Public Voices

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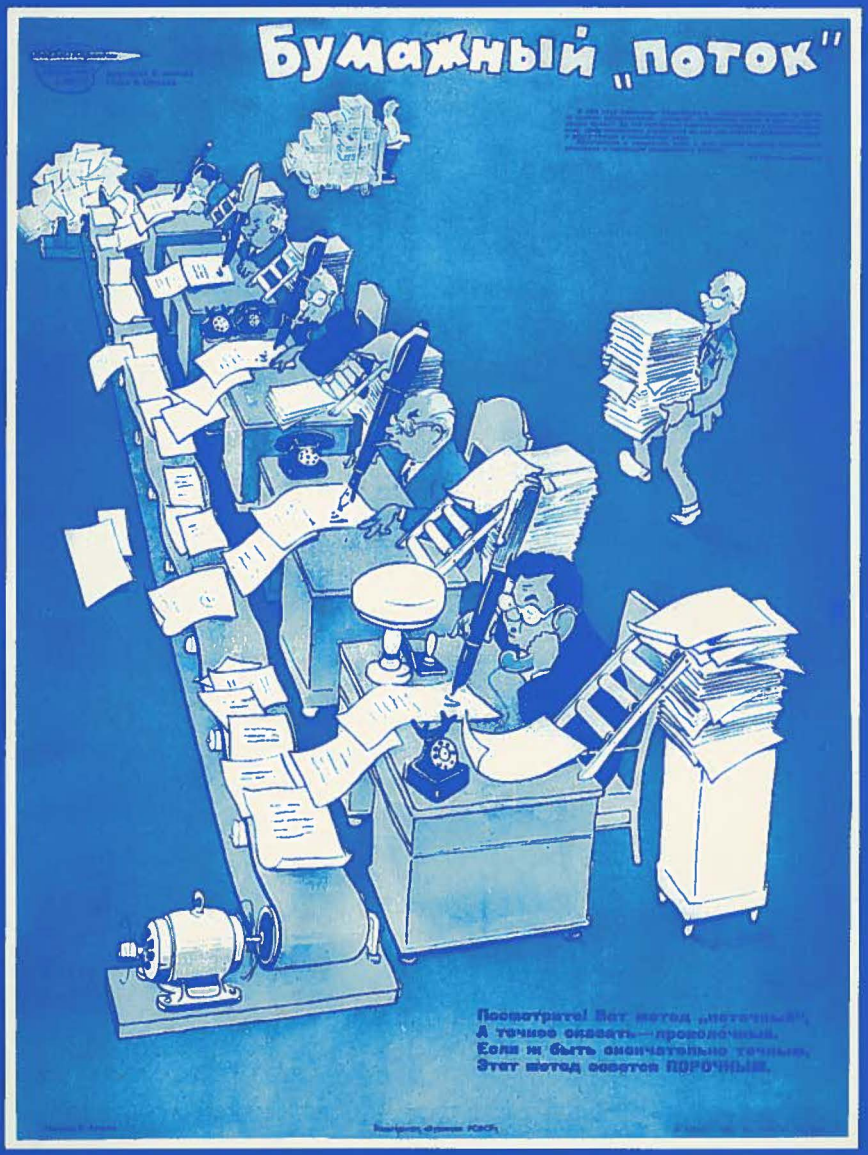

Public Voices

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Political scientists recognize that the personalities and group interactions of top government executives influence their policy decisions and timing, but they are frustrated when they try to analyze the executive level (in Washington, Cabinet secretaries, assistant secretaries and bureau directors). Unlike Congress it is closed, unlike the White House it receives little press coverage, and unlike the career bureaucracy opportunities for interviews and actual experience are rare. Participant observation by political scientists occupying positions at this level is nearly the only method. Erving Goffman's theory of dramaturgy provides a structure for analysis and ties to theories of symbolic interaction.

The Lessons that Tolstoy and *Father Sergius* Hold for Public Administration: Revisiting Three Root Questions 29
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This essay revisits three root questions relevant to public administration: To whom or what does one owe loyalty? Do we need complex institutions? What moral principles should guide public administration? The author draws inspiration from both the life of Leo Tolstoy and his short story titled *Father Sergius*. The two have many parallels with inherent lessons for individual public administrators. The essay comes to the conclusion that the principle of the good example can serve as a paradigm for the field of ethics.

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Diana Akers Rhoads

Nietzsche saw modern democracy as a society with nothing left to give life a powerful sense of purpose, while Tocqueville thought that democracy in America had not produced ambition directed towards lofty objects. Tolkien represents these unpromising tendencies of modern democracy and capitalism in his hobbits, but his work asserts wholeheartedly that virtuous heroism is still possible in our time. In an age when morale in public administration is at its nadir, Tolkien's hobbits provide the basis for a new optimism among those who serve.

Science Fiction and Administrative Truths: 59
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Nolan J. Argyle
Lee M. Allen

Pre-service and in-service MPA students share a common desire for hands-on, real world instruction related to their professional career goals, leading to a pedagogic discounting of fiction as an appropriate tool for analyzing and "solving" problems. However, several factors

weigh heavily in favor of using science fiction short stories and novellas in the MPA classroom setting. These include the need for interesting case scenarios exploring various administrative issues; leveling the playing field between the two types of students by de-emphasizing the use of "contemporary" cases; access to literature that explores the future shock of increasing organizational complexity; and the desirability of Rorschach type materials that facilitate discussion of values and administrative truths. The discussion proceeds by tracing the development of the case study technique, its advantages and disadvantages in the classroom, addressing the utility of "fiction" as an educational resource, and showing how the science fiction literature has matured to the point where it can be applied in all of the major sub-fields of public administration. Several outstanding examples are detailed, and a thorough bibliography is provided.

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Miserere 75
John Alan Nicolay

Dr. Robert Bowler asks Dr. Ian Gestrode, Professor of History in a small, church affiliated liberal arts school to "sound out" the possibility of gay fraternity at St. Elgin's College. Gestrode advises his untenured colleague against this, but does make the inquiries, principally through his friend the Reverend Alan Saunders. A female student, infatuated with the Bowler, briefly draws Gestrode into her amorous intentions toward the English professor, but not before Gestrode questions his own feelings about her. A campus riot, national press, and a career self-immolates: the life of the professor, and the contradictions of freedom, the isolation of leadership, and the search for identity. The story recognizes the power of institutions, and how singular individuals

play out scripts prepared for them well in advance.

The Experience of Federal Employment

Lyn Meridew Holley

Discussions of government employment, especially federal, usually refer to millions of dollars, and a stereotypical worker. Government service does not exist at that level. Government service is the work of the individual who validates your claim to social security, or the individual who reviews your tax return. This article, a composite of first and second-hand accounts, tells the story of how some individual workers in federal government have experienced working for the sovereign. Readers may draw their own conclusions about the impact of existing terms and conditions of government employment on the productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of some federal government workers.

Cover Art

The Paper "Stream"

Artist V. Kunnap
Poet V. Suslov

"The Fighting Pencil" group
Leningrad, Russia, 1960.

Look! This is the method of a conveyer belt,
But it seems to resemble more of a red tape,
And if we want to be more precise and less cautious,
We can call the method what it is—just vicious.

From time to time Soviet authorities launched unsystematic assaults against increasing paperwork and resulting alienation and inefficiency in the government. For example, in 1986 the Central Committee of Communist Party of the Soviet Union even adopted a classified (i.e. restricted to some layers of high government officials only) resolution limiting the length of memoranda and other official documents circulating in the government and within the Communist Party itself. But because the party and bureaucracy were aspiring to encompass and control every aspect of life, the amount of paperwork never decreased.

For every Soviet campaign (for or against whatever cause) large numbers of groups (workers, teachers, writers, etc.) were mobilized to express support or indignation. Obviously, the

artists contributed, too. The "Fighting Pencil" was a formal group of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) artists and poets that specialized in state-sponsored satire and propaganda. Bureaucracy was one of their most common themes.

In this picture from 1960, insignificance of the bureaucrats is intensified with their relatively small size compared to pens they hold and huge paper piles. In the upper-right corner of the poster there is an excerpt from the mouthpiece of the Communist Party—"Pravda" daily, which tells that:

"In 1959 the employees of Saratov Sovnarkhoz[1] have sent to lower levels 73 thousand orders, instructions, directions, memoranda and letters and other "proceeding" papers. And is there a need to speak about relationships with enterprises, if the heads of the departments still communicate mainly in a written form? Addiction to correspondence, faith in the power of a paper resulted in serious omissions in the work of Saratov Sovnarkhoz."

Endnotes

1. Sovnarkhoz stands for Council for People's Economy, which were the regional agencies managing the economy. They were introduced by Khrushchev, who in the hope of reducing the power of overcentralized ministerial bureaucracies, decentralized decision-making to the regional level. After Khrushchev's removal, the ministerial system of managing the economy was restored.

Translation and commentary by **Vatche Gabrielian.**

Symbolic Interaction in the Assistant Secretary's Staff Meeting

X

"You just can't understand it unless you were there." This commonplace is the frustrated lament of a former government official trying to explain political decision making to an outsider. Those who have served at the upper levels of government departments gain unique insights into politics. They participate in meetings and conferences, formal and informal, that are closed to outsiders. They read documents that are not readily available to the public and indeed may be officially classified as secret. They interact with others from this same inner sanctum. Explaining these events to outsiders is difficult. The problem is not only that the insiders get a different view, but that there is no commonly accepted theoretical structure available. Former officials who are also social scientists may be a key to unlock these mysteries.

The executive level of government is the most impenetrable. For the national government this refers to the level between the president and the top career officials. It is the world of Cabinet secretaries, assistant secretaries, the bureau directors and their staffs. While many of the participants are politically appointed officials, this term would be misleading since many are not; career civil servants occupy about a third of the positions. The comparable level in state and city government is that between the governor or mayor and the top career officials. The executive level occupies a no man's land between the

presidential level (that is of great interest but not always accessible) and the professional level (that is of limited interest and is more accessible). Newspapers seldom print stories about this level although trade magazines and newsletters do cover it. Hugh Heclo (1977), who is one of the rare analysts of the executive level, concludes, among other things, that these officials are strangers to one another. Herbert Kaufman (1981) examines bureau directors systematically. Calvin Mackenzie (1987) uses the label "in and outers" because many alternate between government and the private sector.[1]

Certainly outsiders can understand much of what occurs at the executive level, perhaps 80 or 90 per cent to assign an arbitrary number. Outsiders explain these politics in terms of interest groups, elite power, cost benefit, game theory, legal obligations and constraints, stages of the policy process or policy arenas, all of which are views from the outside. While organizational theory looks inside, it is only partially satisfactory because its observation is incomplete due to the closed nature of executive level politics. Nevertheless it can explain some of the basics such as the influence of position or professional training. Derber, Schwartz and Magrass (1990) call professionals a new social class with great power, largely based on their credentials. In examining the behavior of bureaucrats as individuals, Anthony Downs (1967) and Robert Presthus (1962) give generally negative assessments. Most organizational analysts pay less attention to individuals than Downs and Presthus. The chief weakness of the organizational theory approach is that it comes from observations of lower or mid-level bureaucrats. While some insights apply to the executive level, many do not.

Outsiders cannot understand what they have not observed and insiders do not commonly observe and record systematically, and almost never publish what they observe. What insiders see often contradicts the outside theories of interest groups, elite power, legal guidance or cost benefit to say nothing of "the principles of good public administration." On the other hand, it does not necessarily violate these theories either. Insiders observe personal interaction, motivation, insecurities, defensive behavior, side deals, timing and the

place of strategic advice. Insiders observe informal organizations and informal communications channels.

One notable feature of the executive level is that by conventional measures, the actual work product is amorphous; it is not service to clients, or reports or accounting; it is not even managing. It consists of meetings, briefings, letters, and telephone calls as well as recommendations, critiques and advice. Significantly, it is often oral rather than written.

A second notable feature of executive level politics is that it is closed to outsiders, unlike Congress, the courts and the presidency. Congress is consummately public. Visitors sit in the galleries of the House and Senate or watch it on CSPAN. They attend nearly all committee hearings and markups sessions. Committee sessions are recorded and published.[2] Senators, Representatives and their staffs are accessible to the public. Courts, although they deliberate in secret, hold trials in public and publish their opinions.

While the President can do business secretly, much is open. Official papers are published weekly. Minutes of Cabinet meetings circulate to all departments. Because the presidency is so important, it is difficult to keep secrets. The President himself is the chief broadcaster of what transpires at the White House because, after all, publicity is a tool of governance. His cabinet secretaries and key aides are nearly as loquacious. The Reagan Administration officials did not even wait until the president left office as popular books by David Stockman (1986), Donald Regan (1988), Michael Deaver (1987) demonstrate. Bob Woodward (1993) probes "inside the Clinton White House" to the point of embarrassment. Systematic Observers of the presidency like Richard Neustadt and Graham Allison (1971) gain insights beyond the standard ones. Neustadt (1960) points out that even though the president is supposed to be at the top of the hierarchy, his Cabinet secretaries do not automatically follow his direction. He must win them over by persuasion time after time. Allison points out that a single presidential decision is open to alternative explanations: rational, organizational or bureaucratic.

Yet these sources of information about the presidency, official, unofficial and memoirs, are largely confined to the White House. For the most part, they do not go down to the executive level. For example in his *Secret Diary*, Harold Ickes (1953) reports sessions with the president and Cabinet meetings in detail, but he scarcely mentions meetings in the Department of the Interior. A rare exception is Anne Burford (1986), who discusses the stormy events at the executive level while directing the Environmental Protection Agency. Foreign policy is the one area where information about the executive level is available in any quantity, for example George Kennan's *Memoirs* (1967).

While these two features distinguish executive level politics, there are other features which are not unique. One is the quality of the people. Like those in the White House and on Capitol Hill, they are disproportionately ambitious, intelligent, well educated, competitive and energetic (Fisher 1987). They feel great pressure to act, to implement, and to accomplish.

Executive level politics is hard to observe for two reasons. First, because it is closed to outsiders, scholars cannot sit in the gallery, read debates or review judges' opinions. On rare occasions they can read minutes, memoirs and diaries. For the most part observation is confined to participants, yet there are problems even here,[3] for while participating the potential scholars are limited in the time and effort they can devote to recording. Because of the urgency of business, the amount of time approaches zero. Moreover, to do so in an obvious fashion would hinder current work and the trust of colleagues. After termination, scholar participants are constrained as well for to reveal information about the inner workings might cause distrust and hinder future employment. In his novels and in one non-fiction book, C. P. Snow (1961) used his personal experience to reveal the workings of the executive level in the British government during the 1940s. Jackson Grayson (1974) conveys a breezy view of his service as chair of President Nixon's Price Control Commission. Lack of theory is the second reason this level is hard to study. With rare exceptions, no one writes explicitly theoretical analyses. One of these exceptions is Gordon Tullock (1965), who used his experience in the Department of

State as the starting point for an economic explanation, later developing more explicitly into the "Virginia school" of public choice theory.

The inside participant observer offers the advantage of probing explanations other than interest groups, elite power, cost benefit, and so forth, which are already available to the outsider. The insider can check for factors like personality and group process, which of course are frequent conclusions in studies of the presidency or Congress. The insider appreciates that a top level presidential appointee needs to more than just make the right decisions. He needs to not get fired, to stay on top of his job, to react to changing circumstances, to make progress on the general policy direction of the president, to satisfy (or at least neutralize) Congress and interest groups, and to optimize the timing of decisions. The staff of needs to do much the same from its position, adding more emphasis on professional standards and the culture of the department.

Symbolic interaction offers a useful theoretical approach to factors of personality and small group behavior. On rare occasions, political scientists have used it. Victor Thompson (1969) writes on "dramaturgy" and Murray Edelman (1964) examines the presidency and the overall administrative system. In the business world, Michael Fischer and Mark Dirsmith (1995) use it to analyze the relationship between top officials and mid-level auditors in Big Six accounting firms.

Erving Goffman (1974) offers the clearest explanation of dramaturgy. He maintains that people interact in life as if they were performing on a stage. He says that life is a play, not just like a play. People set the stage, proceed to act their parts, then exit. Goffman sets out his theory of dramaturgy most clearly in *Frame Analysis* where he examines actual theater. Although stated in the extreme, this theory serves as a model for analysis of administrative behavior. According to Goffman, a performance requires a stage, an audience, players, a beginning, the performance itself, an ending and costumes.

Under the term dramatism, Kenneth Burke lays out a similar schema. He asserts that a person's identity comes from

rhetoric and dramatism. He goes on to point out that people engage in dramatism for their own sake. Individuals need the theatrical aspect to give meaning to themselves internally. It is not just for show. They act out scenes with themselves and the audience as a means of unconscious persuasion. Charles Derber maintains that attention is power. When subordinates pay attention to a superior, it is not just an indication of the superior's power, but an enhancement of it. At work, people pay attention to those who have technical expertise, professional status and educational credentials. Moreover, those who have these attributes make sure that others know about them. ("Speaking as an engineer,.." "Hello, I'm Doctor Smith," "When I was at Princeton...") Speech is one of the chief ways to indicate that others should pay attention. Good vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation demand attention. Certainly poor speech does the reverse. Because wealth commands respect, people wear expensive clothing, drive Mercedes automobiles, live in elegant houses and decorate their offices. Derber asserts that those who expect attention get it.

The Case Study

The case study is the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Standards and Regulations in the US Department of Public Service. The performance is the semi-weekly staff meeting of the Assistant Secretary, bureau directors and his personal staff. The Friday session is smaller with only the Deputy Secretaries and the immediate staff; the Tuesday session includes the four bureau directors. Other performances are meetings with the Secretary, with the Department Budget Office, with the Office of Management and Budget, and the Christmas party.

The stage is the Assistant Secretary's office. This spacious room occupies the northwest corner of the sixth floor of the Old Main Building, a Washington landmark built in 1936. The view from one window reveals the Capitol and the other shows the Washington Monument. The decor is blue: light blue wallpaper and dark blue draperies. The Assistant Secretary's desk sits on one side facing outward. The participants sit in a circle

of upholstered arm chairs and sofas. Entry is from an adjoining room occupied by the two stenographers. Participants wait in a small anteroom. A tiny storage room holds folding chairs and a telephone.

There can be no performance without an audience (Goffman, 1974). In this case the audience is the staff, one or two stenographers and occasional visitors.[4] The staff consists of six Special Assistants and two Deputy Assistant Secretaries. The staff are GS-14s or GS-15s; four are political appointees and two are in the career service. The staff sits on the smaller chairs and on the sofa. Their places are farther from the center of the circle than the Assistant Secretary or the Deputy Assistant Secretaries.

The lead player is, of course, the Assistant Secretary. He sits in a tall wing back chair facing his staff. The more senior of the two Deputies is to his immediate left in a large chair and junior Deputy is farther to the left in a medium sized chair. The Assistant Secretary is generally acknowledged, even by his own staff privately, as less capable than others at his level. His experience in the industry is limited and his intelligence and education does not match "the best and the brightest" who hold many top positions in Washington. On the other hand, he always performed adequately in a series of jobs in business and as head of a state government commission. He is known as a cautious man who makes few mistakes. His deceased father was a prominent Senator of the President's party. During his first year, rumor had it that the Secretary was considering replacing him, but since then his effectiveness on the job seems to be satisfactory.

The performance begins with the admission of the audience and the players, that is the Special Assistants and the two Deputies, who have gather outside the office. A stenographer announces that they should go in. The Assistant Secretary greets everyone and they swiftly take their places.

The Assistant Secretary speaks first for about five minutes, usually passing on information from the Secretary's weekly meeting earlier that day. He rarely interprets the material or

draws more than the obvious conclusions of how it would affect the Standards and Regulations programs. Soon he turns to the senior Deputy Assistant Secretary for his part. The senior Deputy has extensive experience in Washington and in the industry. Within the Office of the Assistant Secretary, he holds broad authority. The scope of his presentation is wide, examining both the issues and their implications. It usually lasts about ten minutes. The junior Deputy talks next, for about five minutes. His official responsibility is limited to only one of the four bureaus and he confines his remarks to that. At this time the Assistant Secretary scans the room from right to left, pointing with his Cross pen at staff who signal they wish to speak. Their comments usually last only a minute. The expectation is that staff should speak once every week or two. More is not encouraged, but complete silence indicates incompetence. While questions are asked and comments made, the discussion never ranges widely. Staff members do not argue or even raise their voices. All the remarks are on the topic, thoughtfully and professionally couched, listened to attentively and delivered in a well modulated voice.

The staff member being addressed mirrors the Assistant Secretary's posture. When he leans forward, they lean forward; when he relaxes, they relax. Everyone uses first names even when addressing the Assistant Secretary. At the same time the tone is respectful, certainly not chummy. Everyone except the Assistant Secretary refers to the Secretary of the Department by his title or using Mister.

The meeting ends after 30 to 45 minutes. The Assistant Secretary says "Thank you for coming" and announces the time for the next meeting, which is always on the identical Friday at 1:30 schedule. The Deputies, staff and stenographers file out. Occasionally the senior Deputy stays behind to discuss some item privately. Once outside the anteroom, the participants break into loud conversation on their way down the hall, discussing some matter raised. In contrast to the official meeting, these hallway discussions are animated and often argumentative.

The clothing of the participants is dignified. Everyone wears natural fibers of wool, cotton, linen and silk. The men wear dark suits purchased from Raleigh's, Brooks Brothers or Lord and Taylor. The junior Deputy, who is considered an elegant dresser, may wear a Harris tweed sport coat once in a while. The women wear suits or dark dresses. Clothing is a frequent topic at lunch and in casual conversation among the men as well as the women.

