

CSSH NOTES

Rochelle Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence. A History of America's Cultural and Legal Struggles over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art*. New York: Hill and Wang.

“Our public sphere, which should have displayed and preserved the grandeur and beauty of our civic ideals and moral excellences, is instead inane and vacuous when it is not utterly mean, ugly, or indecent” (p. 4). Troubled by the tawdry nonsense circulating in the public sphere—and she wrote before learned enquiries into whether the President’s genitals had any distinguishing characteristics—Rochelle Gurstein turns to history to understand how we arrived at such a sorry destination. Hers is a tale of decline: The Victorians “we moderns” so routinely deride for their Puritanical repressiveness understood full well that certain things have to remain private, even shameful, in order to retain their sacred value—and in order to protect a public sphere worth having.

Catholic or incoherent in her antiliberalism, Gurstein manages to appeal to Hannah Arendt, Alasdair MacIntyre, and C. B. Macpherson as though they were fully compatible. The history on offer ranges broadly from law to literature and more but is overwhelmingly intellectual history, so one misses any sense of concrete social practices: For instance, an elegant reconstruction of late-nineteenth-century worries about invasive journalism would be better if Gurstein offered a sustained exploration of just what newspapers were in fact beginning to publish and just how it did or did not depart from the past. Her commitment to decline is so strong that one wonders if she regrets the public availability of information about birth control, a crucial part of her story. And she is relentlessly repetitive in offering a defensive paratheory of how easy liberals will allegedly find it to dismiss her argument: One begins to feel that to demur is to brand oneself an idiot in the clutches of slogans.

What is to be done? This unreconstructed liberal by no means finds it easy to dismiss her concerns, but it is unclear at the end of the day what kind of remedy, if any, Gurstein would offer. Ironically, she closes by saluting the wisdom of Milan Kundera. But it is easy to imagine what the Victorians she so admires would have made of his titillating novels.

———Don Herzog

Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hasan Kayali brings his obvious talents for narrative and description and knowledge of the extant literature on the relations between the Arabs and the Turks in Arabic and Turkish to bear on the important but understudied topic of the Arabs of the Young Turks. In this relatively short volume, consisting of an introduction and six chapters, he covers this topic from the period of the *Tanzimat* through to the end of the Ottoman Empire. He is aware of the fact that the feelings that were and still are at the bottom of this complex relationship did not end in 1922 but that would be the subject of an entirely different book.

This book would have been stronger without its introduction, which allows Kayali to show his knowledge of the literature on nationalism but which only serves to demonstrate what a field of land mines nationalism is—and he steps on many of them. That is unnecessary, for as Kayali himself says, nationalism was not an issue for the Arabs in the period covered by the book. In it he also repeats the late, and sorely missed, Albert Hourani's unsupported assertion to the effect that historically there were no fines of exclusion that kept Arabs out of Ottoman state and society. Even a cursory look at the available prosographic material demonstrates that—in the military and bureaucratic careers in the central administration until the late nineteenth century—Arabs were strongly underrepresented. That this situation loosened up after the late nineteenth century is due largely to Abdulhamid II's educational reforms, a topic covered well by Kayali in his first chapter which sets the stage for later developments. The second chapter deals with what Kayali terms the second constitutional experiment, 1908–09, and the beginnings of the emergence of Arab criticism of the CUP. Chapter three focuses on the struggle between the decentralists and the increasingly anti-CUP attitude of the decentralist-minded Arab leaders. Chapter four looks at the CUP after losses in the Balkans that left the Ottoman Empire with its Turco-Arab core. The CUP returned to power after the bloody coup of January 1913 and then made Islam a centerpiece of its appeal to the Arabs. Chapter five is devoted to the CUP and its attempt to impose its centralization policy in the Hijaz as Kayali's contribution to center-periphery historiography. The final chapter is devoted to the period between 1914 and 1918. Kayali ends on an ironic note, namely that ultimately the CUP followed the same policies of Abdulhamid—reliance on Islam, political centralization and the attempt to achieve social harmony.

If one is looking for a well-written narrative, focusing on politics, of the relations between the CUP and the Arabs, this book will provide a comfortable, cogent read. By casting this work in the frame of a contribution to center/periphery analysis, Kayali in the end diminishes the thrust of his work. He shares in the sterility of that approach as a means of uncovering deeper layers of historical causation. His book tells us what happened, where and when, but not why. Perhaps that was foreshadowed in his introduction, when he indicates

that he would not be concerned with ethnicity, since he sees it as being anathema to the policies of the CUP. If it turns out to be, as it is highly likely, that many of the intellectual leaders of the CUP were not only anti-Islamic, but atheists as well, where will that leave the paradigm of center-periphery as a means of explaining what in the end was a psychological issue for many of them?

