

TOMORROW'S IDEAS - TODAY.



BASIC
BOOKS

SPRING 2024

Contents

- 01** Introduction
- 02** The Alternative
- 04** The Longevity Imperative
- 06** The CIA
- 08** Paperback highlights
- 12** Award-winning titles

Contacts

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Tomorrow's ideas – today.

Spring is always a time for looking forward, but at the moment it seems as if the only thing we can rely on is that 'the only certainty is uncertainty' – although even then, there seems to be no certainty about who said it first!

Living with uncertainty is difficult but books are always a constant support, a source of education and escape. The three key titles we are publishing this Spring on the Basic Books list all address the challenges of our times from different perspectives.

The Alternative: How to Build a Just Economy by New Yorker journalist and academic Nick Romeo, demonstrates once and for all that the TINA (There is No Alternative) argument is false. There are, in fact, many alternatives as his in-depth reporting and expert analysis show, to our current ways of doing business that are fairer, more efficient and more profitable. Romeo provides an informal handbook for those who believe our economies should reflect our values and work for everyone.

In *The Longevity Imperative: Building a Better Society for Healthier, Longer Lives*, London Business School Professor Andrew J. Scott, a world leading authority on longevity, argues for a revolution in the way we think about our ageing societies. Rather than seeing our extra years as a burden, we need to embrace the evergreen agenda and pursue a more sustainable lifestyle both for ourselves and for the planet.

The CIA: An Imperial History by Hugh Wilford draws on recently released archival material to explore in gripping detail what led the CIA, to transform into an instrument of a new, covert imperialism in America and overseas. By connecting and contrasting US intelligence history to that of other modern world empires, he enables us to understand some of the forces that are at war today.

Finally, we are delighted to bring to a wider audience some of our outstanding books of 2023 in paperback. This is your chance if you missed them the first time round to catch up on Mark Jones's vital history *1923*, the fragrant *Elixir, Truth and Repair* by renowned trauma expert Judith Herman, Cundhill History Prize finalist Kate Cooper's *Queens of a Fallen World* and leading economists Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson's passionate call to take back control of our technology, *Power and Progress*.

Enjoy!

Sarah Caro
Publishing Director
Basic Books UK

The Alternative



HOW TO BUILD A JUST ECONOMY

Nick Romeo

THE ALTERNATIVE

How to Build a Just Economy

Nick Romeo

A provocative debunking of accepted economic wisdom which offers a new pathway to a sustainable, survivable economy.

Confronted by the devastating trends of the early twenty-first century – widening inequality, environmental destruction, and millions of workers stuck in precarious, soul-destroying work – many economists, politicians and business leaders argue that there is no alternative. They cling to the dogmas that got us into this mess in the first place: private markets are more efficient than public ones; investment capital always flows where it is needed; inequality is an inevitable side effect of economic growth; people only behave well with the right incentives.

But a growing number of academic economists, business owners, policy entrepreneurs, and ordinary people are rejecting these myths and reshaping economies to reflect their ethical and social values. Journalist Nick Romeo, who covers the world's most innovative economic and policy ideas for the *New Yorker*, takes us on an extraordinary journey through the unforgettable stories and successes of people working to build economies that are more equal, just, and liveable. Combining original, in-depth reporting with expert analysis, Romeo explores everything from fair pricing in the Netherlands to large-scale cooperatives in Spain to public sector marketplaces offering decent work and real protection to gig workers in California and demonstrates there is an alternative.

18th January 2024

9781399813792

Hardback £25

'Informative and courageous . . . A very valuable field manual for those who want to change our economies for the better'

Ha-Joon Chang, author of *Edible Economics*

'Profound and engaging, a terrific book that deserves to be widely read . . . *The Alternative* gives us the ways and means for creating a just economy'

Clair Brown, professor of economics emerita, University of California, Berkeley

'The Alternative clearly lays out what should most concern us and what other courses of action we can demand and win. An excellent book.'

Danny Dorling, Professor of Human Geography at the University of Oxford and author of *Shattered Nation*



Nick Romeo covers policy and ideas for the *New Yorker* and teaches in the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley.

