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## In Print

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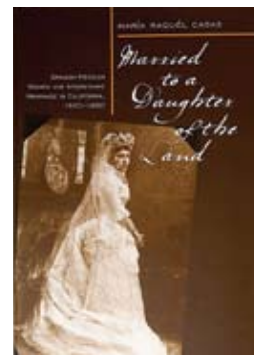
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UNLV history professor María Raqué Casas



***Married to a Daughter of the Land: Spanish-Mexican Women and Interethnic Marriage in California, 1820-1880* by María Raqué Casas. University of Nevada Press, 2007.**

INTEREST IN HER heritage led UNLV history professor María Raqué Casas to research the subject of her recent book on Mexican/EuroAmerican intermarriage in colonial California.

“When I began my graduate career I knew that I wanted to study gender and specifically Chicana history,” Casas says. “Because I am a Mexican-American, I was drawn to women in interethnic marriages, and my family strengthened my interest because three of my siblings intermarried. What I was discussing wasn’t just an academic, intellectual exercise but a very personal one.”

Casas approached her research with thought-provoking memories from her upbringing in a Mexican-American family in the San Joaquin Valley. As a child, she was not only aware of interethnic marriages but also of how gender bias affected perceptions of these relationships.

“When a Chicano or Mexican man married outside his ethnic group, there was little comment or questioning of his motives or identity issues,” Casas says. “But when a Chicana or Mexicana married outside her ethnic group, especially to a Euro-American, she was described in mostly negative terms.”

A woman was seen as “trying to become white,” Casas says, and this made her a “cultural traitor.” At the same time, however, Casas recalls hearing comments suggesting that “marrying someone ‘lighter’ was preferable to marrying someone ‘darker.’” Even in her youth, she

perceived the contradiction; as a young historian, she was determined to better understand the origins of the attitudes.

When she began her research, Casas found such themes born out in history books, discovering that women who married Euro-Americans were often written out of much Mexican-American history largely because they were considered supporters of the conquerors.

“However, my work shows that it was never that simplistic,” Casas says, explaining that these women naturally chose their spouses according to their personal needs and desires. “The book helps explain the logic behind these unions so that the human relationships are at the forefront.”

In her book, which is the first major scholarly treatment on the subject, Casas explores a number of stories of Chicanas who married EuroAmericans in California in the mid-1800s. She discusses how such unions contributed to the multicultural development of California society, addressing such issues as class, race, and identity.

The end result is a book that depicts Spanish-Mexican women’s lives during an important era in California history and that shows how these women “negotiated the precarious boundaries of gender and race.”

Casas says that one of the goals of her research was to provide greater context for these interethnic marriages.

“Too often people see intermarriage as a recent social phenomenon with only contemporary consequence,” Casas says. “I hope my work will help people examine intermarriage in the past and understand how persistent and constant it has been in human history.”

***Willing Suspension of Disbelief: Poetic Faith in Film* by Anthony J. Ferri. Lexington Books, 2007.**

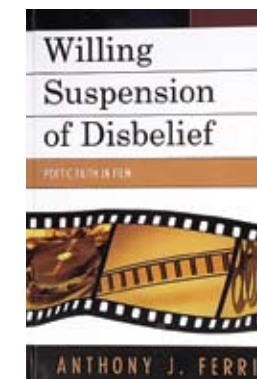
IN HIS FIRST book on film, Anthony J. Ferri, associate professor in the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies, seeks to explain the origin and application of the notion of willing suspension of disbelief to film viewing.

Ferri explores a variety of critical and empirical perspectives devoted to shedding light on the phrase, which was coined by English poet, critic, and essayist Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1817.

“People have used the phrase ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ without knowing its author or origins,” Ferri notes. “I had heard the phrase used widely, mostly by film theorists and filmmakers, but I had no idea where it came from – like most people, I suspect. So I researched it and found that little scholarly study had been conducted on the subject relative to film.”

Coleridge, perhaps best known for the poem “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” first used the phrase in his *Biographia Literaria*.

“I began to think about why a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet’s phrase would be used to explain what happens in a film theater,”



says Ferri, who notes the concept is robust enough to apply to all artistic works, including poetry, film, and even nonfiction. “It is testament to the durability of the phrase that it applies to film—a medium that hadn’t even been invented when the phrase was introduced.”

Ferri became interested in how the idea could be applied in contemporary media, particularly film.

“As I read more by and about Coleridge, it was clear that he was interested in audience cognition and perception – even though there was no ‘science’ on these subjects at the time,” he says.

