of the Lincoln Heritage Trail preservation project run by the federal government. "The reigning ideology of the Park Service is party pooper—a constant vigil against anyone taking unauthorized pleasure in a Park Service property." The funky authenticity he remembers from his boyhood visits is gone; everything near the house has been torn down, replaced by a

sterile visitors' center. Inside, a theater loops through an orientation film. Security cameras monitor all who enter. Speakers broadcast constant announcements ("Your safety is our primary concern. . . . A heart defibrillator is located in the visitors' center") and warnings that an alarm will sound if visitors step off the rubber walking guides. Worst of all are the robotic Smoky the Bear-garbed guides, their voices flattened by the boredom of reciting the same memorized material day after day, who rattle off their speeches so mechanically that they lose all power of inflection and say things

like "We *are* now in the parlor."

Andrew Ferguson is a writer with perfect pitch and flawless timing who can go from hilarity to poignancy without missing a beat. Whether he is describing the seedy glories of Route 66 or the Holocaust survivor who believed Lincoln came to him in a dream, his reporter's powers of observation and his instinctive understanding of the human condition produce the satisfying blend of entertainment and instruction he delivers in this marvelous book.

FLORENCE KING writes a column, "The Bent Pin," for *National Review*.

IN BRIEF

ARTS & LETTERS

A Man of Ideas

SHAKESPEARE THE THINKER begins and ends with a reminiscence about a meditative walk to the English village of Shottery. Late one afternoon, A. D. Nuttall flees the tedium of the biennial International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford to go off on his own, wandering down a country lane "looking for the boy who would grow up to become the author of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *As You Like It*, and all the other amazing plays that bear his name." The anecdote nicely captures the spirit of the author, a beloved Oxford don who considered himself a maverick, an independent reader impatient with the triviality and dead ends of academic squabbles. Nuttall died suddenly in his rooms at New College this past January, and *Shakespeare the Thinker* stands as a fitting tribute to his learning, his humane values, and his pedagogical talents.

SHAKESPEARE THE THINKER.

By A. D. Nuttall.
Yale Univ. Press.
428 pp. \$30



William Shakespeare, c. 1610

Nuttall permits himself a few preliminary and marginal swipes at current (and by now not-so-current) fashions in literary theory, especially the solipsism of poststructuralism

and the “absurd” New Historicist view that “Shakespeare was locked into an undeveloped, savagely hierarchical political philosophy by the period in which he lived.” Leaving these sterile ideas and methods to those “in the airless lecture-room,” Nuttall sets out to help readers find their way into the plays (he does not consider the sonnets or narrative poems) and to account for their distinctive intellectual power after four centuries. To this task he brings exceptional learning (especially in the Greek and Latin literary traditions), a grounding in European philosophy, a lifetime of studying and teaching the plays, and an accessible prose style.

Explaining his title, Nuttall properly distinguishes between, on the one hand, what Shakespeare thought—which, given the medium of drama, we cannot know—and, on the other, what he thought about and how he thought about it, which we can know. He advances more or less chronologically through the canon, devoting some 10 pages to almost every play, identifying and exploring the dramatist’s treatment of such central human concerns as love, death, politics, religious doubt, nature, art, and language. Scrutiny of these topics generates Nuttall’s fundamental insight, that Shakespeare “shows an uncanny ability to anticipate almost every kind of counter-feeling.” In other words, the playwright routinely complicates or subverts any important statement or position he dramatizes by considering the virtues of its opposite. Villains talk sense; heroes behave badly; audiences cannot make up their minds.

This tension between opposing points of view is indisputably central to Shakespearean thought and theater. *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, for instance, raises ethical concerns about words, offering a “juxtaposition of verbal gymnastics and an anti-verbal message.” *Richard II* presents a “horror at the substitution of an idea of reality for reality itself.” In *Hamlet*, “less guilty than most of evading the central mystery of

un-being . . . , Shakespeare propels us into a more fundamental bewilderment.” Late in his career, “the dramatist may have been visited by a kind of nausea as he contemplated the obscene power of his own manipulative art.” Judicious source study, poetic sensitivity, historical context, linguistic scholarship, acquaintance with, among other philosophers, Locke, Wittgenstein, Hegel, and Popkin—all these tools are employed to illuminate the competing ideas that animate play after play.

If the book displays the benefits of lifelong study, it also suffers, regrettably, from some of the mild corrosions academic eminence can bring. Years of autonomy and admiration made the author a little too Olympian. He dismisses the critical establishment as if he were not a product and a perpetuator of it. (His central theory, for example, resembles arguments made by unmentioned critics such as Helen Vendler and Norman Rabkin.) And when he does occasionally linger over a stimulating essay or argument, these almost invariably turn out to have been written either by his own students or by critics dead for several decades. Too many paragraphs begin with some form of the phrase “Several years ago I wrote that. . . .”