The Assistant Secretary's Tuesday meeting is larger, including the four bureau directors. Because the staff-only meetings are formal and predictable rather than candid and wide ranging, the differences between the two sessions is not great. On Tuesday the bureau directors, who are all Presidential appointees, take better chairs than the staff and sit closer to the center. The Special Assistants defer and often sit on folding chairs taken from the storage room. The directors are mature, confident men (and one woman) who speak more freely than the Deputies and the staff. They answer questions at length, giving their opinions and predictions of future events. However, they never venture much about their own bureaus that might result in a decision. For their part, the Deputies and staff do not press them on substantive issues. The Assistant Secretary is respectful of the bureau directors, often mentioning that they are Presidential appointees. He rarely contradicts or hurries them. They in turn do not press the Assistant Secretary, but are anxious to see their proposals move forward over this hurdle.

A separate meeting is scheduled once a week to cover the affairs of each bureau. The participants are the Assistant Secretary, the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for that bureau, the bureau director, his assistant director and a lawyer from the Office of the General Counsel. While the room and much of the performance is like the semi-weekly meetings, they are more substantive and less scripted. After opening the session with a brief recitation of the agenda, the Assistant Secretary turns over leadership of the discussion to the Deputy. The assumption is that the Assistant Secretary has run out of his grasp of the topic. Although under these circumstances one

might expect that the Assistant Secretary and his Deputy would rehearse the agenda, they do not. Typically they only have spoken briefly on the telephone or the Deputy has sent a one or two page memorandum which the Assistant Secretary has initialed. The Assistant Secretary prefers a written memorandum to oral conversation.

A bureau director usually comes with lots of items to cover and strong opinions on them. The Assistant Secretary frequently does not address the items directly, which frustrates the bureau director and his assistant director. On occasion when the course of the discussion calls for the Assistant Secretary to make a decision on the spot, he suddenly hesitates and abruptly moves on to the next item on the agenda. While it may appear at the time that he does not understand what is going on, within a day he will speak to his Deputy or telephone the bureau director to give his decision. In meeting with his bureau directors, he does not pressure them or set them up to force compliance. When action on his own part is called for, the Assistant Secretary guides its format toward a written document such as a draft regulation, a formal plan or a letter.

The lawyer plays a strong role. He is intelligent, articulate, persuasive and strongly committed to the values of Standards and Regulations. He is also committed to two general values of the President that fall outside the direct mission of the Department of Public Service: deregulation and affirmative action. As the legal advisor, the lawyer is deeply involved with all four bureaus. Although he does not set the agenda, he frequently synthesizes the discussion and recommends action. Moreover he often vetoes proposals as exceeding the authority in the law.

In the case of one bureau, a Special Assistant is on the staff who worked on the professional staff of the Senate Committee chairman when Congress significantly amended the organic act of the bureau. He often asserts inside knowledge of the meaning of parts of the law. His Senator recommended strongly that the Department hire him and he maintains close relations with his mentor. On numerous occasions, he recalls

what the Senator and the Committee had intended when they wrote the law. The Assistant Secretary has a standard reply that the courts do not accept such informal accounts and the Department has to adhere to the published reports of the Conference, the Committees and the floor debate.

Every few weeks the Assistant Secretary and some of his staff have occasion to meet with the Secretary. In the Spring they meet with the departmental budget office and the White House Office of Management and Budget. The Assistant Secretary prepares in detail when to topic is the budget. Other external meetings are taken less seriously. Although sessions with the Secretary are obviously important, the Assistant Secretary is comparatively relaxed and makes only routine preparations of reading and discussing the briefing papers, which tend to be short. The Secretary is experienced in the industry and in government, confident of his position and considered to be one of the President's best department heads. Moreover he had known the Assistant Secretary's father when they both served in Congress. The meetings occur in the Secretary's massive, paneled office, with a fire burning in the fireplace if it is winter. The Secretary greets the Standards and Regulations group cordially, unfailingly mentions his respect for the Assistant Secretary's father, and tells a joke. Because the Secretary's staff already would have worked out a tentative solution beforehand with one of the Deputies, the ritual serves to confirm the arrangement. When a new issue arises, the Secretary makes an immediate decision if it is small or says he will have an answer the next day if it is large.

Budget sessions spur the Assistant Secretary to prepare thoroughly. It is his weakest area and he suffered devastating embarrassment in his first year on the job. Despite the fact that other assistant secretaries in the department consider the career civil service budget officers completely adequate, he used a political appointment position to hire a Special Assistant to work full time on budgeting. Prior to meeting with the department budget office, he holds long briefing sessions of three and four hours each. As the dreaded day approaches, he rehearses his presentation, which is to the Assistant Secretary

for Administration and Budget. The two assistant secretaries sit across a giant table, one calmly with only two staff members and the other anxiously with his Deputy, his budget Special Assistant and several career budget officers from his bureaus. While the prospect of meeting outside the department with the Office of Management and Budget is even more terrifying, it is avoidable. Since the Assistant Secretary is not absolutely required to attend, he skips them.

The five assistant secretaries of the department compete in their Christmas parties. These are held from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. on a Friday in December. Food is lavish and plentiful. The location is the Assistant Secretary's office, anteroom and hallway. Invitations go to top department officials, the four bureau directors and their top officials, and virtually any one on the sixth floor. For the Secretary to fail to attend is an embarrassment. The Secretary is sensitive to this and tries not to disappoint anyone, but his visits are often short. The stenographers and two or three of the Special Assistants purchase the food and decorate. One year, to show up a rival who enjoys a reputation as a genial host, the Assistant Secretary started earlier, spent more and arranged for a singing telegram.

While the grand offices of the secretary and the five assistant secretaries are the chief stages for the performances of executive level politics, there are other sites. These better fit Goffman's category of offstage. Many are for eating. The soaring department cafeteria on the top floor of the Old Main Building is a gathering place for all. The Secretary himself dines there once a week, democratically waiting his turn in line and greeting friends and employees throughout his meal. The Assistant Secretary for Standards and Regulations, on the other hand, rarely eats there, preferring to send his stenographer for sandwiches which he eats in his office. The cafeteria is a center for gossip; replaying the events of staff meetings is a common topic. Executives who wish to eat and gossip more privately go to one of the nearby restaurants: Dominique's, Pier Seven or the China Inn.

Findings

The events at the executive level appear to fit closely to Goffman's dramaturgical frames. The performances have a stage, an audience, players, a beginning, the performance itself, an ending and costumes. The meetings at the Department of Public Service also fit Burke's concept of dramatism with regards to a person's identification coming from rhetoric and dramatism as well as physical objects, occupations, friends, activities, beliefs and values. The participants are engaged in unconscious persuasion and have themselves as an audience. And they fit Derber's criteria for attention as power.

In his semiweekly and other meeting the Assistant Secretary is controlling, constrained and defensive. Although his manipulation is subtle and skilled, most participants catch on within a few sessions. They then began to accept it and turn it to their own ends. The Assistant Secretary defends himself by (1) emphasizing process, (2) adhering to hierarchy, (3) limiting his repertoire, (4) getting advice, and (5) acting cautiously.

Control of process both enhances the Assistant Secretary's authority through the performance (as posited by Goffman and Derber), and fends off challenges to his authority. The Assistant Secretary places great emphasis on the proper conduct of the performance and on maintaining control. The staff meetings, which were the ones most under his control, were the most scripted. Those people he could not control, he tends to ignore, even when he is in the room supposedly participating. In meetings on the substantive issues of the four bureaus, he sets the formal agenda but then turns the session over to his Deputy Assistant Secretary. Because he does not try to impose his will on the bureau director or the lawyer, he risks little and their spontaneous assertions can do little damage to his reputation. Indeed to the superficial observer, he seems to exhibit the supposedly superior stance of calmly and democratically allowing his subordinates to quarrel until he intervenes at the end. In fact, at the end he does not intervene.

This means that the meetings often adjourn without resolution. The potential alternative to irresolution may be a chal-

lenge to his authority. While it is unthinkable for a subordinate directly to challenge the Assistant Secretary, the risk of a subtle threat exists in the form of a point made too persuasively or an assertion of independent authority residing in the bureau.

Meetings with the Secretary, which one might assume would be important, are not because the Secretary knows that the Assistant Secretary is not really going to engage him. The Secretary gave up long ago. He continues the Assistant Secretary in his job for reasons unrelated to his effectiveness, such as his late father's prominence in the party. Since the Assistant Secretary has nothing to fear in sessions with the Secretary, he relaxes and probably contributes more than if he tried harder. Budget meetings are his greatest anxiety. Recognizing this, he actually works to improve his performance studying the documents and literally rehearsing with one of his staff playing the part of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Budget.

Adherence to the hierarchy is the Assistant Secretary's second defense. He is scrupulously loyal to the Secretary and repeats his pronouncements from the weekly staff meeting almost word for word. When his own bureau directors wish to pass policy suggestions or criticisms up to the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary neglects to do so. He may even agree to discuss an issue with the Secretary, but then forget. In his adherence to hierarchy, the Assistant Secretary is scrupulous downward as well as upward. He never intentionally circumvents his bureau directors. This is true even in the case of one director who is notoriously prone to delay and distort directives from above.

To avoid the pitfalls of new action, the Assistant Secretary limits his repertoire to action that has worked in the past, is prepared by others and are written. After a year or so on the job, he learned how to do several things such as promulgate a set of regulations, approve a state plan for the delegation of Standards and Regulations responsibility, and revise an affirmative action plan for a bureau. While no one believes he

does these well, at least he does them adequately. In fact he does them with minimum modification of the existing arrangements. Moreover, although these came out of his office over his signature, in fact they are prepared by his staff and by the bureaus. He personally does very little. The Assistant Secretary has also recognized what he does poorly. These include preparing the budget, testifying before Congressional committees, and making speeches to industry leaders. Hence he avoids these duties.

Getting advice is his fourth defense. The advice is frequently private or even secret. Most assistant secretaries get advice directly from their own staff and bureau directors. The weekly meeting on the affairs of each bureau would be the natural time for discussing a range of options, exploring their consequences and choosing one option. But the Assistant Secretary never exposes himself to the give and take this involves. For substantive advice such as whether or not to sign a set of regulations or to approve a state plan, he invariably accepts the recommendation of his staff and bureau director. If they say yes, he signs. In deciding less specific actions, his first choice for advice is the Secretary himself when he can get an appointment or a telephone call through. A senior member of the Secretary's personal staff is his second choice. Because the Secretary does not have the information or time to explore all issues within the topic of Standards and Regulations, seeking this advice is simply begging the Secretary to give orders. Occasionally the Assistant Secretary asks advice from his senior Deputy. He does so privately when only the two of them are in the room; he will not ask in a meeting where others were present.

For advice that is strategic as well as substantive, he relies on Mr. Green. Mr. Green is an old friend and a protégé of his father who holds a political appointment in a different division of the Department. When a strategic issue looms, the Assistant Secretary and he get together face to face for a few hours over lunch or in Mr. Green's office to figure out the implications and options. The Assistant Secretary returns to the office and issues a brief directive to one of the Deputies. Although he never

mentions any details, it always proves to be the case that telephone calls were made to all the key people in Congress and in the industry, presumably by Mr. Green. Other times the advice seems to have been sought in order to counter the Assistant Secretary's own staff or at least to appear more intelligent in front of them. These cases arise when, in the course of a meeting, the Assistant Secretary is confounded. He concludes the meeting without speaking further on the topic. A few hours or a few days later, perhaps in the next meeting, he revives the issue and gives his decision or rebuttal.[5]

Caution is the Assistant Secretary's fifth defense. He rarely ventures outside of the topics or repertoires he knows. He does not seek new responsibilities or even accept them when offered. He moves slowly and deliberately. Via Mr. Green and his own friends in the industry and in his home state, he routinely touches base with Congressional and industry leaders. He never does this directly. The Assistant Secretary limits his exposure in vulnerable situations. Daily lunch is a small example. Sending his stenographers to the cafeteria to buy it avoids the risk of a subordinate accosting him with a problem, or being pulled into a wide ranging conversation with colleagues around the table that may reveal his limited grasp of the industry, or an invitation to join the Secretary on his weekly foray to the Department cafeteria.

Dealing with the budget is a more substantive illustration. For those occasions that he can not avoid, the Assistant Secretary works hard reading, listening and rehearsing. For those occasions that he can avoid, he avoids them. When actually in the inescapable sessions, he minimizes his personal exposure by deferring to his staff after making an introductory statement. The Assistant Secretary has an uncanny ability to be invisible while he sits in a room.

The presence of the four bureau directors in the Friday staff meetings presents a potential threat. Because they are distinguished professionals in their fields, confident of themselves, and appointed by the President, any one of them is a potential challenger whenever he or she speaks. On the other

hand they have all have had a few bad experiences after speaking their minds in previous meetings. On some occasions the Assistant Secretary had reproached them. On other occasions they had found their bureaus opened up for unwelcome discussion from outside. Consequently, the bureau directors learn not to venture too much at the routine staff meetings. They also learn not to venture too much at their individual weekly meetings on the business of their own bureau. Past experience has taught them that the Assistant Secretary is not going to be very helpful in intervening with the Secretary, finding resources in the department, or advising them about Washington. While the quiescence of the bureau directors violates the principles of good organizational communication, it does satisfy a need of the Assistant Secretary for security.

Conclusions

Although this case study illustrates the insights that may be gleaned from a symbolic interaction approach, two caveats are in order. First, despite the pessimistic tone (due to putting all the behavior into a single day), substance is not lacking in the meetings. Regulations, proposals and documents do move forward to their next hurdle. Second, this is one assistant secretary in one department; other ones have different personalities and styles. Nevertheless this dramaturgical analysis shows insights like the Assistant Secretary's emphasis on process, adherence to hierarchy, limited repertoire, advice getting, and caution that may be generalized to many other top level situations. It would be a mistake to consider the assistant secretary's meeting meaningless ritual; on the contrary, it is meaningful ritual.

Standard analysis like interest groups, elites, or policy stages cannot yield these findings about the influence of personality and group behavior. Nor can standard organizational theory do so because it cannot transcend its non-elite origins in the mid-level management. The Assistant Secretary and his staff cannot be understood in terms of professionalism like the upper career level nor in terms of direction from above like the working level. This suggests that the utility of these conven-

tional approaches to helping understand the executive level may be in defining the area of action left to top officials. The second advantage of a dramaturgical analysis, besides better understanding, may be to improve the process. Participants who are schooled in these techniques can diagnose dysfunctional behavior and work to remedy the situation.

Endnotes

[1]The American Political Science Association held panels on Placing Government Experience in a Theoretical Context at its annual meetings in 1988 and 1989. David Howard Davis organized both sessions which included Robert Wood, Matthew Holden, Donald Devine, Joseph Freeman, Kathleen Barber and others.

[2] See Nichols (1991); Bogen and Lynch (1989); and Molotch and Bogen (1985). Richard Fenno (1990) takes pride in the distance he kept from Washington while observing Senator, later Vice President, Dan Quayle.

[3]. Michael Moffat (1989) resorted to the subterfuge of disguising himself as a college student to observe undergraduate life in a dormitory. Evert Gummesson (1991) observes upper levels of business as a paid consultant.

[4].For some meetings other than the semiweekly staff meetings, department regulations actually required notice in the *federal Register* and admission of the public. These were few (otherwise the meeting was moved to a larger room) and typically any visitors were new reporters.

[5].This mode of delaying his response was much like the Secretary. At the conclusion of a fully staffed "Secretarial Briefing" to officially decide an action, the Secretary would say "Thank you, ladies and Gentlemen, for your fine preparation and work here today," then leave the room without announcing his decision, even though his leanings appeared obvious from his comments and questions. The next afternoon, his aide would bring the entire file back with his signature. Occasionally he would modify part slightly or would decline to sign. No one knew for sure what went on in those 24 hours, but the general assumption was that he telephoned Senators, Representatives, governors and industry representatives for their concurrence or at least their information.

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The Lessons that Tolstoy and *Father Sergius* Hold for Public Administration: Revisiting Three Root Questions

Nondas Bellos

Introduction

Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) was peculiarly the product of the Imperial Russia born of the legacy of Catherine the Great. Catherine left and Empire in which the Crown and the bureaucracy had the means to exercise absolute control over every citizen and institution in their dominion, including the Church which was secularized and brought under the jurisdiction of the State. Catherine created an Empire in which only members of the aristocracy could exercise power. They alone could aspire to occupy senior bureaucratic positions and receive a full university education. Tolstoy was singular, among the great Russian writers of his time, in being born into the very highest social rank. His isolation, and the privilege of his birth, partly explain why, in the second half of his career, Tolstoy managed to get away with being such a trenchant opponent of the Russian government. So long as he lived and wrote, the average Russian felt that it was possible to believe in individual liberty, and maintain personal dignity when confronted by a faceless, bureaucratic tyranny (Wilson, 1988).

The life of Tolstoy is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Born of nobility; trained as a local magistrate; commissioned as an army officer; a practicing pacifist; a social activist; an excommunicated Christian; a reformed gambler, smoker, drinker, and cad; a vegetarian; and arguably an egotist—none of these characteristics or roles adequately describe Tolstoy—and none diminish his stature as an author. Tolstoy is defined by his beautiful, profound, and prolific writings. Ninety volumes of his work fill the shelves of the Russian library. No other, with his wide range of life experiences, insight, and literary talent could better guide us in what follows.

In his writings, Tolstoy concentrated on three overarching subjects: his relations with God, Russia, and women (Wilson, 1988). Although crossover themes blur any definitive categorization, Tolstoy's major works may be classified into works of fiction, political and social commentary, and religious writings. For present purposes, the latter are of more pressing historical interest.

Tolstoy began writing *Father Sergius* in 1890 and worked on this short story at intervals until 1898. *Father Sergius* belongs to that period when Tolstoy had largely turned away from literary work and become preoccupied with writing on social, religious, philosophical, and moral problems. In 1897 he expressed in *What is Art?* his moral utilitarian aesthetic, which required of fictional writing that it be morally improving and accessible to the widest possible public (Foote, 1977). By the time *What is Art?* was published, Tolstoy's two greatest novels *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877) had long been completed, followed in 1889 by *The Kreutzer Sonata*. The watershed year of 1879, in which *A Confession* was penned, and *What I Believe* started, marked Tolstoy's evolution as an extreme rationalist and moralist. *What I Believe* was finished in the Fall of 1883. In it, the unfolding processes which had been at work in his earlier religious writings, including *A Confession*, the *Four Gospels*, and the *Critique*, reached their culmination (Wilson, 1988). *Father Sergius* is hence situated at that time in Tolstoy's life distinguished by introspection and a search for meaning.

Although not a self-portrait, *Father Sergius* is replete with many of the same temptations that troubled Tolstoy. Of these, worldly fame is identified as the most persistent, understandable in view of one who had achieved international literary standing unparalleled by few in their lifetime. The reason that *Father Sergius* was never published in Tolstoy's lifetime is that it was too graphic an analysis of what was wrong with the whole Tolstoyan way of looking at the world. The story derives much of its power from buried self-knowledge, its furtive, almost auto-erotic mixture of self-disgust and self-acceptance. The complexity of Tolstoy's nature is accommodated, and almost explained in this short story (Wilson, 1988). *Father Sergius*, however, is not merely a personal journey of self-discovery through a fictional character. Like Tolstoy's *Resurrection* (1899), it combines the story of an individual's moral quest with satire and social criticism on a broad scale: from tsar and high society, to lower professional classes and peasant pilgrims (Foote, 1977). How the character Father Sergius relates and fits into this rich social tapestry, especially those aspects having to do with public affairs, is this essay's vehicle into human motivations, institutions, values, and lessons for contemporary public administration.

"By showing us what organizations look like to individuals who are affected by them, writers of creative literature bring to administration a perspective that scholars are in many ways compelled to avoid" (McCurdy in Chandler (ed.), 1987, p. 568). McCurdy (1987) maintains that works of fiction can be instructive without explicitly describing public administration. Fiction provides insights into administrative issues that are difficult to approach by other means. "Relative to empirical research, fiction makes its most significant contribution to administrative understanding in the areas where individual perceptions matter most: the realm of private motives and character" (in Chandler, 1987, p. 544). Writers, poets, and artists have been martyrs in Russia ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century. In a country until recently characterized by the suppression of the truth, the imaginative writer was and is in a peculiar position of strength, for he or she can see through

falsehoods without the need for evidence. Perhaps this is why, particularly in Tolstoy's time, there has existed at the very heart of the Russian government a powerful lingering of respect for literary genius (Wilson, 1988).

This essay then is a sojourn into the world of fiction with Father Sergius as our guide. He will serve as our mirror to personal motivation and moral character. More questions than answers will emerge: To whom or what does one loyalty? Do we need complex institutions? What moral principles should guide public administration?

To Whom, or What Does One Owe Loyalty?

Tolstoy's *Father Sergius* begins with the story of how a young Guard's officer named Stepan Kasatsky came to enter a monastery, and become known as Father Sergius.

> He [Kasatsky] wanted to demonstrate the utterness of his devotion, to sacrifice something, his whole self, for him...And [Tsar] Nicholas was aware he aroused this ecstasy and purposely evoked it...When the cadets appeared before Nicholas on passing out...[he] said, as always, that they should loyally serve him and their fatherland, and that he would always be their best friend (pp. 16-17).
>
> "What? You gave yourself to him?"...If the man who had been his fiancee's lover had been a private citizen he would have killed him. But it was his adored tsar...On the feast of the Intercession Kasatsky entered the monastery (pp. 21-23).

Did Kasatsky misplace his loyalty in an unethical leader? His commander-in-chief, the chief executive of the nation? Norton Long in his article *Power and Administration* asks: "To whom is one loyal—unit, section, branch, division, bureau, department, administration, government, country, people, world history, or what?" (in Stillman, 1983, p. 98). It would seem that blind loyalty in people, even adored leaders, is bound to lead to disappointment when those leaders, or those in whom we place trust, are not virtuous. But government is composed of people,

and virtue of course can and is found in government. Ultimate loyalty, however, belongs to a higher law. Higher law holds that there is a source and measure of rightness that is above and beyond both individual and government. "While the state may well, and is some cases inevitably will, claim moral supremacy, the individual will have to weigh its claims against his or her interpretations of competing claims of other collectivities *and* the claims of higher law and `conscience'" (Waldo, 1980, p. 103). In its extreme form, the state's claim to moral supremacy violates all or most standards of moral conduct for individuals; this in the interests of preserving, creating, or enhancing state power (Waldo, 1980).

