Finally, Reagan concluded the speech by speaking to history and the nation once again.

Stuckey analyzes each of the audiences Reagan targeted. In the section on the schoolchildren, she might have said more about an astute and strategic sentence that captured the attention of both children and adults. In the middle of the speech, Reagan interjected, "And I want to say something to the schoolchildren of America who were watching the coverage of the shuttle's takeoff." There is no doubt that Reagan wanted to ease the minds of the nation's children, many of whom witnessed a horrific and frightening event via live television earlier in the day. But Reagan also knew that by making such a stark and direct comment, he would entice the parents of every child watching to listen to his remarks, as well. It is no coincidence that after a few sentences intended for younger listeners, Reagan subsequently proceeded to talk about the importance of the space program and continued support for NASA. Once he had the attention of the adults, Reagan wasted no time in moving to achieve the political goals of his speech. Stuckey does mention that presidents often adopt a "parental" role, but she might have said more about why Americans enable and support that type of executive behavior.

I agree with Stuckey's conclusions, which respond to scholarship that dismisses modern presidential speech as trivial, ineffective, or misguided. Instead, presidential speech is always revealing because it exposes deliberate thought-processes that explicate policymaking decisions and executive leadership. A president's rhetorical choices are a reflection of how he perceives the office itself. The spoken arguments that are chosen inform us about the individual who inhabits the office, and even more importantly, the development of the institution itself. Stuckey's analysis of Reagan's *Challenger* address is a noteworthy contribution to this scholarly endeavor.

–Colleen J. Shogan

A GOOD BEGINNING

Marc Galanter: *Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. Pp. ix-xvii, 498. $26.95, paper.)

DOI: 10.1017/S003467050700085X

Asked to review "a book of lawyer jokes" for this journal, I was initially puzzled: why would a serious academic publication be interested in lawyer jokes? Upon receiving *Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture*, however, I saw that this was not the usual slender volume one often sees written about mothers-in-law or dead cats (compared to whom, as it turns out, lawyers fare quite badly) but rather a serious, scholarly volume of over

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400 pages (small print!), including 80 pages of notes and 55 pages of references.

The author proceeds on the premise "that the persistence of the social practice of telling, appreciating, and publishing jokes may reveal something about our society and ourselves that may otherwise elude us." He also acknowledges, however, that there is an opposing view that lawyer jokes lack wider significance and may be popular simply because they are funny (19).

The author divides the universe of lawyer jokes into nine thematic groups, five of which focus on substantive complaints about what lawyers do:

(i) corrupt discourse,
(ii) engage in economic predation,
(iii) foment strife,
(iv) betray trust, and
(v) thwart justice;
and the remainder on the general character and standing of lawyers:
(vi) allies of the devil,
(vii) morally deficient people,
(vii) objects of scorn,
(ix) candidates for elimination (16).

Full chapters are then devoted to presenting and examining numerous jokes within each thematic group. This organizational approach has the advantage of promoting clarity and providing order to the impressive number and array of jokes the author presents. Admittedly, several dozen jokes in a row making essentially the same point can dull the edge of humor a bit, but the accumulated weight is telling, and the portrait of the legal profession that emerges from Professor Galanter's dissection is withering.

To the extent that the author's sights are set on describing the public's attitude toward lawyers and the place of the legal profession in popular culture and imagination, he succeeds admirably. Moreover, the ample humor which he marshals—and many of the jokes really are hilarious—cannot mask the sobering message that the public holds lawyers in very low regard, with a distrust and distaste that have only deepened in recent years. His analysis lays bare the perceived shortcomings and ills of the legal profession in a thorough, persuasive, and insightful way.

The author is on far shakier ground, however, when he suggests that the jokes (or a critical analysis of the jokes) can reveal something about the current state of the legal profession itself. It may well be—and it certainly can be argued—that the legal profession is in a deplorable state, but this volume does not develop that analysis. It neither presents direct evidence of that corruption nor does it demonstrate that jokes such as these serve as an accurate gauge or reflection of an underlying reality they lampoon and ridicule. Indeed, it is on this issue of accurate portrayal that the book most disappoints.