But a little tolerance will lessen the irritation. Nuttall’s voice will be missed. And the reader—whether general or professional—will find much to enjoy in this posthumous volume—and much, well, to think about.

—Russ McDonald

The Professor of Desire

THE CHIEF IMPRESSION ONE takes from *The Life of Kingsley Amis* is of a man who loved pleasure. Indeed, few men have matched Amis’s enormous appetite for enjoyment—of music, laughter, booze, and especially sex—or his capacity for stirring delight in others. With the publication in 1954 of the comic novel *Lucky*

THE LIFE OF KINGSLEY AMIS.

By Zachary Leader.
Pantheon.
996 pp. \$39.95

Jim, Amis (1922–95) burst onto the British literary scene as one of the isles' Angry Young Men. But from the start, his obsession was not rage but desire. "There was no end," concludes the reluctant academic of that novel's title, "to the ways in which nice things are nicer than nasty ones."

The trouble, as Amis's next 40 years proved and as Zachary Leader documents in this meticulous yet surprisingly jaunty biography, is that nice things can't dispel the nasty ones, and the single-minded pursuit of nice things might turn you more than a little nasty your-

Amis's cocktail of neuroses was a strong blend—he was afraid of loneliness, madness, and above all death—and to cope he became a first-class heel.

self. Amis's cocktail of neuroses was a strong blend—he was afraid of loneliness, madness, and above all death—and to cope he became a first-class heel.

He cheated on his first wife, Hilly, at an astonishing rate. (In one of the book's richest anecdotes, he misses the opportunity to testify against the longtime ban on D. H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* because he's busy with a lover of his own.) After he abandoned Hilly and their children for a second marriage, he poisoned it with energetic callousness. And as Amis's fame increased, he delighted in playing the role of the reactionary clubman, with a sideline in what he admitted was "pissing on harmless people."

Yet Leader is not without sympathy for this man who was "full of fear, full of fun." The fun is of an extraordinarily high level: not only in two dozen novels (*I Want It Now* [1968] and *The Old Devils* [1986] rank with *Lucky Jim* as masterworks in chronicling the frustrations of the little guy) but in limericks, verbal mimicry, and wonderfully vitriolic, often poignant letters to his best friend and fellow putdown artist, the poet Philip Larkin.

Leader, a professor of English literature at London's Roehampton University, previously

edited Amis's letters, and is alert to how the novelist, with his aggrieved, heckling tone, influenced British literature by jeering at pretension. Cultural critic Paul Fussell best described the virtues of his friend Amis's writing: "the quest for enjoyment, unmarred by anxiety about fashionableness and alert to the slightest hint of phoniness or fraud."

Those who wish to see Amis only as a bully and a debauchee will find plenty of ammunition here. But such judgments ignore the fact that, ultimately, he was not a defender of libation but the bard of the hangover. His work never lost its humor, but as he aged, it was increasingly flooded with regret.

In *The Old Devils*, one of his later novels, about a group of retired friends, the character Peter (an obvious stand-in for Amis) offers a halting apology to Rhiannon, the woman he abandoned years before. "I've always loved you and I do to this day," Peter says. "I'm sorry it sounds ridiculous because I'm so fat and horrible, and not at all nice or even any fun, but I mean it. I only wish it was worth more." This is the confession of a man who came to see the limits of consuming nice things. It is worth quite a lot.

—Aaron Mesh

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

Hard Word

THE N WORD IS NOT AN easy read. That's hardly surprising, given that the history of the word "nigger" is so brutal and violent. What is surprising, though, is how seamlessly Jabari Asim threads a history through his story of the "n word": a history not only of the African-American experience but of the American republic itself. His title harkens back to Randall Kennedy's *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (2002). Asim's polite title may land a softer blow, but the substance of *The*

THE N WORD:
Who Can Say It, Who
Shouldn't, and Why.

By Jabari Asim.
Houghton Mifflin.
278 pp. \$26

N Word delivers a serious pummeling.

Asim, deputy editor of *The Washington Post Book World*, begins by disputing lexicographers' claims that the first recorded usage of "nigger" was neutral. Jamestown colonist John Rolfe described the arrival in 1619 of "twenty negars" in his diary. In fact, Asim writes, none of the terms—among them "nigger," "niger," "negur," and "negar"—used to refer to black Africans was devoid of negative connotations. Long before the Revolutionary War, black people fought against efforts to dehumanize them through language, but "the notion of black inferiority spread as rapidly as the spirit of independence that enlivened the new nation."