What then must we do?—to ask the Tolstoyan question—when higher conscience and a government's demand for an individual's allegiance contradict one another. Tolstoy in *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893) writes:

> if a man, through the growth of a higher conscience, can no longer comply with the demands of government, he finds himself cramped by it and at the same time no longer needs its protection. When this comes to pass, the question whether men are ready to discard the governmental type is solved. And the conclusion will be as final for them as for the young birds hatched out of the eggs. Just as no power in the world can put them back into the shells, so can no power in the world bring men again under the governmental type of society when once they have outgrown it (p. 239).

Far from discarding the shackles of government, however, we have witnessed the steady growth of the administrative state, particularly in this century. The question then becomes: What should a person do when faced with a powerful government with which one disagrees on moral grounds? That is an intensely private and individual decision. Tolstoy continues in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*:

> settle for yourselves what you need for your life. I cannot prove the need or the harm of governments in general. I know only what I need and do not need, what I

> can do and what I cannot. I know that I do not need to divide myself off from other nations, and therefore I cannot admit that I belong exclusively to any state or nation, or that I owe allegiance to any government. I know that I do not need all the government institutions organized within the state, and therefore I cannot deprive people who need my labor to give it in the form of taxes to institutions which I do not need, which for all I know may be pernicious. I know that I have no need of the administration or of courts of justice founded upon force, and therefore I can take no part in either. I know that I do not need to attack and slaughter other nations or to defend myself from them with arms, and therefore, I can take no part in wars or preparation for wars (p. 239).

When Tolstoy says that he cannot take part in what he perceives to be immoral, or unjust behavior, he is advocating something beyond passive resistance. But since his moral objection to government revolves around a rejection of force, the only possible avenue appears to be escape.

Do We Need Complex Institutions?

Escape from government, government institutions, and institutions in general, is a popular theme of novelists. Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn* takes the view that institutions do not serve us well. "They become vehicles for bondage and injustice. Only when someone like Huck can be as free from institutions as possible can he or she hope to act morally. Even then, the redemption is likely to short-lived" (McCurdy, 1987, in Chandler (ed.), p. 547). McCurdy (1987) concludes that "Twain was not being cynical, he was merely trying to be realistic. People are a bundle of good and evil, and institutions provide an opportunity to elevate the wrong tendencies. Like Twain, Hemingway believed that only by escaping from institutions, as the old man did to the sea, could an individual hope to develop a satisfactory moral code" (in Chandler (ed.), 1987, p. 547). To this list of authors and novels with an escape theme we can add, among others, Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* and Tolstoy's

Father Sergius. Father Sergius confronts organizational hierarchy as an institutional pathology which breeds temptation and powerlessness:

> In his fourth year as monk the bishop showed him special favour and the elder told Sergius that if an appointment to some higher sphere were offered him he should not refuse it. At this the monastic ambition which Sergius in other monks had found so repellent was sparked in him. He was appointed to a monastery near the capital (p. 26).

As natural as natural law gets, when a hierarchical structure is put in place, people, even monks, strive to be superior to others.

> Sergius saw that he was a means of attracting visitors and donations to the monastery and that consequently the monastery authorities were ordering the pattern of his life so as to take full advantage of him...But as he surrendered himself to this way of living, so he felt his inner life turn outwards and the fount of his living water in him fail...(pp. 44-45).

It seems that even the most benevolent organizations, if not corrupt, are at least corrupting when organizational objectives are incongruent with individual needs. Faced with such a moral contradiction, Father Sergius chooses to escape the organization of which he is a member, since he cannot escape from himself.

> She took his hand and pressed it to her breast..."What are you doing?" he said. "Mary you are a devil."...She lay there asleep. He looked at her in horror. He went through, got down his peasant's clothes and put them on. He took some scissors and cut his hair, then set off down the path to the river...(pp. 54-55).

Such were the circumstances under which Father Sergius (Kasatsky again) made his escape. More telling, however, is his decision to become a pilgrim and thus to continue his escape from even a rudimentary organization.

"Ask them," said the Frenchman, "if they really believe that their pilgrimage is pleasing to God."... "As God sees fit. Our feet have found us favour, may our hearts not do the same?" [old women with Kasatsky] (p. 65).

> In sum, institutions have no inherent power to improve the lives of the people who file into them. Institutions by themselves are not a civilizing factor; their quality is merely a reflection of the people who make them up. This personal interpretation of institutional life stands as one of the great themes of fiction addressing organizations and administration (McCurdy in Chandler, 1987).

What Moral Principles Should Guide Public Administration?

As *Father Sergius* reminds us, organizations and the people that run them cannot be divorced from each other. It is important consequently to examine not only institutions, but also the role and obligation of a public administrator in relation to the public. Perhaps the first step is to recognize that such a role is not anything like that of a big brother, but simply that of a trustee of public values. In operational terms, administrative ethics can begin with the profession of public administration choosing to define itself based on an axiology in which the public interest and morality are central. Such a definition might read: "Public Administration is the technology of governance applied with the moral imperative to serve the public interest as expressed through ongoing political processes" (Bellos, 1994, p. 14). This definition emphasizes the practical nature of public administration (it is applied), it clarifies what is applied (the technology, or applied science, of governance), why it is applied (to serve the public interest), and how it is applied (through moral imperatives and ongoing political processes).

If definition is the first step, what is the second, third,...last step? According to Rohr (1990) the field of ethics is unorganized, and the inquiry unbounded (in Lynn and Wil-

davsky, 1990). Waldo (1980) concurs in noting that "if we are going to talk about ethics in public life it would be useful to know what we are talking about" (p. 107). What many authors appear to be talking about is their own list of chosen values deemed to be significant in public administration. Consider for instance Waldo's (1980) list of twelve ethical obligations examples from which include "obligation to constitution, obligation to democracy, and obligation to self" (pp. 103-106). Or, Chandler's (1989) list of ten ethical precepts, three of which are: "avoid moral abstractions, embrace moral abstractions, and, demonstrate fiscal integrity" (in Perry (ed.), 1989, pp. 605-15). And if Tolstoy (or Father Sergius) were a public administrator (or a public administrationist), he might have added humility, and God, to the list of possible values that are to guide public officials. Again Father Sergius:

> "I am written about in the papers, the emperor knows of me, and so do people in Europe, in unbelieving Europe." And he felt suddenly ashamed at his vanity and again he prayed to God:..."Cleanse me from the corruption of worldly fame by which I am afflicted"..."But surely in some part I genuinely wished to serve God?" he thought. And the answer came to him: "Yes, but that was defiled and choked by human glory. And God does not exist for one such as I, who lived for human glory, I will seek him now" (pp. 52-64).

The point is that lists of moral principles can never be complete. Waldo (1980) recognizes this dilemma when he says, "we identify a dozen, but as we indicate, the list is capable of indefinite expansion and does not lend it self to logical ordering" (p. 103). Nor can one appeal to the most encompassing of moral principles—God. Although by most accounts belief in God is the highest principle, belief in God is not catholic. God means different things to different people, and to atheists and agnostics presumably nothing, or very little. Assuming for the moment that many people regard any war as immoral, then certainly even belief in God, in whose name wars have been waged, cannot serve to "bound" the field of ethics. Is this then a problem without a solution? The answer is no.

What is needed is a reconciliation of the infinite with the finite. The "infinite" refers to the unlimited number of legitimate values that can be added to the pool of moral principles from which guidance and inspiration for public administrators is to be drawn. And the "finite" refers to the problem of "bounding"—of establishing one unifying principle for the field of ethics as a whole. One possible unifying principle is the concept of the good example—the example that public administrators set by their own ethical behavior that others can emulate. This construct has the advantage of marrying theory to practice in such a way that the corpus of example (for all practical purposes a finite entity) can accommodate an unlimited number of legitimate moral principles and to permit their modification (the "infinite"), much in the same way that the finite surface of the earth can accommodate an infinite number of human journeys.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the individual who repudiates his or her government is faced with two fundamental alternatives: violence or escape. For Stepan Kasatsky (not yet Father Sergius), variant matters led to the same stark choices. Upon confronting his fiancé and her mother, he says

> "You knew about this and were going to use me as a cover. If you were not both women...," he cried, raising his enormous fist over her—then he turned and fled (p. 21).

As we have seen, Kasatsky chose to escape. Yet for the ethical, moderate individual—whether man, woman, author, citizen, or public official—these unequivocal choices are unrealistic; akin to a finite, barren, and inert earth surface. This is not the finite, dynamic, and fluid surface of our metaphorical earth delimited by the principle of the good example. Upon this "earth" are an infinite number of moral choices (human journeys) between the "poles" of violence and escape that can only be bounded and effectively made legitimate by the principle of the good example. Action by way of good example can serve to

set the moral tone for others irrespective of their chosen path. Simply put: whether one chooses to be guided by God, truth, justice, liberty, social equity, or any other number of values, is relatively unimportant. What is important is to legitimize the chosen value by the good example that one sets. The aggregate sum of good examples and ethical choices that individual public servants make at any given period of time can thus yield legitimate, moral public administration. One of the reasons Tolstoy's writings command such great respect is because he practiced what he preached. In other words, Tolstoy lends credence to the moral force of his characters, like Father Sergius, through the good example that he set by his own behavior in his own life. Aside from the example Tolstoy sought to set at home, he applied himself to the world around him, both through his personal activities and his writings, championing the peasants and proselytizing to the rich in the name of the common good. On behalf of the peasants, who for Tolstoy, represented something of an ideal, he set himself to numerous practical tasks including the reform of peasant schools, active support for the persecuted religious sects, relief work during the great famine of 1891-2, and a series of moral tales written specifically for the common folk. In the prolific writings of his last thirty years Tolstoy helped the oppressed by persuasively undermining the entire social, political, and religious structure on which the lives of the upper classes rested; his influence was tremendous, both at home and abroad (Kentish, 1987).

The year in which Tolstoy did most work on *Father Sergius*, 1891, was also the year in which Russia was threatened with one of the worst famines in its history. Throughout the famine, and the epidemics that followed it, Tolstoy and his family were largely occupied with the practical relief of human suffering. By July 1892, Tolstoy had set up 246 kitchens, feeding 13,000 people daily, and 124 special children's kitchens, feeding 3,000 daily. He had personally raised 141,000 rubles for the relief of the poor, which included 500,000 dollars from America, and a quite independent donation from the English Quakers of 26,000 pounds (Wilson, 1988, p. 401). Nearly half a million people ultimately died, and Tolstoy was outspokenly critical of

the part played by the government. By his example, Tolstoy had again demonstrated his willingness to assume personal responsibility according to his own principles, irrespective of any conflicting loyalties and reliance on his government—a shining instance of democracy by citizen action.

Would Stepan Kasatsky or Father Sergius have done the same? Would he have risen in violent opposition to his government, escaped, or chosen the good example?

> In Siberia he settled on the holding of a wealthy peasant. He still lives there, working in the owner's vegetable garden, teaching the children and tending the sick (p. 66).

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Democratic Man, Last Man? J. R. R. Tolkien's Alternative

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The revolutions of 1989 seem to represent a thoroughgoing rejection of communism in favor of democracy and capitalism, yet those responsible for the formation of new regimes have felt some ambivalence about American-style capitalism and have expressed some fears about the kinds of citizens that it might produce. These fears are the old fears. Nietzsche saw modern democracy as a society with nothing left to give life a powerful sense of purpose. Tocqueville thought that democracy in America had not produced ambition which was directed towards lofty objects. In general, according to Tocqueville, the democratic political leader should apprehend "less from the boldness than from the mediocrity of desires" (Pt. 2, Bk. 3, Ch. 19, p. 261). Along the same line, Nietzsche found that in a modern democracy nothing would be left but "miserable ease" (p. 43).

Tolkien represents these unpromising tendencies of modern democracy and capitalism in his hobbits, but his work asserts wholeheartedly that virtuous heroism is still possible in our time. In fact, Tolkien sees no reason to be less sanguine about individual virtue than in the past—not because he denies the existence of history and its impact on how humans behave, but because he recognizes in the altered times new supports for virtue as well as new temptations to vice or to dullness and spiritual stagnation. Certainly, past ages have produced their

own heroes whom we can still admire, but they also have contained influences which might oppose true heroism and support evil as great as that of today. Tolkien's hobbits exhibit certain tendencies required of the best sorts of heroes, although they also display their own peculiar weaknesses.

Tolkien illustrates what an individual coming out of a democracy might do. Insofar as the individuals are heroes, they are extraordinary—even among their own fellows—and yet their heroism is possible in large part because they take on the characteristics of the citizens in their political regime, the Shire.

The two sides of democracy—its virtues and its defects—are probably best represented in terms of the competing elements which govern Bilbo's and Frodo's characters—the Baggins and the Took. In a sense, these two families represent the dual character of the polity of the Shire, "half republic half aristocratic" (1981, p. 240).

Formerly the Shire had been ruled by a king who lived in the north and whose thane had been a Took, but since the military forces of the Shire were mustered only in times of emergency, "which no longer occurred, the Thainship had ceased to be more than a nominal dignity." Still, the Took family was "accorded a special respect."

During Bilbo's and Frodo's time, the Shire had an unintrusive government similar to a democracy. Like the common law of England, the law of the Shire derived from tradition rather than from a constitution: The hobbits usually "kept the laws of free will, because they were The Rules (as they said), both ancient and just." The only real official of the Shire was the Mayor, who was elected for a seven-year term. His main duty was to preside at banquets, but he also was responsible for the Postal Service and for the Watch, consisting of "Shirriffs" who were "more concerned with the strayings of beasts than of people" (1987a, pp. 18-19).

Bilbo's father was a Baggins, and his mother was a Took. The Bagginses suggest the democratic elements in the Shire.

Like Tocqueville's American democrats, they have no lofty ambitions. They are predictable and stolid and thus respected by hobbits in general:

> [P]eople considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him (1987a, p. 11).

Bilbo displays the Baggins in him when he responds to Gandalf, who is looking for someone to share an adventure:

> We are plain quiet folk and I have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them (1978b, pp. 13-14).

The attention to mundane material comforts makes the hobbits like Tocqueville's democrats in gratifying petty desires rather than succumbing to extreme depravity. Throughout *The Hobbit*, when Bilbo thinks of his comfortable chair and the kettle singing or wishes he were safe or is eager to eat, he is being true to his Baggins side (e.g., 34, 35, 46, 54, 59, 100). When Gandalf first approaches Bilbo about the adventure, the hobbit is "getting rather greedy and fat" (1980, p. 323), and in general hobbits are "inclined to be fat in the stomach" (1978b, p. 12). The other hobbits depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* are equally concerned about food. Merry, for example, inquires first about food before exploring the city of Minas Tirith, where he has just arrived. Legolas, tracking Merry and Pippin after their capture by orcs, remarks that their eating before completing their escape from the orcs is alone enough evidence to prove that they are hobbits (1987c, p. 92).

The very size and obscurity of the hobbits confirm that they are democrats rather than traditional heroes, for heroes tend to be larger than life. Hobbits range "between two and four feet in our measure," and, like humans after the Golden Age, "they have dwindled" below their height in ancient days (1987a, p. 10-11). Bilbo is so insignificant that he is always getting left

behind, as he does in the goblin cave, or is nearly left behind, as with the eagles' rescue of Gandalf and his band from the wolves and goblins (1978b, p. 96). In general, the hobbits are so "unobtrusive" (1987a, p. 10) that they are unknown to creatures outside of the Shire: Smaug has never smelled a hobbit before (1978b, p. 191; 1980, p. 333), and the Ents do not include hobbits in their poems listing the free peoples of Middle-Earth (1987c, p. 68).

In every way the hobbits seem to be the antithesis of Nietzsche's superman—the self-fulfilled irregular hero who rises above the common herd. The military qualities so praised by Nietzsche are neglected by the hobbits, who are neither warriors nor heroes. As Gandalf explains to the dwarves, one cannot attack the front gate of Smaug's lair without either a warrior or a hero, and when Gandalf visits the Shire, "warriors are busy fighting one another in distant lands, and in this neighborhood heroes are scarce, or simply not to be found. Swords in these parts are mostly blunt, and axes are used for trees, and shields as cradles or dish-covers; and dragons are comfortably far-off (and therefore legendary)" (1978b, p.27). To say that Bilbo is "fierce as a dragon in a pinch," as Gandalf does to convince the dwarves to take Bilbo along on their quest, is "only poetical exaggeration applied to any hobbit" (1978b, p. 24).

The hobbits exhibit all of the characteristics that Nietzsche abhorred in democrats—conformity, lack of taste, mediocrity. The Bagginses are respected by hobbits because they are predictable in their conventionality. Even those who have some natural love of tales and curiosity about the outside world are taught by life in the Shire not to act upon their curiosity so that eventually, as with Bilbo, the old desires have "dwindled down to a sort of private dream" (1980, p. 323). All subtlety and elegance is lost on the hobbits. When, for instance, Bilbo hears the dwarves' song about their past and their quest, he cannot understand the poetry. Instead he insists that he must have it "all plain and clear" (1978b, p. 27). Only later does Bilbo discover that he is not as "prosy" as he would like to think.

Sam Gamgee, according to Tolkien, is "a more representative hobbit than any others that we have to see much of," and he has "consequently a stronger ingredient of ...vulgarity," a "mental myopia which is proud of itself, a smugness (in varying degrees) and cocksureness, and a readiness to measure and sum up all things from a limited experience, largely enshrined in sententious traditional `wisdom'" (1981, p. 329). Sam's vulgarity may be what prevents him from recognizing Gollum's debate with himself as a genuine awakening of conscience that entails the possibility of an alteration in character. Rather Sam sees the two sides of Gollum as "Slinker and Stinker," both directed towards evil, towards regaining his Precious.

When Sam discovers that Frodo recognizes Gollum's desire for the Ring, Sam is surprised at Frodo's understanding, for he has assumed that "the kindness of Mr. Frodo was of such a high degree that it must imply a fair measure of blindness" (1987c, p. 248). Sam cannot imagine a higher reason for the degree of Frodo's kindness. Without recognizing his own inconsistency, Sam also "firmly held the incompatible belief that Mr. Frodo was the wisest person in the world (with the possible exception of Old Mr. Bilbo and of Gandalf)" (1987c, p. 240-48).

Sam's vision is somewhat akin to that of the hobbits whom the travelers meet when they return to the Shire: each is parochial in his own way. What Frodo and his friends tell Barliman Butterbur about their adventures is "far beyond his vision" (1987b, p. 271). Similarly, Farmer Cotton and his family "asked a few polite questions about their travels, but hardly listened to the answers: they were far more concerned with events in the Shire" (1987b, p. 291).

Merry, perhaps, best illustrates the tastelessness of the hobbits when, discussing Theoden's death with Aragorn, the hobbit jokes, "`[I]f Strider will provide what is needed, I will smoke and think. I had some of Saruman's best in my pack, but what became of it in the battle, I am sure I don't know.'" Merry, himself, recognizes the inappropriateness of his words, for he claims that "`it is the way with my people to use light words at such times and say less than they mean. We fear to

say too much. It robs us of the right words when a jest is out of place'" (1987b, p. 146).

Bilbo's mother was Belladonna Took. The Took in Bilbo is his aristocratic side. An ancestor of Bilbo's mother was the original "thain" of the Shire in the days when it was a fiefdom held under the king (1981, p. 158; 1987a, pp. 18-19). Clearly, the aristocratic is not a very strong element in the Shire. Although well-to-do, the Tooks are only marginal hobbits: They live on the edge of the Shire, "across The Water," and "certainly there was still something not entirely hobbitlike about them." Sometimes members of the Took clan break out of the bourgeois hobbit mold to have adventures: "They discreetly disappeared, and the family hushed it up; but the fact remained that the Tooks were not as respectable as the Baggins, though they were undoubtedly richer" (1978b, p. 12).

The Took comes to Frodo Baggins through his mother Primula Brandybuck, a direct descendant of the original thane, and a member of another marginal hobbit family, the Brandybucks (1987a, pp. 30-31; 1987b, pp. 381, 382). The Brandybucks live on the wrong side of the tracks, "on the wrong side of the Brandywine River, and right agin the Old Forest." As the Gaffer says, the Brandybucks live in Buckland, "where folks are so queer." When Bilbo adopted the orphaned Frodo and brought him to live at Bag End "among decent folk," according to the Gaffer, he "never did a kinder deed" (1987a, pp. 30-31). Peregrin Took and Meriadoc Brandybuck, who go with Frodo on his adventures, are both descendants of the Tooks (1987b, p. 381). It is not surprising, then, that they become the military strategists in "The Scouring of the Shire" at the end of *The Return of the King*.

Although hobbits are definitely as dull as Nietzsche or Tocqueville might accuse democrats of being, the aristocratic side of Bilbo is not altogether admirable. His Took side impels him to participate in the adventure, but his reasons for going on the quest with the dwarves are questionable. The dwarves' song first awakens "something Tookish inside him" because it makes him feel "the love of beautiful things made by hands

and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and jealous love." Later, as the Baggins and Took in Bilbo vie, the Took side finally wins only because his pride is wounded. Overhearing Gandalf's and Thorin's debate on his suitability for the quest, Bilbo "suddenly thought that he would go without breakfast to be thought fierce. As for *little fellow bobbing on the mat* it almost made him *really* fierce" (1987a, p. 24).

Gandalf's characterization of Bilbo's position with the dwarves as "Burglar" suggests the questionable side of the conventional dragon hunter, usually thought of as a hero. Like the typical hero, Bilbo considers his ancestors' deeds to be evidence of his courage, but, as Gloin points out, "that was long ago" and gives no evidence "about *you*," Bilbo (25).

