

not focusing so relentlessly on Zionism's unique aspects. The lament of the last part of the book—that the Hebrew language is the cause of current stalled debates in Israel—seems odd from an American perspective. The United States has a closely divided polity, with many stalled debates, yet the English language did not have to unmoor itself from its theological status. We have intractable and persistent debates—about abortion, the role of government, and so on—because people deeply disagree. Language surely matters, but the idea that a certain kind of language is befitting of democracy, and that if only Israel had it the debates within that country would be more productive, is hard to fathom.

This argument overreaches, but does not detract from the richness of the rest of the book. For those who want to wade into late 19th- and early 20th-century discussions about time and progress; for those who want a clear understanding of the role of building in Zionism that continues in Israel to this day; and for those who want to understand how early Zionists wrestled with making Hebrew a modern language, this book has much to offer.

NINA BERMAN, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2011). Pp. 336. \$70.00 cloth.

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Although coming from literary studies, Nina Berman sets out to survey a millennium not only of German discourse on the Middle East but also of German social, political, and economic practice in the region and/or pertaining to it. Apart from the introduction and conclusion, the text is divided into five chapters of about equal length. The first, “Pilgrims, Crusaders, Knights, and Settlers,” covers the period from 1000 to 1350 and a main point of it is to show that large numbers of pilgrims went to the Holy Land even before the Crusades. The second chapter, titled the “Conflict with the Ottoman Empire,” from 1350 to 1683, the second Ottoman siege of Vienna, focuses on a shift from the religious discourse to one emphasizing cultural difference. The third chapter covers the years from 1683 to 1792, a period characterized as “A Moment of Equilibrium” and distinguished by *Turcomania* and the popularity of other Middle Eastern themes. The fourth chapter, “Empire and Modernization (1792–1945),” shows that a tradition of positive identification with the Middle East existed alongside the typical colonial perspective. The fifth chapter, “The Middle East Within (1945–1989),” points out that beliefs established in earlier periods persist despite intensive economic and political relations between German-speaking and Middle Eastern states and the presence of large numbers of immigrants from the Middle East, especially in the Federal Republic.

Covering such a long period makes it impossible for the study to be based predominantly on primary sources. Instead, Berman provides an extensive survey of existing research findings. Though the survey of the literature is not comprehensive, and not even all publications mentioned in the introduction are used for the discussion in the relevant chapters, the book covers a very impressive range, enabling the reader to get a useful, well-written overview of the research undertaken so far.

The framing is more problematic. Berman explains in the introduction that she intends to demonstrate that in his *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), Edward Said, like other poststructuralists, was wrong to assume the “concurrence of textual discourses and social, political, and economic practices” (p. 6). In contrast, she aims at utilizing *practice theory*, first introduced by Max Weber in his *Economy and Society: The Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al. [Berkeley,

Calif.: University of California Press, 1978] German original: 1922), to enable an interpretation of “all practices and their engagement of material objects” (Berman, p. 7). As Berman explains:

The occurrence of a death or a journey undertaken to sell goods may only be known to us through a textual document, but the text is not the death or the journey, and we may understand the action and the discursive statement about the action separately, all the while attempting to acknowledge self-reflexively the discursive boundedness of our own perception of the world (p. 7).

Though there is no doubt that practice theory may be a very useful analytic tool, its contribution seems to be rather limited for this particular study.

To start with, the assumption of a concurrence of textual discourses and social, political, and economic practices underlies merely the third kind of Orientalism discussed by Said. Apart from Orientalism as an academic discipline and as a style of thought (*Orientalism*, pp. 2–3), he discerns Orientalism as “the corporate institution of dealing with the Orient (...) as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (*ibid.*, p. 3). Since Said dates the beginning of that third Orientalism to the late 18th century, only Berman’s last two chapters (4 and 5) would be relevant for a refutation of Said’s approach; however, these chapters focus more on issues of continuity in the discourse than the interrelation between discourse and practice.

A study of the interrelation in earlier periods could of course be interesting in itself, though there are major difficulties as Berman’s study clearly illustrates. For any meaningful interrelation between discourse and practice, the two have to pertain to the same group of historical actors. For earlier periods such concurrence is hard to establish and highly questionable. Berman acknowledges the difficulty, but does not consider it an impediment:

Germany is a shifting signifier, referring to a range of empires and states over a thousand-year period. The focus on “Germany” is legitimated through a textual archive that exists in the German language, beginning here with Middle High German texts from the middle of the eleventh century. This archive of literary texts and other writings in the German language was written and read by people who often valued their regional or religious identity more than belonging to an empire or nation-state, and often would not have self-identified as “Germans” (p. 18).

