

Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class

Keith David Watenpaugh

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006

xi + 325 pp., \$35.00 (cloth)

Yes, there is a history of modernity in the Middle East. At a time when, more than ever perhaps, the region is associated with images of backwardness, medievalism, and religious fanaticism, a book such as Keith David Watenpaugh's is a welcome addition to the ranks of scholarship. Based on a microstudy of the city of Aleppo, Watenpaugh's *Being Modern in the Middle East*, however, has contributions to make to the world of scholarship well beyond the "Eastern Mediterranean" region he generalizes about in this study. Scholars interested in exploring the surprisingly undertheorized category called "the middle class" pretty much anywhere in the world will find much of interest in this book. Of even greater interest are Watenpaugh's historical explorations of what "being modern" meant to the middle class of Aleppo and the region.

Following some of the recent writing on the subject, Watenpaugh understands the middle class not so much as a group defined by income or occupation but as the result of conscious efforts of a relatively small group of educated professionals and businessmen, who sought to distinguish themselves both from the traditional elite of Aleppo and of course the lower orders of society. For both of these purposes, being modern, Watenpaugh suggests, was a prerequisite of middle-class-ness. Rejecting the old impact-response of modernization theory, Watenpaugh prefers to "capture modernity as a lived historical experience and explore how it has colonized local politics, cultural practices, and everyday practices" and how that modernity has "given rise to a uniquely modern middle class" (8).

The historical exploration of a lived modernity is perhaps the greatest strength of Watenpaugh's book. I was tremendously impressed with how the author was able to weave in a theoretical discussion of modernity and the middle class with a detailed empirical case study of Aleppo between 1908 and 1946. The first chapter, an introduction, lays out the main arguments of the book, focusing, naturally enough, on terms such as *modernity* and *middle class*. The second chapter introduces the locale, the city of Aleppo, and its

people, with a focus on the developments in the late Ottoman era that facilitated and provided the context for the emergence of a modern middle class in the city. The following nine chapters are organized in three sections, outlining three critical phases in the history of the Aleppian middle class. The first section, from the Young Turk revolution of 1908 to the First World War, shows how the revolution opened up a space into which the Aleppine middle class could come into its own, as institutions of the public sphere such as voluntary associations, newspapers, and political parties became institutionalized in the Ottoman Empire. Their mastery over what Watenpaugh terms the "technologies" of public sphere debate allowed for the emergence and establishment of a middle class largely composed of religious minorities, displacing the traditional Sunni Muslim elites of Aleppo. If the chapters in the first section show the emergence of a confident middle class in Aleppo, aspiring to social or political hegemony, those in the second section—focusing on the period from the end of the First World War to 1924—reveal a different picture. Sundered from their connections with the old Ottoman Empire, the middle classes of Aleppo, along with others in the eastern Mediterranean, now struggled to make sense of new identity as Arab and Syrian. This more somber period in the history of the Aleppine middle class is reflected in their turn to reflections on the past, but one they framed within the parameters of a new, quintessentially middle class, historicity. The last section examines the period of the French mandate over Syria between 1924 and 1946, where Watenpaugh examines how the Aleppine middle class responded to French colonialism. Far from treating the middle class as a monolith, Watenpaugh in this section explores the ambiguities of middle-class politics. Both resistance to and collaboration with colonialism were facets of middle-class politics that led some to briefly flirt with fascist forms of politics.

Throughout the book, Watenpaugh's project is less to trace some sort of inexorable "rise of the middle class" as a political force than to trace the historical processes through which vocabularies and institutions associated with middle-class modernity became normative in Aleppo and the eastern Mediterranean region. This is what he means when he argues that the revolution of 1908 "made indelible and permanent the

politics of middle-class modernity in the Eastern Mediterranean” (67). Though the actual political power wielded by the Aleppine middle class waxed and waned, the fact that even the traditional elite were compelled to speak the language of liberalism and reform in the new era inaugurated in 1908 and afterward, is testament to the strength of his argument. But the project of modernity ultimately remained an incomplete one, in Watenpaugh’s assessment of the region. A liberal, cosmopolitan middle class that spoke the language of rationality expected openness and meritocracy, and looked for alliances beyond the sectarian and communal divisions of the day did not succeed in establishing a hegemonic presence in the eastern Mediterranean. Instead, another face of modernity, the authoritarian modern state, became much more significant in the region.