American ideologies are on trial here, and so are a few individuals who embody them. Thomas Jefferson, for instance. Asim calls Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784–85) "a handy, influential primer for those who aspired to advance the cause of white supremacy." Jefferson represents a quintessentially American paradox: The legacy of one of this country's most prominent statesmen cannot be separated from its white supremacist roots. Of course, as Asim points out, the black American experience is steeped in this same paradox. Campaigns against white supremacy have been central to the evolution of African-American identity.

And yet, he argues, "nigger" survives because Americans want it to. He buttresses this claim with prodigious examples from literature, music, theater, film, and science. Josiah Nott, a 19th-century scientist who sought to prove blacks' inferiority, described his work as "niggerology." Asim links widespread acceptance of this pseudoscience to anti-Negro campaigns evident in courtrooms, congressional committees, churches, and the popular media.

Asim does not believe the word can or should be expunged from our language. He applauds black artists, such as comedian and actor Richard Pryor and poet Sonia Sanchez, who have used the word for aesthetic, historical, and ethical purposes. Ultimately, however, he calls black people's casual use of "nigger,"

even in an attempt to reclaim it, unimaginative: "As long as we embrace the derogatory language that has long accompanied and abetted our systematic dehumanization, we shackle ourselves to those corrupting white delusions—and their attendant false story of our struggle in the United States."

Determining when use of the "n word" is permissible—even constructive—and when it is harmful is a delicate and subjective matter. For Asim, the issue comes down to a distinction between the public and the private spheres. "A man may have as bad a heart as he chooses," he quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., "if his conduct is within the rules." Though Asim does not make good on the definitive and prescriptive promise of his subtitle, readers come away with an appreciation of the fact that every utterance of the word is accompanied by a history to which we must all be held accountable.

Asim displays a curious obsession with quantification ("nigger" appears some 95 times in *Gone With the Wind*, 215 times in *Huckleberry Finn*, 21 times in the 1859 novel *Our Nig*), and his careful cataloging of these mentions functions as a kind of rhetorical assault. Perhaps his private ambition is that readers will be forced to reflect on the psychological effects of this constant confrontation with the word on the page. Each repetition compels us to revisit the awful history the word carries. And we have Michael Richards, Don Imus, and the others who will come after them to remind us that the history of the "n word" is by no means concluded.

—Emily Bernard

Oil's Final Frontier

ON A 2005 VISIT TO SOUTHERN Chad's Doba Basin, John Ghazvinian stood on a road outside a fenced compound occupied by ExxonMobil. On one side, a 120-megawatt

UNTAPPED:
The Scramble for
Africa's Oil.

By John Ghazvinian.
Harcourt. 320 pp. \$25

power plant operated by the U.S. oil company produced six times the amount of electricity generated in the rest of Chad, and posh amenities abounded: modern apartments, air conditioning, Internet access, basketball courts, a health clinic, even an airport. A sign proclaimed, "Home of the World's Greatest Drilling Team."

On the other side of the road, 10,000 people lived in squalor. Atan, a town that had taken root in the desert a decade earlier as a squatter camp for job seekers, lacked clean running water. Nightclub prostitutes served an American and French clientele a short distance from Atan's houses of worship and tiny schools. "Despite the veneer of respectability, Atan is an enormous festering embarrassment for ExxonMobil," Ghazvinian writes, "a living, breathing metaphor for the failure of the Doba drilling operation to bring meaningful development to the people of Chad."

For Western oil and gas producers, Africa is the world's last El Dorado. Since the early 1990s, advances in deepwater-drilling technology and the terms of "production-sharing agreements" with host nations have cleared the way for substantial American and European footholds off the coast of West Africa and south of the Sahara. After 9/11, Big Oil and the Washington elite were captivated by the prospect that exploring for oil in Africa could loosen OPEC's stranglehold on U.S. energy supplies—and that locating wells offshore would separate them from the political upheaval that troubles so much of the oil-producing world. China joined the bonanza more recently.

Journalist and Oxford-trained historian Ghazvinian steers clear of caricatures or smug prescriptions for Africa's feeble democracies as he explores the complex political, economic, and social factors that fuel the "curse of oil." Every developing country in Africa where oil has been discovered, he notes, has seen decreased living standards and increased suffering, a phenomenon scholars call the "paradox of plenty."

African oil, Ghazvinian argues, is neither an easy source of energy security for the West nor a

spur to the African continent's healthy development. The history he recounts and the people he meets in his travels—from the young Nigerian who leads him to an illicit oil-trading post to the Chevron executive who blithely deflects reports of widespread corruption—suggest that there is more than enough blame to go around for the entrenched poverty and violence in Africa's oil-rich states.

