

CUTTING-EDGE CAT AND MOUSE

While the owner's away...these inventive gadgets will keep your feline active and engaged all day, helping her blow off steam until you return home

1 Scrambled Pets

Shaped like an egg, **SHRU** rolls around in random directions at varying speeds thanks to onboard computers that help it mimic the erratic movements and sounds of small animals (complete with fluttering tail). When Tiger is done batting SHRU about, the toy automatically shuts down to conserve energy, saving you from recharging it too often via its USB port. \$98, pdxpetdesign.com

2 Bugging Out

Cats also instinctively love chasing—and destroying—little toys that more realistically resemble mice and bugs. But most stuffed playthings are too inert to deliver the thrill of the hunt. Crafted with computer-controlled motors, **Hexbug toys** dart

about in random ways to keep your cat hotly in pursuit. The mouse toy stops to wait for your pet to punch it before it dashes off, while the Nano Bug convincingly (and creepily) skitters around until its batteries run dry. If knocked over, it can right itself and keep on moving. From \$5, hexbug.com

3 Cat's Eye View

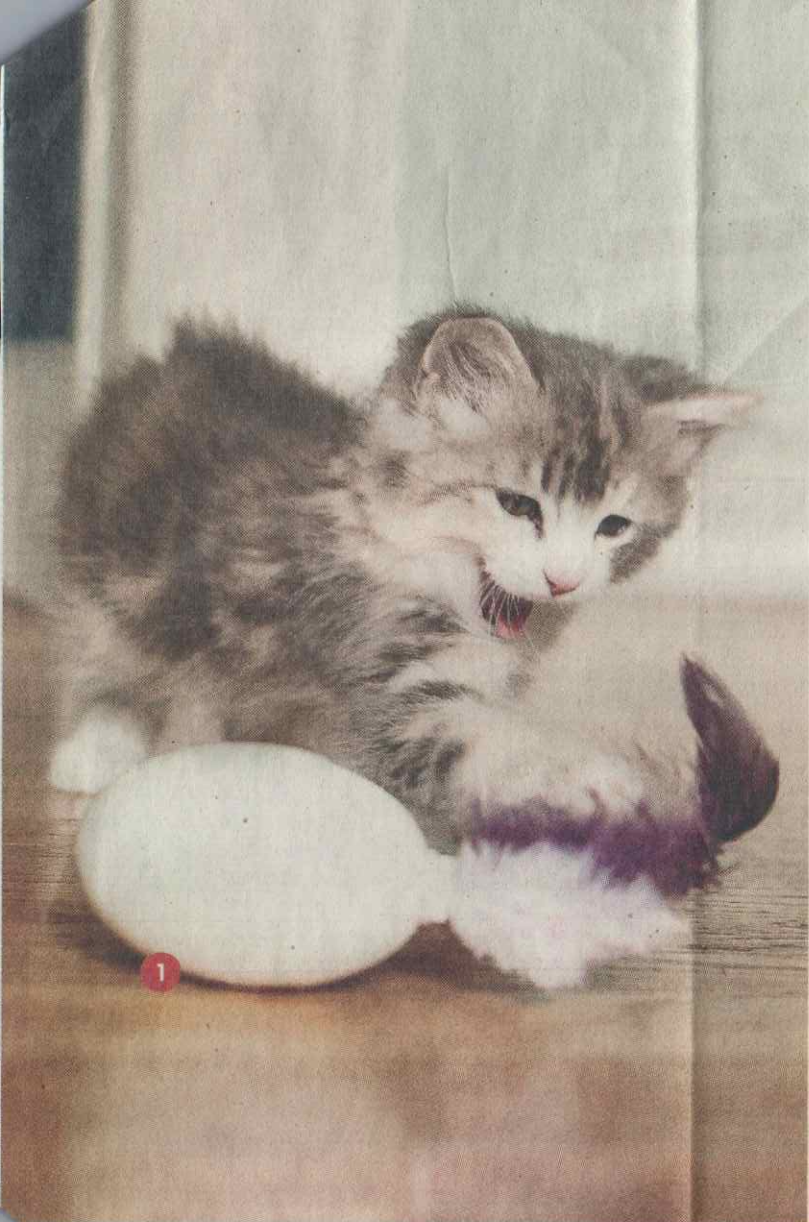
Connect the compact, innovative **Petcube**—a combination video-chat camera and laser pointer—to your home's WiFi, pop it on a bookshelf, and you can use it to look in on your pet via a laptop or smartphone anytime you're away. It also lets you sing out words of loving affirmation (or admonishment), and even tease your feline with the laser pointer you control from your mobile device.