Both the Took and the Baggins elements in the hobbits supply inclinations which can turn to evil or to good. Tolkien looks for a mixture of the two for his heroes. He explains clearly his sense that there is something valuable in both the aristocratic past and the democratic present, for he remarks approvingly on comments by Charles Williams concerning *The Lord of the Rings*:

> C. Williams...says the great thing is that its *centre* is not in strife and war and heroism (though they are understood and depicted) but in freedom, peace, ordinary life and good liking. Yet he agrees that these very things require the existence of a great world outside the Shire—lest they should grow stale by custom and turn into the humdrum...(1981, pp. 105-06).

Although Tolkien recognizes the desirability of a mixture of the democratic and the aristocratic, the democratic side seems to be what he feels is most needed at the time. After all, the heroes he chooses are hobbits. Gandalf explains the matter when he tells Frodo, Merry, Pippin, and Gimli why, aside from chance or providence, he chose Bilbo and Frodo as his heroes. Hobbits first won his admiration because their behavior during the Long Winter displayed to him "their courage, and their pity one for another. It was by their pity as much as by their tough uncomplaining courage that they survived." The Took side is

responsible for the courage, and the Baggins, for the pity. For that reason, Gandalf explains, he wanted `a dash of the Took' (but not too much, Master Peregrin) `and...a good foundation of the stolider sort, a Baggins perhaps.' That pointed at once to Bilbo" (1980, p. 331).

At first a hobbit does not seem a very likely choice for a hero, but the qualities of the hero must be defined by the nature of the noble deed that the hero must perform. The main political problem, as Tolkien sees it, is the will to power. In a letter to his son Christopher he asserts that

> the most improper job of any man, even saints (who at any rate were at least unwilling to take it on), is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek the opportunity. And at least it is done only to a small group of men who know *who* their master is. The medievals were only too right in taking *nolo episcopari* as the best reason a man could give to other for making him a bishop (1981, p. 64).

Tolkien objects to government of all sorts, democracy included, because he does not believe that one can create virtue through control. Virtue, after all, is a matter of individual choice. What he supports instead is "the abolition of control" (1981, p. 63) or the reduction of government to the minimum of functions. For this reason he limits the government of the Shire to nominal operations. The difficulty for the modern world, Tolkien believes, is that science has given tyrants extraordinary power to control others: "the abominable chemists and engineers have put such a power into Xerxes' hands, and all ant-communities, that decent folk don't seem to have a chance" (1981, p. 64).

The great quest of *The Lord of the Rings* is the destruction of ultimate power, the "one Ring to rule them all." In this quest only the hobbits have a chance to succeed, and that chance seems to derive principally from their democratic tendencies—their humility, their sense of fellowship, their ability to feel pity for one another, their plain common sense. Certainly, the hobbits need courage as well, but that alone would not be

sufficient. They need wisdom, but even the wise are not suited for the quest. Courage and wisdom, the two traditional claims to rule, are incapable of handling the ring of power.

Boromir and Faramir represent the two sides of courage. Boromir tries to take the ring from Frodo, for he believes that he can use the ring to rescue Minas Tirith from the Dark Lord. Faramir recognizes his brother's weakness: "If it [Isildur's Bane, the ring] were a thing that gave advantage in battle, I can well believe that Boromir, the proud and fearless, often rash, ever anxious for the victory of Minas Tirith (and his own glory therein), might desire such a thing and be allured by it" (1987c, pp. 279-80).

Courage for its own sake is of dubious value; courage is most valuable when used to protect something higher than itself. Faramir explains,

> I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend: the city of the Men of Numenor; and I would have her loved for her memory, her ancientry, her beauty, and her present wisdom. Not feared, save as men may fear the dignity of a man, old and wise (1987c, p. 280; see also 1987b, pp. 336-37).

Formerly, Faramir's people were more noble, respecting wisdom and beauty more than warfare and called "The High," but now they

> are become Middle Men...with the memory of other things. For...we now love war and valour as things good in themselves, both a sport and an end; and though we still hold that a warrior should have more skills and knowledge than only the craft of weapons and slaying, we esteem a warrior, nonetheless, above men of other crafts. Such is the need of our days. So even was my brother, Boromir: a man of prowess, and for that he was accounted the best man in Gondor (1987c, pp. 286-87).

Faramir's courage is every bit as strong as Boromir's, and yet it is directed by a wisdom which Boromir lacks. Faramir

knows that to take the ring of power and use it for the sake of Minas Tirith would be to turn the city further away from what is highest and towards power and warfare. As a consequence, he tells Frodo, "I would not take this thing, if it lay by the highway" (1987c, p. 280). Sam recognizes the wisdom of Faramir, telling Boromir's brother that he has "'an air ...that reminds me of, of—well, Gandalf, of wizards'" (1987c, p. 291).

Wizards, perhaps, have the greatest claim of all to deserve to rule, but they are also the most dangerous. Saruman is able to set himself up as a servant to the Dark Lord and to imagine himself as a competitor because his knowledge enables him to understand and to control much in the world. In a marginal note to "The Palantiri" Tolkien explains that Saruman's integrity had been undermined by purely personal pride and lust for

> the domination of his own will. His study of the Rings had caused this, for his pride believed that he could use them, or It, in defiance of any other will. He, having lost any devotion to other persons or causes, was open to the domination of a superior will, to its threats, and to its display of power (1980, p. 413n.14).

The wizards do have more ability and more knowledge than most men—to define their superiority, Tolkien suggests in a letter that they are incarnate angels—but their very superiority makes them peculiarly susceptible to evil in general and to the will to power in particular. Knowing that they are strong and powerful, wizards are apt to believe that they can be even stronger and more powerful. From evil the "'wizards' were not exempt, indeed being incarnate were more likely to stray, or err" (1981, p. 202). As Gandalf tells Gimli, the wizard is "more dangerous than anything you will ever meet, unless you are brought alive before the seat of the Dark Lord" (1987c, p. 103).

Part of Gandalf's wisdom lies in his recognition of the danger. He refuses the ring even when Frodo offers it to him willingly, for he sees that the ring would give him a power "'too great and terrible'" and would gain power over him "'still greater and more deadly.'" For Gandalf the temptation is the wish to use his knowledge to produce good: "'the way of the

Ring to my heart is by pity, pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good." Gandalf sees that the "'wish to wield it [the ring] would be too great for my strength'" (1987a, pp. 70-71).

Even Gandalf is tempted to use the ring. Returning as Gandalf the White, he finds his power enlarged, and he sees a vision of power in the east. Still, he recognizes that vision for what it is, shaking his head and realizing that "'it [the ring] has gone beyond our reach. Of that at least let us be glad. We can no longer be tempted to use the Ring'" (1987c, pp. 103-04).

The danger in Gandalf's use of the ring would rest in his attempt to control humans altogether so that they would no longer have the choices which true virtue requires. Tolkien asserts that "Gandalf as Ring-Lord would have been far worse than Sauron. He would have remained `righteous,' but self-righteous. He would have continued to rule and order things for `good,' and for the benefit of his subjects according to his wisdom (which was and would have remained great)." The difficulty would be that since people no longer chose good, what they had to do would often seem evil to them: "while Sauron multiplied ...evil, he left `good' clearly distinguishable from it. Gandalf would have made good detestable and seem evil"(1981, pp. 332-33).

Although the hobbits' strength as ring-bearers comes chiefly from their humility, they too are tempted. Bilbo becomes possessive about the ring and finally manages to give it up only with the help of Gandalf (1987a, pp. 41-43). Even Sam is tempted by the ring to conquer the land and make it into a garden—until his heart tells him that he is not large enough to bear the burden and, in Candide fashion, he decides that one small garden of a free gardener is enough for him to manage (1987b, p. 177). Even Frodo finally succumbs to the temptation: on the very edge of the Cracks of Doom he puts on the Ring, refusing to give it up. The will to power is simply so great that if any human had the opportunity to attain absolute power "in the end it would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it" (1987a, p. 56).

It is almost impossible to strip any government of this temptation to control others. That temptation makes Tolkien fear all government, though he sees that at threatening times powerful government is necessary (1981, p. 64).Still, for Tolkien any government would have to serve a good beyond itself. The temptation to pride is so great that it becomes an element even in a democratic government. Tolkien explicates Merry's remark that "the soil of the Shire is deep. Still there are things deeper and higher; and not a gaffer could tend his garden in what he calls peace but for them":

> I am not a "democrat" only because "humility" and equality are spiritual principles corrupted by the attempt to mechanize and formalize them, with the result that we get not universal smallness and humility, but universal greatness and pride, till some Orc gets hold of a ring of power—and then we get and are getting slavery.(1981, p. 246).

Almost all political leaders seem to Tolkien to have a tendency to bully people. Both the king and Farmer Giles of *Farmer Giles of Ham*, for instance, are bullies. Despite the similarity of the two characters in terms of bullying, Tolkien seems to provide a modest defense of the utilitarianism which Nietzsche described as a "pig philosophy" suited only to a nation of unimaginative shopkeepers such as he thought England to be. The utilitarianism of Farmer Ham comes off much better than the extravagance and incompetence of the king. The king never has much money in his exchequer and offers his subjects less than the dragon has to offer—a "token of his esteem" as opposed to the dragon's ten pounds (42). Farmer Giles, the cleverer of the two, "can afford to be generous" to his friends and neighbors due to the practicality of his dealings with the dragon, Chrysophylax. Instead of slaying the dragon, as a traditional hero would, Farmer Giles bargains with him for a portion of his treasure and preserves the dragon as a means of transporting the goods. Farmer Ham is by no means Tolkien's model: in addition to bullying, he haggles (50), unlike the hobbits, who do not (1980, p. 333).

Of course, the main point which Tolkien makes about Frodo as a hero is that he begins his quest not out of any sense that he stands apart as a hero or as a superman, but out of a humble wish to save the shire. Unlike Bilbo, who goes on the quest out of wounded pride and reveals his generosity only later, Frodo "undertook his quest out of love—to save the world he knew from disaster at his own expense ...and also in complete humility, acknowledging that he was totally inadequate to the task" (1981, p. 327). Frodo confesses to Gandalf that he should "like to save the Shire . ...But I feel very small, and very uprooted, and well—desperate" (1987a, pp. 71-72). Later at the Council of Elrond, Frodo says, "'I will take the Ring...though I do not know the way'" (1987a, p. 284).

The meaning in Frodo's life derives not from standing alone, but from his connection with the Shire; his quest becomes desirable, "bearable" in fact, only because he knows that the "Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable" (1987a, p. 71). Throughout, the hobbits' ties with each other preserve their quest. Frodo is reluctant to take any of his friends with him because the quest will be difficult and dangerous (1987a, p. 96). For the same reason, after Boromir's attack he determines to go on alone to save the company from any further harm from the evil of the ring (1987a, p. 418). Sam, Merry, and Pippin go with Frodo initially and then after Elrond's council because they do not wish him to face the danger alone (1987a, pp. 114-16, 284-85).

Pity for their fellows is the special quality that saves the hobbits. Bilbo gains the strength to escape from the goblins' cave as soon as he comes to pity Gollum (1978b, pp. 79-80). Frodo has learned the lesson of pity from Bilbo's example and Gandalf's teaching, and so he can pity and be kind to Gollum (1987c, pp. 221-222). And even Sam learns to pity Gollum in the end, though perhaps not soon enough and though he cannot convey his pity to Gollum (1987b, pp. 221-222). Truly what drives Sam to continue with the desperate journey is the pity which he feels for the good hobbit, Frodo. He even weeps to see the burden that his master bears.

What Tolkien seems to be rejecting explicitly is Nietzsche's attack on the whole ethic of service that forms the basis of liberalism, or, put another way, Nietzsche's attack on the slave morality which is the basis of Christianity. All of Tolkien's heroes see themselves as servants. Pippin swears fealty to Denethor out of gratitude for Boromir's attempt to save him from the orcs. Merry swears fealty to Theoden who is like a kindly father to him. Even Gandalf serves not to rule any realm, but in order to save anything that "can still grow fair or bear fruit," for, as he tells Denethor, he "also [is] a steward" (1987b, pp. 30-31).

Democrats certainly have weaknesses. They lack the sense of adventure and the courage which heroism requires, though they have humility and a sense of fellowship and pity to help them to overcome the temptation to control others. Tolkien sees the possibility that such humans could be capable of great sacrifice for the sake of others, but in order to envision that sacrifice, they need to be educated to a sense of something nobler than themselves. As Tolkien puts it, "after the primary symbolism of the Ring, as the will to mere power," a moral of the story is that "without the high and noble the simple and vulgar is utterly mean; and without the simple and ordinary the noble and heroic is meaningless" (1981, p. 160).

Gandalf sees the time of the hobbits as a new age, and he believes that the hobbits are capable of making the Shire a desirable place to live:

> "I am not coming to the Shire. You must settle its affairs yourselves; that is what you have been trained for...My time is over...You are grown up now. Grown indeed very high; among the great you are, and I have no longer any fear at all for any of you."(1987b, p. 275).

Some may doubt whether heroism really belongs in the Shire because Bilbo and Frodo eventually depart to dwell for a time with the elves, who represent the spiritual side of humans. That both lose weight on their adventures as they get further and further from the Shire is a sign of the reduction in their materiality. Bilbo leaves the Shire for a permanent

holiday because he finds that he has become "stretched thin" by his experiences with the ring, and he goes to live with the more spiritual elves and to write poetry, which does not thrive in the prosy Shire. Frodo leaves because, as he says, "I have been too deeply hurt" in saving the Shire: "It must be so ...when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (1987b, p. 309).

In saving the Shire, Frodo has lost some of his hobbit nature. As Tolkien says, Frodo has become "too ennobled and rarefied by his achievement of the great Quest" to remain in the Shire (1981, p. 105). Moreover, the simple things do not please quite so much because he has had a revelation of his weakness, and thus of theirs. Ultimate resistance to evil must come from beyond this world, but an unusual hobbit can come a good way along the road.

Sam, however, remains in the Shire, and he is qualified to be mayor because he has been improved by the love of things nobler than himself. He cannot match Frodo, but he has been educated by his devotion to Frodo and his love of Elvish things. Frodo has taught Sam to use his own abilities to the utmost and then to improve them with what the spiritual has to offer: "'Use all the wits and knowledge you have of your own,'" Frodo tells Sam, "'and then use the gift [of Galadriel] to help your work and better it'" (1987b, p. 303). In some ways, then, even in the Shire, life can be enlarged, for, as Tolkien tells us, "All tales may come true" (1966, p. 73).

The modern democrat, then, can be a hero precisely because he is in part the democrat Tocqueville and Nietzsche describe—the creature who cares for mundane comforts and has no wish to rise above his current state. Only the democrat can hope to save a world where there is no danger greater than the will to power.

During the Kennedy administration there was hope and optimism about democratic government's ability to do good. Kennedy's exhortation to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country" was really a call to public service. Now, however, cynicism is everywhere, and

morale in public administration is low. The "civil servant" has become the "bureaucrat."

The good public administrator rarely seems grand and glorious; rather he is ethical and efficient. Tolkien reveals that heroism can arise in unlikely places. A democracy relies on ordinary folk who can rise to the occasion. Tolkien teaches respect for people who stay late to help a statesman plan a needed reform or who blow the whistle on the corrupt when someone must take a stand.

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Graduate Department of Public Administration, 701 Hill Hall,
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Science Fiction and Administrative Truths: The Short Story and Novella as Administrative Cases

Nolan J. Argyle
Lee M. Allen

> One way to close the gap between the theory and practice of administration, and at the same time focus on the often overlooked "human element" of administration, is to use "unorthodox" administrative commentaries found in fiction.
>
> *Marc Holzer, Kenneth Morris, and William Ludwin*

Introduction

Master of Public Administration programs, as well as similar programs in city management, nonprofit management, etc., draw their clientele from both pre-service ("traditional") and in-service ("non-traditional") groups. Students in these programs tend to see them as a means to either break into the job market or to advance in their present careers. They want hands-on, real world instruction that they can relate to their current or future work environments. Given this fact, students and instructors alike often overlook the value of fiction, including science fiction, as a pedagogic tool. Yet science fiction, particularly the short story and the novella, can provide both pre- and in-service students with a more even playing field as

both struggle to come to terms with the growing complexity of their work environments. This study will argue that science fiction stories and novellas, when used as teaching case studies, allow both groups of students to join in analyzing and "solving" problems in a less threatening manner than case studies drawn from "real" organizations; case studies that preservice students feel provide a marked advantage to their more experienced colleagues.

The case as a teaching tool has a long history in public administration. Harold Stein, often seen as the "father" of this approach, argued that a good case study could sharpen a manager—or a student's—analytic skills by allowing him or her to apply his or her own perception of the problem and the circumstances developed in the case study to the theory of administration (1948 pp. xxi-xxiv). The use of fiction as case studies is not new—Roland Egger presented a strong argument for the "administrative novel" in 1959—but, as Frank Marini noted, while the idea that "literature can offer interesting perspectives on administration is scarcely a new assertion...it cannot be claimed that even this general proposition has been well explored" (1991, p. 146). This study attempts to further that exploration, beginning with an overview of the case method, then examining the utility of the science fiction short story and novella as cases.

Development of the Case Method

In one way, the case method of instruction is as old as written records themselves—or even older. The oral histories of ancient Greek bards were designed not only to entertain but to instruct as well. The parables found in the *Bible* were miniature cases, used by Jesus to instruct his followers. Plato, using Socrates as his foil, drew on the case method in many of his dialogues to let commonplace experience lead the reader to a conclusion in a manner designed to improve cognitive skills. In *Meno* he tells us: "there are...true opinions in [the student], which are awakened by questioning and become true knowledge" (Rouse, 1956, p. 51).

The case method as it is currently used is a much more recent development, however. Christopher C. Langdell, then dean of the Harvard Law School introduced the first modern case book in 1871 (McGlothlin, 1960). By the turn of the century, the case method had become the dominant pedagogic tool utilized in law schools. When the Harvard Business School started operation in 1908, the case method proved a natural for instruction in management as well. A. W. Shaw first used cases based upon business, rather than legal, decisions in courses he taught during the 1911-1912 academic year (Copeland, 1954, pp. 25-26).

Public administration adopted the case method, in part as a response to the generic approach to management instruction that dominated the 1930s and 1940s. In 1947 the Inter-University Case Program (ICP) began under the auspices of Harvard, Cornell, Princeton, and Syracuse Universities aided by a Carnegie Corporation grant. This program, now based at Syracuse's Maxwell School, has published more than 150 cases, many of which are available in a series of casebooks. The primary strength of this collection lies in its emphasis upon the political nature of the policy making and administrative processes. Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government released a catalogue of cases in 1986, which in its current edition offers more than 800 cases illustrating management and political problems associated with public decision making. A number of professional associations, including the International County and City Manager Association (ICMA) also produce excellent cases.

Given the widespread availability of cases drawn from actual management and political events, one might question the need to use cases drawn from fiction. Yet fiction has some advantages over these more "standard" cases, advantages that will be brought out through an examination of the rationale for the case method.

Why the Case Method?

If students are to learn from the material presented to them in a course of instruction, they must believe that the material is worth learning. For many public administration students, relevancy is the key determinant (Gragg, 1951, P. 1):

> It can be said flatly that the mere act of listening to wise statements and sound advise does little for anyone. In the process of learning, the learner's dynamic cooperation is required. Such cooperation from students does not arise automatically, however. It has to be provided for and continually encouraged.

Providing for and encouraging this cooperation requires a positive effort on the part of the instructor. Films, role-playing, and simulations can be useful in this process. And, as Argyris (1980, p. 291) pointed out, each of these, along with "straight long lectures" have been identified by various instructors as being part of the "case method." While each of the above may be useful pedagogic tools, they are not the case method as used in this paper. Windsor and Greanis (1983, p. 371) define a case as "a 'typical' true-to-life management situation or policy issue presented as a mystery or dilemma compounded of multiple dimensions...." The case method, then, "is the unraveling of this mystery by the student, acting individually or in groups, through the application of principles, concepts, and techniques" developed in the course. In this view of the case method, fiction provides both unique opportunities and unique challenges.

Using cases that are typical, true-to-life management situations with an element of mystery compounded by multiple dimensions does two primary things in a course. First, students are required to think purposefully. Rather than simply tell an instructor what transactional analysis is, they are required to demonstrate it in the context of the case, something that can make many students uncomfortable. Pre-service students often feel at a distinct disadvantage in this process when the case is drawn from a "real" agency. Using a short story or

novella tends to lessen this perception of disadvantage, and provides these students with a more even playing field. Second, the analysis of the case opens channels of communication between student and student, and between student and instructor. As Gragg points out, this makes the case method of instruction more democratic than the lecture method, as "all members of the academic group, teacher and student, are in possession of the same basic materials in the light of which analyses are to be made and decisions arrived at" (1951, P. 5). Fiction increases this democratic element by reducing the advantage in-service students may have by being familiar with the specific type of setting the case is placed within.

Not Without Problems

While the case method is a useful pedagogical technique, it is not without its problems, nor is it without its critics. While the case method does force students to think through linkages, it does not assure that the process will be done properly. It is not always easy for students to accept the challenge the case method poses, nor is it always easy for the instructor to keep an open mind concerning the students' contributions.

A certain amount of student trauma is useful to the learning process, but too much trauma interferes with that process. Sachdeva (1983, p. 250) found that students who had problems with the case method expected far more guidance from their instructors than they were given, and were unsure as to what was expected of them. Providing students with a clear understanding of expectations can reduce student trauma to acceptable levels, even when the case itself is somewhat ambiguous.

Another common complaint about the case method is one stated by Taylor and Wynn (1980, p. 451). Cases are always of someone else's organization, someone else's problem; yet the learner is expected to transfer the learning he or she may gain to his or her own organization. This is compounded when the student has little or no experience in any organization that will allow the transfer. This problem, while real, is again one that can be alleviated by the instructor. One colleague of the

authors has his students write one case of their own, drawn from their own experience. The case is then presented and discussed in class. Students without relevant work experience can draw upon their experience as students in a large organization. Denhardt (1984) uses such a case to illustrate concepts of organization theory.

