

tle with the conviction "that nothing living could cross him and get away with it." This was the quality that enabled the Confederacy to prolong for four years its rebellion against overwhelming odds—with Forrest the last Southern commander still leading troops in the field in the spring of 1865. Minnesota farm boys sent to Mississippi to fight Forrest were confronting a ferocity given voice by the blood-curdling rebel yell and summed up by his slogan: "War means fightin', and fightin' means killin'."

Riding ahead of his outnumbered troops, he used fear on foe and friend alike. "Forrest's troops feared him more than the enemy, and with good reason," Hurst writes. "Assaulting or shooting them with his own hands when they tried to run from battles, he compelled them to run in the opposite direction." Forrest often deceived the enemy into thinking his forces were much larger and then did his best to frighten them out of their wits. At the battle of Brice's Crossroads in 1864, where he led one of the most humiliating routs in the history of the U.S. Army, Forrest voiced his philosophy of war: "Get 'em skeered, and then keep the skeer on 'em."

The sense of dread evoked in combat by "the sudden and terrible Forrest" (to use Cash's phrase) does not emerge as vividly from Hurst's printed page as it did from Shelby Foote's epochal three-volume history of the Civil War. Hurst is less adept at the difficult art of combat narrative, stingy with maps, and sometimes overwhelmed by his file cards, compelled to offer all conflicting accounts of even trivial events. Nonetheless, Hurst does an admirable job of charting "an exceptional American's remarkable philosophical journey." Needless to say, he regards Forrest as a man of far more subtlety than the contemporary Northern press's portrait of a racist butcher commanding his troops to slaughter black soldiers trying to surrender at Fort Pillow.

Like his region, slave-trader Forrest prospered from slavery (his annual earnings in the late 1850s surpassed \$100,000, a seven-figure income today), was ruined by the war, and never recouped. His leadership of the Ku Klux Klan was clearly an effort to subvert black political aspirations.

Starting in 1868, however, Forrest

began to condemn Klan violence and in 1873 was quoted as saying that if he "were entrusted with proper authority, he would capture and exterminate the white marauders who disgrace their race by the cowardly murder of Negroes." Hurst concludes that Forrest "embraced the Klan as a weapon in a savage fight for individual and sectional survival—and thrust it away soon after he saw that it injured, instead of aided, the best interests of the South and the Nation."

But Hurst also sees a less pragmatic softening in outlook toward blacks, as Forrest neared his death in 1877 at age 56 and for the first time became a practicing Christian. Addressing a black gathering in 1875, he declared: "We have but one flag, one country, let us stand

together. We may differ in color, but not in sentiment." It would be a century before white Southern politicians would echo those sentiments.

Forrest's story so parallels the drama and tragedy of the South that this ambivalence on race brings into question the validity of Cash's analysis of Southern violence as dedicated to the "savage ideal" of black inferiority. Violent Forrest and the South were, as their Yankee foes could testify, but the connection to race was never that simple. In undercutting the prevailing one-dimensional picture of the slave trader-Klan leader, Hurst has written the most complete and objective treatment of Forrest to date, and has ploughed some important new ground. □

## THE IMMOBILE EMPIRE

Alain Peyrefitte

Alfred A. Knopf/630 pages/\$30

reviewed by WILLIAM MCGURN

A mong certain sinophiles it has always been popular to date Britain's unhappy relations with China to Lord Macartney's refusal, 200 years ago this past September, to perform the ritual kowtow in that first fateful diplomatic encounter with the emperor. But for this unforgivable breach of etiquette, the argument goes, China might have ultimately been induced to look with favor upon British petitions. It was a view shared by Napoleon, and echoes might still be heard today in the comments of impatient businessmen and Foreign Office types such as Sir Percy Cradock, who are daily trooped out by the press to urge the more subtle Chinese conceptions of the law upon the new governor of Hong Kong.

But now another Frenchman has finally laid this old chestnut to rest. In *The Immobile Empire*, former Gaullist diplomat Alain Peyrefitte recounts the story of

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the ill-fated embassy of George Macartney, commissioned by George III to open China to Western (read: British) trade and all its attendant benefits. Drawing on the first-hand recollections of fifteen eyewitnesses from the British side, the observations of French and Portuguese Jesuits resident in Peking, and 420 pages from the imperial records—complete with Emperor Qianlong's vermilion responses in the margins—Peyrefitte paints a vivid portrait of the Chinese and British actors involved and the issues that would ever divide them. In so doing he also demonstrates that the dispute over the kowtow that came to a head in the wee hours of September 14, 1793, extended far beyond "superficial touchiness" to the collision of two mutually exclusive civilizations:

Deep convictions were at issue—respect for cosmic order on one side, sense of honor on the other. The disagreement was not due, as the British imagined, to misguided interference by junior of-

ficials; nor, as the Chinese believed, was it a matter of barbarian ignorance. For the British, it was the refusal of a people who felt borne by the wings of history to humble themselves; for the Chinese, it was the defense of the old rituals, long ago established once and for all, that lay at the very foundations of civilization itself. The impasse of protocol masked a confrontation of two different worlds.