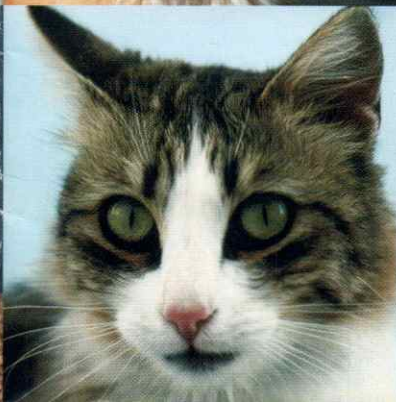
Bonus: Record playtime in 1080p HD for online sharing. Petcube can help soothe owners who spend a lot of time on the road imagining destructive cat behavior. \$149, petcube.com

4 Feline Groovy

If all this cat-centric tech has you feeling left out, consider **Qoobo**. This "tailed pillow that heals your heart" was designed by Japan engineers to provide the comfort humans get from cradling a purring kitten. Stroke it, pet it, and it reacts by wiggling or gently swinging its tail just like a real cat. Despite its "Black Mirror" vibe, Qoobo is ideal for those allergic to felines or who simply don't want the responsibility of a real cat. \$95, qoobo.info

—Joshua Fruhling





BOOKS

'The past resembles the future more than one drop of water resembles another.' —Ibn Khaldun

Why History Goes in Circles

BY ERIC ORMSBY

IBN KHALDUN pops up in the most unexpected places. This late medieval Tunisian-born thinker (1332-1406) has been celebrated by historians, economists, sociologists and ethnographers, not to mention scholars of Islamic thought, often rather vaguely and without any precise understanding of the nature of his ideas. He has been called "the father of sociology" or the first "philosopher of history," among other honorifics. In 1935 the popular English historian Arnold Toynbee, the author of "A Study of History" in 12 volumes, waxed rhapsodical over Ibn Khaldun's accomplishments, claiming that his "Muqaddimah" ("Introduction" in Arabic) was "undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever been created by any mind in any time or place." It doesn't detract from Ibn Khaldun's genuine originality to note that this claim is the sheerest hyperbole. Yet it had the happy effect of putting Ibn Khaldun back on the intellectual map, and it contains an element of truth: His speculations on history were unprecedented, his theories both novel and persuasive.

As Robert Irwin notes in his excellent "Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography" (Princeton, 243 pages, \$29.95), his subject's influence has also been pervasive, if often subterranean. To take one surprising example: On Oct. 1, 1981, President Ronald Reagan alluded to him in a press conference when he invoked "a principle that goes back at least, I know, as far as the 14th century, when a Muslim philosopher named Ibn Khaldun said, 'In the beginning of the dynasty, great tax revenues were gained from small assessments. At the end of the dynasty, small tax revenues were gained from large assessments.'" (The president added—"O forlorn hope!"—"And we're trying to get down to the small assessments and the great revenues.") As Mr. Irwin shows, Ibn Khaldun's cyclical notion of history also underlies classic works of science fiction, such as Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" trilogy and Frank Herbert's "Dune." No other Muslim author, let alone one writing in high-flown classical Arabic, has had comparable influence on thinkers and scholars in both the Islamic world and the West.

Mr. Irwin, a novelist as well as a scholar of medieval Islam, traces the vicissitudes of Ibn Khaldun's tumultuous career in a vivid narrative. Ibn Khaldun was both a thinker and a man of action who observed the workings of courts and rulers up close. Under the Merinids and the Nasrids of North Africa and Spain, he served variously as an official secretary, a chancellor, a judge and a diplomat. He was a trusted negotiator: In 1364 he was sent on a mission to Pedro of Castile, a Christian potentate known as "Pedro the Cruel," who ended up offering him a position (he prudently declined). When Damascus was besieged by the Mongols under Tamerlane, Ibn Khaldun was lowered from the city walls in a basket to conduct negotiations. Again he was

successful and offered a job by the conqueror (again he prudently declined).