He has also written for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *National*

Geographic, *Rolling Stone*, *Atlantic*, *MIT Technology Review*, and many other venues. He currently lives in Berkeley, California

In late 2020, a sign appeared on the street outside De Aanzet, a charming independent grocery store in downtown Amsterdam. “Welcome to the World’s First Supermarket with True Prices,” it read. Inside, two kinds of prices were listed for potatoes, peppers, bananas, broccoli, bread, and many other foods. The “normal” price of tomatoes was €3.75 per kilo, for instance, while the “true” price was €3.97. The extra €0.22, pictured as red tomato slivers of varying widths, represented the total impact of four categories of damage caused by growing and transporting them: climate impact, water use, land use, and underpayment to workers who grew the crop.

The store was introducing a pricing system with a simple yet audacious premise: ask consumers to pay the real costs of what they purchased. Most sustainability labels address individual issues like pesticide use, habitat loss, or worker treatment. But minimizing negative impacts in one domain often ignores major problems in other areas. Your organic bananas could have an enormous carbon footprint, be grown by workers who don’t earn a living wage, and come from a farm made by destroying a biodiverse rainforest. A recent study found that organically grown peas in Sweden had a 50 percent larger carbon footprint than conventional ones. Lower yields for organic produce can mean that more land must be devoted to agriculture, raising an item’s carbon footprint. Even the Fairtrade label, which covers both environmental and social issues, doesn’t precisely quantify impacts by category.

A true price, by contrast, calculates exact shortfalls in different domains to determine the cost of remediating all major harms caused by producing and transporting a good to market. Rather than presenting a simple either/or label, the prices can show quantified information about sustainability sorted by categories. Items with the same certification standard may still have radically different impacts: an organic potato grown across the globe has a much higher carbon footprint than one that came from a farm a few miles away. Similarly, two cartons of conventional blueberries may have been grown by workers treated very differently. These differences are currently invisible in most stores and for most products.

A simple thought experiment can clarify the motivation behind true prices. Imagine you can buy an incredibly cheap chocolate bar on two conditions. First, young children in your neighborhood will miss school and labor in dangerous conditions for years. Second, the natural landscape nearest to your home will be destroyed. No rational person would accept cheap goods under these conditions. Yet many products in our current economic system create extreme human misery and environmental destruction.

The children missing school may not be in your own neighborhood, and the environmental impacts may seem far away (though increasingly less so). It’s hard to see in a chocolate bar the effects of chemical fertilizers on drinking water or the lasting harms of not getting an education. True prices make these typically hidden impacts visible, bringing our psychology into closer alignment with reason and morality. Displacing the hidden costs of products onto the natural world, other humans, and future generations is not inevitable. Reconfiguring pricing to reflect more of these hidden costs can motivate companies and governments to shift the way goods are produced and transported. True price proposes a radical normalization of ethical behavior across the global economy. While this will likely mean higher prices, it’s really a shift in who pays the true costs of products. Rather than some of the world’s poorest humans and most fragile ecosystems subsidizing costs, governments, corporations, and wealthier consumers can all begin to pay their fair share. True prices may become in the next decade what the organic label was thirty years ago: a tool for raising consumer awareness, changing producers’ and companies’ behavior, and influencing policy.

At De Aanzet (which means “the impetus”), shoppers can compare products by looking at the “true price gap,” the difference between the true price and the normal price. If one apple has a true price gap of €0.05 and a second has a true price gap of €0.50, both the scale of the difference and its causes—perhaps carbon emissions in transport, underpayment of workers, or soil-eroding intensive farming—are made transparent. The second apple causes more damage, which its higher true price gap reflects. With true pricing, this information becomes visible to consumers. If shoppers choose to buy the first apple, this can incentivize the second producer to make its production practices more sustainable, thus lowering the price of its produce and becoming more competitive.

The Longevity Imperative

Building a Better
Society for Healthier,
Longer Lives

Andrew J. Scott



14th March 2024

9781399801058

Hardback £25

‘Finally a manifesto to guide the longevity revolution... A revelation on every page’

David Sinclair, author of *Lifespan*

‘Once in a while, a book comes along that resets our thinking - this certainly does that! It is an important work will stimulate you to rethink your own, and our, collective future’

Linda Yueh, author of *The Great Crashes*

‘A must-read book with an important message and many lessons’

Daron Acemoglu, author of *Power and Progress*

‘A must read for anyone who wants a life well lived’

Noreena Hertz, author of *The Lonely Century*

THE LONGEVITY IMPERATIVE

Building a Better Society for
Healthier, Longer Lives

Andrew J. Scott

**A leading expert on longevity calls for a revolution
in the way we think about health, aging, and the future . . .**

The last century saw a revolution in life expectancy. Whether you are male or female, born in the global south or north, the chances are that you can expect to live much longer than previous generations. But instead of seeing this as a precious gift of extra life, we see it as a burden, with aging populations dogged by infirmity, dependent on an ever-decreasing number of young people to support them.