On October 3 Macartney received the Emperor's response to the letter he had delivered from George III. Qianlong had turned down every one of the British requests—for normalized trade, for access to more ports, for a permanent embassy in Peking, etc. In itself China's wholesale refusal is not remarkable. But Peyrefitte discloses that the draft of Qianlong's reply had been ready a full week before Macartney's audience before the imperial court.

Lord Macartney set off from Portsmouth harbor on the morning tide of September 26, 1792, bound for the Middle Kingdom. Europeans had been trading with China for some time, but they did so under onerous constraints: confined to Canton, restricted to certain seasons, forced to deal through extortionist middlemen. The British understood, as Peyrefitte notes, "that trade benefited both seller and buyer, who were like two lovers, each depending on the other for satisfactions neither could provide singly." The Chinese, alas, had no such understanding. With the noxious exception of opium, they remained militantly indifferent to British exports.

And so George III dispatched two brilliant envoys to press the case for more open trade before the Celestial Court: George Macartney, former ambassador to Russia and onetime governor of colonies in Madras and the Caribbean; and Sir George Staunton, who had been Macartney's deputy on his last two postings. Sons of the Enlightenment both, the two men believed, along with their superiors, that a high-level delegation would bring the Chinese to their senses. Even when they were ultimately frustrated in their task, the British continued to rule out the possibility that the Chinese had reached their own conclusions, and instead

attributed their failure to the sabotage of malignant officials.

The maddening irony is that Macartney was not exaggerating the advantages to China itself from a more normal intercourse between the two great empires. Had his embassy achieved its relatively modest aims, the whole unhappy sequence of events that followed might have been avoided: no opium wars; no humiliating British retreat from Shanghai; indeed, no Hong Kong and no 1997, maybe even no Communist Party. All this is plausible enough. But those who attribute the failure of the Macartney mission to British arrogance and insensitivity overlook one decisive factor: China herself. Unlike Britain, China was "quintessentially scornful of the merchant, suspicious of business and dismissive of foreign inventions." Not only did the Emperor's court rank commerce at the bottom of the social order, it perceived—quite correctly—that such commerce was inimical to the perpetuation of a status quo that had held for centuries.

This is the fuller story of the expedition, and Peyrefitte tells it well, without condescension, weaving the various accounts into a compelling (if at times contradictory) narrative. But what gives the book its special twist is the author's liberal use of the diary kept by George Staunton's young son. Almost a half century later, Thomas Staunton, by then a member of Parliament and England's foremost China expert, would rise in support of the First Opium War. At the time of the Macartney expedition, however, he was but 11 years old, serving as Macartney's page, and where his elders were inclined to gild the diplomatic lily, young Thomas's boyish candor has been a boon to historians. The first Englishman to learn Chinese, Thomas could hardly have helped but notice the Chinese interpretation of their visit on the banners that greeted their arrival throughout the kingdom: "Envoy Paying Tribute to the Great Emperor."

As the banners implied, the Chinese lacked any concept of equal, sovereign nationhood. In their cosmos, China was the fabled kingdom mid-way between heaven and earth, to which all other states were by definition vassals. Hence the impossibility of exchanging ambassadors (which implied equality) and the

inevitable clash over the kowtow. In a nation where custom and worldview constituted an inseparable whole, to agree to the ritual bow to the emperor was to concede inferiority, not offer a sign of respect. Macartney was willing to go down on one knee, as he would to his own monarch, and he hoped this would suffice. But there was no middle ground. "Like it or not," says Peyrefitte, "to perform it was to be incorporated into the Celestial hierarchy."

And so history records the rest. Or does it? According to the official version of events in China's imperial archives, "when the Ambassador entered His Majesty's presence, he was so overcome with awe and nervousness that his legs gave way under him so that he grovelled abjectly on the ground, to all intents and purposes performing an involuntary kowtow." Eventually the Chinese came to believe it themselves.

Not that Peyrefitte takes the British line. To the contrary, he takes pains to demonstrate the cross-purposes at which the Chinese and British protagonists worked, how the underlying logic of their respective cultures propelled them toward a showdown. That each considered itself ("and not without good reason," says Peyrefitte) the apex of civilization only intensified the conflict and made it less likely that either would, or could, give way. "The two countries lived in different mental universes," writes the author, "and the more contact there was between them, the less inclined either was to accept the other's point of view." Another liberal nostrum deflated.