That explanation might suffice in a study of literature, but to my mind it is insufficient for an investigation of the interrelation between discourse and social, political, and economic practice. Until the end of the 18th century, the German language was not yet standardized; it was not the only language available for writing (Latin was a major alternative); and the vast majority of the population was illiterate. In that context, a national framing of a study aiming to investigate the interrelation between discourse and practice seems inappropriate, at least to this reader.

Given the framing, it is not surprising that Berman comes to the conclusion that there is no predictable pattern to the way discourse affects social, political, and economic practice (p. 239); that the relationship between discourse and historical events is complex, comprising continuities and discontinuities (p. 240); and that an investigation of crosscultural and transnational processes might be useful (pp. 240–41). The conclusion presents an astonishing argument, however. Berman asks: “How is it possible that images, such as those of ‘the Crusades’ or ‘the violent Arab,’ can be readily invoked in public discourse after decades and even centuries during which these images played only minor roles?” (p. 241). She finds her answer in neuroscience. Research of the brain is said to have shown that “certain ideas and images are passed on through generations and end up stored in the long-term memory section of the brain [...] these ideas and images are part of people’s nondeclarative memory ... that is, memories that can be used for things that cannot be declared or explained in any straightforward manner” (*ibid.*). At least to this reader it seems

worthwhile readjusting the level of inquiry before resorting to some century-old residue in the brain.

On the whole, Berman's book makes for interesting reading. If the limitations are kept in mind, the book allows discerning issues that warrant further research, not least due to the fact that it is well written and presents an extensive overview of the literature. I warmly recommend it.

RAOUF ABBAS AND ASSEM EL-DESSOUKY, *The Large Landowning Class and the Peasantry in Egypt, 1837–1952* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011). Translated from the Arabic by Amer Mohsen with Mona Zikri. Edited by Peter Gran. Pp. 296. \$29.95 cloth.

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The late Raouf Abbas was among the giants of history as a discipline in 20th-century Egypt. Author of more than a dozen books on modern Egyptian history, mentor to countless students in the discipline, and organizer and motive force behind decades of symposia and conferences—not least in his capacity as president of the Egyptian Society of Historical Studies—Abbas had as great an influence on the development of history writing in Egypt as his renowned forerunners Ahmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karim, Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahim Mustafa, and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Raf'i. It is therefore a matter for regret that scholars in the English-speaking world should have so little of his work available to them in translation.

Peter Gran, Amer Mohsen, and Mona Zikri have performed a great service for English-speaking scholars in editing and translating the work under review, coauthored by Abbas and his distinguished colleague from Helwan University, Assem El-Dessouky. Originally entitled *Kibar al-Mullak wa-l-Fallahin fi Misr 1837–1952* and published in Cairo in 1998, the book was in fact a compilation of works penned separately by the authors and published in the 1970s. Both had an enormous influence in reorienting Egyptian historiography away from the political and intellectual history that had dominated the field until that time, and toward social history. To have, at long last, this work available in English is important, then, not simply in enlarging scholars' understanding of the material which forms its subject—social relations in the modern Egyptian countryside, and their bearing on Egyptian politics—but also in exposing the methods and concerns which have structured history writing in contemporary Egypt.

The book was, and remains, pathbreaking, not least given the tremendously rich archival materials upon which it is based. These materials are drawn from Egypt researchers' archival mainstay, the Egyptian National Archives (Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya), as well as from the Archives of Egyptian Public Records (Dar al-Mahfuzat al-'Umumiyya) and the archives of the Agrarian Reform Authority (al-Hay'a al-'Amma li-l-Islah al-Zira'i). The variety of documents scrutinized by the authors is quite literally breathtaking, ranging from land deeds, registrations, and transaction records, to taxation accounts and pension files, to the investigations the Agrarian Reform Authority undertook into particular landowners after the 1952 revolution.

Arguably the central concern of the authors, in theoretical terms, is to debunk the view that social relations in the Egyptian countryside had an essentially feudal character during the period under examination, extending from the Muhammad 'Ali (1769–1849) era through the 1952 revolution. Abbas and El-Dessouky suggest these relations are better understood as a variation on capitalism, insofar as they had a distinctly contractual character. This suggestion is significant in that it represents a departure from the Nasirist analysis of social relations