Andrew J. Scott argues it doesn't have to be like that. Our longer lives can be a source of hope and fulfilment if we seize the opportunity to pursue the evergreen agenda, one in which we pursue a sustainable lifestyle both for ourselves as individuals – investing in our finances, health, skills and relationships to support a longer life – and for the planet.



Andrew J. Scott is a professor of economics at London Business School, having previously taught at the University of Oxford and Harvard University. He is co-founder of The Longevity Forum, a consulting scholar at the Stanford Center on Longevity, and co-author of the global bestseller *The 100-Year Life*. He lives in London.

On his twentieth birthday in February 1945, my father was serving on a Royal Navy minesweeper. In that same month, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met in the Black Sea resort of Yalta to decide the postwar fate of Germany. The end of the war in Europe was only three months away. Within a year my father would be out of the navy and rejoining civilian life.

I celebrated my own twentieth birthday forty years later. Unlike my father, the closest I had come to war was listening to protest songs. Top of the UK music charts at that time was “19,” a song by Paul Hardcastle lamenting the loss of so many young soldiers in Vietnam whose average age was nineteen. Within a year I was thinking about where to apply for graduate school, worrying about the Chernobyl nuclear explosion and mourning England’s exit from the World Cup at the hands of Argentina or more precisely Diego Maradona’s “hand of God” goal.

In 2019, it was my youngest son’s turn to reach twenty. Amid growing debate about climate change, the UK recorded its then hottest-ever August bank holiday with temperatures in west London reaching 33.3°C (91.9°F)—that is high for this rainy island. Microsoft invested \$1 billion in OpenAI, which had just launched Chat GPT-2 with its revolutionary potential to change employment prospects. Within the next year, my son would be finishing university in the midst of a global pandemic and trying to find a job in an increasingly competitive labor market.

Three generations, three very different twentieth birthdays. Each of us was dealt a different hand in terms of how the world was treating us and what our future looked like. We each faced different daily concerns and had important short-term obstacles to overcome.

While individually each of us is having to adapt to the reality of longer lives, we are all having to do so at different points in the life cycle and in different contexts. That leads to a number of generational challenges that will be played out at the economic, social and political level as well as within families.

In particular, younger generations such as my son’s face two distinctive challenges that past cohorts didn’t. They are the first cohort growing up with not just the possibility but the expectation of living into their ninth or tenth decade, if not beyond. The longevity imperative is most important for them. But there is a second distinctive feature that defines them. Because of past longevity gains, they are the first cohort growing old while the majority of their parent’s generation is still alive. If each age group changes how they age in response to longevity it has consequences for the groups following on behind them.

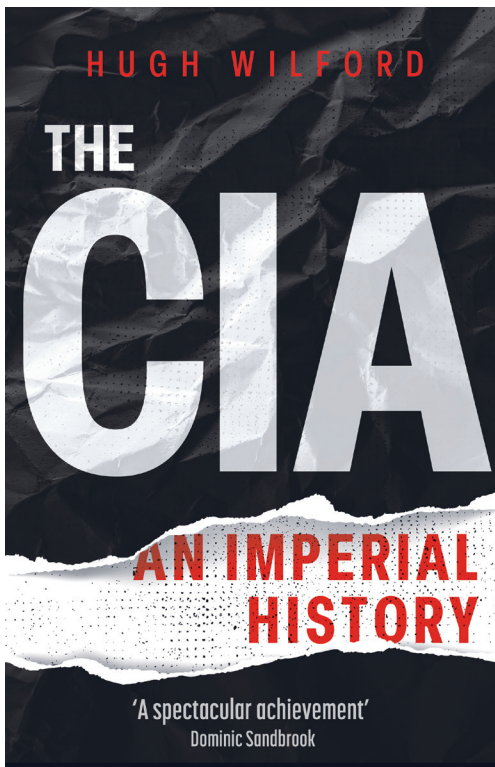
We can look to Buckingham Palace for an example of what we might call the traffic-jam effect of increased longevity. The late Queen Elizabeth II was the oldest monarch in English history when she died in 2022 aged ninety-six years. One consequence of her striking longevity was that her son, King Charles III, is also a royal record holder. No heir to the throne has ever waited so long to reign. By the time Charles finally succeeded his mother he had waited seventy years to be king.