In recent years, billions of dollars in national oil wealth have landed in the private accounts of ruling families or been redirected from development projects to arms purchases. Meanwhile, Washington often turns a blind eye. Ghazvinian's most disturbing stories emerge from Africa's small rentier states, where once-diversified economies have become dangerously dependent on the royalties paid by oil exporters. The opulence he finds in Libreville, the capital of Gabon, is a mirage. The national unemployment rate is 40 percent, and Gabon imports most of the food once produced in its jungles. Meanwhile, the oil is running out.

Like other recent books whose authors roamed the world to expose the underbelly of "energy security," including Paul Roberts's *The End of Oil* (2004) and Lisa Margonelli's *Oil on the Brain* (2007), *Untapped* taps into our growing, converging anxieties about oil supply, national security, and global warming. But Ghazvinian and his fellow authors also shed light on an important question that Americans still rarely ask: What does our relentless hunger for oil mean for those who vie to feed it?

—Joel Kirkland

HISTORY

Gertrude of Arabia

THE LIFE OF GERTRUDE BELL (1868–1926) cries out for a biopic. More famed and influential in her day than her colleague T. E. Lawrence, with whom she rallied Arab tribes

GERTRUDE BELL:
Queen of the Desert,
Shaper of Nations.

By Georgina Howell.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
481 pp. \$27.50



Gertrude Bell (middle), flanked by Winston Churchill on her right and T. E. Lawrence on her left, tours the pyramids during the 1921 Cairo Conference, where she played a starring role in determining the destiny and drawing the borders of modern Iraq.

to rebel against the Turks during World War I, she was eclipsed after her death by the myth-making that crowned him Lawrence of Arabia. But Lawrence could never have accomplished his own cinematic exploits among the Arabs if not for Bell's preceding years of intrepid travel and dogged information-gathering in the desert.

Bell was pivotal to the politics of the day, serving as Oriental secretary in the British administration in Baghdad—she was the only

woman officer in British military intelligence—and tirelessly shepherding unruly Iraq toward the wobbly independence it finally achieved in 1932. Her life, like Lawrence's, ended in pathos. The great political adventure ebbed, leaving her lonely in Baghdad, and she died at 57 after what most biographers agree was an intentional overdose of pills.

Several recent biographies, notably Janet Wallach's *Desert Queen* (1996), have striven to capture the mystique of the woman who crossed

and recrossed the Middle East on camelback, spoke fluent Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, met Bedouin and Druze sheikhs on equal terms, and ended up knowing everything about the tribes and their rivalries, trading patterns, and internal politics. Her story is painfully relevant today for the light it casts on why nation-building in Iraq is so difficult—indeed, was difficult even for someone with Bell's formidable sense of the region and its cultures. We can learn much from her struggles to draw the borders of Iraq and weld its warring Shiite, Sunni,

After meeting Gertrude Bell, one sheikh exclaimed, "This is a woman—what must the men be like!"

Kurdish, and other populations into a modern nation.

Georgina Howell, a British magazine writer, has produced a vivid portrait that

tends toward the breathless—forgivably so, for the most part, given the material. Bell was stylish and fearless. Arriving at the remote tents of a desert ruler, she would dispense gifts, share the latest political news and gossip, and join her hosts in reciting classical Arab poetry far into the night. The sheikhs, perplexed at first, came to treat her with profound respect; the British authorities, well aware of her value, accepted her as a colleague. (There were hitches: One sheikh, meeting with Bell and other senior officers in Baghdad, exclaimed, "This is a woman—what must the men be like!" "This delicious peroration," she wrote dryly to her parents, "restored me to my true place in the twinkling of an eye.")

Disappointed several times in love, Bell poured herself into the Arab cause. Late in life she wrote home, "I'm acutely conscious of how much life has, after all, given me. . . . I'm happy in feeling that I've got the love and confidence of a whole nation." This seems to have been so. The king she helped install, Faisal ibn Hussain, treated her as a valued adviser. Iraqis called her the Khatun, or great lady. As recently as 1990, in Saddam-era Baghdad, the minister of antiquities respectfully took me to see "Miss Bell's museum" (the Iraqi National

Museum, which she founded) and "Miss Bell's university."

Howell's shortcoming as a biographer is her apparent inability to criticize her subject. She earnestly defends even her heroine's antisuffrage activism. (Bell became the founding secretary of the Anti-Suffrage League in 1908, and for years opposed votes for women, most likely because she identified with the political interests of her social class—the upper crust feared a large increase in the franchise—over those of her gender.) Howell's uncritical treatment extends to the politics in which Bell was enmeshed: She shows no discomfort at the puppet-style "independence" Britain permitted Iraq after World War I, or the duplicity of the policies that preceded it. The romantic British vision of the East possesses her utterly.