This may be as good a time as any to confess that my own area of expertise is South Asian history rather than that of the Middle East. Though I may miss some of the local nuances critical to Watenpaugh’s account of the region, I do share a deep interest in most of the themes Watenpaugh explores in his monograph. As there are some inevitable overlaps as well as evident differences in the two historical contexts, a review by a historian of another area may even be useful for readers of an explicitly comparative journal such as this one. Certainly the best way to understand the middle class in either area is not as a fixed sociological category defined by income and/or occupation but, rather, as a project of educated professionals who sought to create, through the public sphere, a series of distinctions between themselves and classes above and below. But the middle class of Aleppo and the region, unlike India, were not successful in establishing their hegemony in the postcolonial milieu. That critical difference probably accounts for some significant differences in the analysis and representation of the middle class in Watenpaugh’s account and those of South Asia.

Most recent scholarly analysis of the middle class in South Asia is much more critical of the middle-class projects than Watenpaugh is of his subjects. Undoubtedly, this is to some extent colored by the peripheral position the middle class occupies in contemporary Syria, as the conclusion to the book clearly demonstrates. Yet it does, to some extent, prevent a more thoroughgoing critique of middle-class politics, and its limitations, which might have allowed readers to see them as more active agents in the process of their disempowerment. Could it be that their desire to distance themselves from the lower orders actually prevents the middle class of the region from realizing their political goals?

Given the ways in which the middle-class projects across the world have been highly gendered, the absence of attention to the gendered elements of the middle-class politics of Aleppo are also surprising in this otherwise theoretically astute work. I would also have loved to see questions of religious identity and middle-class-ness elaborated on a little more. Watenpaugh leaves readers with a teasing reference at the end of the book, where he describes how the loss of hope in modernity’s ideals, rather than commitment to Islam, is leading middle-class men to “strap dynamite to their waists” and become suicide bombers (301). Rather than see this only as the product of a debased middle class of contemporary Syria, it might have been interesting to see ways in which a new notions in religiosity emerge in the process of middle-class formation in Aleppo.

The one area where the similarities between South Asia and the Middle East become very apparent are in Watenpaugh’s historical and historiographical struggle with notions of modernity—a concern that lies at the heart of most scholars of the postcolonial world. The central, and most significant, contribution of Watenpaugh’s book remains his detailed examination of the nature of the modern fashioned by the Aleppine middle class. Rather than fall into the trap of Eurocentric historiography and lament the impossibility of the Middle Eastern people achieving “true” modernity, he looks to tease out the local experience and construction of the modern in Aleppo. Yet, here too, my South Asian training leads me to wonder if he may not have taken his arguments further. Though Watenpaugh is careful to distance himself from Eurocentric approaches, and even endorses Dipesh Chakrabarty’s call to “provincialize Europe,” he does not use the difference between the metropole and the colony to reflect back on the limitations of the ideal type of modernity given to us by the colonial world. Instead, early in the book, he clearly states that though modernity can be thought of as a “language that can acquire local dialects,” these local idioms must be “comprised of the definitive components of modernity” (14). These definitive components include the central planks of rational discourse and institutions of civil society pioneered in Europe. Perhaps a more critical look at the premises of Western modernity and its definitive components may have added another facet to Watenpaugh’s admirable analysis of the eastern Mediterranean region.

That Keith Watenpaugh’s work is a seminal contribution to the history of the region and to the larger scholarly universe cannot be eclipsed by the minor disagreements noted above. It must be a required part of any sort of reading list on modern Middle Eastern history, and I am sure that it will

form an important component of graduate courses on the history of the region. But, perhaps equally significant, *Being Modern in the Middle East* is a very important contribution to the rank of scholarly studies of the middle class across the world. It adds one more work to a relatively small list of books that can and should be used to illustrate how the experience of modernity and the formation the middle class are both unique to specific regions yet offer a wealth of possibilities for comparative historical scholarship.

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**Empires of Intelligence: Security Services
and Colonial Disorder after 1914**

Martin Thomas

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Told from the vantage point of the colonial archive, Martin Thomas provides an in-depth comparative study of British and French information-gathering techniques and services developed and variously applied in the Middle East and North Africa as the sine qua non of imperial government during the interwar period; moreover, he analyzes the reasons for the failure of intelligence to secure a stable social and political environment, or, alternatively, to prevent “disorder.” The history of this instrumental form of colonial knowledge is framed within a notion of the “intelligence state.” As the “first comparative study of colonial intelligence gathering in the early twentieth century,” (1) according to author Martin Thomas, the book excavates an extensive documentary base and draws on an impressive array of secondary material to offer a layered view of how intelligence operated. However, the book also raises more questions than it is able to answer, which is a problem of theory and method rather than of the work’s novelty.

