

CSSH NOTES

Harry Harootunian. *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Can the concept of “everydayness” help us widen “our understanding of the processes of modernity” (p. 4)? Yes, asserts Harry Harootunian in *History's Disquiet*, arguing that everydayness allows for seeing assimilations (not copies or alternatives) of modernity as experienced in regions outside Euro-America. Exploring early twentieth-century Japanese notions of modernity in tandem with a much larger roster of European theorists, Harootunian suggests that as both temporal experience and historical category, everyday life allows for a leveling of the analytical playing field across diverse societies such that a “native theory” (6) is not needed to explicate modernity in places such as Japan. Instead, as shared experiences of capitalism that transcend cultural geographies, everydayness allows for a coevalness of capitalist societies in and out of Europe.

History's Disquiet opens with a poignant passage on modernity from Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet*. The introduction that follows—and the book in general—is highly theoretical, arguing for a political rather than historical analysis of Walter Benjamin's concept of the modern “present conjuring the past” (17). Where Pessoa writes of “how mysteriously the everyday things of life brush by us,” Harootunian suggests that the everyday is where “pasts [which] lay waiting in the present” are actualized (21). For Harootunian, the everyday and everydayness are neither mundane nor immemorial, but are instead historically specific secular and temporal concepts. These ideas are considered in Chapters Two and Three, the first exploring European theorists, the second Japanese intellectuals. The latter chapter is the most provocative, assessing the shades of variation through which Japanese cultural producers viewed their cities, times, and notions of the here and now, including the unfinished nature of modernity.

This slim volume consists of an introduction and three chapters, and was originally presented as the 1997 “Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory” at the University of California-Irvine. Much in the essays still has the feel of a lecture, with a choppyness to the chapters, and sparse footnotes and bibliographic citations. Readers may also be distracted by at times personal and not always substantiated criticisms of scholars such as Hayden White, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, but primarily and persistently of Partha Chatterjee (whose name is misspelled throughout the book). Others also take hits, including the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) that is likened to a “pimp”

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(29), and Euro-American scholars of Japan who marry Japanese wives, thus limiting options for genuine critique in the field (39–40).

In the end, this is a difficult book, lacking an integration of historical and cultural material for Japan alone, or in dialogue with Europe, that would allow the theoretical discussion to truly come alive (as it does, for example, in Harootyan's *Overcome by Modernity*, Princeton, 2000). The opposition to post-colonial scholarship is awkward, given that as a discourse on modernity outside of Europe, *History's Disquiet* does not radically depart from the conclusions of this general literature. What does distinguish this book, however, is the insistence on everydayness as a key component in the relationship between history, modernity, and cultural practice. Thinking about everydayness as a shared aspect of capitalist modernity opens new doors for thinking about the doubled and incomplete modernities experienced in Japan and beyond.

———Carole McGranahan, University of Colorado

Robert E. Bonner. *Colors & Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. 223 pp., ISBN 0-691-09158-7.

Robert Bonner begins this wonderful and engaging narrative with a nod to contemporary debates over the symbolism and meaning of the Confederate battle flag. “In the 1990s,” he notes, “rebel flags became front-page news” as civil right organizations “worked to discredit a symbol they associated with slavery and racism” while heritage groups defended the flag “as a proud relic handed down from heroic ancestors” (p. 1). Bonner emphasizes in his introduction, however, that readers of *Colors & Blood* should not expect rumination on these contemporary debates. Instead, he has fashioned a fascinating study that explores how a series of Confederate banners and flags evolved out of and, in turn, shaped a “wartime flag culture that set the emotional tone of the Civil War . . . and brought together powerful themes of defiance, sovereignty, and bloodshed” (2). Although this wartime flag culture existed in the North as well as in the South, *Colors & Blood* focuses almost entirely on the Confederacy.

Contemporary Americans think primarily of the Southern Cross (the familiar diagonal blue cross with inlaid white stars on a red background) when they conjure up an image of the Confederate flag. As Bonner so effectively explains, however, there were many Confederate flags. First came a series of secession banners; in the fall of 1860 and the early months of 1861, proponents of secession in the various states designed a wide variety of banners that included South Carolina's Palmetto, Alabama's Cotton Flower, and Mississippi's Magnolia. Soon thereafter, the first Confederate Congress recognized the need to adopt a single flag for the new nation. After considering more than 120 designs submitted by men and women from all across the South, the Confederate Congress selected the Stars and Bars, a design that closely resembled the flag of the Unit-

ed States except that three wide bars replaced the thirteen stripes. In addition, a circle of stars (one for each state) on a blue background represented the states. The Confederate Congress first unfurled this new flag in Montgomery, Alabama, at the moment that Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office in Washington, D.C.