Romantic expectations of transforming the Middle East have persisted long past Gertrude Bell's time. But what endures of her legacy flowed not from fanciful ideas about the region but from her intense engagement with its realities.

—Amy E. Schwartz

Daze of Yore

IN THE DECADES LEADING up to the Civil War, Virginians were casting longing backward glances. They "believed that they had already glimpsed—if not momentarily captured—the essence of the good life," writes Williams College historian Susan Dunn. But, she goes on to ask, did nostalgia tempt the Old Dominion in particular, and the South, by extension, to mistake its plantation idyll for a more-or-less permanent stasis? Did the nearly religious embrace of the rural way of life, which was equated with manly independence, and a cultivated distaste for urban industrialism eternally mar relations between North and South? What was it that sank the fortunes of proud Virginians?

Dominion of Memories is a richly detailed

DOMINION OF MEMORIES:

Jefferson, Madison, and the Decline of Virginia.

By Susan Dunn. Basic. 310 pp. \$27.50

investigation of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison's home state in the half-century after the Revolution, as it struggled with slavery, weighed government's role in public education, and speculated about the proper parameters of democracy more generally. Dunn, a smooth and persuasive writer, digests the best literature on Virginia and Virginians, highlighting the scholarship of the last 50 years as well as drawing on newspapers and correspondence of the early 19th century. In these pages, illustrious founders vie with lesser lights to chart the future, only half-realizing and half-accepting how shaky a foundation—how exhausted the soil—the future rests upon.

Virginia's decline from Enlightenment-era prosperity to political and cultural backwardness was spiritual as much as a matter of political economy. For her explanation, Dunn points to the depletion of tobacco-stained land, crop failures, the migration of common farmers to the fertile West, the refusal of a tax-averse legislature to support public schools, and the general lack of interest in creative solutions to these issues. Most telling, though, is state representatives' inordinate fear of the consolidation of power within the federal government. "Prisoners of their own plantations," as the author calls Virginia's planter elite, perpetuated their myth of splendor in the grass.

No portrait of the Old South is complete without the eccentric provocateur John Randolph of Roanoke (1773–1833), and he pops up several times in Dunn's account. His people, polished and unfailingly decent, were content to remain isolated from whatever challenged the legitimacy of their dream world. Even Jefferson, a hero of states' rights as much as he was a clarion on behalf of individual rights, was not conservative enough for Randolph. In one of the great put-downs of the 19th century, he dismissed the third president's ample intellect with faint praise for his invention of the moldboard plow: When, in 1829, Jefferson was invoked to promote state constitutional reform, Randolph declared, "Sir, if there be any point in which the authority of Mr.

Jefferson might be considered valid, it is in the mechanism of a plough."

Dunn's take on Madison is complex and interesting. Unlike Jefferson, Madison acknowledged and struggled with the contradiction between social happiness and national identity. Neither man could stomach the idea of a biracial society, but Madison was a unionist, clearer in his insistence that North and South were equally bound by the constitutional compact of 1787. Despite his own culpability for the "looming crisis," Madison's final message to the nation, delivered in a short public letter he penned in 1834, "was a supremely rational one—union and vigilance—though he offered it in vain."

Dunn completes her analysis by relating the South's early sacrifice on the altar of limited government—a creation of Jefferson's misguided idealism and provincialism—to Virginia politicians' later opposition to New Deal legislation. And she connects the conservative call for hands-off government in our own generation, and a self-satisfied lethargy that stalled advances in civil rights, to that same unreasonable fear of intrusive federal power. The American nation was conceived in energy and dynamism, much of it engineered in Virginia. So what happened to divide North and South? Dunn's answers, some unsettling, are all credible.

—Andrew Burstein

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Physician, Think for Thyself

ONCE UPON A TIME, DOCTORS made house calls and eye contact. Chatting at patients' bedsides or with their families at kitchen tables, doctors

assessed both patient and context. They understood the sensible counsel of postbellum physician William Osler: Listen, and the patient will tell you the diagnosis. So how can 21st-century physicians hope to interpret their patients' ill-

HOW DOCTORS THINK.

By Jerome Groopman.
Houghton Mifflin.
307 pp. \$26

ness narratives, when, in the typical encounter, the doctor interrupts 18 seconds after the patient begins speaking, and within 20 seconds has formed some opinion of what is wrong?

Jerome Groopman, a Harvard professor of medicine and *New Yorker* staff writer, became upset that the medical students, interns, and residents he was training did not seem to be “thinking deeply about their patients’ problems.” He asked astute diagnosticians around the country how they approached and cracked difficult diagnoses and what happened when they failed. Misdiagnosis is not an insignificant problem: Groopman cites a finding that between one in six and one in seven patients is incorrectly assessed. Most medical errors, he discovered, arose from all-too-human “mistakes in thinking,” not technical glitches.