Ibn Khaldun suffered all the ups and downs of a courtier close to power. He was elevated to high position only to find himself discarded and even imprisoned. Ibn Khaldun was only able to write his "Muqaddimah" when he took a kind of sabbatical for four years at a remote castle in Algeria, where, he tells us in his "Autobiography," he wrote "with words and ideas pouring into my head like cream into a churn."

Though he impressed his contemporaries, Ibn Khaldun had no great following in the Muslim

group toward power and "royal authority," another key term in Ibn Khaldun's thought. Yet that same impulse drives it toward civilization, an ultimately fatal destination.

Dynasties rise and fall in stages, he argues in the "Muqaddima": They go through identifiable phases of triumph and decline, and there are discernible causes for these cycles. This is perhaps Ibn Khaldun's most original insight: The course of human history follows certain patterns, even laws, that can be discovered and named; it is not merely a sequence of unrelated events, as earlier Muslim historians had seen

group toward power and "royal authority," another key term in Ibn Khaldun's thought. Yet that same impulse drives it toward civilization, an ultimately fatal destination.

For Ibn Khaldun, the world is divided between the civilized urban dwellers and the outsiders—the nomadic unsettled tribes, barbarians, desert Arabs or Bedouin. Those outsiders are self-reliant and self-sufficient; though plagued by illness and malnutrition, they are healthier in spirit; they possess little in goods but have 'asabiyya in spades. By contrast, the civilized are addicted to luxury; they depend on others

WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT A table of contents listing kings and rulers, from a 15th-century Ibn Khaldun manuscript.

a kind of memento mori for the living: We too will pass away, as our predecessors did. And even though Ibn Khaldun's cyclical view might be seen as a tragic vision, with the seeds of decline hidden in the very impulse toward civilization, he notes the persistence of crafts and trades and social traditions. These survive the collapse of kingdoms as "habits" of being. The baker, iron worker and scholar endure while the king and his minions perish.

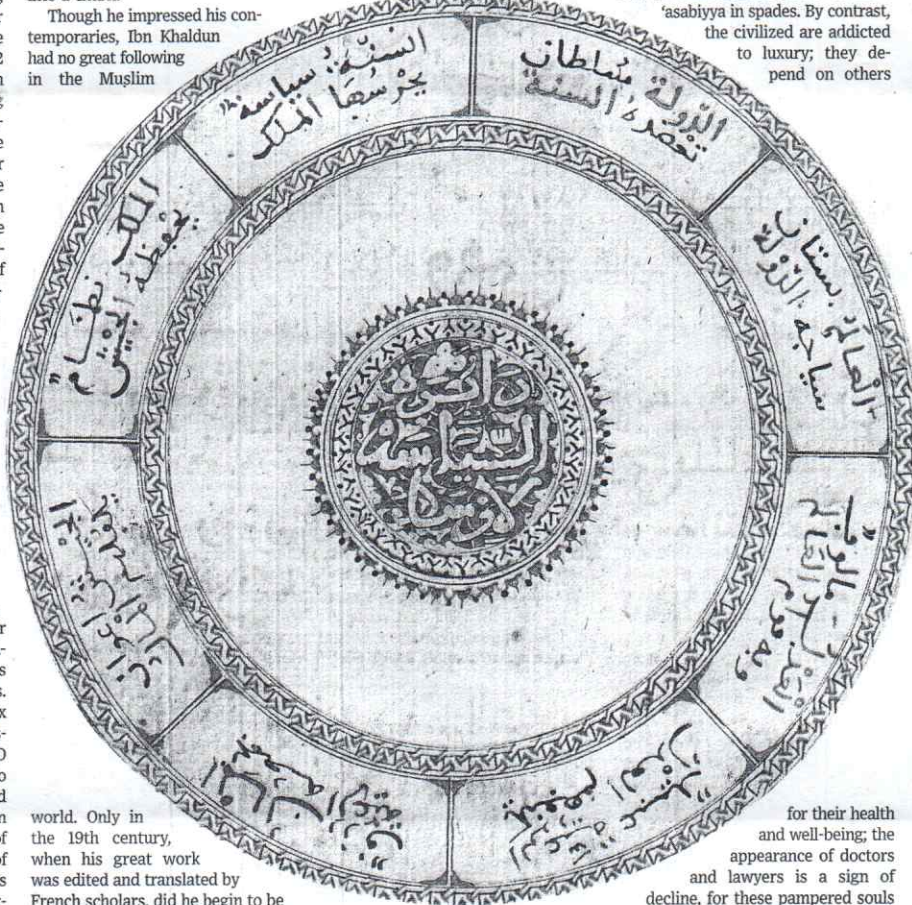
Mr. Irwin is especially good at pointing out the apparent contradictions in Ibn Khaldun's thought. His rationalism must be seen within a wider context. He was as interested in magic and the occult as he was in the laws of history. His piety is as conspicuous as his rationalism. Scholars like Stephen Frederic Dale, author of the insightful 2015 "The Orange Trees of Marrakesh: Ibn Khaldun and the Science of Man" (Harvard, 383 pages, \$31),