But for reasons that Bonner makes clear in an insightful series of chapters, the Stars and Bars did not last long as the defining emblem of wartime flag culture. Instead, the Southern Cross, designed in the fall of 1861 as a battle flag for the Army of Northern Virginia, soon emerged as the most potent symbol of the Confederacy, especially as white southerners came to associate the standard with the success of their army. As Bonner notes, “the only accomplishment more celebrated than dying for the cause was achieving victory on its behalf” (94). Consequently, in 1862 and 1863, as Robert E. Lee’s troops scored a number of victories, most other Confederate armies adopted versions of the Southern Cross. By 1863, the Southern Cross proved so popular that the Confederate Congress replaced the Stars and Bars with the Stainless Banner, a design that set the Southern Cross in the corner against an all-white background.

Throughout *Colors & Blood*, Bonner makes a strong argument for the importance of taking flag culture seriously, especially as he sees a critical link between the development of wartime flag culture and the existence of a vibrant Confederate nationalism. Most cultural historians, he asserts, have understood Confederate flag culture primarily in terms of the sentimentalism and nostalgia of the Lost Cause. Bonner, on the other hand, emphasizes the degree to which flag culture reveals the “gut-wrenching patriotism that was felt, rather than thought, by the many” (3). In this story, women emerge as the staunchest defenders of the Confederate cause, devoting themselves to the sewing, presentation, and display of Confederate symbols as fiercely as the men who fought on the battlefield.

Of course, the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865 forced white southerners to redefine the meaning of their most potent symbol. No longer able to associate the Southern Cross with military victory, white men and women in the South instead emphasized the glory and honor of their cause, by definition stripped of any association with treason or slavery. Between 1890 and 1920, as the white South refined its mythology of the Lost Cause, African Americans paid little attention to the white South’s glorification of the Southern Cross. Instead, as Bonner effectively articulates in his final chapter, blacks in the Jim Crow South were far more concerned with redeeming the Stars and Stripes than condemning the Confederate battle flag. Once African Americans, however, had thrown off the shackles of Jim Crow during the Civil Rights Movement, they turned their attention to the Southern Cross. White heritage groups, meanwhile, continued to embrace a flag culture that honored bravery and sacrifice. Consequently, as Bonner concludes, “if participants in today’s debates often seem to talk past one another, it is because they have come to the controversy by very

different paths and seek different goals in the fight” (176). In *Colors & Blood*, Robert Bonner has produced a well-written and thought-provoking account that elucidates the startling depth of those differences.

———J. Douglas Smith, Occidental College

John Watkins. *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History, Sovereignty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Semper eadem—always the same—was Elizabeth I’s motto, but the accounts and appropriations of her legacy have been anything but. In the century after her death, as John Watkins’ study shows, Elizabeth received mostly good press, but she was praised for different reasons by different people, and to greatly varying political ends. Jacobean economists linked James and Elizabeth as saviors of the English nation against Catholic threat. Parliamentarians in the 1630s and 1640s (and Whig historians thereafter) praised an Elizabeth whose supposedly moderate, constitutionalist government contrasted with the tyrannical innovations of the Stuarts; Royalists, by contrast, praised her as a defender of royal prerogative. Elizabeth made an uncomfortable model for revolutionaries, and her famous memory was invoked less during the Interregnum than before or after; but Restoration writers such as Clarendon and William Cavendish advocated a return to Elizabethan government, which Clarendon understood as a *via media* between tyranny and excessive popular concessions, but which Cavendish frankly praised as a successful despotism. After the Glorious Revolution, the power of the monarchy had become too limited for Elizabethan government to serve as a practical political model of any kind; but popular interest in Elizabeth flourished in “secret histories” which purported to reveal the passions of her private life, a genre which appealed to the public appetite for scandal in high places, and which endures to this day.

Representing Elizabeth is an essay in mnemohistory, or the history of memory. Literary scholars might think of it as a reception history, save that the object received is not a text but a queen. In showing how conflicting interpretations of Elizabeth’s legacy figured in the political conflicts of seventeenth-century England, Watkins points out that evocations of Good Queen Bess’ glorious days involved a fair amount of amnesia, as evocations of the good old days usually do. Watkins aims to modify the view that most seventeenth-century writing about Elizabeth exalted her in contrast to the Stuart monarchs, and to this end he examines a variety of texts which offer more equivocal representations of the queen or which praise her from a pro-Stuart perspective. Watkins also wants to challenge the idea that Stuart remembrance of Elizabeth was “nostalgic”; nostalgia, he says, involves a sense of the irrecoverable pastness of the past, and such a view of Elizabeth’s reign did not emerge until around 1700. This argument depends simply on how one defines “nostalgia.”