When using a packaged case—or a short story or novella—the instructor must place the case in context, and the context must be understandable to the student. The student should have a clear understanding of what he or she is expected to gain from the case, even if how he or she is expected to do so is left purposefully unclear.

As Goldsmith and Boo (1989) point out, the case study can greatly enhance the student's understanding of the working of the political or administrative processes under examination. Used properly, the case method of instruction can do this by accomplishing three general purposes (Lynn, 1980, p. 2): first, it can "help students acquire *the habit of being analytical*"; second, it can "increase students' *facility in using specific analytic concepts and techniques*"; and third, it can "familiarize students with *the institutional and political context of public policymaking*." The case method, then, can be a very useful part of an overall teaching strategy. It will be so only if the instructor carefully evaluates his or her students' interests and capabilities, and makes sure that the approach used stimulated the former and is within the bounds of the latter. The instructor's guidance is crucial to the successful use of the case method.

Why Fiction?

The complaint raised by Taylor and Wynn—that cases are always of someone else's organization, someone else's problem—is certainly true when using fiction. This is less of a problem for students, however, as they can start with the premise that each is equally familiar with the organization presented in the story, and can build upon their equality. Marini points out that his students found literary works to be the most helpful, that

"these were the works that lit the fires of class discussion" (1991, p. 146).

Fiction is particularly useful in examining the motivations of actors. Where cases typically provide little background of the characters involved, and presents situations that are largely devoid of an understanding of individual motivation, fiction provides a more in-depth development of character, and often provides explicit motivation for behavior. Students must still be able to analyze the characters' motivations and tie those to the concepts and techniques developed in their instruction, but fiction can alleviate some of the trauma involved in this process.

Student-instructor interaction is facilitated by using fiction as a case study. Good administrative fiction allows—indeed, it almost demands—student and instructor to engage in an active dialogue over roles, groups, and organizational characteristics. As Marini points out, fiction allows "a lot of 'what if' questions," it provides us with "believable, 'human' situations which present a dilemma which focuses our attention on the guts of an issue and offers the context for exploring it in its various dimensions" (1991, pp. 146-147).

Selecting the "Right" Fiction

As McCurdy points out, "good administrative fiction is fiction that works. It should be relevant to the reader's experience, lively and creative, and skillful in relating current events to fundamental issues" (1973, p. 54). Fortunately, there is an almost inexhaustible supply of "good administrative fiction." Literature from the short story to the play to the novella to the major novel may be drawn upon, depending upon the nature of the course and the purpose of the instructor. Literature as diverse as the classic *Antigone* to the modern techno-thriller of a Michael Crichton may be used to illustrate administrative truths. There is no genre that cannot be usefully applied; the only limits are the instructor's and students' interests and the needs of a specific course.

The instructor should select fiction with care, based upon the nature of the questions being explored. *Antigone* raises the eternal question of the nature of justice, and is well-suited to an examination of administrative ethics. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* provide fascinating glimpses of early Greek administrative structures, as well as allowing one to examine the interplay of personality, hierarchy, and culture. *A Bell for Adono*, often cited as the classic administrative novel, allows one to investigate administrator-clientele relations, while *Catch-22* may be used to explore the pathologies of bureaucracy. *Covenant* examines the role of organizations as control mechanisms attempting to maintain existing social relationships in a changing environment. The power of organizational routine is shown in *The Spectre General*, while the impact of the disruption of that routine on communications, leadership, and small group behavior is brought out in *Team Yankee*. Culture shock and the adaptation to new organizational arrangements driven by environmental differences are explored beautifully in *Dune*. Indeed, only the background and imagination of the instructor limit the availability of material.

This study focuses upon a short story and a novella to illustrate and illuminate issues raised in courses on organizational behavior: Isaac Asimov's *The Caves of Steel* and Theodore Cogswell's *The Spectre General*. Both are drawn from the genre of science fiction, but they are very different in their orientation, style, plot, and length. The authors of this study have found them both to be extremely useful in assisting students in the process of internalizing concepts of organizational behavior.

Fiction as Case Study: Organizational Behavior

The authors currently teach in a Master of Public Administration program that is offered in an executive weekend format and in a more traditional evening format. The weekend format requires students to complete a course over a five-week period, alternating weekend of class work with "free" weekend of study. The evening program is in a quarter system, with

classes meeting one night a week for ten weeks. Due in part to the compressed time-frame, the authors have found it impractical to use major novels. The short story and the novella, however, fit a compressed time frame well, and have proven to be very useful to—and very well received by-students.

The Spectre General

"The Spectre General" was first published in 1952, and is currently available in a number of anthologies, including *Phantom Regiments* (1990). The story combines humor with excellent insights into organizational behavior. The central character, Sergeant Kurt Dixon, is the organizational innocent; a highly-skilled technician who has never questioned his years of training that has prepared him to repair machines he has never seen—or even knows exists. His encounter with First Officer Ozaki, the pilot of a spaceship containing such machines who is unable to find anyone who can repair them, forms the center of the story.

Dixon is a member of the 427th Light Maintenance Battalion of the Imperial Space Marines. The battalion set up a base on an out-of-the-way planet, and were forgotten by an imperial structure in decay. For 500 years the battalion has kept the faith, training new generations of recruits according to the book. When Dixon does question why the battalion is living a rather harsh life dominated by training and drills, when he—going further on a hunting trip than was authorized—has discovered a proverbial land of milk and honey where everyone could live in ease, the battalion commander calls him on the carpet. For Dixon, the battalion had always existed where it was—there was no other acceptable explanation. His grandfather had spoken of them "being brought from some place else by an iron bird, but it stands to reason that something that heavy can't fly!" (1990, p. 154).

Colonel Harris, the battalion commander, explains that they did indeed come from "some place else," and tells him of the Empire. There has been no contact for centuries, but that makes no difference. "Our operational orders," Harris muses,

more to himself than to Dixon, "said that we would stand by to give all necessary maintenance to Imperial warcraft until properly relieved, and stand by we have" (1990, p. 154). When Dixon objects that those orders can't matter any longer, the commander responds (1990, P. 155):

> But they do!....It's because of them that things like your rediscovery of the tableland to the north have to be suppressed for the good of the battalion! Here on the plateau the living is hard. Our work in the fields and the meat brought in by our hunting parties give us just enough to get by on. But here we have the garrison and the Tech Schools—and vague as it has become—a reason for remaining together as the battalion. Out there where the living is easy we'd lose that.

The need to just be, to exist. A case study of the March of Dimes could illustrate an organization's adaptation to changing conditions in order to survive, but it can't do it in quite the same way this marvelous tale does. The Spectre General of the Imperial Space Marines—the commander in one of the few working space suits left in the storehouse—appears drifting down from the sky once a year to inspect the troops and to keep them in line.

The story progresses through Dixon getting into the suit and accidentally managing to get out into space, where he is picked up by First Officer Ozaki, a pilot from one of the remnants of the empire—and a pilot of a ship where the air smells like rotting fish and the shower delivers only scalding water. There are no technicians left who can fix anything, and he doesn't dare tinker with any of the malfunctioning equipment for fear of making it completely inoperable. Dixon—now Lieutenant Dixon—has never seen anything like the ship, but he can fix everything in it. Organizational culture shock, personified in these two disparate individuals, sets in.

"The Spectre General" is a marvelous little tale that can generate hours or useful discussion about the power of bureaucratic routine, an organization drive to survive, organizational decline, and a host of other topics. And, students find it as

entertaining as it is thought-provoking. Properly used, it can bridge the experience gap between pre- and in-service students, level the playing field, and develop insights in both groups in a way no case on the March of Dimes ever could.

The Caves of Steel

First published in 1953, Asimov's wonderful little novella keeps on being reissued. Ostensibly a murder mystery set in a New York City of 2,500 years in the future, the *Caves of Steel* is a superb study of organizational behavior. Earth, with its population of more than eight billion crowded into 800 cities is dominated by fifty "outer planets"—former colonies whose residents have bred disease out of their lives, and who look down on their disease-ridden earth cousins. "Each city," Asimov writes, "became a semiautonomous unit, economically all but self-sufficient. It could roof itself in, gird itself about, burrow itself under. It became a steel cave, a tremendous, self-contained cave of steel and concrete" (p. 21). New York City covers over 2,000 square miles, with more than twenty million inhabitants. It is bordered by "Spacetown, " an outpost of the superior "spacers." The relationship between earthmen and spacers is provided in the musings of one of the central characters, Lije Baley (p.22):

> The Cities were good. Everyone but the Medievalists knew that there was no substitute, no reasonable substitute. The only trouble was that they wouldn't stay good. Earth's population was still rising. Some day, with all that the Cities could do, the available calories per person would simply fall below the basic subsistence level.
>
> It was all the worse because of the existence of the Spacers, the descendants of the early emigrants from Earth, living in luxury on their underpopulated robot-ridden worlds out in space. They were coolly determined to keep the comfort that grew out of the emptiness of their worlds and for that purpose they kept their birth rate down and immigrants from teeming Earth out.

Students can easily draw parallels between Baley's musings and contemporary city-suburban, upper- and middle-class v. "underclass" development in contemporary America. The novel provides a springboard for instructor and students to discuss a wide variety of organization theory and organizational behavioral concepts, including systems theory, motivation theory, leadership theory, communications theory, role theory, small group theory, and transformational theory. Fear of change and of technology, key elements in understanding organizational behavior, are brought out in numerous ways.

The story begins with Elijah ("Lije") Baley, a C-5 New York City plainclothes detective, called in to solve the murder of Dr. Roj Nemunnuh Sarton, a prominent "spacer." Failure to solve the case and bring the perpetrator to justice could prove disastrous to Earth. He is given a spacer assistant, R. Daneel Olivaw—R. signifying "robot." Lije, like virtually all earthlings, hates robots, seeing them as a threat to his own existence. R. Daneel Olivaw, however, challenges his views, as "he" appears human, and he slowly emerges as an equal partner in the investigation. From this premise, Asimov proceeds to develop an excellent study of organizational behavior.

A key strength of Asimov's writing lies in his ability to develop his characters within an organizational context. The teeming "cave" that is New York City must be carefully structured, with each inhabitant fitting into his or her niche. The instructor and student can examine these characters applying and giving life to concepts of organizational behavior. Maslow's (1962) classic hierarchy is demonstrated in Baley's concern over the possibility of failure and its resulting "declassification" which will take his privileges from him and his family. At the same time, Baley reflects Downs' typology (1967), as he moves from conserver to advocate, only to fall back to conserver as things go wrong, and to finally emerge as a reluctant statesman. Downs' zealot is represented well by the medievalist, Francis Cloussar.

Asimov's book lends itself well to study through the systems approach. Students find it easy to grasp the City as a

system that is in a fine-tuned state of equilibrium, a system whose inhabitants see it as a closed system, yet a system that is so dependent upon inputs of materials that it could not survive an hour if that input were to be interrupted. It is more difficult for them to see that the "superior" system of the spacers is equally fragile and is also suffering from entropy. In addition to the obvious comparison to contemporary American society, the contrast between the City and Spacetown can be used to examine Harmon's active-social paradigm (1981).

Indeed, *Caves of Steel*, more than "The Spectre General," may be applied to virtually all aspects of organizational behavior, and it can be applied from a number of theoretical frameworks. Even though Asimov's novella has passed its forty-fifth birthday, it remains a contemporary study of behavior. Its reference to a slide rule dates it—and may puzzle the younger students—but the insights it can provide to organizational behavior are timeless.

Summary and Conclusions

The authors of this study have found that students respond to fiction and get involved in discussion more than they do to the nonfiction elements of the course. In addition to finding the works of fiction "more entertaining" than other material—and the authors confess that this fact may be of dubious value—students also found that it "offered great insight into organizations." One of our students, an Air Force nurse, found that *Caves of Steel*, and the process of analyzing it in organization theory terms, provided her with a fresh perspective, giving her "more insight into what is really happening around me than ten years of experience has." In polls of students, a large majority—even larger among in-service than among pre-service—stated that if they had to choose just one of the texts used in the course to capture the subject matter they were to learn, they would select the novella or the short story.

Using fiction as a case study provides both problems and opportunities for the instructor. Selection must be done with great care, and the work of fiction must be fully integrated into

the more traditional course material. Used properly, fiction enhances the dynamic interaction between student and student and between student and instructor that is so essential to the learning process.

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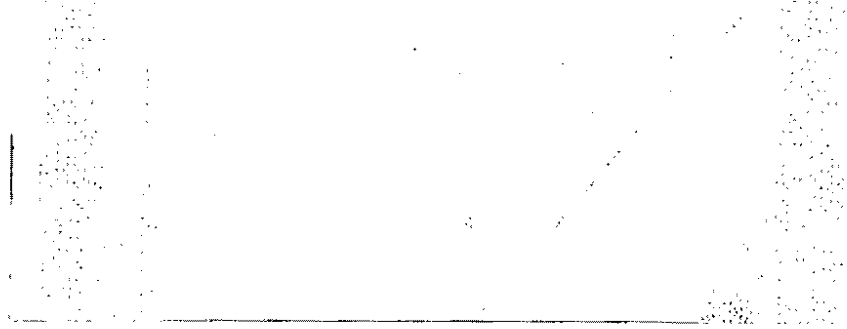
Call for Books to Review and Book Review Essays

Suggestions for books to review, particularly fictional works, and book review essays about fictional literature regarding organizational life and bureaucracies, are requested for future issues of *Public Voices*. Books being suggested for review should have complete citations, including title, author(s), publisher and date. A brief explanation of why the book is an important contribution and should be reviewed would be helpful. Books and book reviews selected should conform to the mission of *Public Voices* and the ASPA Section on Humanistic, Artistic and Reflective Expression, which include unorthodox and controversial perspectives on bureaucracy; explanations of how novels, short stories, poetry and other genre contribute to our understandings of society; and how society is reflected in the creative writings of novelists and others.

Please send your suggestions for books to review or completed book review essays to Willa M. Bruce, Book Review Editor, ***Public Voices,*** Department of Public Administration, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Annex 27, Omaha, NE 68182.



MISERERE

John Alan Nicolay

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive at where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning,
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always -
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

T. S. Eliot The Four Quartets

1.

He was a lonely man.

With each year, Dr. Ian Gestrode, Professor of History at St. Elgin's College, chipped another letter into his own cold epitaph. Sensitive to the irony of his prescience, with the power to change it, he did not. Beneath the projections of great

scholarship as yet unearthed, the claims to a peerage serving only as pretense, the foolish palaver which no one bought on the demands of class preparation, he had chosen to succumb to a pleasant muddling through. He had come into academics at a time when the road was less strewn with rubble. If there was an afterlife, and he had all the reasons in the world to believe that there was, this life did not play a calculus with any resolution a resolution to strive to make his life bear some meaning, have some connection to a grander scheme played out upon this mortal stage. Awkward in his movements beyond the well rehearsed, within the safety of habit, when he sought to embrace another social construct, his actions only betrayed the former, the well known. The habit was, after all, a script by which he was read, and by which he lived. He had learned one of life's most difficult lessons for its minor players: anonymity.

Gestrode sat at a table within the small bistro that accommodated no more than twenty, and this on busy tourist days with families taking a holiday along the historic waterfront with the old warehouses long ago converted to shops and restaurants. On all mornings business people jammed themselves into the room, waving their hands for the attention of the staff, generally to no avail. Appropriately named "The Steam Room," the bistro ran on its own internal clock. Staff worked the crowd until there was no crowd, then would slump back on uncomfortable cane chairs around small cafe tables for espresso or cafe au lait before tackling the detritus of the morning or afternoon rush, preparing the place for another episode, another shift.

Each convenient weekday Gestrode came between these episodes, ordered a glass decanter of freshly brewed coffee, heavy and black, the thick aroma enveloping him, distancing him from the supine figures of young people, chatting, laughing among themselves. He enjoyed the distinction of being a "regular," which meant that he was generously ignored, and accepted as no inconvenience to the well-earned respite of the staff. He would read the morning paper, methodically dissecting it, first for headlines, then for the editorial page, then to pick through whatever articles he found

of interest to him that day. Gestrode enjoyed the casual comfort, his acceptance into the place. He needed it. He needed that feeling of the hearth, the staff taking on the curious implication of an extended family, although he knew only a few by name.

The Steam Room was once the entrance foyer to public baths gained at the rear in another day, but now closed to the public and used only for storage and for the curious. Gestrode had never been that curious, and stored nothing. He was a man in his middle years, strikingly handsome, but settled in his appearance, having long surrendered the preoccupation with vanity to those much younger than himself. Married, the second time, a daughter by the first time, and a doting, brooding henesque wife by the second. Gestrode and his present wife, affectionately called the hen, had no children, although not for want of trying. The first wife had been a mistake of monumental proportions, and he had not seen the daughter since she was an infant. His memories of her could not be extracted from his memories of court hearings, each having fought bitterly for possession of anything remotely connected to their ill-fated, four year relationship. In fact, he had nearly convinced himself that the daughter was not his, or did not exist, carrying the fantasy forward to believe that the marriage itself had not existed. He never talked about it, rarely thought about it, while only occasionally lingering on the daughter in an act of futile curiosity, now twelve years a fading memory.

The small college at which Gestrode taught American history had been his third and final assignment. The first two teaching experiences forced him into two fundamental realizations: the first that college teaching was not a noble enterprise, and the second that the politics of the banal consume minor players, of which he was surely one. Because he had managed to do some publishing, primarily in respectable but not illustrious academic journals, and taught for mass mentality, choosing not to challenge the gifted, but to placate the numbers needed for good student evaluations, therefore job security, his third station earned him tenure, rank, and the isolation he now craved. He was respected by his students, accepted by his

colleagues, and growing older in units of semesters. He was now in his fifth year at the college, his fourth year at the Steam Room, and counted among his confidants three men, and no women, for the hen disdained his knowing women, distrusting their motivations, he supposed, although she denied it.

The Steam Room occupied no more than a store front on the busy historic district facade. The area had once been a service area of the port city, and the bay below them stretched towards the mountains and islands. The district comprised dozens of shops and restaurants, a three by two block of enterprises. The 19th century leapt to life within the district's confines, and lay like an egg within the nest of the city. The college itself was a stiff hike, perhaps a mile, past hotels, banks, a library, office buildings, more upscale restaurants. St. Elgin's College was a heavily endowed, small liberal arts college, where a hefty tuition barricaded all but the top end middle class, and students able to stumble into grants, scholarships, and no little cunning.

Gestrode always had an eight o'clock, a mid-morning free, followed by afternoon sessions. The first class was the perfunctory American History, a required course for all students. The afternoon sessions tended toward the eclectic. Gestrode led the willing through the Federalists, the Jacksonians, and the Gilded Age. Another member, Dr. James Hobartson taught the Civil War, and had made a minor national reputation researching the soldiers' lives, with an occasional obscure general to snatch the hungry Civil War aficionado market. Hobartson had done some public broadcasting work, served on Kennedy's Civil War Commission back in the 1960s, and enjoyed a lucrative public speaking circuit. Hobartson was one of three men Gestrode locked into his circle.

This early fall day, brisk weather, typically overcast, with the husky, earthy smells of autumn leaves found Gestrode alone with his paper. A young woman approached his table with fresh coffee. She stalled behind him, placing him immediately as her morning instructor.

"Dr. Gestrode?" she whispered.

He turned to look up at her over the rims of the reading glasses bridging his nose. Assuming she was offering coffee, which she was, he turned, then easily slipped the coffee urn toward the edge of the table. He recognized her, but did not know her name. The young woman was exceptionally pretty. She was perhaps five foot five, a slight build cloaked in loose fitting clothes barely hinting at her physique, with thick blond hair cut to fall back toward her shoulders without touching them. Her blue eyes danced, appearing to catch the hues of the sun cutting across the room.

"Do you know me?" She filled the urn.

"Yes, of course. This morning's class." She finished pouring. "Thank you," he said, thinking they were at an end.

"Yes, Monique Chambers." He made a mental note. "You know, I see you come in here quite frequently."

"Habits of a historian. Making minor trails for future biographers to follow."

The irony fell away. "I love your class." She turned red. Gestrode now turned fully to face her.

"I like it too. You must be brave to tackle American History at eight in the morning." He smiled pleasantly to reassure the young woman that he posed no threat, even if his conversational skills paled. He handled compliments badly.

"I come to work afterwards, so it is a convenient time. But I'm glad I decided to take it. I never thought history was very interesting, but you've made it a lot of fun."

"Join me?" He looked toward the vacant chair at his table. She eased into it.

There followed a long drawn silence, curiously making neither uncomfortable. He thought about this girl, conjecturing on work and school with personal sacrifices necessary to make an education work for those without the parental means. He looked carefully into her face. A pleasing look. Honest. Slightly

demure. She exuded a womanliness that he always found attractive in women, but never seemed make real in his own turbulent social rites. He flashed back on the girl that he chanced upon in his college statistics class. He was dating the girl that would become his longest waking nightmare. When this new girl caught his attention, then they met for coffee, he saw a hint of a relationship with much more promise and a lot less pretense. In response to her question regarding his love interests, his honest reply impaled possibilities. The girl of promise abruptly stood, left the room, and would never speak to him again. On hindsight, her reaction seemed a bit histrionic. Had he led her on in some way? Now here she was, twenty years passed, sitting at his table. He suspected there would be no conversation about his dating interests. The nostalgia clung feverishly to his mood. He didn't want to shake it. He wanted to savor it.

"I guess you get a lot of students sucking up for better grades. I'm not doing that... I mean, you don't see it that way?" She looked to the table, then started to push her chair away. He smiled at the use of the term "sucking up". It was brown nosing in his day.