Hasan Kayali should be congratulated for successfully clearing out the underbrush that has made the study of the Arabs under the Turks so impenetrable. All who are interested in this subject will find this book a must read, but rather than deterring them from joining the fray, they should now feel comfortable in viewing the same issues from other perspectives.

———Norman Itzjkowitz

Glenn Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

The intifada, or uprising, that began in the Occupied Territories in December 1987 and ended about four years later was a watershed in that it profoundly transformed the rules of the game for Palestinian politics locally, regionally, and internationally. Glenn E. Robinson's *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) discusses the precedents, processes, and aftermath of the intifada by focusing on the role of elites in this trajectory. The book is structured around three questions: First, what compels aggrieved individuals to turn to sustained collective action? In the Palestinian context, the author argues that this became possible only when national leadership in the territories was transferred, beginning in the late 1970s, from a class of politically accommodating, wealthy, conservative, urban, landowning elites to a younger generation of more radical, university-educated, lower-middle class and middle-class village, refugee camp, and urban residents who sought social as well as political transformation. As a number of other scholars have argued, this leadership transfer was facilitated by Israeli land confiscations and restrictions on land and water use, the concomitant rise of a migrant wage-labor force largely dependent on manual work in Israel, and the expansion of Palestinian universities after the 1967 Israeli occupation of the territories. Robinson argues that these universities were particularly important for the rise of the counter-elite because their student bodies largely came from the non- and small-landowning residents of villages, towns, and refugee camps (the children, particularly male, of the wealthy were more likely to be educated abroad).

Robinson next considers how revolutionary collective action is sustained in the face of overwhelming counterforce. This, he argues, was possible because the new elite was more democratic, fluid, and regionally dispersed than its predecessor. Again, in an argument previously made by others, Robinson argues that this "devolution" of power made it more difficult for the Israeli authorities

to contain political mobilization by cutting off “the metaphorical head of the beast” (p. xi). The author does not, however, discuss levels of devolution and their respective implications. For example, the dispersed yet focused and accountable mass-based organizing of the decade preceding the intifada (and its first several months) is not comparable to the often destructive, gang-like factionalization that occurred as Israeli repression intensified and the goals of the intifada were increasingly contested among Palestinian elites beginning in mid-1988. This new stage was less about strategic dispersal and more about disintegration. Indeed, it coincided with a re-masculinization of power and space: Women were dramatically eclipsed from political leadership and their public presence was targeted and regulated.

The most interesting question addressed by Robinson is how the “revolutionary” process has shaped the emerging Palestinian state. Here he argues that while the goals of the intifada were social and political transformation, neither was fulfilled. This is largely a result of Yasir Arafat’s deliberate re-institution of the more reliable “old guard,” at the expense of the less compliant elite that had cut its teeth on mass-based organizing, as the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in the territories. In this context, the new state, Robinson compellingly argues, will probably remain authoritarian as a result of three reinforcing dynamics: an institutionalizing process that promises to consolidate the PA’s existing lack of accountability; a dramatic imbalance of power between the Israeli state and the PA that assures that the latter will not win significant concessions and will therefore have to increasingly repress dissent—and the PA’s status as a rentier regime whose revenues depend on foreign aid rather than local taxation, providing little necessity for domestic political accountability.

———Frances Hasso

Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies. Conquest, Family, and Nation in Pre-colonial Germany, 1770–1870*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Germany’s brief colonial career began in the 1880s after centuries of European overseas expansion. Yet as Susanne Zantop shows in this interesting study, German observers were anything but “passive” during these long years of colonial abstinence. Between the Welsers’ ill-fated South American colonial venture (1528–55) and the late-nineteenth-century Scramble, German writers generated a huge literature on colonialism which was fraught with fantasies about imperial conquest, European conflict, and German class struggles. While most recent work on German colonialism focuses on the late nineteenth century and on the sites of Germany’s eventual overseas empire, this book concentrates on the New World, arguing that it played a more important role in German colonial fantasies than Africa, Asia, or the Pacific. Zantop traces the evolution of colonial discourses within a variety of literary, philosophical, and

scientific genres, focusing on the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1870s.