Ferri, who has researched audience perception in other media-viewing contexts, chronicles Coleridge’s life and describes the thinking that led the poet to introduce the concept. He goes on to trace contemporary usage and notes that the “staying power of the phrase shows how intrigued we are by what happens when we view a film.”

Ferri identifies a common theme in the theories on the film-viewing experience, suggesting that viewers who become absorbed in a film are transported in a way that engages their “emotions and very sense of reality for the moment.”

He applies the notion of transport to a number of films and discusses what elements lull the viewer into this state. He goes on to assert that the suspension of disbelief is, in fact, a measurable reaction to a film – a contention born out in his 1999 study of local movie theater patrons.

In it, he surveyed audience members to gauge the degree to which “they lost themselves” in the movie they had viewed. He notes that the study confirmed what could be called

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UNLV faculty authors shed light on Chicana history, willing suspension of disbelief, Ghandi’s gurus, and more.

By Barbara Cloud  
Photography by R. Marsh Starks

conventional wisdom about the film-viewing experience: Those who were most willing to suspend disbelief were more likely to feel the characters in the film were real and that the storyline was believable.

Ferri, who studied film-making in college, views this work as a baseline study and hopes to continue researching the subject. He is interested in pursuing several related projects, among them, one in which he would partner with neuroimaging researchers to determine what physiological changes occur in the brain when willing suspension of disbelief occurs.

“There is much more to understand about this concept,” Ferri says. “This amazing 19<sup>th</sup> century poet gave us a brilliant idea to explore. I hope to contribute to a wider understanding of its contemporary uses.”

***Gandhi's Teachers: Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta* by Satish Sharma Gujarat Vidyapith, 2005.**

IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Mahatma Gandhi names four figures who influenced his life and philosophy—Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, Henry David Thoreau, and Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta.

All four are subjects of interest to UNLV social work professor Satish Sharma, who has undertaken an effort to write a series of books on them, devoting a volume to each.

The first to be published is *Gandhi's Teachers: Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta*, a largely biographical work that also provides description of the guru-disciple relationship between the primary subject and Gandhi.

Sharma says he chose to focus on Rajchandra after observing what seemed to be a contradiction in Gandhi's autobiography: Gandhi calls Rajchandra his principal guru, yet devotes only two and a half pages to discussion of him.

“This lack of information about Rajchandra bothered me, and I decided to explore more about him,” Sharma recalls.



Social work professor  
Satish Sharma

Sharma, a graduate of Panjab University in India, made four trips to his homeland to research Rajchandra, visiting libraries and research institutes in Ahmedabad.

“I talked to the people who had heard about Rajchandra and followed his teachings, and I visited the places established in his honor,” he says.

In *Rajchandra* Sharma describes the life of the saint-philosopher who practiced Jainism, an Indian religion and philosophy that originated in about the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. as a protest against certain Hindu practices of the period, such as animal sacrifice. Sharma devotes a chapter to discussion of Jainism, in which he explains that Jains abjure injury to all living creatures and believe that the monastic life offers the path to perfection of man's nature.

Sharma provides biographical details of Rajchandra's life, follows his commitment to his religion, and offers accounts of his relationship with Gandhi. Sharma offers a chapter and an appendix in the book containing the religious and philosophical questions Gandhi advanced to Rajchandra and the latter's replies. Finally, Sharma also includes two of Rajchandra's works, *Philosophy of Six Padas* and *Atma-Siddhi*, with commentaries.

Sharma acknowledges that Gandhi's other three gurus may have achieved greater fame than Rajchandra but says he is their equal in terms of ability to inspire.

“The challenge of this work excited me so much that it motivated me to

research Gandhi's other teachers as well, resulting in the idea of the series,” he says.

Sharma's volume on Tolstoy is nearly ready for publication, and he continues work on the Ruskin and Thoreau manuscripts.

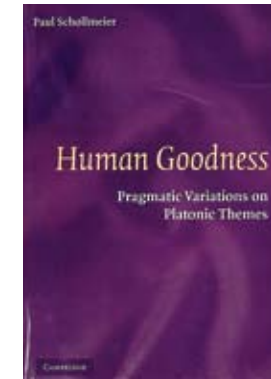
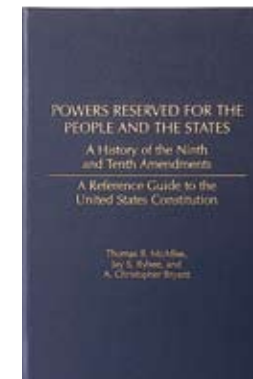
***Powers Reserved for the People and the States: A History of the Ninth and Tenth Amendments* by Thomas B. McAfee, Jay S. Bybee, and A. Christopher Bryant. Praeger, 2006.**

THE DEBATE AMONG the framers of the U.S. Constitution regarding the addition of the Bill of Rights – in particular, the final two amendments – is at the core of the discussion of *Powers Reserved for the People and the States*.