He reached out to stall her. "Don't go. I was thinking back to someone I knew in college. You reminded me of her."

"Someone you dated?" Catching his eyes, she looked interested, and smiled sweetly.

"Someone I should have dated, now that I think about it. You brought her back." He paused to think about what he had said. "Memories play tricks on us. I doubt that she really looked anything like you. It might have been a gesture, or a word, or the voice. I don't know." He caught himself. Why was he telling her this?

"I've had experiences like that. Some guy I wanted to go out with but never asked me. I would wonder about him. It's innocent."

"Yes, so it is. Tell me about yourself. I don't know many students."

She clasped her hands in front of her. How much did she want to tell this man?

Over the next few minutes Gestrode learned that Monique was nineteen, the oldest daughter of five, working class parents from down state, eager for her to get an education with small means to see it through. She had accepted a scholarship, some federal money, a small gift from grandparents, and now worked to run the losing race to capture the rest. She lived in the dorms, hated her two roommates, whom she found boorish, juvenile lushes who spent more time on their backs then on their books.

From experience Gestrode knew that the working class genetics played against her. It tended to place high value on the education without the connection to curriculum. He soaked her in by both ear and eye, relishing the lapse of generations, nearly losing his perspective on that distinction. What would he have said to her twenty years' difference? He suddenly felt this intense need to make up for that failed statistics' experiment, felt foolish for the thought, yet basked in the rejuvenation.

He found himself lost on her words, and picked them up as she said, "...innocent, you know?"

"Innocent?"

"Yes, I mean...well, I'm sorry. I don't know what has come over me. I'm acting like a school girl." She stood.

"Tomorrow?" he asked.

She stared at him.

He composed, "You'll be working tomorrow?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?" He sensed her uneasiness.

"Let's talk again. You've made me appreciate an honest conversation. I would be interested in knowing you better." He thought he should explain himself further, trusting that she didn't misread him while acknowledging to himself that he really had no thought as to what he was after, albeit, probably

nothing. He thought about the hen. She disdained faculty having any conversational relationship with students, thinking it purely manipulative. There was something to it the distance between faculty and students, the power struggle each played. Too obvious. Conversely, what was the harm?

The second of Gestrode's circle was Dr. Robert Bowler, a junior faculty member in the English Department. Bowler routinely had lunch with Gestrode, and occasionally swam laps with him at the college pool. Gestrode enjoyed Bowler's sense of the moment: his flippant, carefree attitude about life and station. He remained, and would remain, single for the obvious, some would say oblivious, reason. He didn't flaunt his sexuality, except to pierce private conversations with humorous asides riding high on St. Elgin's unwritten moral code for faculty and students.

St. Elgin did not need to publish what everyone knew. It was a culture of less than subtle expectations. Gestrode regarded his affiliation with Bowler as a minimal risk for himself, and their relationship never crossed any lines. He found it amusing that the coeds adored Bowler, fawning around him in droves. Except for the Ministerial Council with member Saunders, the college community could never bring itself to speculate, for to do so would be tantamount to scandal. The Ministerial Council, an odd assortment of denominations brought together to rotate pastoral duties on campus and keeper of the moral code, watched with the doting jaundiced eye of a spinster aunt for any signs of a crack in the otherwise staid facade. In many ways, the facade was not unlike a mud levy: one good rain and all would disappear in a diluvian moment. The code did not define the college. The college was something more lasting. This was a curious position for a liberal arts college, but Bowler was the least of its worries, for a man of equal charm and looks otherwise inclined would surely bring the roof caving in upon the chapel crowd, a small, but omnipresent pedigreed cognoscenti.

Over lunch in the student commons with Robert Bowler he replayed the morning experience. Bowler lifted the edge of a

sliced turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread as if to discover something he wasn't sure he wanted to know. They sat surrounded by the cacophony. Students would occasionally meander by, tray or coffee cup in hand, speaking to one or the other of them with simple salutations. Both would nod, return the salutation, letting it pass for the ritual that it was.

"What do you make of it, Ian?" Bowler continued his inspection of the sandwich.

"Are you going to eat the damn thing? Looks like you're checking its gender."

"Do you think it possible to have a turkey pecker sandwich?"

"I wouldn't want to know about if it was."

"The mayonnaise as metaphor," a wicked smile pursing his lips.

"The very reason I never order mayonnaise when I eat with you. Or cottage cheese."

"Or bananas." Bowler laughed.

"Eating itself takes on preposterous possibilities. I should fast. Let you indulge your passions alone. Peeking under slices of bread."

"Can you get AIDS from food handlers?" Bowler mused.

"I don't think so, unless you're dating one."

"Not my style. Pedigree is important." Having exhausted the possibilities for the moment on this trivial line of chatter, Robert switched back to the original topic, "What's your inclination with this girl... Monique?"

"I don't have an inclination, as you put it. She's a student of mine, and I've only become aware of her. She made me realize that I have objectified these students."

"As they have you. Turn about is fair play, I suppose, " he paused to return a greeting to a young man passing by. "I sup-

pose it wouldn't hurt you to get to know one. You don't have any desires for her?"

"Desires? You mean, to lift her bread?" Bowler laughed. "No. Twenty years, professional standing, and all that bullshit." Gestrode normally disdained the prevalent use of slang to suffice for serious ratiocination.

"You're too concerned," Bowler said with little sincerity.

"Or not concerned enough. I was thinking that I've lost myself."

"In a rut?" Bowler bit into the sandwich

"Worse than that. Routines are OK. We need them. I couldn't write if each day began with so much uncertainty that I had to spend it balancing demands. I couldn't find the time to drink coffee at the Steam Room if my class schedule changed everyday, and I didn't know that schedule until I arrived at my office. As if it were assigned by a lottery system. The time I spend at the Steam Room is valued time. I enjoy the coffee. I enjoy the paper."

"And apparently the waitress." Bowler winked.

"Apparently," Gestrode sighed. "I was thinking that I have lost twenty years. It was in that brief conversation that I connected to an event of my own college years. If I had made a different choice back then. If I had gone with my instinct and allowed that relationship with..." and he couldn't think of her name, not that it mattered, so he made one up "with Sarah to mature. How different it would all have been."

"Or exactly the same. You didn't know her."

"I knew the alternative. It was a painful, empty experience. No good gain. Just lost time. Lost daughter."

Bowler looked at him curiously. "All of our lives are that way. A more existential view of life would help you. I've learned to move quickly from mistakes. That's the secret. To move quickly. Abandon them. Don't upright them. We spend too much of our lives trying to undo bad choices."

"Wisdom there. That's why ruts are so pleasant. The outcomes are very predicable."

"My advice is to explore the conversation. We're men of words and thoughts. It is our way. The intelligentsia love to lose themselves in their thoughts."

"Rather than having babies, sitting in front of the television, growing old, and looking forward to family reunions." Gestrode stirred his coffee absently with his finger.

"And planning your own funeral. Listen, I've been asked to serve as a faculty advisor for a new group forming on campus. And what are you doing with your finger?"

Gestrode pulled his finger from the cup. "Great," Gestrode said sincerely. "New Age Poets?"

"In a sense. A gay students' alliance."

Gestrode choked. "You're kidding?"

"No, I'm serious. I was approached a couple of weeks ago. I'm thinking about it. It would reify what I am."

"Reify? You're not an academic for gays. You're a gay academic. The later is much more discreet than the former." Gestrode hoped his friend was merely testing conversational waters, as people do when the prescribed action is not entirely attractive to them.

"I think I'm both. St. Elgin's is a repressive place. An alliance would crack that facade. Legitimize their status."

"St. Elgin's legitimize gay rights?" Gestrode chortled.

"The college would eat you alive. This isn't Berkeley. And you don't have tenure. Tenure would at least buy you some space."

"I'm not the only homosexual faculty member on campus, and some have tenure. I know at least five or six myself." Bowler looked disturbed. He expected a ringing endorsement.

"Quite a shift from private conversations among colleagues to a public morality play. Perhaps one with tenure would be in a better position to champion this alliance."

"They're all closeted. The old order, you know. No different than weary heterosexuals who haven't gotten it on in decades, dragging their wives to faculty receptions as some kind of pale tribute to the established order. You sit on the college tenure review committee. Can you sound it out?"

"I suppose. Give me some time. What's your clock on this?"

"No hurry. The students are anxious to get moving, but they realize the timing has to be right. But there must be a time."

"How many students?" Gestrode expected Bowler to say three.

"Around twenty." Gestrode's eyes widened. "I don't expect them all to become public. There are parents and dorm residents to contend with." Bowler flipped a potato chip over on its side, as if it was dead.

"And careers. Let me poke around for you. Be patient."

"You can count on it. It took me twenty-five years to sort it out for myself." But he was insincere.

Later that day Gestrode called the third of his circle, Reverend Alan Saunders the Presbyterian minister. Saunders and his wife Melanie constituted the only couple he and the hen regularly entertained. They were considerably younger than the Gestrodes, but an affable, giddy couple. They never seemed to have a down moment or, if they did, Gestrode never saw it. The hen didn't like church all that much, and found herself more involved than she would have otherwise chosen for herself. But Gestrode taught the adult Sunday school class, so she found herself on every church calling list for baking pies, cleaning the kitchen after pot luck suppers, running the annual bazaar, and continually whispering into Gestrode's ear the names of fellow communitarians, as Gestrode refused to learn them. The century old white frame church occupied the

station of landmark on their country road, and was not more than one half mile from their house.

Saunders agreed to meet later that evening at his church office. The hen would have to be prepared for Gestrode's absence, and he elected to defer total honesty for another day. He had not told her about Bowler's disposition, although Bowler had been to their house often for dinner. She may well have assumed as Bowler's mannerisms tended toward the effeminate. And there was that perplexing singleness.

2.

Saunders sat behind his desk in the small but comfortable church office. He often sought sanctuary from his own noisy brood residing in the parish house located just beyond the church. He had just left an unpleasant encounter with the church trustees, a sour group of stodgy old men each hell bent on renaming the church after his pater familia. He had been after them for two years to address a serious renovation of the church sanctuary, and once again found this request lowered in the priority list in favor of expanding the recreation hall. These meetings always soured him. He was a spiritual man, a man of deep, brooding preoccupations. He could spend hours puzzling over a Hebrew or Greek word, or projecting himself into the life of an Apostle, wondering what he would do if equally challenged. He reminded himself that Paul had his hands full of dissention within the early church. Of all God's inventions, the committee had to be the most ill-conceived.

Gestrode banged into the church building, made his way to the office and saw Saunders glance up with his finger still on a text and a pencil in the other hand applied to a note pad. "Hi. Good timing?"

"Sure." Saunders was early thirties, stocky build, and bearded. He was dressed in his study attire: a moth-eaten brown wool sweater and shinny corduroys. Gestrode often thought that his friend only owned two outfits, the Sunday vestments and this appeal to humility. Aside from Saunders' reticence Gestrode found many common linkages to Saunders

and was sympathetic to his liberation theology, which Saunders shared with a few confidants. "A closet liberal" Gestrode would chide pleasantly for the appellation suited him as well. Saunders was recently a father again for the third time. Melanie was predestined to motherhood. Generally their social evenings revolved around the hen's only addiction, playing bridge. Gestrode found the game a sufficient diversion, but lacked the killer's appetite for it. Stiff competitors always beat Gestrode who never saw life playing out in a hand of cards. Or much else.

"When you were ordained, I believe you told me that the question of homosexuality was raised to you?"

Saunders shifted. What was coming, he wondered? "The topic absorbed a goodly portion of the interview, that is true."

"I have a colleague in another department who's gay. He's managed to keep it pretty much to himself, sharing with a few of us, but very discreet. A few eyebrows have been raised, I suppose. He's single, good looking. He might go public." Gestrode paused to allow the thought to be absorbed. Saunders did not react. "He has asked me to make some inquiries as to whether this will affect his bid for tenure in a couple of years. I sit on the tenure review committee for the university."

"How does he plan to do this? A big party?" Saunders smiled.

"He might as well. A group of gay students have asked him to be the faculty advisor for a proposed fraternity. St. Elgin's College is probably not the right venue. You have connections to the college?"

"Sure. It is a Presbyterian affiliated school. I have rotated through the campus ministry as a visiting clergyman. And I serve on this committee and that on occasion. I guess you would say that this qualifies me as having connections."

"What is your read on the social climate there?"

"Are you asking me if I think they're ready for a gay fraternity?"

"I guess so. I'm really sorting it out for myself right now."

Saunders opened a desk draw, rifled through it, and extracted a cracked, blackened corn cob pipe. He continued his excavations until he found a pouch of tobacco and some matches. There followed a ritual Gestrode had seen many times: the filling of the bowl. Saunders was not a smoker, but whenever he needed to drag a conversation out he went through this routine. Finally, hurling a cloud of blue smoke into the air, he responded. "A campus is the logical place for a fraternity. The freedom to express ideas openly. Your question is whether this idea rises to the level of warranted freedom. On the face of it, I would say no. You might be better to suggest that your colleague try putting together a symposium. Invite a few nationally known gay writers. Couch the debate in the respectability of dialogue."

"St. Elgin's did something like that a few years ago. It was a symposium on radical feminism. The panel was accused of being a front for lesbianism. It beat up on male domination severely. I don't recall that it made the administration very comfortable. The student paper ran letters back and forth on the topic for nearly a year. It was my first year at St. Elgin's, and I was asked to represent the History Department on the panel."

"How did that go?"

"I chickened out. It was my first year, for goodness sake. What was the department chair thinking?" The hen had fairly warned him that participation on a panel like that would likely result in yet another job search. He didn't relish that.

"That would seem to answer your question. Is your colleague tenured?"

"No, and I think that was the reason he asked me. I sit on the college tenure review committee. He would like me to get a sense of the committee's likely reaction. But if I bring it up, I might as well tell them what's going on."

"Can you do that?" Saunders struck another match to the bowl, sucked, and blew out the match in the ensuing cloud.

"It wouldn't be wise. I would be better to lay the ground a little more discreetly. Eventually, if this friend goes forward, I am afraid the connection would be made." Gestrode looked toward a plain wood cross hanging on the study wall. Quietly, he continued. "I feel torn."

"These are not the best of times to be pushing this agenda," Saunders tapped the pipe on the side of his trash can, and put it back into the drawer. "The country reacted badly to 'Don't ask, don't tell'. Senator Nunn practically went into orbit. And the Christian Coalition, well, they alone make one pause before calling oneself a Christian. The Presbyterian Church has taken the Leviticus route." Gestrode smiled.

"Yes, I suppose. But didn't all advances in social freedoms come at a price?"

"We have an expression for this: People tire of being eaten by lions. Even the early Christians, and Jews through out their history, survived because they had the good sense to duck. My own experience has taught me that to be a minister requires appreciating the body politick. Your colleague should wait until he has tenure. Or the students should find a champion with more power."

Gestrode leaned in. "Suppose some of us with small power begin softening the beach head?" Saunders felt uneasy for what he saw coming. "You sit on the campus ministerial council. What if a group of students came to you seeking spiritual guidance? Would there be a threshold for their concern that would propel you to bring it up? To seek some appropriate avenue for them to..."

"To come out? To get sanction for a fraternity?"

"No. That would be inappropriate. Let's put it more directly. Say they want a dialogue with the ministerial council."

"Knowing the council, there would be some members that would recommend a cleansing. If they thought these students were using them to get attention? to force the issue? I suspect

there would be some that would work to get them expelled from school."

"You're kidding?" Gestrode did not expect this answer.

"I'm not kidding at all. And it could hurt me, and anyone that argued too strongly in defense of these students. Not a pleasant thought."

Gestrode stiffened, looking at his friend suspiciously, in a new light. "Am I hearing you say that this is not something that you feel strongly enough about to make it an issue?"

"Ian, we're talking in hypotheticals here, aren't we?"

"Generally." He looked sheepishly to the floor.

"My congregation here has a mean age of sixty. They are rural people: the sons and daughters of lumbermen, fishermen, and orchard farmers. Gay to them means feeling happy. Homosexuality is a perversion. And if they didn't believe it, they would never admit it. I may not plan on making a career of this ministry here, but I would like my wife and children to have a home and food on the table in the interim. If I were single, I might take to the fields and work the masses. I am not even sure if that would matter. The money of the Church is still pretty much in the Calvinist tradition. They made their babies in the dark half-dressed. Whenever the national leaders have been confronted with this problem, it has nearly split the church. American Christianity is pretty conservative. Gays would have had a lot fewer problems with mainstream Christians if the God had never singled out Sodom, and Paul had not made such a point of saying, unequivocally, that homosexuality was unacceptable."

"Sure. This was the same man that advised men against having sex, or even marrying."

Saunders laughed. "It would have been a one generation movement if they had followed his advice on that one."

"Sure, and didn't he believe that Jesus would return in his life?"

"Until it became evident that He wasn't going to do it to please Paul. But you're correct." He lightened his tone, "Listen, you and I are both wise enough to understand that the modern Church has problems more pressing. Main stream Protestant churches have a hard enough time getting people to come at all. Those churches that are growing are not likely to be all that egalitarian. I don't have an answer that you want to hear. It will take individuals of great standing and persuasion. Those kind of people exist, but they aren't likely to champion this cause."

"I have an idea. What if a group of students wanted to establish a campus affiliation with the Metropolitan Church?"

"The homosexual church? Ouch. That would be interesting."

"Do me a favor. Put it forward. Tell the council that several students approached you and asked you about the process of getting an affiliation at St. Elgin's."

"That would be hard. If this in fact did happen, I would tell them quite honestly that it would be a stiff climb. The real process would involve a minister with credentials coming forward. As I understand it, the Metropolitan Church is pretty loose about who gets to be called a minister. I think something akin to a matchbook degree in divinity. The council would challenge him or her at that level first. It would be the easiest way to steer the challenge away. But even with credentials, I suspect the council would advise him or her to take it off campus, at least until it could be demonstrated that the numbers are there."

"What kinds of numbers?"

"Truth? No numbers. It would be a moot point. We have interdenominational services now because we can't attract enough of any one flavor to fill the chapel beyond the obligatory freshman chapel."

"Just a clever dodge," Gestrode said with disgust. It was this aspect of Christianity he found most distasteful. As long

as the right hymns were sung, and the right rituals performed, everyone was happy. Hold up a mirror to their bigotry, and every one ran. And why shouldn't they? In America, every man is his own moral authority. There are no external milestones to mark the passage. How often had he heard students say of themselves, "I'm a good person." He might ask, "What does that mean? Are you good according to your standards or the standards of others?" They would invariably answer, "My friends like me."

"A dodge, yes. Say, are we on for bridge tomorrow night?"

3.

Gestrode felt uneasy. Dissettling feelings arose whenever he felt the presence of an unresolved conflict. He had no reason whatsoever to involve himself with Bowler's crusade. It was simply a matter of principle for Gestrode, and the misery arose from the conflict between friendship and freedom. Neither the Constitution nor the law created a right in sexual preference. There were the problems attendant to health insurance for gay couples, or perhaps getting a parking decal on a partner's car for campus, but these points seemed minor in the face of it, and weren't at issue anyway. It was simply a matter of forcing an audience, and the price he would have to pay for someone else's principle seemed out of proportion for the gain achieved. He was comfortable in his routines, and not up to the challenge. And there would be tremendous obstacles. Even if Bowler won the right to have a new fraternity created, in itself no big deal, it wasn't the fraternity that Bowler was after. He wanted the institution to acquiesce. He wanted to win acceptance on the principle, not the fact.

The idea of a public discourse on the topic intrigued Gestrode, but it was highly unlikely that minds would be shifted. These students would graduate, lose interest in their cause, with no guarantees that any permanent tilling of the soil would occur. But he would still be here. He would still have to face colleagues. Their memories would be a lot longer. Bowler would never get tenure. He would be a memory as well.

That Monday morning, following the 8 AM class, he spoke briefly with Monique. She came by his office, and asked if he would be having coffee at the Steam Room that day. He said he would. She said she would have a break around ten, and if he was there, perhaps she could join him for a few minutes. He said he would like that, and she was gone. Again he thought back to the girl that might have been. The reverie invigorated him. It was interrupted by Hobartson.

"Ian, do you have a minute?" Hobartson was near sixty, a tall robust man with a shock of white hair. He dressed fastidiously, today in a dark blue suit with a red, white and blue stripped tie, like the properly attired politician. Gestrode waved him into his office, and Hobartson took the overstuffed leather chair that Gestrode reserved for his own reading, when he wasn't sitting in the Steelcase ergonomic chair that he used at his desk. Faculty offices at St. Elgin's were small, lined with bookcases, and if the faculty member had some status, which Gestrode did, a window looking over the common area below that truly defined St. Elgin's campus.

"Bill Franken of the English Department spoke with me over the weekend. One of his faculty is making a move that Franken feels will be disruptive, and he would like to squelch it before it makes headlines. He came to me because you and I are friends, and because I chair the Tenure Review Committee." Hobartson paused for what he presumed would be a confirmation of facts already evident to Gestrode. Gestrode realized this.

"Robert Bowler?"

"You know about it?"

"If you're talking about some move toward starting a new fraternity, yes." Gestrode folded his hands before him, offering the slightest hint of assignation.

"More or less." Gestrode saw that the fraternity idea was not the thrust of his appearance. "I understand that Bowler has an interest in the gay literature, and uses some of it in his classes as a part of body of study on 20th century alienation

literature. A few students have complained about it, but we're all a little defensive about students dictating our selection of suitable instruction materials. St. Elgin's is certainly not much different than any school in giving its faculty some latitude for the classroom."

"The skirts of academic freedom," Gestrode summarized, then asked, "What has brought you into it?"

"Apparently Bowler has told these students that the approval is fait accompli. Franken had a student conference with two of the more forward students, and the word has reached the ears of at least one of the college trustees. A trustee calls the Provost, the Provost calls Franken, and there you are. I told Franken that you had a more casual relationship with Bowler, and that I would speak to you. Ask you to speak with Bowler privately without the imprimatur of something more official. It might well be that Bowler has been misconstrued. Faculty generally are. It wouldn't surprise me if Bowler had some words with the students and puffed himself up to the task. Since we both sit on the Tenure Review Committee, we might avoid some nasty business later with a termination if the matter is put to rest now."