Ibn Khaldun's insight: Dynasties rise and fall for predictable reasons. Thus history can be studied as a science.

have treated Ibn Khaldun primarily as a philosopher. Mr. Irwin disagrees, pointing out that he disparaged Aristotle, the dominant figure in the Islamic philosophical tradition, and was contemptuous of earlier Muslim philosophers. And the author's discussions of Ibn Khaldun's involvement in Sufism, on which he wrote his first known work, are inconclusive but serve to show that this strange and ambiguous thinker was far more complex than has been assumed.

More than a mere intellectual biography, Mr. Irwin's work has a personal element for the author, whose "Memoirs of a Dervish" (2011) was a delightful account of his own experiences as a novice in a North African Sufi convent. There he showed a remarkable ability to view Islam from the inside without sacrificing objectivity—or a sense of humor. Here he likewise retains a healthy sense of perspective about his ambitious project. "I have spent most of my life," he writes, "communing with a man who has been dead for over six hundred years, a man whose ways of thinking are very different from my own. It has been a kind of séance and, as is so often the case with séances, it has sometimes been difficult to interpret the messages coming across the centuries." In Robert Irwin, Ibn Khaldun has finally found a biographer and interpreter almost as versatile and learned as he was himself.

Mr. Ormsby is the author of "Theodicy in Islamic Thought," recently re-issued in the Princeton Legacy Library.



world. Only in the 19th century, when his great work was edited and translated by French scholars, did he begin to be more widely known, even by Muslim readers. Then, with the 1958 publication of a magisterial English translation of the "Muqaddimah" by Yale orientalist Franz Rosenthal in three massive volumes, Ibn Khaldun's thought was revealed in all its intricacy to Western scholars. Rosenthal's translation incorporated readings from at least four original manuscripts as a way of correcting the often unreliable Arabic editions and remains authoritative. An abridged one-volume translation is available as "The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History" (Princeton, 465 pages, \$24.95).

The "Muqaddima" was written as an introduction to Ibn Khaldun's huge history of the Berbers and Arabs in North Africa, titled "The Book of Lessons" ("Kitab al-Ibar"), which runs to seven dense tomes in the standard edition. Though in the actual history he adheres to the centuries-old, rather stodgy conventions of Arabic histori-

ography, his introduction gleefully lambastes them. Dynasties rise and fall in stages, he argues in the "Muqaddima": They go through identifiable phases of triumph and decline, and there are discernible causes for these cycles. This is perhaps Ibn Khaldun's most original insight: The course of human history follows certain patterns, even laws, that can be discovered and named; it is not merely a sequence of unrelated events, as earlier Muslim historians had seen

it. History is, in fact, a science whose underlying principles are constant, and there are factors that determine it, from the geographical and environmental to the political and social. At the same time, it is God who establishes these patterns, and history stands as a series of lessons and admonitions for the living. What mechanisms govern how dynasties rise and fall? The question preoccupied Ibn Khaldun rather obsessively. A dynasty comes to power only if it possesses an intense feeling of solidarity within its founding group, he suggests. This is his famous concept of 'asabiyya, that fierce cohesion that unites a clan or tribe in unbreakable bonds of loyalty and common purpose. When this "group feeling" (as Rosenthal renders it) is allied with religious zeal, its adherents are virtually unbeatable. 'Asabiyya has as a corollary an ambition for dominance; it impels a

group toward power and "royal authority," another key term in Ibn Khaldun's thought. Yet that same impulse drives it toward civilization, an ultimately fatal destination.