When an older generation lives for longer it has an impact on younger generations—not only for privileged royals but for ordinary family businesses, finances, homes and lifestyles. It forces the young and the middle-aged to age differently. It affects their employment, pensions, taxation and voting power.

A key aspect of the longevity imperative is this generational challenge. How do we get the young to realize they need to age differently in order to make the most of longer healthier lives? Linked to this is the need to alter the focus of governments away from the idea that aging is a challenge only for the current old. That brings us to the greatest generational challenge of all—how do we factor intergenerational fairness into our evergreen calculations, avoid generational conflict and harness the potential of generational diversity?

Within my own family the concept of “generations” is straightforwardly sequential. My son is the next generation after me just as I followed my father. In this context, the word “generation” is emphasizing the tiers of a family tree and the genetic hierarchy between different generations. But there is another sense of “generation” that provides a different perspective. As developed in the 1920s by the Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim, this alternative concept looks beyond family trees to a social concept of generations defined by a thicket of interconnections and shared and distinct experiences.

Each of us travels through time in two dimensions. Chronologically we all age, one calendar year at a time. My father, myself and my son were all twenty at some point. But we also experience time as history unfolding, which makes the context of our aging different.



THE CIA

An Imperial History

Hugh Wilford

A celebrated British historian of US intelligence explores how the CIA became an instrument of a new covert empire both in America and overseas.

As World War II ended, the United States stood as the dominant power on the world stage. In 1947, to support its new global status, it created the CIA to analyse foreign intelligence. But within a few years, the Agency was engaged in other operations: bolstering pro-American governments, overthrowing nationalist leaders, and surveilling anti-imperial dissenters in the US.

The Cold War was an obvious reason for this transformation – but not the only one. In *The CIA*, celebrated intelligence historian Hugh Wilford draws on decades of research to show the Agency as part of a larger picture, the history of Western empire. While young CIA officers imagined themselves as British imperial agents like T. E. Lawrence, successive US presidents used the covert powers of the Agency to hide overseas interventions from postcolonial foreigners and anti-imperial Americans alike. Even the CIA's post-9/11 global hunt for terrorists was haunted by the ghosts of empires past.

Comprehensive, original, and gripping, *The CIA* is the story of the birth of a new imperial order in the shadows. It offers the most complete account yet of how America adopted unaccountable power and secrecy both at home and abroad.



Born and educated in the United Kingdom, Hugh Wilford taught at the University of Sheffield before moving to his current position as professor of United States History at California State University, Long Beach. A recipient of

awards and fellowships on both sides of the Atlantic, he is the author of five books, including *America's Great Game: The CIA's Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East* and *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*. He lives in Long Beach, California.

6th June 2024

9781399816847

Hardback £25

Praise for Hugh Wilford:

'Fascinating and authoritative . . . a lively, witty account of the CIA's escapades . . . both an entertaining biography and a ground-breaking piece of critical history'

Kai Bird, author of *Crossing Mandelbaum Gate*

'Enthralling . . . A valuable history and a fascinating read – a true page-turner'

Jeremi Suri, author of *Liberty's Surest Guardian*

'A spectacular achievement: learned, thoughtful, frequently surprising, often wryly funny, always gloriously readable'

Dominic Sandbrook

Early in the afternoon of August 26, 1953, a thirty-seven-year-old CIA officer, Kermit “Kim” Roosevelt, was ushered quietly into a drawing room in Number 10 Downing Street. There he found the prime minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill, lying in bed. The veteran PM had recently suffered a stroke and was, Roosevelt subsequently reported to Washington, “in extremely bad shape.” Nonetheless, the aristocratic young American—a grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt and a Grotonian—was greeted warmly and instructed to pull a chair up to the bed. For the next two hours, Churchill slipped in and out of a doze as he listened to Roosevelt telling a story. When the CIA officer had finished, Sir Winston sat up and addressed him. “Young man,” he declared, “if I had been but a few years younger, I would have loved nothing better than to have served under your command in this great venture.”

