

CSSH NOTES

Liisa H. Malkki's *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Liisa Malkki's extraordinarily powerful book joins the study of violence and the body with history and nationalism through detailed ethnographic work and a strong grasp of theory. If there is a weakness in the book, it is perhaps that it is burdened with too many themes, since it is also about displacement, marginality and invisibility; about narratives of the self and the conditions of narrative making; and, not least, about the politics of ethnic violence in Burundi from 1972 until the present.

To be sure, Malkki does an admirable job of joining these different strands, but for me, her contributions are best understood as two interwoven themes or sets of issues. The first is the phenomenology of violence and its narrative representation; the second, a more objectivist or sociological exploration of two settings in which "the categorical identity of Hutu" is made and unmade. In this second area, Malkki differentiates two distinct categories of Hutu refugee informants in Tanzania, the camp and the town refugees. This distinction is much more than methodological and develops into a conceptual distinction that structures the entire study, and indeed, the study of nationalism itself. The social and political circumstances of the refugee camp produces a "totalizing institution"—à la Goffman and Foucault among others—in which the refugees produce themselves as a collective subject in a historic narrative about victims who have been displaced from their true nation by the evil Tutsi who are the illegitimate rulers of Burundi. In contrast, the town refugees seek a certain invisibility by taking on the many, shifting identities available to city people and reject the heroic historical mode that would make them into the collective subject of the nation.

Through a series of informant "panels," Malkki reconstructs the historical narrative through which Hutu camp refugees frame their experiences. This history does not merely moralize their present situation and prepare the "subject" for future action, since it also represents an entire cosmology which produces Hutu and Tutsi (and Tanzanians, their present rulers) as categorical entities identifiable by imagined "body maps" and racial attributes, a cosmology that has itself emerged out of the matrix of European colonial and Tutsi nationalist myths. The author's most singular contribution here is to show how these body maps, nested within wider "mythico-histories," became maps for a genocidal

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violence so horrifying that the reader has to make a special effort to keep his or her eyes on the page. Indeed, intentionally or not, the author has generated a remarkable tension in the text between violence as sheer physicality, as the breakdown of signification, and violence as social code and performance—the only means by which perpetrators, victims and ethnographers can give meaning to the meaningless.

Considered together, the two themes make a powerful argument. The historical narrative that at its core responds to the violence by essentializing and categorizing must also at some level reproduce the structure that enabled the violence. But as the experiences of the town refugees show, such historicization is not inevitable but is a consequence of the social space that people inhabit. As the author herself fleetingly suggests towards the end, the nation itself can perhaps best be understood as being composed of both these types of spaces which are so sharply distinguished in the microcosms that the refugees inhabit. Does the nation-state not produce everyday, in our schools and institutions, essentialized categories of the national self which are, however, confused and confounded by the multiple and shifting demands of our cities? And what happens when this balance is tipped one way or the other? This enormously important book provokes us to ask these and many other questions.

—Prasenjit Duara

Natalie Zemon Davis. *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1995.

A Jewish merchant woman from Hamburg whose audacious autobiography reveals the complex Ashkenazi culture on the margins of Christian Europe; a French mystic and missionary who founded an Ursuline convent in far-off Quebec; and a German naturalist, painter, and radical Protestant who travelled to Surinam to investigate the metamorphoses of tropical insects: The lives of these three seventeenth-century women form the basis of Natalie Zemon Davis's ambitious and richly textured book, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*. Separated by religion, geography, and life goals, these three women nonetheless share a crucial trait: the flexibility and creativity to adapt and make one's way as a woman, marginalized away from the centers of power. "In their own way," writes Davis, "each woman appreciated or embraced a marginal place, reconstituting it as a locally defined center" (p. 210). By drawing on letters, memoirs, scientific writings, and even illustrations, Davis simultaneously narrates each woman's unique trajectory and paints a rich portrait of three cultural worlds.