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for their health and well-being; the appearance of doctors and lawyers is a sign of decline, for these pampered souls no longer trust themselves to settle disputes or heal themselves. When outsiders full of 'asabiyya seize control, they enjoy an initial period of triumph. Group feeling remains strong, and the charisma of the leader is still intact. In a second generation, the original leader's charisma persists but has begun to weaken. In a third generation, internal difficulties appear: The army becomes disaffected, taxes rise, the love of comfort grows. By the fourth generation, everything falls into disarray: The ruler is weak, the army revolts. The time is ripe for a new group, united by 'asabiyya and religious fervor, to seize royal authority.

BOOKS

'Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them.' —T.E. Lawrence

Picking Sides in the Middle East

Behind the Lawrence Legend

By Philip Walker
Oxford, 284 pages, \$34.95

BY ANTHONY SATTIN

ON JUNE 10, 1916, a 62-year-old Arab by the name of Hussein bin Ali leaned out of a window in his palace at Mecca and fired a round from his rifle. With Turkish forces occupying what is now Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Palestine and the whole of the Arabian peninsula, shooting into the air might have seemed futile. But Hussein was the head of the Hashemite clan, keeper of Islam's holy places and a man with good claim to the title of caliph, leader of Muslims. His shot launched the Arab Revolt against Turkish occupation, as well as a debate among historians and observers of the Arab world that continues to this day.

The revolt—the uprising of tribes on the Arabian peninsula against Ottoman occupation—would lead, with outside help and a hoard of British gold, to the reshaping of the Middle East. It would also redefine relations between Arabs and the British and French, in part because, unknown to the Arabs who thought they were fighting for their independence, the latter two had reached a secret agreement for the postwar division of the Turkish provinces.

The centenary of the outbreak, in 2016, was marked by the publication of a number of books with an image of T.E. Lawrence on the cover, usually in native robes, often riding a camel. The reason is obvious: Of all the characters who took part in the revolt, only "Lawrence of Arabia" now has any name recognition outside of specialist circles, although in the Arab world Hussein's son Faisal, later king of Iraq, is still revered.

But we live in an age of revision in which many assumptions behind the history that we were taught and told from school onward are being challenged or overturned. Lawrence has not escaped this trend. Among recent books, Scott Anderson's "Lawrence in Arabia" puts Lawrence's story into the context of other agents—German, American and Zionist—who were active at the same time in the Hejaz. In "Faisal I of Iraq," Ali Allawi uses Arab and Turkish sources to tell the king's story from the "other" (i.e., Arab) side and the result is indeed a "reassessment": In Mr. Allawi's telling, neither Lawrence nor his European colleagues had much influence over the man or the revolt.

Philip Walker's first book, "Behind the Lawrence Legend," promises a "fresh interpretation" on the Arab Revolt, one that will "set the record straight." If your understanding of the uprising goes no further than David Lean's classic movie "Lawrence of Arabia," you might think there



END OF THE BEGINNING A photo by Lt. Lionel Gray of Arabs in Jeddah celebrating with a captured Ottoman flag, 1918.

was very little British, French or American involvement in the campaign beyond Lawrence going native. But this was obviously not the case. Lawrence's own published account, the extraordinarily passionate and evocative "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" (1926), names hundreds of colleagues who fought alongside the Arabs or provided logistical support. They ranged from the eccentric diplomat Ronald Storrs, "the most brilliant Englishman in the Near East," and the traditionalist Col. Cyril Wilson, a leader "of the honest, downright Englishmen," to 40 others who "could each tell a like tale." Lawrence's version of the tale also lists those who served with the Hejaz

Armoured Car Company and the 10-pounder Talbot Battery.