The story Kim Roosevelt told that afternoon—of his recent participation in a coup d’état that had deposed the nationalist prime minister of Iran, Mohammed Mosaddeq, and empowered the Iranian shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi—was indeed a thrilling one. Roosevelt had slipped into Iran on July 19, 1953, and hidden away in hills just outside Tehran. From there he had directed local American and British agents as they fomented disturbances on the streets of the Iranian capital. He also persuaded the initially hesitant shah to sign royal decrees replacing Mosaddeq with a pro-Western general, Fazlollah Zahedi. But the prime minister had uncovered the scheme on August 15 and the shah had fled the country, leaving Zahedi hiding in a Tehran basement. Undaunted, Roosevelt carried on with the plot, rallying Zahedi’s supporters in the Iranian military and orchestrating a new wave of street protests. Eventually, on the morning of the nineteenth, violent demonstrations and an army mutiny combined to force Mosaddeq from office. Zahedi emerged from hiding and an emotional shah returned to his palace. There, at a secret midnight meeting, he raised a glass to Roosevelt, telling him, “I owe my throne to God, my people, my army—and you!”

Small wonder that Winston Churchill was enthralled.

Roosevelt received a similar reception when he returned home to the United States. During a recitation of his report on the coup to a group of senior officials in Washington, he noticed that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was “purring like a giant cat.” US leaders were delighted with what they perceived as a stunning victory in the Cold War. By the following year, 1954, when a similar operation culminated in the overthrow of the nationalist president of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán, the CIA-instigated coup was firmly established in the official American mind as the preferred method of dealing with undesirable foreign leaders. Not only was it cheaper than overt, military

means of regime change, it also enabled US officials to preserve “plausible deniability,” that is, the ability to disclaim involvement in any given foreign intervention at a time when the combined circumstances of the Cold War and decolonization made it vitally important to avoid the appearance of imperialism. Working in league with local allies and surrogates, the CIA enabled successive American presidents to conceal their engagement in overseas regime change from communist rivals, postcolonial populations, and anti-imperial US citizens alike.

Or such, anyway, was the theory. In practice, of course, American involvement rarely stayed a secret, not least in Iran, where memories of August 19, 1953 (28 Mordad in the Iranian calendar), remained a cause of powerful resentment against the United States for years afterward. In the minds of many Iranians, Mosaddeq was a national hero for having dared to defy Western imperialism, and his downfall was a tragedy, not a cause for celebration. Had they witnessed Kim Roosevelt’s meeting with Winston Churchill, these Iranians might have interpreted it not, as Roosevelt remembered it, as “a most touching occasion,” but rather as the moment when an old imperial adventurer passed the mantle of empire to a young pretender.

Why, despite their history of anti-imperialism, did Americans engage in covert regime change in Third World countries such as Iran? How did CIA operations like the one commanded by Kim Roosevelt work, and why did his succeed when, as we will see, other, later ones failed? And what were the consequences of covert regime change not just for Iranians but also for other inhabitants of the Global South, the United States, and, finally, the CIA itself?

As the intimate scene in the Downing Street drawing room suggests, the answer to these questions lies not only in the immediate context of the Cold War but also in the longer arc of imperial history.