One central theme is the systematic organization of German colonial material around fantasies of gender, sexuality, and the family. Relations between colonizer and colonized are variously emplotted as stories of rape, marriage, or divorce, and alternately assume heterosexual, “homosocial,” and desexualized forms. Countless German rewritings of the Robinson Crusoe story in the eighteenth century elaborate the myth of “the benign, efficient, and restrained German colonizer” (p. 120). This is a desexualized variant of the colonial fantasy, with colonizers as pedagogical fathers and the colonized as children. The second half of the century sees a shift to plots of cross-cultural, interracial colonial “love.” Here, natives surrender willingly to the (German) conquistador, and native men are depicted as sexually decadent and feminized. Colonial love is then inverted at the end of the nineteenth century in a new narrative form organized around “divorce” and the idea of an unbridgeable cultural gulf between Europeans and non-Europeans. At the same time, a scientific and philosophical literature on “race” emerges. Race is already being defined in terms of anatomy and physiology (p. 79), and Europeans or Germans are placed at the top of the racial hierarchy. Zantop argues that these writings construct an impersonal “racist intertext” which differs little from the more familiar biological racism of the second half of the nineteenth century.

A second central theme is the increasingly important subtext of European and German politics within writings ostensibly concerned with faraway lands. German writers respond to the failure to gain a colonial foothold in the New World into a counterstory of “colonial innocence” and “Germans as superior colonizers,” in which Germany is accorded a “moral entitlement to its virgin island” (p. 202). The Napoleonic occupation adds a new twist to this notion of a special German colonial prerogative, as Germans position themselves as victims of “colonization.” German nineteenth-century colonial literature is then characterized by “fantasies of heroic (con)quests” (p. 171), with Alexander von Humboldt playing the role of a scientific, modernized, German Columbus. Alongside these themes of international competition is another intra-European subtext of rising middle-class assertiveness. The depiction of colonized men as beardless and otherwise feminized, for example, is also a veiled critique of the aristocracy.

This literature produces a foundation of ideas about Germans’ special claims to colonies and their talent for colonization; about race and racial hierarchy; about techniques for governing overseas colonies; and about the place of gender, sexuality, and the family within colonialism. By the 1880s these “colonial fantasies” were firmly implanted in the “German subconscious” (p. 193) and were able to influence the burgeoning “colonial movement” as well as concrete colonial practice.

Colonial Fantasies explores one of the least familiar areas of the German

colonial and racial imagination. Alongside the book's considerable merits, however, are several theoretical and methodological ambiguities. One concerns the manner in which Zantop explains changes in themes and dominant plot structures as an almost unmediated translation of political and social events. The literary and scientific fields are granted little specificity or autonomy. The author argues, for instance, that the emergence of the interracial love story reflects a transition in European colonialism "from conquest and pillaging . . . to permanent settlement" (p. 123). In another example, the rising interest in racial classification at the end of the eighteenth is traced to "racial" events such as the Haitian revolution. What about the influence of (non-colonial) literary form on the colonial novel or the methods and tropes of non-racial science on "racial theory"?

Ambiguity is also introduced into Zantop's theoretical account by the inconsistent use of psychoanalytic terminology. At times, the book appears to rest squarely on a psychoanalytic foundation, employing concepts like "libidinal investment[s]" (p. 184), "tide[s] of libidinal energy" (p. 203), and the "unconscious." At other times, such terminology seems to be used in a more metaphorical sense (see Hunt 1992 for a similar wavering between metaphorical and substantive use of psychoanalytic terminology).

Other problems could only have been addressed in a much longer book. One concerns the exact connections between the earlier fantasies and colonial discourse and practice in the late nineteenth century. A second problem relates to the argument that German colonial fantasies were dominated by images of the New World. This may be true of the period emphasized in *Colonial Fantasies*, but by the later nineteenth century things had clearly changed. A more complete picture of the ideologies which undergirded the German colonial expansion of the 1880s and 1890s would have to integrate material on Africa, Asia, Oceania, and China (cf. Martin 1993). It would be especially interesting to see how images originally forged in the American context were transformed in the new colonial settings (see Thomas 1997 for a comparable analysis). Despite these quibbles, *Colonial Fantasies* is required reading for anyone interested in the German colonial and racial imagination.

————George Steinmetz

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