

significant that Brahm prefaces his introduction with a 1958 quote by Hamburg professor of 'Overseas History', Egmont Zechlin, in which he points to 'the emancipation of the colored world from the system of European domination' as a sign that the 'modern era has come to an end' (p. 9). Zechlin was a very ambiguous character who promoted post-Second World War African studies, but had previously not only supported the Nazis but also attempted to use the German occupation of Paris to seize thousands of books from French colonial libraries. Brahm dug Zechlin's unpublished pronouncement on global history out of the archives but like much else he has unearthed here, it is not clear what we are to make of it.

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SOCIAL IMAGINATION AND YOUTH IN CAIRO

doi:10.1017/S0021853712000515

Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Modern Middle East. By MARK ALLEN PETERSON. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011. Pp. xvii + 263. \$24.95, paperback (ISBN: 978-0-253-22311-1); \$70, hardback (ISBN: 978-0-253-35628-4).

KEY WORDS: Egypt, class, media, modernity.

Cairo's cityscape has changed rapidly since the mid-1990s. One of the most striking features of the revamped landscape has been the ubiquitous presence of, and importance attached to, foreign, First World goods, styles, and knowledge. *Connected in Cairo* by Mark Allen Peterson addresses this cosmopolitan face of Cairo in the years before the 2011 uprising, and investigates the social divisions it helped define and elaborate among Cairenes. Peterson explores the ways in which being connected had come to constitute and signify specific class positions. He correctly points to the importance of imaginations of place and connection, focusing on what he terms metadecisive discourses, 'discourses that seek to interpret and make judgments about cultural artifacts and practices by connecting them with other places' (p. 15). In a globalizing context, transnational flows are localized, creating new distinctions between products, styles, and people construed as local, and their counterparts from elsewhere. Elite status but also desires for upward social mobility are expressed through cosmopolitan consumption and styles.

Peterson, who taught at the American University in Cairo (AUC) for five years, has made good use of his familiarity with Egypt's elite students to map out the balancing act involved in displaying cosmopolitan skills and styles without contravening what are construed as local or Arab cultural codes. The latter are mainly framed through recourse to gendered sexual norms. In the various chapters, Peterson explores how mostly elite children, students, and entrepreneurs socially position themselves by drawing on consumption practices, styles, and discourses that signify a familiarity and connection with the West. These different protagonists walk a tightrope of social positioning in a landscape in which class, culture, and forms of connectedness to the outside, particularly the West, are intimately related. In this context, cosmopolitanism can signify elite status but also inauthenticity, while the local can be read both as lack of sophistication and as authentic. Peterson admirably combines these explorations with accessible theoretical discussions of media and globalization.

Yet, however well chosen, Peterson's forays into cosmopolitan Cairo tend to merely touch on, rather than unpack, what is at stake in this starkly divided social landscape. The ethnography at times seems rather thin; for example Peterson's discussion of elite young men's visits to working-class 'ahawi' (street-side cafés) is suggestive, but it fails to move beyond the single case he describes. He does not tell us enough about the social lives of the young men who cherish their slumming experience. Oddly, for a discussion of class distinction in globalizing times, *Connected in Cairo* does not sufficiently situate its discussions in the specific political-economic and ideological climate of Egypt at the time. Moreover, the book only fleetingly addresses the long history of linkages between class, culture, and connectedness, which reverberate in contemporary discussions of social distinction and belonging. As I have argued elsewhere these two aspects – the reigning neoliberal project of Egypt's non-democratic regime, and the way cosmopolitan Cairo takes up and revitalizes longstanding debates about elite status and Western cultural capital in the forms of languages, styles, and consumption – are central to understanding Cairo's new professional upper-middle class. In the absence of detailed ethnography and significant attention to political-economic and historical context, the discussions of *Connected in Cairo* feel insufficiently situated in the everyday life of that teeming, sprawling and highly divided metropolis.

Despite these reservations, *Connected in Cairo* provides an accessible and instructive reading of the everyday construction and negotiation of what is oftentimes glossed as globalization, and will be of value to students and academics interested in the importance of social imagination in the making of local worlds in global times.

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ANOUK DE KONING

AN ALGERIAN DIASPORA

doi:10.1017/S0021853712000527

Algerians without Borders: The Making of a Global Frontier Society. By ALLAN CHRISTELOW. Gainesville, FL: Florida University Press, 2012. Pp. xiii + 251.

\$74.95, hardback (ISBN 978-0-8130-3755-4).

KEY WORDS: Algeria, African diaspora, identity, international relations.

As Allan Christelow's rich study of Algerians who cross borders shows, Algerian migration has a complex history involving the circulation of ideas as well as people, just as it provides a fascinating means of exploring the many strategies deployed by Algerians in the face of Ottoman and then French control and, today, globalization. The book takes a long chronological approach (starting in the late eighteenth century) alongside a broad geographical framework (from the Pacific to the Middle East to North America – in addition to France) to better put 'the Algerian experience into historical and comparative perspective' (p. 174).

As the author remarks, Algeria, as a 'frontier society' has often been situated uncomfortably on the fault line of tensions between Western and Islamic worlds, making it acutely susceptible to geopolitical shifts (p. 185). Simultaneously, however, the country has produced individuals capable of understanding a multitude of political, cultural, and intellectual environments and serving as cultural intermediaries in different roles (interpreters, scholars, and diplomats), thereby challenging – both implicitly and explicitly – many a cultural binary. Indeed, one of the book's key aims is to analyze, through a study of the *longue*