Paperback highlights



1923

The Crisis That Led to Hitler's Coup

Mark Jones

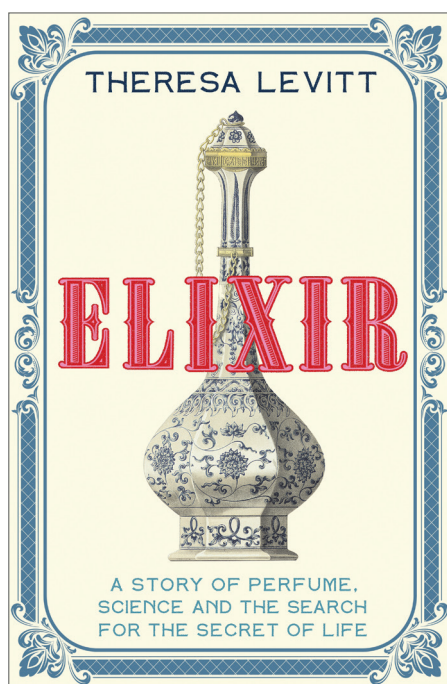
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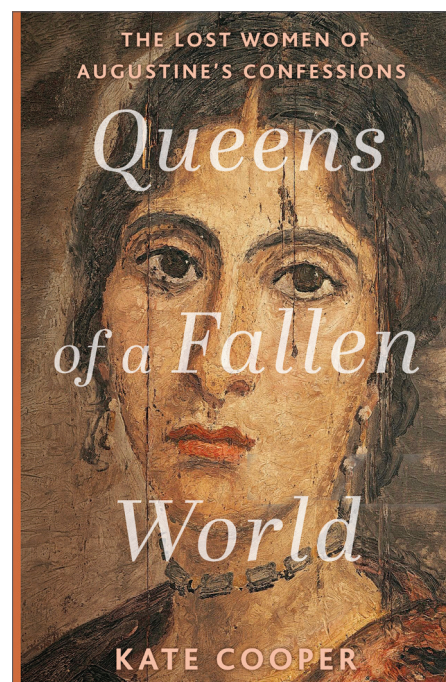
Kate Cooper

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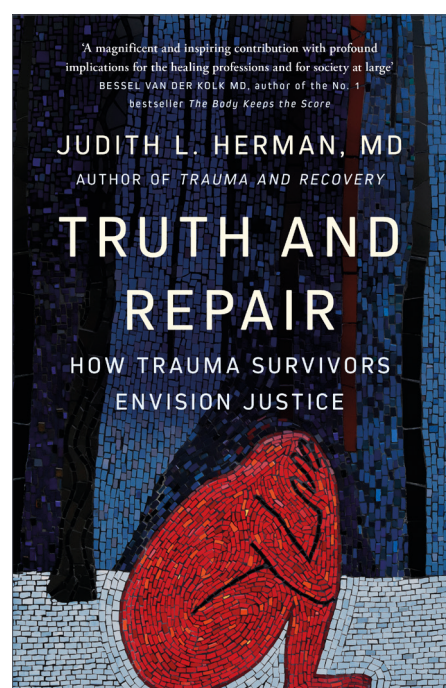
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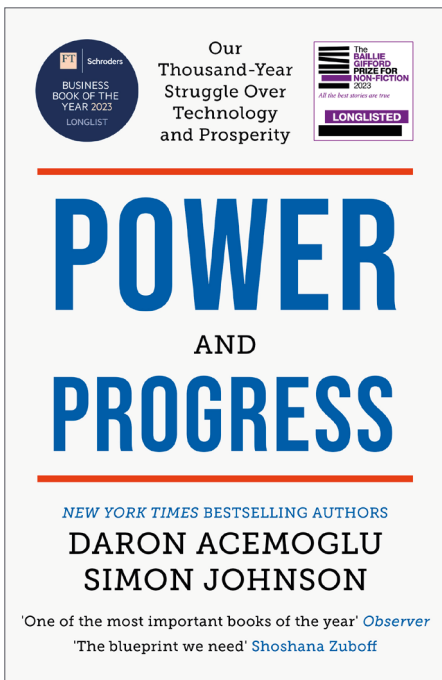
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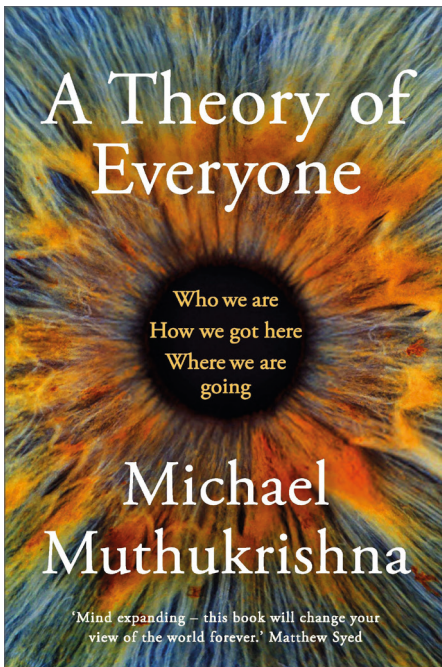
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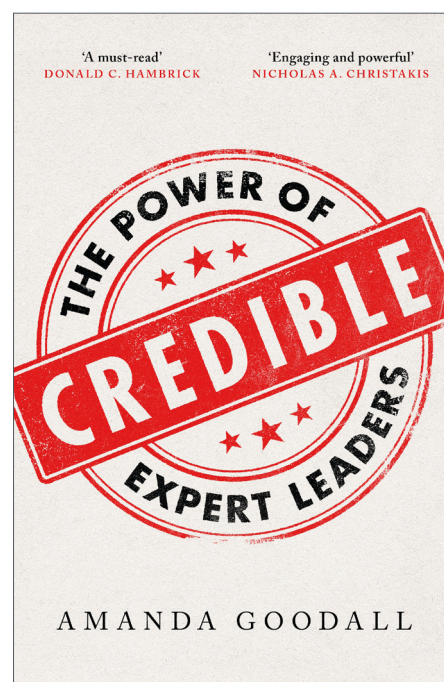
Amanda Goodall