Save for some tired observations on colonialism—whose treatment as a solely Western phenomenon is especially odd in light of China's more virulent strain—Peyrefitte tells his tale well. The occasional allusion to his own diplomatic experience with China as an envoy for Charles de Gaulle too lends a welcome tartness. In the end, however, *The Immobile Empire* owes its strength to an old-fashioned, never-fail formula: a rollicking good story told by a serious man of letters in a superb translation—with obvious and immediate parallels for today. Two centuries after Macartney, says Peyrefitte, "we know more about the motives of the two sides than they did themselves, for we are confidants of both, and of history itself." Are we any wiser? □

## COMING ATTRACTIONS: THE MAKING OF AN X-RATED VIDEO

Robert J. Stoller and I. S. Levine

Yale University Press / 246 pages / \$30

reviewed by FRANCIS X. ROCCA

To go see our first X-rated movie, my friends and I drove around the Washington Beltway to a Virginia theater we had heard would not card us. We could have gone downtown to Fourteenth Street, but none of us—Montgomery County suburbanites all and students in good standing at a Jesuit boys' high school—was comfortable in the neighborhood of such blatant vice. Even in the shopping-mall multiplex, I resisted touching the sides of my seat, and sat with arms and legs crossed for the entire show.

That was thirteen years ago. Today's curious adolescent can proceed with peace of mind, for revelation is as close as the family VCR any night his parents go out to dinner. Ira Levine, co-author of *Coming Attractions* and himself a sometime porn filmmaker, reports that housewives are also regular watchers: "They rent *Cinderella* for the kids, and *Rain Man* for everyone after dinner, and an X picture for after the kids go to bed."

These proliferating cassettes do not of course produce themselves, yet the makers of this ever more accessible commodity are rarely the subject of journalism, let alone scholarship. This book is a collection of interviews, by Levine and the late UCLA psychiatrist Robert Stoller, of eight porn professionals—two producers, an actor, two actresses, a cinematographer, an editor, and an actress-turned-director—in connection with the making of a recent hard-core video, *Stairway to Paradise*.

The conversations range from the details of work on the set to the peculiarities of life at home. The discussions of hygiene, in a business where unprotected intercourse is de rigueur, are not only revolting but scary. When the authors' infor-

ants talk about health at all, they speak of an imminent plague with blasé fatalism.

Somewhat longer shrift is given to another contentious social issue, pornography's degradation of women. Not surprisingly, those who make their living in porn have little use for the radical feminist critiques of Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, who see X-rated material as a form of sexual assault. According to Nina, star of *Stairway to Paradise*, "Dworkin is a prime example of a woman on a vendetta because no one asked her to the prom." The exploitation of female employees is another matter: one actress claims she was blacklisted for nine months after founding a woman's advocacy group for porn professionals. Yet all the interviewees, male and female, agree that things are worse for men, at least in front of the camera. The "boys" get lower pay and lower billing, and are expected to perform in ways that cannot be faked, at great length and under often stressful conditions. (At one time men could count on the assistance of their co-stars, but it is now considered unprofessional to ask for "fluffing.")

Such a profession influences private life in special ways. On some, it has the entirely predictable effect of making the deviant boring and the normal alluring. Says Sharon, the former actress who now works behind the camera:

The only erotic fantasies I have are: being with a person that I am totally connected to emotionally, physically, spiritually, intellectually, so that there is a complete relationship. . . . It is because of these movies that I've been able to come back to that healthy space. I've been addicted to sex in the past, I've based relationships on sexual encounters. . . . Now they're my friends first.

For the performer with an active career, "a complete relationship" remains necessarily a fantasy. One improvises as much stability as one can. "I couldn't have been in this business if I hadn't had a mate (I have two) and a firm home base," confesses Nina; a footnote informs us that she "lives *en ménage* with a man and a woman." And some, no matter how jaded they become, still find themselves prey to the green-eyed monster. Levine recalls the betrayal that ended one relationship: "If she was doing straight hard-core, I wouldn't have cared. But that she was doing a *bondage* picture with someone other than me. . . ."

It is not as if all these people had normal lives before they got into pornography. Porsche Lynn (not her real name) was orphaned at age six, when her father shot her mother and himself; she then moved in with an uncle who ogled her in the shower and gave her unwelcome caresses. Levine's account of relations with his own mom—a phone call home was more like a call to a 900 chat line—is disturbing to say the least.

This anecdotal evidence lends some credibility to Levine's theory that X-rated performers tend to be incest victims, whose experience as children has given them not only an advanced education in sexual technique but also an exaggerated sense of their own sexual appeal (since "god-like" adults fell under its spell), and the habit of receiving "material validation for sexual availability."

Levine insists that pathological motives do not vitiate the result: "By modern standards, Mozart was an abused, exploited child. . . . The knowledge of his distress then does not prevent us from enjoying his music now." This theory, though, falls short of explaining why these people would go into movies instead of prostitution. As Levine himself points out, "a woman doing straight outcalls can make just as much money without leaving behind a permanent public record. And she can make the client wear condoms." The best that the authors can manage is to talk vaguely about "exhibitionism."

There is another puzzle to which neither author offers a conclusive solution. One of several things my teenage friends and I didn't understand as we sat in that suburban theater was that we were watching a relic of a "golden age" already past. In the mid-seventies, hard-core classics such as *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*