esting point, however, that even the reader's notions of cleanliness have probably changed over his or her lifetime. Pollution has become the new filth, for example, and the "green" movement upholds the new purity.

Smith and Ashenburg both end on the same note: *Plus ça change. . . .* According to one survey, half of the French still don't bathe daily, Ashenburg drolly remarks, but they continue to lead Europe in the consumption of perfumes and cosmetics. Despite hundreds of new "antibacterial" products, Smith notes that we're as worried about cleanliness as our distant, far dirtier ancestors—actually more so. Indeed, Ashenburg says, the only certainty is that a century from now, people will look back on our era "in amusement if not amazement at what passed for normal cleanliness."

Both histories of cleanliness necessarily offer much of the same information, but their presentations may determine where each is shelved. *Clean* is the more complete and academic, replete with the subheadings favored by university presses, 80 pages of notes, and Smith's politically correct disclaimer—"I am unashamedly looking for universal trends, but do not claim to be anything other than a local European (in fact a British) historian." Ashenburg's style is livelier, and her text is riddled with gossipy anecdotes about the rich and famous. Whatever you think of Napoleon's politics, it's fun to know that he bathed daily for two hours.

In the end, readers may decide to keep *Clean* in the study and *The Dirt on Clean* in the bathroom.

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Everybody's Business

By Gary Alan Fine

Ah, Britney. The latest supernova among our tabloid stars. In a culture awash in celebrity, it's easy to assume that the study of reputation is confined to the rich and the famous and their infamous sibs, too. As sociologist Charles Horton Cooley remarked a century ago, societies need the famous to define shared values. They provide us with a common set of references, and a map of the achievements that we, as a community, believe are noteworthy. Yet reputation belongs to us all, celebrity and ordinary citizen alike.

Reputation is an essential feature of the human condition. People care how others see them. A sterling reputation is, as Shakespeare recognized, worth more than a purse of gold. A bad one is a dark stain that limits relationships, rewards, and options. And because others may assign us a status that differs considerably from how we wish to be known, the reputation domain can be a hard world. That's one reason the middle school years—when our reputations are being formed—can be so brutal.

Two recent books by law professors assess the complexities of reputation—past and future—particularly as they relate to another human need: privacy. Lawrence Friedman, of Stanford University, focuses on how American law in the 19th century became a tool by which courts

GUARDING LIFE'S DARK SECRETS: Legal and Social Controls Over Reputation, Propriety, and Privacy.

By Lawrence M. Friedman. Stanford Univ. Press. 348 pp. $29.95

THE FUTURE OF REPUTATION: Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet.

By Daniel J. Solove. Yale Univ. Press. 247 pp. $24

preserved some reputations while diminishing others. Daniel Solove, of George Washington University, examines how reputation is being transformed by the Internet. Both authors' plentiful anecdotes—many drawn from legal cases—are dramatic and exceptional, but they illuminate the workings of reputation at the mundane level as well.

We moderns are tempted to believe that past generations were more "moral," and that social decay has been continuous and linear. But belief in a golden age is misleading. Perhaps in bygone days actresses did not flaunt their absence of undergarments quite so publicly, but the censure that comedian Michael Richards and shock jock Don Imus received after their racist remarks reminds us that, Cole Porter notwithstanding, we do not believe that "anything goes."

The question is how vigorously we should search out and expose violations of the right and proper, and thus damage the offenders' reputations. Our culture has enshrined a "penumbra" of privacy in the Bill of Rights. Still, sophisticated surveillance technologies flower, and databases record our purchases and preferences. Privacy may be rhetorically secure, but much of what was once treated as private is now public. And as a consequence, we are less able to shade our reputations to our liking.

We share warm notions about the communalism of the past, even as we condemn the restrictions on behavior that communalism exerted. Friedman emphasizes that life in 19th-century America was rough. Heavy drinking, fighting, and con games were common in public spaces. The goal, Friedman writes, was less to eliminate these behaviors than to moderate them. In a society in which tight boundaries on action were held to be essential, how should we regard the reality that many, rich and poor, violated these principles? Prostitution, for example, was widely condemned from pulpits and on soapboxes, yet skid rows and zones of public prostitution were common and widely known in every large city. Every so often the police made a show of cracking down, but they, as well as politicians and the public, knew that prostitutes would not disappear.