On the one hand the work adumbrates the specificity of intelligence as a form of knowledge, while on the other hand it demonstrates the need to conceive it broadly when viewed in the context of empire. In the introduction, Thomas proposes a distinction between metropolitan and colonial information-gathering processes, a theme he develops further in the following three chapters. “Colonial states were intelligence states insofar as the entire bureaucratic apparatus of imperial admin-

istration in Muslim territories contributed to state surveillance of the subject population” (14). The colonial difference here seems to rest on a positivist and liberal conception of state, wherein “intelligence and power were [not] one and the same” (2). Thomas’s claim depends on the assumption that “consensual rule,” the ostensible norm within the metropolitan context, was predicated on bases *other* than that of the evolving system of “state surveillance” over the course of the nineteenth century, which eventually became a tool for insuring social stability through responsive government rather than through repression—the former being the domain of liberal politics. In the wake of decades now of studies on power inspired by Michel Foucault, this type of claim would appear rather naive. Indeed, the remainder of the text, through the telling details, which are its strength, belies the weakness of this framework for a comparative analysis of intelligence conceived as a particular technology of government that intertwined with other modern disciplinary and regulatory practices. That being said, while a Foucauldian framework might complicate the author’s conception of power, the former, too, would need to be complicated in order to apprehend colonial difference.

In chapters 4–9, Thomas highlights instances of colonial rule in which that rule appeared tenuous or was indeed in danger of being undone. This choice is partially understandable given his framework of the intelligence state, although one might query even in this regard whether the frame would hold up against ordinary instances of colonial administration. But if we do not share the assumption that knowledge and power are categorically different, then the material he presents would require another analytic, to which the text itself points the way. An enormous range of colonial authorities’ encounters with potential and actual threats is recounted and meticulously dissected in order to illuminate the specific interplays of intelligence-gathering techniques, indigenous and external actors, and the policy-making structure of imperial governments. Tracking existing and potential challenges to colonial rule from Morocco to Iraq, from city to desert, and within the metropole itself in the case of France and the Algerians, Thomas marshals a mountain of evidence that demonstrates the diversity of intelligence situations, actors, and even epistemologies (in the case of tribal law, for example) that characterized the history of British and French attempts to impose order on their “dependent subjects,” or prevent their disorder. In short, the practices of imperial government were irreducible to any overarching theory of state that presupposed the workings of a sovereign subject

on docile objects. Indeed, the only major recurring theme throughout the work is the racial and cultural stereotypes underpinning the practices of the “intelligence state”; however, this unavoidable finding in the colonial archive does not register in Thomas’s analysis of power except to the extent that it was always a given in the “dominant ideology of imperialism.”

Although the history of this ideology is narrated to some extent in the early chapters (chapter 2 in particular), its import within the argument is insufficiently elaborated. The analysis Thomas offers—that the prejudices of intelligence officers and other officials, whether in the field or in London and Paris, often made them see threats where there were none (Communism, Pan-Islamism, Pan-Arabism) or not see threats where there were (peasant suffering in Egypt and Palestine, genuine tribal grievances in Morocco, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq)—only begs further questions. How was a racist or racializing ideology connected to colonial knowledge; how did it shape social and political categories that were meaningful to, and constitutive of, the “intelligence state?” Within the specific examples of intelligence types Thomas provides, particularly in the guise of colonial anthropology, there lies an answer, but one whose implications are not drawn out.

In a brief and misguided invocation of Edward Said and Michel Foucault (whose works do not seem to require citation), he points to the possibility that intelligence is already implicated in networks of power by recommending orientalism as a source of colonial stereotypes (76–78). Just as quickly, however, he dismisses the analytical value of the Saidian critique as “dangerous” because somehow it is incapable of appreciating how important “even flawed and manifestly biased intelligence” was to imperial governance. Even more hasty and problematic is his dismissal of the dangerousness of “Foucault’s complex ideas about the connections between knowledge and power to colonial security agencies by asserting that the information imparted by intelligence providers automatically conferred power on the colonial authorities” (78). Such a banal and largely inaccurate treatment of these interrelated theories of the power/knowledge nexus places the author in an untenable analytical bind.