"You want me to tell Bowler to back off?" Gestrode's role now suddenly shifted. Where once he was to be an intermediary, now he was the messenger. He was to use his influence as a friend to forewarn Bowler that his career would be in jeopardy if he pursued it. With some disbelief, Gestrode was now on the defense.

"Yes. I doubt if the English department will even offer his name for tenure. He might not even get a contract renewal."

"Why doesn't Franken tell him directly? He's the chair."

"Franken thinks Bowler will over react. Perhaps Bowler will say something he'll regret later. In a private conversation with a friend, he can vent all he wants." Hobartson rose from the chair, and smoothed his tie back between the jacket lapels.

"I understand," Gestrode played a chance card, "that the Ministerial Council might entertain an appeal from the Metropolitan Church?"

"What? The Metropolitan Church? What is that?"

"I understand it is a church founded back in the 60s to serve the spiritual needs of the gay community."

"Where did you hear that? I can't imagine such a thing." Hobartson put an arm to the back of the chair he had just vacated, as if the chair and he were old drinking buddies.

"My wife and I are good friends with one of the members. We play bridge together." Gestrode realized that he had better proceed with caution. Leave it as a vague comment in a conversation.

"Well, I would be very surprised. You were here when the feminist round table nearly resulted in a campus riot. As I recall, the Ministerial Council came out dead center against an event such as that occurring again. This church business would make the other pale in comparison. Many of the same men are still around, still sitting on the same council."

Gestrode deflected, hoping to set the ground for a detraction, yet realizing that he had planted the seeds, "It was probably just a conversational aside. I didn't make anything of it at the time."

Hobartson accepted this. "Gestrode, take some time to level with Bowler. It's for his own good. If these kids want to push something, let them. Bowler should stay as far from it as possible. If not for his own benefit, then for the college. St. Elgin's just is not a proving ground for radical thinking. Let the ivy league boys rewrite the social calendar. We'll continue to do what we do best."

Later that morning, Gestrode found it hard to focus on the newspaper spread out before him on the table at the Steam Room. He had waved to Monique as he entered, but she was busily cleaning tables, gathering up breakfast plates and cups. An hour passed before she made her way to his table. Gestrode

thought she looked exceptionally bright today, and felt his first sexual awareness of her. She was dressed in exceptionally tight denims, a light blue blouse carelessly buttoned offering a hint of the small breasts beneath. In one hand she carried what appeared to the apron all Steam Room employees wore, a royal blue emblazoned with the SR monogram, in the other the refill decanter. Her blonde hair wrapped her face like a winter muffler. He smiled as she approached, he assuming the familiarity of old friends enjoying a comfortable, nostalgic encounter. She smiled cheerfully in return, and as she reached him, stood near enough to brush against his shoulder as she poured the coffee. He did not rebuke the touch.

Closing his eyes, he tried to recapture that feeling he had those many years ago. The excitement of possibilities, the promise more fulfilling than the enactment of it. She said, as if she was reading his mind, "Do you think it is possible to really care for someone without ever thinking that you'll act on it?"

"I would say it is likely. Why do you ask?" She slipped into the chair next to his, and put her head to the table on a cushion of arms.

Glancing coyly up to him, she said, "There's this man, an older man really, that I find myself thinking about a lot."

"Does he know this?" His pulse raced.

"Maybe he does. I don't know. It would be impertinent of me to say anything to him."

Gestrode wanted desperately to touch her hair, but resisted the urge to pull her into his personal space. "Perhaps you should. Otherwise, how would you know?"

"I'm not sure where I want it to go, I mean, I think it's just an infatuation." She lifted her head, restoring her posture.

"Maybe he's infatuated as well."

"Then he can say something to me," she looked over her shoulder toward the small gathering of her work mates at a distant table.

"That's not always easy. He may be surrounded in circumstances that would make it dangerous for him to be totally honest. How well do you know him?"

"Well enough to care, not so well to pursue it." She edged a hand near to his, and he reached over to touch it, but did not.

"My advice is to let it go." He retracted his hand.

"I don't think I want to. I think I just want to know how." She paused.

Gestrode hated innuendo. Too dangerous for him for chance anything. Now he was in exactly the same difficulty that he had experienced twenty years back. He could act on the impulse, but then what? "Who is this man?" He settled for the obvious with images of his wife and their years together filling his mind.

"I guess I can trust you. I feel like I can. He's one of my professors." Absently she lifted Gestrode's cup and took a sip of the coffee.

"Tell me about him," Gestrode felt as if he was opening a door. Let her make the move. He wasn't exactly sure what his response would be. Flattered, for sure, that a beautiful, sexy young woman would be interested in him, yet cautious. Where would it go? A brief affair? Out of the question. He would never betray his marriage. Then what? And if word got out? It could cost him his job. He would be defending himself against the negative. The negative always wins, even with no truth to it. He would lose his friendship with Saunders, and Hobartson. So they would have a pleasant father-daughter relationship. What damage would have been done by then? She would forget him, but he would live with the ramifications for years. Forever explaining, forever putting to rest what the prurient always chose to believe, their teeth fastened on anything to give their hallway conversations some substance.

"This is just between you and me, promise?" She took his right hand, running a finger lightly across the knuckles.

"Of course, Monique." His mind raced and pulse quickened. A wave of nausea swept him.

"Dr. Bowler, my English professor. How well do you know him?"

Gestrode didn't know whether to laugh or cry, and felt both emotions. At once he was relieved and crestfallen, then blushed with his foolishness. He smiled sardonically, "I know him. We often swim together. Sometimes have lunch at the student commons."

"I know. I've seen you there. He's single? Is he seeing someone?"

"I don't think seriously," he said, taking his hand away. He reviewed his emotions. Thank God he had not set it up differently, exposed his naiveté. Now he faced a problem of a different sort.

"Would it be all right if I joined you for lunch sometime? He might notice me."

"You have his class?" She nodded to this. He continued, "Just talk to him. You might feel differently if you got to know him a little better."

"He's always awash with girls, and guys. What would I say? 'Here's a poem I've written?'"

"Sure. Why not?"

"I don't know. I've thought about it a thousand times. Then you told me the story about the girl you knew in college and regretted letting her get away from you. Then I knew it would be wrong of me not to explore these feelings further. Take a chance. Isn't that what you wished you had done when you were my age?" Yes, he thought.

Now Gestrode saw it very clearly, buying immediately into the truth his wife had imparted. "Are you any good as a writer?"

"Fair, I guess. He writes beautiful comments on my work." She hugged herself, then glanced over her shoulder toward the

group of workers stirring to return to the tasks left from the morning episode.

"Write a story about a young woman with ambivalent sexual urgings. She's seeking an understanding of herself, and her past relationships have left her feeling empty, unfilled. There's a person deep inside of her crawling to break free of stereotypes, yet trapped by social convention. Write that story and give it to him to critique."

"Will you read it first if I write it?" She once again moved toward the now rapidly aging Gestrode.

"Yes. When you're ready." It was an offer he hoped she would never act upon.

She stood, leaned in to him and kissed him lightly on the cheek. He reached up, touching her hair. "Thanks," she said, and moved away.

He sighed to the accompaniment of a dull ache coursing his chest.

4.

"Can you make a contact with someone from the Metropolitan Church?" Gestrode tried to make the question seem inconsequential.

Saunders looked at him with a blank stare, not knowing which way to take the question. He was good at one-on-one theology, but he disliked being put to the test. Privately he disdained the lack of teeth in his organized faith, but when put to the test, he fell back into an introspective theology. He was no Paul, for sure, and was not the sort to spend time in any prison, even a metaphorical one. He took a revisionist view of Christianity, thinking that God's interdiction among the apostles had a clear resonance to it. Those fellows knew when God was acting in their lives. He told them so. Fiery tongues, wind blowing, visions to knock your shoes off your feet. Until the wind blew and tongues appeared he would not act on someone else's guilt trip—or even his own. That wasn't God speaking, it was mother. "Why would I want to?"

"You make it sound so utilitarian." And it was. "I'm following up on our conversation the other day."

"The difficulty with your friend? Why are you making this your crusade? Didn't you tell me that he wanted to start a fraternity? That's a political agenda, not a spiritual one." Saunders grew impatient, fiddling with some papers on his desk. Gestrode had never seen this side of him.

Gestrode thought about the question. Saunders was correct, of course. "The principle of it, I suppose." It was more than that. Beneath the calm waters, he had seen himself grow irrelevant. While players charted the future of the college, and colleagues shaped the faculty dialogue, he was merely the man in the grey flannel suit, trudging through each day, anticipating the gold watch, stamping his endorsement on whatever came his way, reaching him long after input mattered. He was in their pocket, as it is said. A good soldier in the trenches. A part of him looked for a difference, having them turn to him for counsel, for the nod, "We need your input here Dr. Gestrode. We're at a loss, and a man of your reputation, well... it would be cavalier not to acknowledge your wisdom."

"To venture a guess, this principle might consume you." Saunders suddenly looked terribly disinterested. Gestrode broke from his reverie.

"What principles consume you?" He and Saunders were much alike, wishful thinking taken to the grave.

"I know it seems petty to you, but keeping this congregation together consumes me. I don't think you realize how precarious the American ministry has become. If I took off on some personal tangent some Sunday morning, venting a passion, the next Sunday the pews would be empty. I serve the ritual of faith and someplace in that ritual I try to make little gains, to give little insights, small advances. I'm not going to revolutionize the faith because I decide they need to be awakened to a greater call, that is, my greater call. That's not my job."

"It's not petty at all. I appreciate the delicate balance. But if you appear to be closed to an issue, you don't know how many out there will accept that closure and not approach with a spiritual need. Look at the numbers. Is the church growing?"

"Some churches are, just not this one. The faith needs of a community are defined by the community itself. It has to be their hunger for spiritual growth that dictates these directions, not mine. This has always been the case, even for the early Christians."

"I'm trying to find a reasonable accommodation to this tension. The college will not tolerate a political statement on gay rights. A Christian college might be forced to tolerate a Christian response to gay rights. Hence, a speaker from the Metropolitan might provide the catalyst Bowler needs to organize a small conclave."

"He has a conclave? Your plan would result in the ministerial council asking hard questions about my motivations. Would you have me explain your involvement? And Bowler's? How honest should I be? Or should I be duplicitous? Create such a tangle of motives that no intelligent reasonable person would accept any explanation, even the truth? Social movements begin with grass roots mobilization. The students have a lot less to lose than you, or I, or your friend Bowler. Students are expected to act with a certain degree of impetuousness. Eventually examinations catch up with them, and that's the end of it. Besides, I wouldn't know where to begin with finding a minister, then arranging introductions, assuring that his or her credentials are acceptable. How committed is Bowler to this project?"

"Apparently something's brewing. My associate Hobartson approached me to ask that I speak to Bowler. Word has reached the ears of a trustee."

"What kind of word?" Saunders moved uneasily, running his hand through his beard with an absent minded energy.

"A couple of students spoke with Bowler's chair, and word reached a trustee somehow. I don't know the routes. This chair

Bill Franken spoke to Hobartson because Hobartson sits on the tenure review committee with me. Franken thinks that a circuitous route to Bowler would be more productive than a direct confrontation."

"Franken's Bowler's department chair?

"Yes, but Franken believes that Bowler might react negatively to a sanction on this matter. Franken doesn't want it to explode in his office. It narrows options."

"Sounds to me like the options are getting narrower by the hour. You have a handful of students bold enough to speak out, a faculty member willing to champion their cause, an alarmed chair, two members of the tenure review committee, and at least one trustee. Now you want me to compliment the mix, bringing in the Ministerial Council to boot? Don't you think it wise to disengage?"

Gestrode sunk back in the chair.

5.

Robert Bowler slipped out of his underwear, and placed them, folded neatly on top of his shoes and socks in the second locker. His shirt and pants already hung on a plastic hanger he had brought with him in a small athletic bag. More modestly, Gestrode stood slightly behind him, his own blue bag sitting on the bench behind them. Bowler stepped gingerly to the mechanical scale, adjusting the weights for the approximation before more scarcely moving the ounce weight to the appropriate balance.

"Dammit. Up three. 170 pounds." He turned to face Gestrode. Gestrode looked at Bowler. Bowler was a good looking man, physically fit, nearly six feet tall. A slight wisp of hair crossed Bowler's pectorals, a light sandy brown like his head hair. Bowler scratched his genitals with an absent minded gesture as he moved toward the shower stall, one of twelve in the men's locker room serving the pool. While Bowler showered, Gestrode slipped out of his remaining clothes and took the stall next to Bowler. While he considered himself in fairly good

shape for a man in his forties, Gestrode lacked Bowler's immodesty.

When both men had finished showering, they reconvened by the lockers to dress for the pool. Bowler wore a pair of Lycra swimming trunks, while Gestrode pulled on a pair of conventional boxer style trunks with the cotton mesh liner.

After swimming their laps, both men hung by elbows to the pool's wall. Gestrode broke the palaver, "I understand that two students spoke to Franken about the possibility of a gay fraternal organization."

"I know. They asked me if I thought they could speak to Bill about it." Bowler kicked the water in place.

"What can Franken do about it?"

"He's faculty advisor to the pan-Hellenic board. They tell me that Franken about shit in his pants." Bowler laughed as he rolled over, hooking his elbows again. A young man approached from behind them and cannonballed into the pool over their heads. The splash brought Gestrode's hands to his face in a natural reflex. Bowler pushed away from the wall, swam to the boy and frolicked with him a minute before returning to Gestrode.

"Founding member of the fraternity," he offered as a singular excuse for his excesses. Several students and other men looked suspiciously toward them. "Nice looking boy, eh?" Bowler poked Gestrode playfully in the side, which again brought a reflex, this of turning in to himself. "Franken was unnerved, for sure. He spoke to Hobartson, and Hobartson to me."

"About what?" Bowler again turned to face the pool side.

"Well, to put it straight to you, putting a lid on it."

"Why should I? The students are free to inquire. They pay the bills around here."

"They only pay 40% of the bills. The rest comes from the endowments and charitable giving. The time isn't ripe for a

public stand. And you need to manage your career more cautiously."

"What are you saying?" Bowler eyed him sternly. Gestrode faced a stranger, understanding immediately the shallow depth of collegial friendships.

"I'm saying that this back room planning of yours has raised eyebrows, and the eyes are on you. Get tenure first, then tackle this. And find a more legitimate way of doing it. Maybe a round table on gay literature. Maybe you can invite Somerset Maupin through the speakers' forum." Gestrode's efforts to couch the news casually had the subtlety of a fart in church.

"The present cohort of students would have graduated by then. We would lose the momentum of the movement."

"There's a movement? Listen to yourself. This group graduates? Are you suggesting that there will not be the same numbers in the future?"

"With the same enthusiasm? I don't know."

"Do you want tenure here?"

"It would be nice to have life employment. But it's not driving me. I'm not convinced that I can last here. Pretty suffocating, really. I live two different lives. Wouldn't you prefer to be the same person off campus as you are on campus?"

"I thought I was. Basically this is a job with restrictions. No one works in a place where all they call all the shots. None of us are hired so we can act out our total existence on a single field. A man who likes to take a drink wouldn't drink in class, would he? You would like to swim in the nude, I'll bet. I don't see you doing it."

Bowler smiled at Gestrode as he hooked his fingers into his trunks, slipping them off, and slapping them onto the deck. "What were you saying?"

"Jesus, Rob. Get dressed!" Gestrode panicked. Glancing around the room, no one seemed to have noticed. Bowler

kicked off from the side, rising in the water sufficiently for his naked butt to stick prominently into the air. He swam to the opposite side of the pool, turned and swam back. Bowler retrieved the trunks and pulled them back on, laughing boisterously, the sound echoing through the pool cavern.

"Man, you are a lot tighter around the sphincter than I imagined." Bowler saddled into Gestrode, whispering into his ear. "This doesn't have to be your concern. I'm not asking for an endorsement. We just wanted an airing, that's all. I asked you to get a sense of the battle field, and I guess you did."

"The college will have your balls hanging in the trophy room next to the feminists' bras."

"I doubt if they were wearing bras."

Gestrode forced a smile. "Meet privately with the students. That's as far as your risk taking should go."

"Let's go. I think I want to end this." With triceps flexing, Bowler hoisted himself from the water in a slosh. Gestrode took a more cautious route, turning backwards, sliding his own butt onto the side, then hoisting his legs.

In the locker room again, Bowler quickly pulled off his shorts and began ringing them out. The same young man he had dunked minutes before approached him. "Rob?"

Bowler turned toward him. "Hi Carl."

"Neat move there in the pool." He laughed as he too undressed.

Bowler thought his reference was to the playful dunking. "You didn't drown did you?"

"No man, I mean taking off your trunks. That took some balls." He laughed as he walked away.

6.

"Here's my essay, Dr. Gestrode," Monique bubbled like cheap champagne as she pulled out the chair next to Gestrode's in

the Steam Room. He took it from her. It wasn't long, a single page generated on a computer.

"Word processed?" Gestrode suggested the obvious. How he missed the days of the labored pen. Students, and himself as well, no longer connected to the paper. The creative process, he thought, transformed by bits and bytes. "Do you want me to read it now?"

"Yes, please." She could not contain herself. It would seem she had bottled an aphrodisiac. This is the reading:

The Folly

No sooner had he spoke, she knew. Standing at the distance, masculine and sure of himself. This was no boy. She had known boys, many of them. They left her soul vacuous, hungering to be filled. Their grunts and groans, petty dalliances which could not mask their inexperience. Their words were not cunning, they were simply begging for the obvious. She could give the obvious, the sex rituals learned by teenagers. They could receive them, pleased that the sex had been good for them. Leaving her hungry for something, for something she had not experienced, but knew must exist.

She only knew him from the distance, yet suspected she knew him well, as if they had been intimates for years. What were his thoughts? And could she read his. She blushed, and ached, and felt the urgings rise in her blood.

Just a word from him would be sufficient. Just a glance would tell her. A smile for her alone would initiate the passion, as a spark to dry straw invokes the conflagration. They would be consumed. They would rise above temporal limitations, as smoke rises above the fire, to exist beyond the temporal, to love beyond the inconvenient, united through their passion.

Gestrode paused in his reading, the sweat running with a chill down his chest. Monique nervously bit her lip, darting

glances from paper to Gestrode. He looked at her lovingly, a nanosecond wish that he was the recipient of this young woman's adoration. He slid the paper back toward her. Now it was the full weight of his station that came to fruition. He must distance himself from her, and from Bowler.

"It's terrible, isn't it?" Focused only on her mission, she sighed heavily, slipping it back into a manila folder.

"No, actually, your letter is very strong." He told the truth.

"I shouldn't give it to him. It's too obvious. He'll think I'm a slut."

Gestrode knew that she didn't mean this, but was laying the ground for a more candid assessment. He replied, "I don't know what he will think. Give it to him. Just be prepared for an academic response."

"What do you mean?" Her eyes pleaded for the friend's insight.

"I mean he may simply think that you are asking a professor for an academic response. How are you going to approach him with it?"

"I don't know. I guess I was hoping you would give it to him. Tell him it's from an admirer." Ah, Gestrode thought, he was to be the go-between. The temptation rose to tell her the truth about Bowler, but it was not his truth. Reluctantly he took the essay.

When he gave Bowler the letter at lunch, while Bowler fiddled with the mound of tuna salad resting on a wilt of lettuce, Bowler's first glance was one of suspicion. He took it, read it, and smiled.

"I didn't realize you felt this way about me." He chuckled, proceeding to divide the tuna into three separate mounds on his plate. "I don't. A student admirer gave it to me to pass along."

"What's his name?" He now flanked each mound with potato chips, fortifying them like so many redoubts.

"A female student. I don't make it a point of publicizing your gender preferences."

He took the folder. "I'll write a brief reply. I don't need students fawning over me."

"Agreed," yet he himself had lost this detachment. "She's wholly sincere with this infatuation."

"It's just a crush. These things happen when you're as good looking as I am. Any action on the home front with Hobartson?"

"No more than I've told you. Try to distance yourself from it for now. I did speak to a friend on the Ministerial Council, suggesting an invitation from someone with the Metropolitan Community Church as an ice breaker." Gestrode was disheartened at Bowler's cavalier treatment of Monique's letter. He would have handled it much differently. He would have written a reply, full of poetry and images.

Bowler's thoughts were elsewhere, "The Ministerial Council? You've got to be kidding! Why would we be interested in the Metropolitan Church? This isn't a religious issue. This is civil rights. And the Ministerial Council? It's nothing more than a toothless relic. The students don't want forgiveness, for Christ's sake. They want political recognition." Bowler threw the fork to the table. "Jesus, Ian. I only asked you to get a sense of the tenure review committee's posture on this."

"Then I'll tell you plainly. You will not get tenure if you associate yourself with a radical effort of any kind."

"And your position? You're not willing to make my case?"

"Tenure is hard enough to achieve under normal circumstances," and Gestrode recognized immediately his imbroglio. "And what exactly would I say? He's a nice guy with a revisionist streak. Forgive him for his impetuosity'?"

"I see." Bowler stood, smiled weakly at Gestrode, now staring meekly to his own uneaten lunch. "I see it very clearly." He left.

7.

"I think it is a mistake," Saunders' voice echoed through the phone signifying that he was calling from a large room with little furniture, "but I made contact with the Metropolitan Church in San Francisco. They will send a minister" the word took on an unnatural resonance as Saunders spoke it "for the next meeting of the council. I'm setting it up as merely a learning session. For the council to gain some appreciation for the depth of this spiritual need."

Gestrode debated with himself briefly as to whether he should tell Saunders what had transpired over lunch, electing not to say anything more. "Great. That would be the least objectionable approach."