Nuanced in its readings, coherently organized, and clearly written, *Representing Elizabeth* adds to the growing body of fruitful cross-disciplinary work in early modern British studies.

———Tobias Gregory, California State University, Northridge

Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds., *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001.

The provocative, lucid, and wide-ranging set of essays contained in *States of Imagination* attempt to fashion a “denaturalizing approach” to the postcolonial state, one that moves beyond both orthodox Marxist renderings of the state as epiphenomenal and modernization-theoretical approaches that substituted a catalogue of negative definitions (narratives of lack) for a critical engagement with postcolonial governance. While rooted in an explicitly anthropological perspective, the introduction and the thirteen essays that follow position themselves in a conceptual “space” between Gramscian and Foucauldian frameworks that have broad interdisciplinary import (p. 3). A central assumption here is that the distinct epistemological grounding of Gramscian and Foucauldian perspectives does not translate into fundamental incompatibility, much less demand a rigorous epistemic hygiene. The conceptually dense introduction and essays seek to parlay the operative metaphor of a “space between” Gramscian and Foucauldian frameworks in order to render intelligible a range of paradoxes constitutive of the state in postcolonial worlds. While the attempted rapprochement between Gramscian analyses of hegemony and class relations and the currently ascendant Foucauldian analytic of governmentality is somewhat uneven in execution, it is motivated by a concern to grasp the “ambiguities of the state” as “both illusory as well as a set of concrete institutions” as “both distant and impersonal ideas as well as localized and personified institutions” as “both violent and destructive as well as benevolent and productive” (5). The central conceptual trope of the volume as a whole and the dominant thematic focus of the various essays concern the varied “languages of stateness,” or the localized significations and trajectories that define the field of political discourse and practice in diverse postcolonial formations. The volume places particular emphasis on the everyday practical techniques of governance and the symbolic modalities that reproduce the stubborn persistence of the imagination of the state as “a source of social order and stability” and as “an agency capable of creating a definite and authorized nation-space” inscribed in “boundaries, infrastructure, monuments, and authoritative institutions” (2). In so doing, the volume articulates an ethnographic manifesto for studies of the postcolonial state that has broad relevance for historians, sociologists, and anthropologists alike.

States of Imagination is thematically organized along three constitutive di-

mensions of the state: technologies of governance, representation of the state, and the authoritative investment of institutions, community, and fields of struggle. Beyond its laudatory focus on the specificity of postcolonial state forms, the volume is distinguished by the methodological attempt (laid out in the introduction) to navigate the conundrums associated with the pervasive naturalization of statist epistemologies in everyday language and practice, and, above all, by the remarkably uniform set of contributions that provide richly detailed, highly readable, and nuanced explorations of vernacular conceptions of authority, resistance, and governance in diverse postcolonial political fields. It is impossible to do justice here to the conceptually insightful and ethnographically nuanced essays. They not only range geographically from South Africa, India, and Pakistan to Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru, but engage a diverse, if interrelated, complex of themes including the spatiality of the state, techniques of state formation in contexts of political transition, struggles over local developmental agencies, and the juridical and institutional reworking of community, citizenship, and pedagogical practices.

The timeline of most of the essays is contemporary, and the introduction leads off with a brief discussion of current transformations associated with neoliberal capitalist restructuring. Yet, neither the introduction nor the majority of the essays directly engage the articulation between the “language of stateness” and socioeconomic imaginaries and transformations. The introduction and essays tend to bracket in common the larger structures of the neoliberal present and almost entirely ignore the question of shifting state/economy constellations. The Foucauldian analytic adopted by most of the essays conditions the eclipsing of political economy in general beyond an underspecified understanding of the economic “effects” of dispersed disciplinary regimes. And the dominant micro-analytical perspective reinforces the particular neglect of the shifting contours between political and economic fields and imaginaries. The elision of global capitalism (in all its unevenness) in relation to ongoing transformations of state forms and imaginaries across regional contexts undercuts the attempt to engage the specific present of postcolonial states. The neglect of political economy is a wider aspect, of course, of a great deal of contemporary postcolonial study. Yet it must also be read as a sign of a specific historical conjuncture—as itself symptomatic of the neoliberal formation that many of the essays in this otherwise excellent volume presuppose but do not explicitly elaborate on.

———Manu Goswami