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The very first joke presented in the book raises the issue squarely:

> Question: How many lawyer jokes are there?
> Answer: Only three. The balance are [*sic*] documented case histories. (3)

Reading the ensuing jokes portraying nastiness, duplicity, greed, and so on, one cannot help but wonder, do such things really happen? If so, how common are they? Is this what all (or most) lawyers are like? In this regard I was surprised to find one of my favorite lawyer jokes overlooked:

> Lawyer 1: (upon witnessing particularly egregious misconduct on the part of a colleague): "No wonder the public holds the legal profession in such low regard."
> Lawyer 2: "Yes, it's the 98% of lawyers like him that tarnish the reputations of the rest of us."

The author skirts the issue of accurate portrayal, contenting himself instead with the recurrent suggestion that there is far more than a grain of truth in these humorous stories. (See, for example, pages 180–84, comparing lawyers to prostitutes, with relative sympathy for the latter.)

At one level, this implied assertion is obvious: caricature may distort one or more features of the underlying subject, but there must be some resemblance to the underlying subject or it would not be humorous—the audience would not "get it." Yet this does not get us beyond the realm of public perception, and such caricatures are, by their very nature, distortions. Some caution is surely in order in assessing what we can learn from these jokes about the state of lawyers and the legal profession as distinguished from the popular beliefs and attitudes about these subjects.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that many of the jokes recited in the book are borrowed from earlier jokes about businessmen, clerics, ethnic groups, and others, especially many of the more recent additions to the corpus of lawyer jokes (22). The author notes that this may in part be the result of political correctness: as jokes targeting certain minorities became taboo, lawyers were slotted in as acceptable substitutes to ridicule and revile (228). He argues, however, that there is more that accounts for the frequency and vituperation reflected in these transplanted jokes and in lawyer jokes generally. Nonetheless, it is fair to ask, is there really a correlation between the jokes and the real world in which the lawyers operate? Is there a correlation between hair color and intelligence as the plethora of "blond jokes" suggests? Do now-discredited racial and ethnic jokes have anything to tell us about the character or quality of their subjects? If the older versions of jokes about Jews or Blacks, for example, did not fairly reflect on the objects of their derision, should we have confidence that they do so today when conscripted to join the ranks of lawyer jokes? Stereotypes rarely offer us meaningful insights, and, whatever their value as a barometer of popular sentiment, lawyer jokes seem an ill-suited instrument for making quantitative or qualitative judgments about the underlying reality of the lawyer's world.

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Professor Galanter's book has much to tell us about the beliefs, anxieties, and frustrations of the public regarding the legal profession and its ubiquitous place in modern life. It does not, however, offer the reader a window into the operation of the legal profession itself. Thus, I would offer a modest alteration to the sub-title. Rather than *Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes & Legal Culture*, I suggest "Lawyer Jokes and Popular Perception of Legal Culture." This title more accurately describes the target the author in fact hit, dead center.

In the end I find myself wondering whether the subject of lawyer jokes—and public attitudes toward same—really merits such close analysis and prodigious scholarship. We are not, after all, dealing with Shakespeare or the Book of Job. That said, the jokes are indeed funny, the insights interesting, and I can think of many far worse ways to spend an evening or two than perusing this volume and reflecting on the real-life legal villains of one's own acquaintance so aptly captured in these jokes.

–Robert F. McDermott, Jr.

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Charles Tilly: *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Pp. ix, 256. $36.00.)

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Regimes and Repertoires is another great book by Charles Tilly who publishes books faster than we can read them. It analyzes "how prevailing forms of popular struggle vary and change from one sort of political regime to another" (3), that is, how differences in regime types bring about differences in contentious politics. Tilly argues that a simple matrix of government capacity (high vs. low) and democracy (democratic vs. nondemocratic) explains broad patterns of political contention (27, fig. 2.2).

Tilly has argued for some time that social scientists should abandon the search for necessary and sufficient conditions for complex historical episodes. He advocates a new approach that searches for "causal regularities . . . in the mechanisms and processes that interlace within those episodes" (157). Critics may think that the latter approach easily degenerates into "thick description." In *Regimes and Repertoires*, Tilly does not defend his approach but proceeds to demonstrate how a parsimonious model of capacity and democracy can explain a wide range of contentious activities, both violent (including civil wars, genocide, terror, revolutions) and nonviolent (including unarmed insurrections and social movements), both in earlier centuries and in the contemporary world, and both in the West and in other parts of the world. He lays out his theoretical arguments of regimes in chapters 1 and 2, repertoires in chapter 3, and the shaping of repertoires by regimes in chapter 4. Although

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