Mr. Walker has taken for his subject the exploits and opinions of some of the less known British servicemen involved in launching and sustaining the Arab Revolt. They include Capt. Thomas Goodchild, an "amiable" veterinary officer tasked with acquiring herds of camels, which he procured, Mr. Walker writes, with "£14,000 in gold and silver coins." This purchase was necessary in part to provide transport for the Imperial Camel Corps, who used them to advance on Jerusalem but also to keep them away from the Turks. Four of Mr. Walker's subjects were based in the Red Sea port of Jeddah (Jidda), in

the western region of the Arabian peninsula known as the Hejaz. Col. John Bassett, Col. Hugh Pearson and Lt. Lionel Gray all served with Wilson and fulfilled crucial duties.

These and most of the other characters here have appeared in histories and biographies of the period, including Jeremy Wilson's 1989 authorized biography of Lawrence. But Mr. Walker, a British retired archaeologist, is right in claiming that most have fallen through the cracks and he does a good job at bringing them back toward the light, providing focus and detail, the latter being the result of extensive research in libraries on several continents and over many years. He has also tracked

down the families of some of his subjects, most notably of Lt. Gray, a cipher officer. Gray's daughter gave the author access to a cache of documents, as well as to Arab robes and a Turkish pistol given to her father by Lawrence. She also supplied a quantity of photographs from the revolt, many reproduced here for the first time and providing rare glimpses from the sidelines.

It is unfortunate that the author devotes time and words trying to reduce Lawrence's stature. Lawrence stands out for several reasons. He was unlike most British, American or

British support for the Arab Revolt included cash, advice, soldiers and £14,000 worth of camels.

French officers active in Arabia at that time for he had already spent four years working as an archaeologist on what is now the Turkish-Syrian border, had traveled widely on foot through the Levant and had acquired a deep understanding and affection for the people of the region and their way of life.

While Col. Wilson in Jeddah objected to the idea of wearing an Arab headdress, Lawrence wore his full robes with some pride, even during the postwar conference. Lawrence spoke Arabic (although, it seems, not brilliantly), understood tribal mentality and felt more of a kinship with Arabs than he did with many Westerners. On occasions Mr. Walker questions the accuracy of "Seven Pillars," as if he did not know that it was created mostly from memory and written at great speed by a man who was suffering from a severe case of what we know as post traumatic stress disorder. Lawrence was a "master of half-truths, denigration by inference and omission," he stresses, and the book "has sometimes given rise to confusion and red herrings—Lawrence's favourite fish." In "Seven Pillars," Lawrence claims the credit for identifying Emir Faisal as the future leader of the revolt, but Mr. Walker rightly finds this doubtful. Instead he suggests that Capt. Norman Bray identified Faisal as a likely leader in October 1916, but he fails to mention that Bray's superior, Col. Wilson, had expressed this opinion in August of that year.

In the end, "Behind the Lawrence Legend" doesn't quite set the record straight about the Arab Revolt. What its fine and complex narrative does do is provide a more richly detailed and nuanced background than we have had till now to the unfolding of one of the most colorful theaters of World War I.

Mr. Sattin is the author of "The Young T.E. Lawrence."

Why the innocent end up in prison

By JOHN GRISHAM

It is too easy to convict an innocent person.

The rate of wrongful convictions in the United States is estimated to be somewhere between 2 percent and 10 percent. That may sound low, but when applied to an estimated prison population of 2.3 million, the numbers become staggering. Can there really be 46,000 to 230,000 innocent people locked away? Those of us who are involved in exoneration work firmly believe so.

Millions of defendants are processed through our courts each year. It's nearly impossible to determine how many of them are actually innocent once they've been convicted. There are few resources for examining the cases and backgrounds of those claiming to be wrongfully convicted.

Once an innocent person is convicted, it is next to impossible to get the individual out of prison. Over the past 25 years, the Innocence Project, where I serve on the board of directors, has secured through DNA testing the release of 349 innocent men and women, 20 of whom had been sent to death row. All told, there have been more than 2,000 exonerations, including 200 from death row, in the U.S. during that same period. But we've only scratched the surface.

The list

Wrongful convictions happen for several reasons. In no particular order, these causes are:

Bad police work. Most cops are honest, hard-working professionals. But some have been known to hide, alter or fabricate evidence; lie on the stand; cut deals in return for bogus testimony; intimidate and threaten witnesses; coerce confessions; or manipulate eyewitness identifications.