The Ninth and Tenth Amendments are the basis for William S. Boyd School of Law professor Thomas B. McAfee's analysis of the powers of the federal government versus those reserved for the states and/or the people.

In *Powers Reserved*, part of a series of reference guides to the constitution, McAfee has joined with two former UNLV colleagues – Jay S. Bybee, now a judge on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth District, and A. Christopher Bryant, now a professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Law – in examining the last two amendments in the Bill of Rights.

As the title of the book indicates, the Ninth and Tenth Amendments were designed to address the issues of powers retained by the states and by the



people. The Ninth Amendment reads, “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” The Tenth Amendment reads, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

McAfee, one of the founding faculty members at the Boyd School of Law and adviser to the *Nevada Law Journal*, specializes in constitutional law and American legal history. This is his second book on constitutional history, and he has published numerous articles about the protection of rights and the Constitution.

The latest book offers an overview of the two amendments and their impact on law over the last two and quarter centuries. McAfee, whose previous articles about the amendments led to the invitation to write this volume for the series, discusses the drafting of the two amendments and examines how the amendments impacted the Civil War and Reconstruction. He also discusses the Ninth Amendment and substantive due process as modern phenomena. His colleagues cover the prelude to the Constitution, as well as the way early Congresses and courts worked with the amendments and developments regarding the amendments in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

McAfee says one of the objectives of the authors in writing the book was to refute those who have tried to use the Ninth Amendment “as a discovery of ‘new’ and ‘additional’ rights limitations beyond those already found in the Bill of Rights.”

“In addition, the book should serve to help us understand how it is that the Tenth Amendment has not done much

to preserve ‘states’ rights’ by restricting the federal government to the powers enumerated,” McAfee says. “We’ve construed federal powers so broadly now, that the Tenth Amendment of itself can do little to help.”

Since completing *Powers Reserved*, McAfee has continued to explore one of the themes in the book in a journal article. Additionally, he and fellow UNLV law professor Chris Blakesley are coauthoring an article about the war powers of Congress.

***Human Goodness: Pragmatic Variations on Platonic Themes* by Paul Schollmeier. Cambridge University Press, 2006.**

SEEKERS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE, this book is for you. In his exploration of what some would consider an indefinable topic, philosophy professor Paul Schollmeier examines the classical Greek concept of happiness, along with its implications for individual freedoms, obligations, and virtues.

Schollmeier, who joined the UNLV faculty in 1989, prepares his reader for the ambiguities that such a discussion can produce; in his preface, he writes, “I must offer you a word of caution at the very outset: Any success in an endeavor of this alluring sort [exploring self-knowledge] is at best rather elusive, and whatever success one might actually claim could quite possibly be illusive.”

Schollmeier, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, calls the book “merely an experiment in the analysis of ideas about human goodness.” He says he has taken a concept of happiness “gleaned from the ancients” in order to

“see what the consequences might be if we were to take it seriously as a principle of moral philosophy.”

In other words, what could happiness tell us about ourselves, our autonomy, our obligations, and our circumstances, not to mention our virtue?

Schollmeier, who has been exploring this subject for more than a decade, traces his approach to American philosophers William James and John Dewey, who, in turn, refer back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

James and Dewey subscribed to a philosophical movement developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century called pragmatism, which holds that practical consequences are integral elements of both meaning and truth.

“We can employ the American pragmatic method to advance the ancient Greek concept of happiness,” Schollmeier contends. “We can use the method to define empirically activities worthy of pursuit for themselves. That is, happiness on my account does not take one ideal form, as has been traditionally thought, but many empirical forms.”

“My purpose,” Schollmeier says, “is to revive the ancient Greek concept of happiness, which is to perform an action for its own sake. This concept has been much neglected in our moral discourse both inside and outside the academy. But we clearly do recognize it in our daily lives.”

Schollmeier continues to research the Greek concept of happiness and also plans a book on political theory and its relationship to the concept. In the meantime, he has authored a paper on Plato's concept of causality and has started one on Aristotle's theory of comedy.