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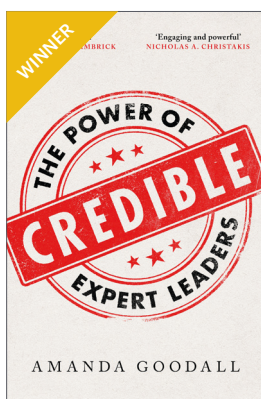
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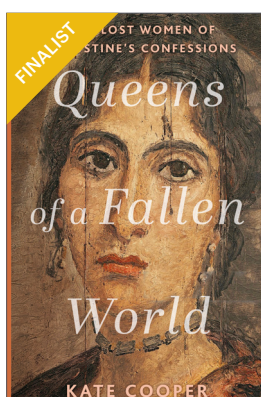


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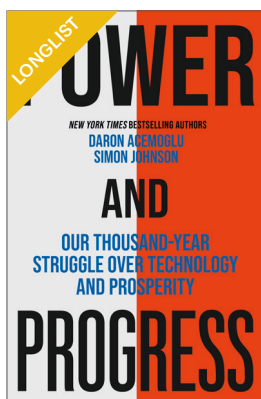


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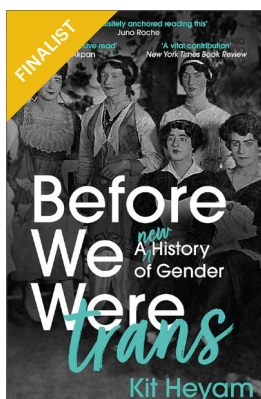
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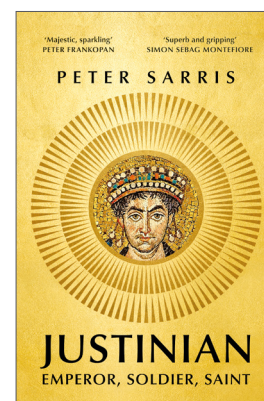
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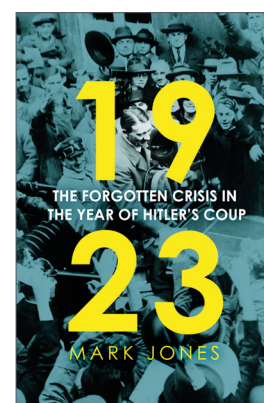


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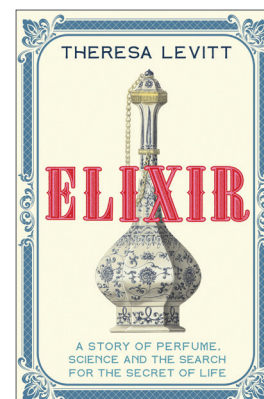


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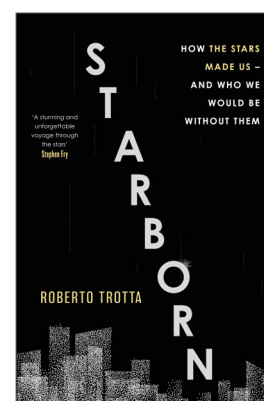


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