Prosecutorial misconduct. Most prosecutors are also honest, hard-working professionals. But some have been known to hide exculpatory evidence; encourage witnesses to commit perjury; lie to jurors, judges and defense lawyers; use the testimony of bogus experts; or ignore relevant evidence beneficial to the accused.

False confessions. Most jurors find it impossible to believe that a suspect would confess to a serious crime he didn't commit. Yet the average citizen, if taken to a basement room and subjected to 10 consecutive hours of abusive interrogation tactics by experienced cops, might be surprised at what they would say. Of the 330 people who were exonerated by DNA evidence between 1989 to 2015, about 25 percent gave bogus confessions after lengthy interro-



ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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gations. Almost every one recanted soon after.

Faulty eyewitness identification. More often than not, those who witness violent acts have trouble accurately recalling the facts and identifying those involved. Physical and photo line-ups may exacerbate the problem because police manipulate them to focus suspicion on favored suspects.

Jailhouse snitches. In every jail there is a career criminal staring at a long sentence. For leniency, he can be persuaded to lie to the jury and describe in great detail the confession overheard from the accused, usually a cellmate. If he performs well enough on the stand, the authorities might allow him to walk free.

Bad lawyering. Those accused of serious crimes rarely have money. Many are represented by good public defenders, but too many get stuck with court-appointed lawyers with little or no experience. Capital cases are complex, and the stakes are enormous. All too often, the defense lawyers are in over their heads.

Sleeping judges. Judges are supposed to be impartial referees

intent on ensuring fair trials. They should exclude confessions that are inconsistent with the physical evidence and obtained by questionable means; exclude the testimony of career felons with dubious motives; require prosecutors to produce exculpatory evidence; and question the credentials and testimony of all experts outside the presence of the jury. Unfortunately, judges do not always do what they should. The reasons are many and varied, but the fact that many judges are elected doesn't help. They are conscious of their upcoming re-election campaigns and how the decisions they make might affect the results. Of those judges who are appointed rather than elected, the majority are former prosecutors.

Junk science. Over the past five decades, our courtrooms have been flooded with an avalanche of unreliable, even atrocious "science." Experts with qualifications that were dubious at best and fraudulent at worst have peddled — for a fee, of course — all manner of damning theories based on their allegedly scientific analysis of hair, fibers, bite marks, arson, boot prints, blood spatters and ballistics. Of the 330 people exonerated by DNA tests between

1989 and 2015, 71 percent were convicted based on forensic testimony, much of which was flawed, unreliable, exaggerated or sometimes outright fabricated.

Flawed testimonies

Brandon L. Garrett, a professor of law at University of Virginia, has studied nearly all of the trial transcripts from wrongful convictions later exposed by DNA-based exonerations.

"There is a national epidemic of overstated forensic testimony, with a steady stream of criminal convictions being overturned as the shoddiness of decades' worth of physical evidence comes to light," he wrote last year in *The Baffler*. "The true scope of the problem is only now coming into focus."

An excellent new book by Radley Balko and Tucker Carrington, "The Cadaver King and the Country Dentist," chronicles the story of two of the most brazen experts ever allowed in a courtroom. Steven Hayne was a controversial forensic pathologist who once boasted of performing more than 2,000 autopsies in a single year. His sidekick, Michael West, was a small-town dentist who assumed the role of an expert in many other fields.

Together they tag-teamed their way through rape and murder trials in Mississippi and Louisiana, accumulating an impressive string of convictions, several of which have been overturned. Some are still being litigated. Many others, however, seem destined to stand.

It's a maddening indictment of America's broken criminal justice system, in which prosecutors allowed — even encouraged — flawed forensic testimony because it was molded to fit their theories of guilt. Over two decades, elected judges permitted these two professional testifiers to convince unsophisticated jurors that science was on the side of the state.

The atrocities that occurred in Mississippi and Louisiana aren't specific to one time and place. The medical examiners, police officers, prosecutors, judges and others who hold sway over our criminal justice system around the country have largely failed to deliver justice. We must do better.

Tribune Content Agency

John Grisham is a writer best known for his legal thrillers. This piece was adapted from the foreword of "The Cadaver King and the Country Dentist."