In practice, the existence of commandments is more important than the fact that they are always obeyed. What seems like hypocrisy was mere realism. Yet the rules remained in place to be used as necessary to preserve social order. Society, through enforcement by the courts, recognized that citizens inevitably would falter, but attempted to preserve the positions of those deemed respectable. Although respectability was a somewhat uncertain category with vague boundaries, according to Friedman an imperfect consensus existed among the public and the courts as to who was to be protected.

One reason the middle school years can be so brutal is because that's when our reputations are being formed.

What resulted, he says, was the "Victorian compromise," the practice by which (most) respectable citizens were protected from being discredited by their moral lapses, except when public notice demanded otherwise. It was a culture of "don't ask, don't tell." For the middle class and the elite, it was a world of second chances. The working class served as society's scapegoats. Thus, even though gambling was common at all levels of society, it was the gambling dens of the poor that were raided, not the salons of the wealthy. These miscreants, not so different from their fellow citizens, were discredited, isolated, and stigmatized.

Although Friedman calls America "perversely moralistic," the changes that have occurred in the last 200 years have tended to shift—rather than increase—the regulation and publicizing of moral shortcomings. As the government's regula-

tion of social behavior has lessened, the media's influence has increased. In today's "peeping Tom society," the Victorian compromise is a thing of the past. Celebrities and other elites are more likely to be the focus of prying eyes, and it is the common people who are accorded a zone of privacy that protects their reputations.

In this new world, public esteem still matters, but the forces that shape it are different. The all-important difference is the Internet, which has created a reputational economy as well as an electronic one. The virtue of cyberspace—the possibility of knowing everything now—is also its vice. In *The Future of Reputation,* Solove cites one estimate that as of July 2006 there were 50 million online blogs. Even if this figure is inflated, the blogosphere is a crowded neighborhood where people often share intimate details of their personal lives. (Exhibit A is perhaps Jessica Cutler, a Capitol Hill staffer who dubbed herself "the Washingtonienne" and openly described her sexual exploits with members of the capital elite.) Factor in the huge popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, as well as the in-your-face ubiquity of videos on YouTube, and the opportunities for connection and defamation are enormous. Where once gossip cultures were local—occurring in small towns, secretarial pools, and high school homerooms—they are now global.

The Internet is a particularly effective tool for reputational entrepreneurs, those who take as their responsibility the shaping of the public personas of others—maliciously, for amusement, or from a sense of moral outrage. A minor offense—for instance, failing to clean up after your dog near someone who snaps a picture with a cell phone camera—can earn a "digital scarlet letter" from anonymous critics the world over. Much of *The Future of Reputation* catalogs the ways in which privacy has diminished in an age in which technology allows for the diffusion of information and in which punishments for this diffusion are weak or sometimes simply impracticable. In such a world, privacy is a scarce commodity, particularly as the laws against defamation have become musty relics. The fact that personal attacks cannot be punished means that reputations can no longer be easily defended, and everything and everyone is fair game.

Solove's goal is to create a new compromise for a world of Victoria's secrets. He sings the praises of "the virtues of knowing less." The law, he believes, has a role in obstructing the malicious and protecting the private, but there is only so much that any legal system can do in a culture of global talk. Although Solove argues that people should be permitted to sue others for invasions of privacy and seek redress (including the deletion of their names from webpages), and that the understanding of individual privacy should be expanded to include activities in public spaces, he has no illusion that information can be easily contained. Far better, if possible, would be the establishment of social norms that punish those who reveal too much about the lives of others.

Much has changed since the age of Friedman's Victorian compromise. Today, when everyone—responsible or, as is more often the case, not—has a say, and in which the opinions of all are archived in the Google maw, are second chances still possible? We have only to look at our celebrities for the answer. Crimes and peccadilloes are now widely broadcast on grainy streaming videos, and moral opprobrium sets in. But we know the routine: The violator issues an unabashed, humiliating apology, sincere or not, and, after some time has passed, forgiveness is granted. The offense becomes part of the celebrity, not a detraction from it. This is not the Victorian compromise, but it is ours—applicable equally to celebrities and to common folk accorded their 15 minutes of fame. Just ask Don Imus.

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