Some physicians latched on to the first diagnosis that could accommodate all apparent symptoms. Some were focused on a particular prototype because they had just missed that diagnosis in another patient or because five patients had recently come in with similar complaints. And some were honoring the law of parsimony—choose the simplest necessary-and-sufficient explanation; their premature anchoring in an incorrect diagnosis reflected attention to the medical maxim, “When you hear hoofbeats, first think ‘horses,’ not ‘zebras.’”

The algorithms and decision trees that young doctors are taught provide “a static way of looking at people,” noted one doctor whom Groopman interviewed. But patients are not static and should demonstrate their vitality by actively putting to doctors such questions as “What’s the worst thing this can be?” and “Shall I begin at the beginning?” These queries, Groopman suggests, can help doctors reframe their thinking and consider the illness afresh.

His most poignant example of the difficulties in medical diagnoses is the story of a Vietnamese baby adopted by an American

woman. When Rachel Stein arrived at the orphanage in Vietnam, she was handed a thin, congested three-month-old who in no way resembled the “robust and content” infant she had seen in photographs. By the time she and Shira arrived home in Boston, the baby was gravely ill.

During a month in intensive care, Shira bore the weight of staggering diagnoses—SCID (severe combined immunodeficiency syndrome), AIDS, pneumonia, exotic and mundane fungal, viral, and bacterial infections—and was subjected to countless interventions. Yet in the end, her problems were all attributable to malnutrition. “In addition to forming mental prototypes and retreating from zebras,” Groopman writes, “Shira’s doctors made a third cognitive mistake, called ‘diagnosis momentum.’” As soon as the first doctor decided Shira had SCID, the other members of the staff accepted SCID as a given. “Diagnosis momentum, like a boulder rolling down a mountain, gains enough force to crush anything in its way.”

Medical detective work resembles crime detection with an important difference: “Human biology,” Groopman notes, “is not a theft or a murder where all the clues can add up neatly.” And contemporary doctors never seem to benefit from the luxury of time for reflection. They’re under pressure from patients—do something! anything!—and from colleagues. The most insidious pressures come from drug representatives pushing new products. Groopman cautions patients to ask doctors why they are proposing specific therapies. Did the pharmaceutical company’s drug rep give the doctor a ski trip to Vail?

How Doctors Think provides an important 21st-century guide for doctors and patients. In exposing the workings of the medical-industrial complex, it makes a powerful case for a more humane culture of medicine in which patient care would rightly be approached with “a mix of science and soul.”

—Ruth Levy Guyer

The Man Who Built the Castle

GRACING THE NATIONAL Mall in Washington, D.C., with several splendid buildings, the Smithsonian Institution is a huge tourist attraction, a repository of art and culture, and a pioneering center of scientific research. As is well known, this singular American institution, encompassing 19 museums and nine research centers, came about because of a quirk in the will of an Englishman who gallivanted around Europe all his life but never crossed the Atlantic. Luckily for us, the man born Jacques Louis Macie changed his name in midlife to James Smithson, hoping to gain an ounce more respect in the salons of London and Paris. It would have been hard to turn "Macie" into a mellifluous name to etch into stone.

Architectural historian Heather Ewing cannot be faulted for failing to summon a full

THE LOST WORLD OF JAMES SMITHSON:

Science, Revolution, and the Birth of the Smithsonian.

By Heather Ewing.
Bloomsbury.
432 pp. \$29.95



Englishman James Smithson, shown here in 1816, never set foot in the United States, but it was his fortune that created America's ultimate museum piece, the Smithsonian Institution.

portrait of the man. A disastrous 1865 fire at the Smithsonian destroyed Smithson's letters and notes along with his scientific collections. Scouring libraries and private collections throughout Europe, Ewing has made a remarkable effort to gather up what documentary evidence remains of his existence.

Macie was born in Paris in 1764 or 1765 to Elizabeth Macie, mistress to Hugh Smithson, the first Duke of Northumberland. When, at about age 35, he changed his name to Smithson, he was only making official a parent-age that was already widely known. He never met his father.

Smithson had a passion for science, and by age 22 was a fellow of the Royal Society of London. It didn't hurt that he was well connected and well off, though the origin of that wealth never becomes clear in Ewing's account. Taking life as an extended grand tour, Smithson popped up over the years in Germany, Italy, and Denmark, as well as England and France.