Glickl bas Judah Leib left behind the earliest known autobiography by a Jewish woman. From this panoply of moral tales, religious reflections, and family sagas, Glickl emerges as a resilient figure at the center of a web of family and business ties. Davis uses Glickl's lifestory as a window into the precarious po-

sition of Jews in early modern Europe but also illustrates the vibrancy and autonomy of Yiddish culture and society and provides thought-provoking reflections on the religious and cultural meaning of autobiography and storytelling. Perhaps most compelling is Davis' depiction of Marie de l'Incarnation, the widow from Tours who left behind her eleven-year-old son to become an Ursuline foundress in Canada. With particular resonance and sensitivity, Davis explores the spiritual dilemmas and energy of this complex individual. As she depicts Marie's attempts to transport her French, Catholic Reformation mentality into the world of the Hurons, Davis offers us a history of French missionary presence in Canada, an ethnographic exploration of Christian-Indian cultural negotiations, and informed speculations on the imaginary world of the Hurons as well. Maria Sybilla Merian follows the most unexpected lifepath in the book. This unusual woman devoted much of her life to illustrating and analyzing the lives of insects and even spent two years in Surinam. Davis skillfully explores Merian's craftsmanship and creativity: Excluded from academic circles, she nonetheless forged her own scientific interpretation, which blended an emphasis on the life cycles and ecological setting of insects with a strong aesthetic appreciation of entymology.

These microhistories combine insights into early modern psychology and gender dynamics, religious and cultural history, ethnography, and the history of science and European expansion. Some readers may be disappointed that Davis does not fully develop marginality as an analytical construct. But despite the title, the author aims less to explore marginality than to analyze the unique talents, creativity, and resilience of her three subjects. And this, after all, has always been one of Davis' main fortes: to uncover and elucidate creativity, power, and individuality in unexpected places. *Women on the Margins* carries this theme to new levels of complexity.

—Suzanne Desan

Mark Irving Lichbach. *The Rebel's Dilemma*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

This is an impressive and even overwhelming book. Mark Lichbach, a professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, has written widely in the areas of rational choice and other models of conflict. In this book, he seeks to use the basic framework of collective action theory to provide a comprehensive analysis of problems of social conflict. The breadth of his vision is captured in the introduction, in which he argues that Hobbes' problem of order is the flip side of the Rebel's Dilemma and that both may be understood within the framework of the Prisoner's Dilemma. That is, if conditions prevent defections from cooperation, rebellion is impossible and Hobbes' Dilemma does not exist because cooperation is enforced; conversely, if defection is possible, the Rebel's Dilemma is solved and Hobbes' problem quickly follows.

Two introductory chapters review basic arguments about collective action dilemmas and the themes of the book. Four chapters on “solutions” classify proposed resolutions of collective action dilemmas into market, community, contract, and hierarchy mechanisms and review large numbers of propositions from the literature about conditions promoting or hindering collective action. Two chapters on “themes” explore the complexities and paradoxes of collective action and link it to the core of politics, as dissidents struggle with regimes. A final chapter uses Lakatos and Popper to suggest ways of evaluating all these theoretical claims.

The book is encyclopedic: Its 344 pages of text are supplemented by 106 pages of footnotes and 41 pages of references. Its style is also encyclopedic, with most sections written in the telegraphic style of an abstract, although occasionally there are pauses for philosophic reflection. A typical page summarizes from three to ten distinct propositions, so there are somewhere between one and two thousand propositional claims about the predictors or consequences of collective actions within the book. But it would take dozens of volumes to treat all these propositions in depth, and so the treatment on any one of these propositions is inevitably sketchy.

Even with its encyclopedic breadth, it is also incomplete. There are at least a thousand articles on collective action in social movements alone which are relevant to the claims in this book, and the selection for mention often seemed to lack any core principle except that political scientists were more likely to be cited than sociologists. I could not help but notice that my own work on selective incentives was missing, as was, in fact, all of my joint work with Marwell on collective action, except that on which Marwell rather than I was the first author. As a consequence, the book lacked any analysis of the differences among production functions and failed to cite the reference for the “critical mass” models referred to in the text.

Nevertheless, the book represents an incredible scholarly effort. It is premised on an impossible vision of integrating “everything” into one scheme. The collective action literature is much too vast to bring this vision within human capacity. But Mark Lichbach has gone much farther toward realizing the vision than I would ever have thought possible. This is not a book to curl up with next to a fire. But I would recommend it as a reference for scholars who want theoretical inspiration for analyzing a problem involving collective action and conflict. Its thousand-plus propositions are a gold mine of ideas and insights, a treasure trove of potential research projects, and a point of departure for any future synthetic efforts.

—Pamela Oliver