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detention centers, without charges, for months, even years. Foreign detainees in American prisons overseas have been brutally abused and subjected to interrogation techniques verging on torture. American citizens have been arrested in the United States

and, as “enemy combatants,” denied access to legal counsel, while foreigners detained abroad and given the same designation have been held indefinitely and denied the protections of the Geneva Conventions.

Further, new methods of investigating terrorism have “increase[d] the risk of inhibiting free speech or association.”

Many authors have protested the curtailment of civil liberties and human rights since 9/11. Few, however, have proposed alternatives designed to safeguard liberty *and* security. Heymann and Kayyem, assisted by a bipartisan advisory panel of experts, venture into this uncharted territory, emerging with a map of “new rules and practices that simultaneously address national security, democratic liberties at home, legality and human rights abroad, and broader foreign policy interests.”

They do so by stressing three goals. The first is accountability: providing mechanisms for reviewing executive action. The particular type of review—administrative, congressional, or judicial—will depend on the context, but “a system of accountability must be developed if the country is to fully honor a system of divided, shared powers.” The second goal is transparency: providing sufficient information about security rules and practices so that Congress and the public can openly debate them. The third goal is assessment: establishing ways of determining whether a particular rule or practice does indeed reduce the threat of terrorism.

Using this framework, Heymann and Kayyem examine such controversial practices as coercive interrogation, indefinite detention, targeted

killing, the interception of communications, and the surveillance of religious and political meetings. In each case, they offer reasoned approaches for overseeing, assessing, and limiting or banning the practice.

How well does their balancing act work? It’s difficult to evaluate recommendations before they’ve been tested over time, and implementing many of these proposals may prove politically impossible: Security specialists are loath to surrender any authority, while civil liberties advocates resist any compromise of their principles. Still, as executive branch officials, members of Congress, and judges continue to develop rules for defending our security, they can profit from Heymann and Kayyem’s guidance on the equally urgent task of protecting our liberty.

—John Shattuck

Cold Comfort

WHEN WRITER GRETCHEN

Legler decides it’s time to thaw her frozen heart, she heads to the coldest place on the planet. Courtesy of the National Science Foundation Artists and Writers Program, Legler travels from the Far North—the creative writing department at the University of Alaska—to the Far South—McMurdo Station, located at the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf, “nearly at the bottom of the world.” Her ostensible goal in visiting McMurdo, whose population ranges from 150 to 1,000-plus, is “to talk to the people who dwelled and worked in Antarctica, to find out about their lives, and to listen to them tell their stories about themselves and this icy place.” But like her hero, Henry David Thoreau, Legler really wants to explore the wilderness within herself.

The result is a series of lyrical portraits of people and places, whose standalone quality betrays their original role as essays or “prose poems” in literary journals. Legler visits the South Pole, spends a month on an icebreaker, climbs down into an

ON THE ICE:

An Intimate Portrait of Life at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

By Gretchen Legler.
Milkweed Editions.
195 pp. \$15.95

undersea observation tube, and hangs out with scientists of every variety. In addition to providing a comprehensive look at life in Antarctica, these portraits serve as occasionally clumsy jumping-off points for Legler's ruminations on her sister's suicide, her emotionally distant family, and her own shaky psychic state.

The humor that seems to characterize everyone who sets foot in Antarctica hastens Legler's defrosting. The bus that lumbers between the airstrip and the station is called Ivan the Terra Bus, for instance, while parishioners at the Chapel of the Snows are known as the Frozen Chosen. The scientists and support staff are as aware as Legler of the ludicrousness of their attempts to measure up to their predecessors in a place that now offers fresh basil, espresso makers, a bowling alley, ATMs, and Internet connections. Instead of battling the elements, they're checking their mutual funds.

The Antarctic literature is extensive—Legler discovers that even the walls of an outhouse are covered in scribbled excerpts from Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World* (1922) and other classic texts—and awash in testosterone. Legler's volume is a nice switch from the heroic tales of Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and other early explorers, and a welcome addition to the tiny body of work featuring women in Antarctica, represented most notably by Sara Wheeler's *Terra Incognita* (1996).

Legler's book also offers the novelty of a lesbian perspective, with the question of whether she will let herself fall for a banjo-playing mechanic named Ruth providing the book's only real narrative drive. In bundled-up Antarctica, it seems, romance means parkas brushing or ice axes clanking against each other.

Toward the end of the author's six-month stay, she takes the "Polar Plunge," leaping into frigid water. "It was my birthday and I was born again," she writes. Although Legler leaves no mark on the outhouse wall, she leaves her readers with a fascinating look not only at Antarctica but at a woman coming back to life.

—Rebecca A. Clay

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Test Case

THE POLIO VACCINE IS ONE of medicine's great success stories, but its development makes for a dirty, dangerous, and far from edifying tale. Mistakes were made, as the political phrase goes, and some of those mistakes cost lives before other lives were saved. In the first half

of his book, Paul Offit, a physician, achieves an almost thrillerlike intensity with a fast-paced account of the many tribulations and errors that preceded the Salk vaccine's momentous triumph. But in attempting to trace so much of the modern antagonism between our legal and medical systems back to a single source—the Cutter incident of the title—Offit allows outrage to overwhelm reason.

Early efforts, in the 1930s, to create a polio vaccine were, by modern standards, staggeringly irresponsible. Physicians tried to kill or inactivate infectious matter in ways that bordered on quackery, then without further ado injected the products into

THE CUTTER INCIDENT:

How America's First Polio Vaccine Led to the Growing Vaccine Crisis.

By Paul A. Offit.
Yale Univ Press.
238 pp. \$27.50



Jonas Salk, developer of an experimental polio vaccine, administers a test inoculation to a Pennsylvania youngster in 1954. The vaccine was soon rushed into production, but a contaminated batch led to a landmark liability case against one pharmaceutical company.