Unable to say much about the man himself, Ewing instead gives a rich account of the origins of the Royal Society and the rise of chemistry, fashionable society in the capital cities and tourist resorts of Europe, and the chaos that enveloped France during the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras.

Against this ornate background the enigmatic Smithson flits back and forth. He traveled to Paris in 1788, for example, with a letter of introduction from the botanist Sir Joseph Banks to the chemist Antoine Lavoisier, whose scientific importance and grisly demise on the guillotine Ewing duly recounts. Did Smithson actually meet Lavoisier? We can't be sure. Judging by his brief appearances in the letters and diaries of such notables, Smithson was a charming, well-liked man, and a clever but hardly profound

Luckily for us, Jacques Louis Macie changed his name to James Smithson. It would have been hard to turn "Macie" into a mellifluous name to etch in stone.

scientist, publishing mainly on chemistry and mineralogy.

Ewing makes a slender case that Smithson saw in the American and French revolutions the promise of a fresh, utopian future—until the blood began to flow in Paris, leaving the United States the sole unblemished example of a new society, free of the snobbery and condescension of the old. Upon his death in 1829, he bequeathed a good living to his nephew and the bulk of his fortune to that nephew's issue. When the nephew died, childless, in 1835, a proviso in Smithson's will sent roughly £100,000 (about \$510,000) "to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase & diffusion of knowledge among men."

Some proud Americans declared that their country should refuse this Old World largesse. When the money finally did reach Washington, bickering ensued over what sort of establishment it should support. Not until 1846 did Congress charter the Smithsonian; the cornerstone of its castle home, which symbolizes the institution to this day, was laid the following year.

If Ewing can't turn Smithson into a substantial character or explain precisely why he left his famous legacy, she is nonetheless persuasive that the bequest wasn't merely whimsical, as popular legend sometimes has it. Smithson was a true scientific enthusiast, and something of an idealist. He would be happy with the institution that bears his name.

—David Lindley

Making Sense of It All

TO THE MODERN MIND, THE verb "compute" signifies a murky electronic process—blinking lights, the hum of a processor, possibly the scrolling of digits across a screen. But before the 20th century

GLUT:
Mastering
Information
Through the Ages.

By Alex Wright.
Joseph Henry Press.
296 pp. \$27.95

the word had a very different connotation, namely, to count, reckon, or impose order on information. Alex Wright, an information architect and former Harvard librarian, argues that we've outsourced so much processing, storing, and retrieving of information to machines that we've come to see information technologies as mysterious, thoroughly modern innovations. In *Glut*, he sets out to show that if we resist the tendency of the technorati to look only into the future, we can see that we've been in an information age of sorts all along.

Inventions such as Sumerian tablet writing in the third millennium BC and the Phoenician alphabet in approximately the 10th century BC testify to humankind's innate ability to organize data. The original purpose of the familial order of the Greek Pantheon (Cronus begat Zeus, who begat Athena) was not to imbue stories with familial drama but to help orators recall the sequential details of their epics. Exotic accounting tools such as the Incan quipu—long pieces of intricately knotted rope—were once thought to be simple ledgers; new evidence suggests that they served as historical chronicles as well, and perhaps even stored gossip.

Wright, an information systems theorist, holds that all social schemes—from bee colonies to stock exchanges—share certain observable characteristics in how they create and disseminate data. Such systems branch from a single source (a hierarchy) or bubble up spontaneously (a network). A hierarchy involves individual elements grouped into categories that, in turn, fall into broader categories. Aristotle's taxonomy of flora and fauna, which classified animals according to their medium of locomotion (i.e., water, air, land), is the quintessential hierarchy. A computer pull-down menu is another example. Networks, on the other hand, follow no single pattern. French philosopher Denis Diderot's 18th-century *Encyclopédie* featured the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau alongside bits

of colloquial knowledge and folk histories.

In the eyes of Internet age utopians—those who herald our digital future with nearly religious fervor—hierarchies are old-guard systems that naturally reinforce a particular worldview or bias, and are doomed to extinction by the democratic, malleable networks that are replacing them. But this is an oversimplification, Wright says. While there is a “fundamental tension” between the two kinds of information systems, they “not only coexist, but they are continually giving rise to each other.” Wikipedia, a vast online encyclopedia that accepts and posts entries by virtually anyone, has been forced to institute a supplemental system of hierarchical controls to govern the activities of its contributors.

The current growth of network activity across the Internet—which is also provoking shakeups in the organizational charts of companies and even in the military’s traditional command-and-control authority structures—doesn’t spell the end of hierarchical institutions, Wright concludes, nor are the tremendous technological shifts we’re witnessing unprecedented. History has seen “information

explosions” as far back as the Ice Age, when our ancestors began using symbols.