"And will Bowler attend the council meeting to carry out introductions?"

"I doubt it."

Saunders did not expect this turn. "Is he getting cold feet?"

"Bowler isn't especially religious. I don't think I'm up to converting him."

"Why am I not surprised? Ian, I've stuck my neck out for you on this one." Saunders' voice trembled with an uncharacteristic anger. "You lead me to believe that this had been thought through. Now..." he paused. "Well, the water's dirty now." He hung up.

Gestrode slumped back in his leather chair. Shaking his head, he dug out memories of the girl of twenty years' reflection. The solace the image offered lasted briefly, interrupted by a knock at the office door, then the entry of Hobartson.

"Ian," Hobartson closed the door behind him. Gestrode offered the thinnest recognition.

"What is it, Jim?" He made no offer to relinquish his chair.

Standing before him as the stern father would before the child, Hobartson spoke directly. "I've just come from a meeting

with Franken and the Dean. Bowler has been put on administrative leave."

"Why?" Gestrode stiffened.

"It seems that Dr. Bowler took off his swimming shorts in the pool."

Gestrode sank, a hand to his shaking head.

"You were there and you didn't stop him."

"I didn't know he was going to do it. When he did, of course I reprimanded him. It was a foolish lark." Hobartson stood before him stiff in his three piece uniform. Gestrode full well expected a slap across the face.

"A lark? How absurd! We can't tolerate this kind of behavior. A student pulling a prank like that would be expelled instantly. A faculty member, well, all that due-process-shit. You're accountable too, you know." The institutional "we" Gestrode thought, separating them from him.

"How so?"

"I know you're not stupid. But you were with the man. Take my advice, distance yourself immediately. There'll be an investigation."

"What does Bowler say?" Gestrode knew that this conversation had a long prelude.

"He told Franken that you dared him to do it."

"Shit. That's ridiculous."

"So I said to the Dean. You've got tenure, so you've got some breathing room, but that doesn't absolve you from this, especially if Bowler persists in entangling you. The Dean also received a curious call from a trustee...."

"The same that called the other day regarding Bowler?"

"The very same. It seems that someone on the Ministerial Council called him with a story about someone from this Metropolitan Church being invited to address the council on gay

rights. I didn't say anything to the Dean, but didn't you and I have a conversation along the same lines?"

"Too much of a coincidence for you?"

Hobartson looked at Gestrode sternly. "Sarcasm, Ian? I find myself in the untenable position of defending a friend and colleague whom I now regret calling both."

That hurt. "Perhaps you should distance yourself from me as well." As best he could from the confines of the chair, Gestrode turned his back on Hobartson.

"Oh, I intend to do just that. Get your ducks in a line, Ian."

Gestrode canceled his afternoon appointments.

8.

He didn't say anything to the hen, although she could tell something was troubling him. Years of marriage delivers those kinds of insights. Thoughts of Bowler, Saunders, Hobartson danced through his thoughts that sleepless night. The impulse to call Saunders was resisted, and he full expected Bowler to call him, but he did not.

Monique was absent from class the next morning, an absence Gestrode connected to the front page story of the student paper regarding Bowler's sudden administrative leave. Entering his office he found a summons from the Dean to meet with him that afternoon. It took the form of a neatly typed memo, slid under his office door. The Dean was a good general, hiding well behind the lines. Gestrode was prepared to tell the simple truth and let it fall as it may. Gestrode's own involvement was at worst a minor one. Even if he had thrown down a gauntlet for Bowler to swim around naked, it was Bowler who had done it. The Metropolitan Church angle was a minor one, although the complicity suggested by Gestrode's connection to Bowler on two fronts would require an act of public contrition. There might be pressure for an administrative sanction, but Gestrode would deal with it later.

The Steam Room seemed especially harried. Some staff had not shown for work, and as Gestrode scanned the room, he quickly saw that Monique was among the unaccounted. He asked a young man doing triple duty where she was.

"Don't you know?" Gestrode shook his head. The waiter continued, "There's a demonstration at the college pool in support of Dr. Bowler."

"At the pool?" Gestrode asked thinly.

The young man shrugged as he scuffled away.

Gestrode nearly ran the mile back to the college. He found the building housing the pool surrounded by an assortment of media vans, police cars, and a crowd of students making their way into the building. He cut through a side door leading directly into the men's locker room, which contained a dozen or so naked young men pushing each other toward the door leading into the pool room itself. Gestrode joined into the group, nudging aside the reluctant.

The pool area was hysteria. Gestrode's eyes first blinded by the bright camera lights, then adjusting to them, he found police officers standing around the pool, beckoning to swimmers. Television cameras and reporters panned the room, catching him, catching swimmers. Nude boys scurried past him, leaping into the water. The din echoing through the cavern offered no sensible words. He grabbed a naked boy by the arm.

"What's going on?" The boy quickly jerked away, dashing into the water.

The splashing students comprised a group of perhaps thirty. Young women and men of all types: fat to thin, blonde to brunette to redhead, African Americans, Hispanics, Caucasians. He saw a young woman being taken from the shallow end of the pool by a heavy set police officer soaked in his second skin blue uniform. Gestrode immediately recognized Monique. She screamed and yelped at the officer's grip. Seeing Gestrode, she broke away, darting toward him, pushing past the clothed, gawking, laughing, chiding crowd.

This was not how he had fantasized Monique. The sight of her nudity was hardly erotic, and as she reached him, he took her into his arms, slipping off his jacket, the offering as a modicum of privacy. The cameras panned the pair, and cameras flashed through a battery of electronic pulses. Gestrode realized in that moment that his jacket draped across the girl's back, perhaps lightly concealing her breasts, buttocks, and pubic area would produce a single photograph worthy of home reader consumption. He was right.

He led her quickly into the men's locker room, found a pair of quickly discarded jeans and a shirt, which Monique slipped into easily, despite the wet skin. Several boys surrounded them, but paid little attention. This lingering group of reluctant boys had not made the final decision to join the melee, peeking into the pool area over each other's shoulders. For them the dance was over.

Gestrode lead the shoeless Monique out the side door. She protested, for her second thoughts suggested a preference to be arrested as a grand gesture in demonstration of her love to the feckless Bowler. Gestrode said nothing more. Now he was the parent, firmly grasping her arm as he lead her toward the nearest building, a women's dormitory. Here he found a group of girls gathered on the building's portico and asked one whose attention he earned to take care of Monique. She took the sobered girl inside.

10.

Tightly bundled against the winter chill, Gestrode wandered past the Steam Room, peering briefly through the large window at the front. He moved down the street another block outside the historic district, and slipped into a smokey diner. The long narrow room was nearly empty, and although available tables awaited his choice, he took a stool at the counter. A middle aged, grey haired woman brought a cup and a pot of coffee toward him. He smiled, nodding at the invitation. She poured, offered him a menu, which then lay beside him unexamined.

Eighteen students were expelled put on probation in administrative parlay but it was the same. Bowler disappeared, which generously put to rest the inquiry and short-lived public scrutiny. Naturally there were headlines, reaching far beyond the local population. Supermarket tabloids made a fortune on the episode and some of the more scatological photos were run in a men's magazine pictorial. He had heard that some of the photos even found their way onto the duty free World Wide Web. The photo of himself embracing the nearly nude Monique saw the most coverage, as one would expect, it being the least objectionable of the lot. The Associated Press picked it up. History would record Gestrode's fatherly embrace, leading the child away.

Gestrode's own sudden appearance at the pool was easily explained, as was the young woman running to seek his cover. The Dean even showed some private appreciation that Gestrode had done what he could to ferret the young woman out. As Gestrode had explained, Monique was a student in his American History class, recognized him, and sought protection from the groping hands of a campus police officer. Gestrode was sanctioned, but it was a mild rebuke, given the gravity of what had happened. But the Dean and trustees agreed to end the matter quickly and quietly. "Ah, yes," Gestrode had thought, "The Dean echoing the sentiments of the powerful to the end."

Time would erode the impact. This always happens. Appetites move on to other subjects. Murders, rapes, robberies, wars, depressions, Washington political intrigues. It doesn't matter. Personal involvements live on, but public memories distance themselves. Gestrode's hen offered a litany of epithets much more resounding than any offered by the Dean. Bowler gone, students and faculty reminded of their proper place in the scheme of things.

Order and harmony restored to St. Elgin.

That left Ian Gestrode. Professor. Poking through the newspaper. Headlines first, then the editorial page. At last, the articles of interest to him. He would bury himself in his re-

search. Attend to his duties within the department. Yes, that was what he would do.

The author is deeply indebted to the fine critiques prepared by the anonymous referees for this story. Their insights greatly strengthened the prose.

Miserere introduces a longer work "In My Father's House" which plays off the friendship between two principle characters, Gestrode and Saunders. Dr. **John Alan Nicolay** completed his doctorate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and now teaches in the Master of Public Administration program for Troy State University in its Atlantic Region. He has recently published two articles for the Journal of Public Administration Education, an essay on Leonard White in Jay Shafritz's forthcoming encyclopedia, and many other previous articles. He is currently researching a textbook on Public Management Information Systems. He may be reached by Internet at Nicolayj@summit.net.

The Experience of Federal Employment

Lyn Meridew Holley

1980

Polly had graduated from college with high academic standing, and the equivalent of several years work experience at an assortment of pink collar and low level white collar jobs. She had majored in Industrial and Organizational Psychology with a quantitative emphasis. She expected to change things for the better in the world of work through her career. Polly was the first college graduate in her entire family, her father and brothers were blue collar workers and her mother was a homemaker. Polly's knowledge of organization structure, power relationships, and networks was very limited. She applied for jobs advertised in the newspaper and posted with the college. The only job offers she got required that she begin as a clerk or a secretary, work she had done before she graduated from college. A friend suggested she take an examination for employment in the U.S. government. Polly filled out numerous forms, and over a period of about six months, took and passed the examination with a high score, got two interviews, and was offered a job as a Psychologist Trainee in a large federal agency.

Orientation, 1981

Polly reported for her first day of work for the People of the United States on a sunny day in May. In the gloom of a basement office with peeling paint, she filled out many more forms, some of which included specific questions about any experience

with subversive organizations (a modern-day Polly would also be asked about drugs, and might be asked to take a drug test). She learned she would not have been eligible for regular U.S. employment if, among other things, she were not a U.S. citizen. She was told that, as a federal employee, her participation in partisan politics would be limited in accordance with the Hatch Act. She was told there was a union in the agency, and reminded that federal employees did not have a right to strike. During the coffee break, a clerk pressed Polly's fingers into an ink pad, and onto her first fingerprint record. Polly signed permission for the agency to conduct an investigation of her background.

She received stacks of papers and brochures explaining her health insurance and pension benefits, and a pay chart showing the salary grades and ranges for almost all of her more than one million colleagues in federal service. Polly was shown an organization chart of her agency, and given a brief summary of its chain of command and an agency mission statement. Finally, Polly and the others attending the orientation session, stood in front of a U.S. flag, and swore to obey and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

First Line Supervisor

Polly reported to her first line supervisor after lunch. Ms. First had been working for the federal government more than 20 years. Her section devised and administered aptitude tests, and performance and proficiency measures for a large agency. Ms. First proudly told Polly that the section saved the agency a lot of money. Polly was given a copy of her job description, and Ms. First explained that Polly was a GS-5 step 1. The GS-5 signified a level of work in every white collar occupation throughout the federal government. Everyone doing work that required the same level of knowledge, skill, and responsibility, was in the same pay grade. Polly's job was at the level of an entering professional trainee. For each grade level, there is a range of 10 pay rates, or "steps". The step 1 is the beginning of the range. Each step up represents about a 3% increase in pay. Polly would get a step increase every year for her first three

years so long as her performance was at least "satisfactory". After that, the time between step increases would be longer - it normally would take 18 years to reach step 10. On rare occasions, employees were given faster increases, to recognize, among other things, outstanding performance. Ms. First would rate Polly's performance, and Ms. First's boss, Mr. Second, would review the rating. Polly's first year was her "probationary period" during which employment could be terminated without appeal for a merit-related reason. After three years, Polly would be considered for "career" status, which carried with it rights similar to "tenure".

Ms. First discussed Polly's duties generally, her hours of work, when and how she would get her pay checks, and her initial assignments. Ms. First introduced Polly to her new colleagues in the six-person section, and escorted her to her green metal desk. Polly, as a professional, had her own cubicle. Polly felt she was in heaven.

Office Buddies

Polly's new colleagues were friendly enough, but always seemed to be under pressure of work, deadlines, and commuting. Tad, the other Psychologist in the section, was supposed to help Polly through her first assignments. In their talks, Tad, a grade GS-11, explained how "the system" worked. If you just "stuck to your knitting", and did your job, you could expect to be promoted up to its "full performance level". The "full performance level" of Polly's job was GS-11, like his. There were three promotions between GS-5 and GS-11. The minimum increase for promotions in government is at least 6% of base pay (two steps). Polly's promotion would be worth more, because, like most early career professional promotions, each would "skip" a grade. The quickest anybody could get three promotions was three years, because there was a rule that limited promotions to only one per year. Sometimes promotions were "delayed" because of budget problems. Getting any further than the grade GS-11 was "iffy", but could happen. Tad had been a grade GS-11 for several years. He was applying for supervisory Psychologist jobs as they were announced, but not

having much luck. He felt that most jobs were "wired" for somebody from the organization where the job was located. Ms. First incumbered the only GS-12 psychologist job in their organization.

First Pay Increase

In October, 1981, Polly and most of her more than 1 million federal colleagues got a 4.8% pay increase. It was the result of the annual adjustment of the federal white collar pay schedule to keep it "comparable" with pay rates being offered in the private sector for comparable work. The 4.8% was lower than the 18.5% figure based on the data gathered by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and recommended by the President's Pay Agent. It was a compromise between what the survey data revealed, and what the President and Congress felt the U.S. could spend. Even though federal civilian salaries represent consistently less than 10% of the budget, their part of the budget is easy to cut because, among other things, no politically powerful constituency defends it.

For Polly, the annual increase was like "manna from heaven", she had not expected it. Tad was dissatisfied because it was less than it should have been according to the survey, and the intent of the law governing pay adjustments in federal service (until 1990, the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1970). The Postal Service, since 1970, had negotiated wages and benefits and had enjoyed persistently better increases.

1982 First Promotion

Polly met with Ms. First to discuss Polly's annual performance rating. The rating was "above average", on a 5-point scale in which the highest rating was "outstanding". Polly was interested in learning what she needed to do to get an "outstanding" rating. Ms. First explained that "outstanding" ratings were really rare. Further, office procedure required an award be given with the outstanding rating, and there was no money for it this year. On the other hand, Polly would get promoted from

GS-5 to the next level in her career ladder (which, for most professionals, is GS-7, about 20% increase in pay). There was some money for training too, and Polly could take a nighttime college course related to her work. Her tuition would be paid.

Polly thought this was a pretty good deal, until she talked to Tad about it. Tad had gotten an "above average" rating too. He said practically everybody did. An "average" rating was considered "the kiss of death"—an indication of some problem. He informed Polly that other sections had had money for "outstanding" ratings, and some had been given. Polly was already working her heart out. She felt she couldn't do more. She knew Tad was dissatisfied, but didn't know what his real problem was. It was pretty clear to Polly that her future depended on Ms. First. So, she decided not to press the issue of the performance rating.

1996 Chance Reunion

Polly was scanning a list of state officials, deciding which to contact to coordinate informal estimates of impact of a federal mandate, when she saw Tad's name and number. She called immediately. Tad was surprised and pleased to hear from Polly, they exchanged news.

Tad's Good News

Tad had left federal employment in 1986, the year for which President Reagan recommended and the Congress accepted a 0% annual increase in the government salary scale. That was only the last straw. He had been in his grade GS-11 job for several years, and felt "trapped" in the small section of psychologists, isolated in an agency with a very different mission. Tad returned home, and on the advice of a family friend, started working in a state budget office, outside his specialization, and for less salary. His career in state government had gone well. His political party had kept the statehouse for six of ten years. During the four "out" years, his connections had helped him find work as an administrator in a local consortium of mental health clinics. His salary and "perks" were better

than those he might have had in Ms. First's old job, and his benefits were comparable.

Tad's Bad News

On the other hand, he ruefully joked about the hefty amount of time and money he was expected to contribute to the party. Tad was glad he did not have to combine his psychology profession with his state job - politics had a way of influencing every judgment. It was however, the price of admission. Without his "political passport", Tad would also be without his state position. Without his family contacts, Tad would likely have been unable to get his political passport.

Polly's News

After Tad had left, Polly was "in line" for promotion to the section chief job when Ms. First retired. However, Ms. First's job was abolished one year after she left it. Tad's job had not been filled, and, after trying and failing to keep up with the workload of first her and Tad's positions, then of all three positions, Polly had developed an ulcer. She had requested and been granted leave without pay for a few months. During that time, their old section was abolished, support staff were "absorbed" into other, existing vacancies. Polly was assigned out of her specialization into a project coordinator job. She did well there, and was promoted to a grade GS-12 (about an 8% increase as she was coming from a higher step of grade GS-11). The job put her in touch with people throughout the federal government and in several state governments. She worked long, happy hours putting together "partnerships" that shared federal expertise among one or more states.

Since her promotion, Polly's salary has stagnated. Years creep by between step increases at the upper two thirds of the range, and despite the spirit of the law and recommendations of special commissions, annual increases to the federal pay scale do not kept up with "comparability" measures. The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 fragmented the

nationwide federal pay scale for white collar work into regional segments, and was harder to understand than the old scale.

Constant pressure for downsizing and budget cuts, and frequent changes in mission kept her on edge. Polly had participated in several special task forces over the years to "reengineer", then to "reinvent" her work. In the end, it had come down to more cuts. She had cultivated a selective deafness in relation to the steady diet of negative pronouncements about "bureaucrats" and exhortations to "do more with less" from her lofty "bosses" in the Administration and the Congress. Polly strove to narrow her focus to her projects, feeling that the projects would make a positive difference in peoples' lives. The projects, however were overtaken by the 1995/1996 budget crisis and its furloughs. Long sought meetings and conferences involving many different officials and locations were canceled. Uncertainty about resources precluded rescheduling. Polly's agency continued to "freeze" vacancies, and expected to have to cut more staff.

Polly, after 15 years of service, feels like quitting. Messages sent in rhetoric, and in deed (e.g., erosion of program resources, job security, salary, and benefits) communicate that she and her work are part of the nation's problem, not the solution.

Important as her knowledge and skills are to running federal government, they are not readily matched with employment in the private sector. It has been years since she worked as a psychologist, and when she did, applications were specialized to the federal government. She feels battered and tired. Starting at the "bottom" outside federal government is not appealing. She's earning more than $45,000, and her pension is contingent on meeting years of service and age requirements (e.g., at age 55, 30 years of service). Polly is under the "old" pension system, which can't be transferred, and she is not covered by social security. The "new" pension system, in place since 1983, makes leaving a little easier. These days, Polly does whatever she can find to do while remaining calm, and waiting for the other budget shoe to drop.

Postscript

The U.S. Budget was passed seven months after the beginning of the fiscal year it funded. Polly's program was among 200 that were discontinued in the process of budget negotiations. Her job was abolished. Under new flexibility in government termination regulations (i.e., RIF or Reduction in Force), the number of jobs Polly had "the right" to claim from colleagues with less seniority or lower performance ratings was effectively zero. The "Outstanding" performance ratings Polly had achieved recently counted little.

After 15 years of service, Polly's federal employment was terminated involuntarily. Her severance package would tide her over about one year, and although doubly expensive to her, health benefits could continue for a few months. Her pension was effectively foregone. Polly's advanced skills and knowledge were specific to federal employment, and, since her program had been abolished, not particularly relevant to state employment. She had been an ideal civil servant, and treated all her "customers" well. She had not done favors that would make her contacts in state, nonprofit, or congressional agencies, or contractors beholden to her personally. She had walked the "extra mile", investing time and effort in her federal career. Her professional associations had been those relevant to her federal job. At nearly 40, Polly would start all over again.

Lyn Holley is a consultant to national and international governments for designing personnel systems, and a second year doctoral student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Lyn has had more than 20 years of experience as a U.S. federal government employee in seven agencies, and worked for four years in the United Nations International Civil Service Commission. She was Staff Director of the Pay and Compensation Task Force of the Volcker Commission.

Movie Reviews Invited

The movies contain a vast wealth of information about and illustrative of management and public administration. Unfortunately much of this is "hidden" in war films, westerns, prison dramas and other genres that do not immediately appear to be relevant. Fortunately, now that most films are readily available on tape, it is easier than ever to find and use this treasure trove of light and sound that so often illuminates the administrative world far better than any text. Thus *Public Voices* encourages and invites reviews and analyses of pertinent films. Many films stand by themselves; but it is often useful to consider several films by a single actor. For example, consider Gregory Peck. In *Gentleman's Agreement* (1949) he demonstrated the subtlety of racism in the corporate world. In *Twelve O'Clock High* (1950) he illustrated the life cycle theory of leadership behavior. In *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (1956) he coped with the ethical dilemmas of the modern organization man. And in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1963) he showed how one person of unstinting integrity could make a difference.

Gary Cooper was more than just a lanky cowboy. In *The Fountainhead* (1949) he was a premature supply-side philosopher. In *High Noon* (1952) he offered a case study of the need for more effective pre-retirement planning. In *Vera Cruz* (1954) he dealt with the problems of Americans offering technical assistance to the Third World. And in *The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell* (1955) he portrayed a martyred organizational dissident.

Similar summaries apply to the work of many other leading actors. The point is that we have within our collective memories hundreds of films that bear upon public policy and administration, but that have never been looked at in this light. So please accept the invitation of *Public Voices* and consider contributing your reviews of specific films or specific actors. Films are like great literature or history itself in that each new generation offers its own interpretations.

Reviews of 500-750 words should be submitted to:

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