

virtuous character” (p. 367), all the while explicitly acknowledging the compromises that the medium of the cassette necessitates. Metacommentaries on the paradoxes of mediation and the creation of authorial character are now embedded in the poems themselves, documenting what Miller calls the “scriptophonic”—“the vocal extensions of true script” (p. 370). This is important, because moral authority still resides in what is “written” in this tradition.

In Chapter 6 Miller expands on these issues by examining the life and death of one poet of national and international renown, Shayef al-Khaledi, discussing how “the function of a mass-mediated ‘personality’ [helps] Yemenis to consider their own moral relations to the collective nationalist demands” (p. 429). This occurs in part through the “secrets” of orality—that is, the polysemy and duplicity of the poetic form and its resistance to the evidence of the pictorial (as in television, for example). Public figures mediate history in a way that is different from script, allowing discourses about public morality to proliferate.

Finally, Miller concludes by reminding the reader of the social work of poetry and the poetic. Drawing on the legacy of Roman Jakobson, he notes the musicality of poetry as well as its inherent ambiguity in order to stress its self-reflexive role in human communication. Miller’s contribution, however, is not just to analyze Yemeni poetics or the social import of Yemeni poetry but also to bring attention to what happens when these forms—so essential to identity formation—are mediated.

Flagg Miller ultimately asks the reader not to be persuaded by arguments that implicitly associate orality with stages in a progression of modernity; rather he reminds us that the power of the media is determined by the use people make of it. He historicizes moral authority by looking at how authoritative texts come to be “differently mediated over time” (p. 10). Despite Miller’s inquiry into mediated forms of poetry, he stresses the importance and necessity of ethnographic inquiry into forms of expressive culture. Although other scholars might be content to watch videos and listen to cassettes only, Miller embeds these media in their cultural contexts of use and interpretation. He returns to the power and endurance of ethnography as a mode of knowing, asserting that “culture lies in transmitted ways of knowing how to clothe society’s needs in imaginative form” (p. 5). As a study of the social life of Yemeni poetry, this book builds on the groundbreaking work of Steve Caton to break further ground. It will be of interest to scholars of Arabic poetics and media, culture, and communication, as well as anthropologists of the Middle East.

CHRISTOPH SCHUMANN, ED., *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century Until the 1960s*, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008). Pp. 338. \$162.00 cloth.

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In the preface to the 1983 edition of his seminal work, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Albert Hourani observes that some intellectuals in the Arab world, when faced with the growth of European power and the seemingly unstoppable spread of European ideas, responded by “changing their own societies and the systems of beliefs and values which gave them legitimacy in a certain direction, through acceptance of some of the ideas and institutions of modern Europe.” *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean*, a collection of essays, extends and complicates this premise in order to challenge several common misconceptions about the Middle East that seem to persist in the public eye: the equation of economic

liberalism with liberal thought, the claim of the lack of “historical experience with liberal thought and democratization in the region,” and the overemphasis on Islam as the main “formative factor of the region’s political culture” (pp. 1–2).

The goal of *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean*, according to its editor, Christoph Schumann, is to situate the roots of liberal thought in the Middle East in its historical contexts. Despite emphasizing an open definition of “liberal,” a particular set of liberal ideas emerges as pivotal for the volume’s contributors, including an emphasis on modernity, progress, reform, individualism, constitutional rule, marginalized-groups’ rights, and democracy. The volume is divided into three parts. The first focuses on the impact, both positive and negative, of the West. The second looks at internal political and social factors. Finally, the third considers some of the inherent ambiguities and contradictions in liberal thought.

Several themes stand out as particular strengths of this volume. One is a focus on the policies of the late Ottoman and Mandate period that formed the foundation, for better or worse, for later political systems in the Middle East. In her essay, “The Ottoman Revolution of 1908 as Seen by *al-Hilal* and *al-Manar*,” Anne-Laure Dupont argues that the Ottoman revolution was “a turning point in the history of the reformist movement” (p. 123), allowing liberal ideas about reform and democracy to be widely discussed in the public arena. In a similar vein, Hasan Kayali argues that the period between the military collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 and the creation of the state of Turkey in 1923 saw an unprecedented explosion in liberal thought and practice that was curtailed by the establishment of the Republic.