Wright the information architect is less interesting than Wright the historian. He tends to oversimplify in order to impose his universal organizing theory on the entirety of human history. But his book does succeed beautifully as a museum in which various artifacts reveal how humankind has used wit, reason, and imagination to store and compute data. Nothing, in fact, could be more human.

—Patrick Tucker

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Call Letters for Jesus

THE CONTEMPORARY HOLY alliance between evangelism, the media, and politics has roots that are many decades old. Long before Pat Robertson or Billy Graham, there was Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), a self-educated minister mostly

**AIMEE SEMPLE
MCPHERSON
AND THE
RESURRECTION
OF CHRISTIAN
AMERICA.**

By Matthew Avery Sutton.
Harvard Univ. Press.
351 pp. \$26.95

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The people's preacher: While other ministers still used Bibles as their only props, Aimee Semple McPherson's theatrical sermons filled the temple she built in Los Angeles in 1923. A media pioneer, she also started a radio station and appeared in film reels.

remembered now as the model for the hypocritical revivalist Sister Sharon in Sinclair Lewis's novel *Elmer Gantry* (1927). But in her day, McPherson was one of the most famous women in America.

Born in rural Canada, she emigrated to Chicago with her first husband, who died shortly after they arrived in 1910. She soon remarried, but left her second husband to follow her religious calling, eventually founding the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, a conservative Protestant sect. A charismatic preacher with a flair for drama, she came to exert enormous influence from the 5,300-seat Angelus Temple, which she built in Los Angeles after settling in California in 1918.

Matthew Avery Sutton, an assistant professor of history at Oakland University in Michigan who was himself raised around the Foursquare Church, clearly admires McPherson, but he is not blind to her faults. One of

the first women to attain a prominent leadership position in an American church, she was recognized as a pioneer even as she was criticized for her love of publicity, lavish lifestyle, high-profile romances, and flamboyant services.

McPherson was always looking for ways to increase her flock, and early on she saw the potential in the new media of radio and film. She went on the air in 1924 with her own station, Kall Four Square Gospel (KFSG), bankrolled by her followers, and broadcast her services and a variety of other programs, from live music to talks by a local Boy Scout leader. By the late 1920s she was appearing in newsreels and movies.

McPherson's celebrity—and her notoriety—grew with her mysterious 36-day disappearance in 1926, after which she claimed to have been kidnapped. Many people believed she had faked her abduction in order to steal away with Kenneth Gladstone Ormiston, a

married radio engineer at KFSG. She was eventually charged with perjury and obstruction of justice, but the charges were dropped.

She also had a series of well-publicized romances, including one with actor/singer David Hutton, a man 11 years her junior who starred in a biblical opera she composed. After a brief courtship, he became her third husband, in 1931. (McPherson went on the air from their bridal suite.) When Hutton filed for divorce less than two years later, critics—including some of McPherson's own followers—seized upon the failed marriage as evidence of the evangelist's hypocrisy and an ungoverned sexual appetite.

But McPherson persisted in her ministry. She worked with political leaders of both parties to support prohibition and fight communism and the teaching of evolution. During World War II, she was better than Hollywood stars at selling war bonds, and championed nationalism, writing, "The flag of America and the church stand for the same thing. . . . They stand or fall together!"

McPherson's visibility helped the Angelus Temple grow into one of the first megachurches. Today, the Angelus Temple is home to a worldwide spiritual movement with millions of members. However, the pressures on her took their toll. Plagued with ill health and loneliness, she became addicted to prescription drugs and was dead at the age of 53, after an overdose of sleeping pills.

Although McPherson was enough of a cultural icon in her lifetime to be the inspiration for characters in popular books and movies, today she's largely forgotten. Sutton has done an admirable job of portraying McPherson's life and work. She deserves no less, for her efforts to reshape the role of Christianity in American life resonate still.

Aimee Semple McPherson may be best known now as the model for the hypocritical revivalist in *Elmer Gantry*, but in her day she was one of the most famous women in America.

—Claude R. Marx

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PORTRAIT



Future, New York, by
H. Wiley Corbett, 1913

Paleofuturism

Cars still don't fly, the moon remains uninhabited, and at home there's no robot doing the laundry. What happened to the future? To find it, bloggers and sci-fi buffs alike are flocking to websites that explore the paleofuture—"the future that never was." Matt Novak, the man behind paleo-future.blogspot.com, says that in today's cynical age,

people crave the sincere and hopeful dreams of yesteryear. This drawing graced the cover of the July 16, 1913, issue of *Scientific American*, in which a columnist called for the construction of elevated sidewalks to end the "obsolete method" of conducting "foot and vehicular traffic" on the same level. Today, the future is a thing of the past.



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