The Mandate period is also portrayed as an important one for the creation of the modern Middle East and its relationship to liberal ideas. In his essay on the policies of the Mandate system in the Middle East, Peter Sluglett observes that although the ideals of the system were rooted in liberal ideas, its practices and institutions “were in many ways an imitation of democratic structures” that functioned to mask the illiberal rule that was at the heart of most Mandate policies (p. 48). Nevertheless, Mandatory institutions later served as the structural foundation for a new civil society independent of the state. Addressing the same period and making a related argument, Michael Provence avers that despite its veneer of legality, the laws and institutions of the French Mandate were not designed to protect the rights of ordinary citizens. Unlike Sluglett, Provence does not locate the beginnings of civil society in Mandatory institutions. Rather, he argues that the French Mandate and its “debasement of political culture have had a lasting [negative] influence” on Syrian political and public life and have impeded the development of a state governed by laws (p. 74). The local politics of the Mandate period are also examined in an essay by Eyal Zisser on the Syrian constitutional movement. Zisser argues for the need to reexamine a number of assumptions about the actual relationship between Syrian legislators and the French Mandate authorities. In particular, he writes that although the French Mandate was established on the basis of French interests and reflected French ideas about political organization, the Syrian constitution of 1930 was a product of a sometimes violent dialogue between the French powers and Syrian legislators and reflected the democratic worldview of Syria’s liberal elites. Finally, an essay by Raghid El-Solh focuses on the development of consociational democracy in Lebanon. Using the materials produced during meetings of the General Syrian Congress and the Conference of the Coast, he shows that Lebanese Arab nationalists’ attitudes toward the Mandatory political system underwent a dramatic shift from opposition to cautious support during the course of the French Mandate, which illustrates the fluidity of liberal ideas and practices.

Cultural policies and practices represent a second central theme of the volume. In her essay, “Liberal Education at the American University of Beirut,” Betty Anderson explores the

contradiction between the liberal humanist ideas espoused by the university's administrators and educators and the limitations placed by the university administration on student activism. She observes that "the students embraced a broader definition of freedom than the administration" largely as a result of their exposure to the liberal ideals of the university (p. 120). A second essay on education, by Abdul-Karim Rafeq, titled "The Syrian University and the French Mandate (1920–1946)," chronicles the creation of the university system in Syria from the late 19th century to the end of the Mandate period. Rafeq contends that although the French politically repressed the Syrian nationalist movement, they tried to present themselves as promoters of Arab Islamic culture in the educational arena. This argument does not at all reflect the many contradictions of French education policy in Syria, though it does highlight one of the ways in which French Mandate administrators viewed themselves vis-à-vis their subjects. Finally, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi's exceptional essay, "The *Nahda* Revisited," shows the ways in which the 1908 performance of a play celebrating the life of the well-known Spanish socialist Francisco Ferrer in Beirut reflected the existence of "an entire network of radical leftist intellectuals in Syria" in the early 20th century (p. 149). Through the presentation of a wide variety of evidence, she convincingly demonstrates that radical leftist ideals, including "calls for social justice, land redistribution, . . . workers' rights," and "mass secular education," were popular among intellectuals in late Ottoman Lebanon and that their adherents saw themselves as part of a worldwide socialist network that posed a challenge to nascent Syrian nationalist movements (p. 150).

A third theme of the volume concerns the inherent ambiguities and contradictions of liberal thought, particularly in its colonial manifestations. In a fine essay titled "The Question of American Liberalism and the Origins of the American Board Mission to the Levant and its Historiography," Ussama Makdisi explores the impact of Western missionaries by examining the first American-missionary encounter with the Ottoman Arab world and its legacy. In particular, he connects the American imperial experience with American Indians to the imperialist goals of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions in the Ottoman Empire, focusing on how assumptions about the former informed the latter in often devastating ways. In his essay, "Within or Without," Christoph Schumann uses the concept of "transcultural space" to explore the thought of the noted Lebanese-American intellectual Ameen Rihani, arguing that Rihani's life and thought were shaped by an interaction between Western and Middle Eastern societies and thus challenged the prevailing East/West dichotomy. In his view, Ameen Rihani's work exemplified the ways in which liberal ideas such as freedom, nation, and civilization did not belong to a particular culture but were shaped in the interaction between East and West. Finally, essays by Marilyn Booth and Sami al-Kayyali both explore the limits of liberal ideas in the internal dynamics of Middle Eastern societies. Marilyn Booth's "Who Gets to Become a Liberal Subject?" examines the ways in which memoirs served as outlets for Egypt's marginalized subjects, particularly young women, in 1920s Egypt. Memoirs highlighted both the promises of liberal ideas for individual subjectivity and the limitations of those ideas when applied to actual questions of gender and family. Finally, in his essay "Illiberal Metamorphoses of a Liberal Discourse," Sami al-Kayyali shows the ways in which liberal secular discourse can become, in stages, an illiberal nationalist one in response to changing political and social circumstances. Both of these essays emphasize the contingency of liberal ideas and the need to place them squarely in their historical contexts in order to fully understand their impact on actual lives and societies.

With few exceptions, the essays in *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean* usefully and creatively extend the boundaries of scholarship on liberal thought in the modern Middle East in its historical context by focusing on the actors whose lives were shaped by the struggle for liberal ideas and institutions.