On the one hand, Thomas dismisses these approaches as dangerous because he seems to fear that a totalization of Power overlooks the complexity of negotiations among various parties that colonial policing and intelligence gathering often entailed and thus makes invisible, for example, the agency a tribal leader actually exercised, the customary practices colonial authorities were sometimes forced

to adopt, or the tensions among various positions and personalities within the imperial government. On the other hand, it is entirely possible from the material he uncovers to show that the forms of disciplinary and regulatory power discussed by Foucault were repeated in the modern Middle Eastern context—especially by the interwar period—albeit with a colonial difference, a difference that entailed among other things an incomplete suppression of prior traditions of authority. Indeed, Thomas suggests as much in his discussion of French and British attempts to settle and police tribal groups within newly bounded territories. However, by hedging his bet, he is left without a suitable analytical frame with which to explain the eventual “failure” of the intelligence state and the ultimate occasion of “disorder.”

The uncritical use of the term *disorder* highlights the fundamental theoretical and methodological problems of this study. A reliance on the colonial archive is not a weakness in itself, and an approach that repeats the logic of the colonial, which in historiographical terms is often defended as a fidelity to the sources, is errant not simply for its political implications but precisely for historical reasons. Adopting a stance toward his historical sources that ostensibly privileges its contemporary context, in which preventing disorder was a primary concern of states, leaves Thomas at pains to explain how the longue durée and the everyday, as opposed to the extraordinary event, were central sites of performance for the diverse knowledge practices he attributes to the colonial “intelligence state.” In order to account for that domain of practice, it is indeed “complex ideas about the connections between knowledge and power” that are necessary; moreover, such an account would go a long way to explaining why the intelligence state did not fail but merely changed hands in the period of decolonization.

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**The Unending Frontier:
An Environmental History of the Early Modern World**

John F. Richards

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696 pp., \$75.00 (cloth), \$26.95 (paper)

The title of John F. Richards's monumental survey is, of course, intended ironically. We now foresee the end of the frontier, for we have consumed enough of the natural world to be able to sense its limits. This book treats the period when most humans did not yet perceive the natural world as having limits, despite the fact that we had already begun to affect world environments, on a grand scale. *The Unending Frontier* is a survey of the accelerating impact of human societies on environments around the world, since about 1400. This is the great period of western European expansion—but Richards does not limit himself to that theme. He traces the development of several major Asian economies in their own right, examining the environmental effects of their eventual interaction with Europe, but never imagining that it was only Europe that had the power to effect serious impact.

Environmental histories might be divided into two genres. Some treat the environment as a setting for the human drama and emphasize climate change as a context for social and economic evolution. Brian Fagan's *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300–1850* is a good example of this approach. Others are more concerned with the impact of the human drama on the natural world. This is Richard's major emphasis, although he devotes part 1 of his book to situating the emerging modern economies within climate history. The bulk of his survey, though, is directed to describing and trying to explain human modification of the natural world. Part 2, on Eurasia and Africa, treats the successive resettlements of Taiwan, the intensification of land use in China, the surprisingly self-conscious ecological strategies of early modern Japan, and the various knock-on effects of the Dutch colonization of South Africa, as well as more often explored topics of British industrialization and the Russian colonization of Siberia. Part 3, on the Americas, examines ranching and mining in colonial Mexico, sugar and cattle production in Brazil, and the Columbian exchange in the West Indies, with a separate chapter on the impact of the sugar industry. Part 4 examines what Richards terms "the world hunt," including the fur trade in North America, the fur trade in Siberia, the northwest Atlantic cod fishery, and the hunt for whales and walrus. In each chapter, Richards frames environmental history with a concise account of the political history and economic evolution of the region in question. So what

The Unending Frontier offers is not simply environmental history but, effectively, a cross-fertilization of environmental with world history.

The major value of Richards's work is that it offers the reader the big picture. This is achieved in a kind of cubist way, through the presentation of a series of case studies. In other words, the book does not actually cover the whole world. The omission of Australia and Oceania are understandable, given that the kind of modern impact under discussion came later there, for the most part. Continental Europe and Africa north of the Transvaal are not discussed, while North America is here only as the scene of the fur trade and a scatter of fishing stations. These omissions probably reflect Richards's sense of what has already been written and what actually needs a synthesis. In each chapter, he works from the political to the economic to unravel environmental and social consequences. He does not assume that humans are always shortsighted; this is not a book about inevitability, and the case of Tokagawa Japan is particularly thought provoking, in this respect. Richards does not sentimentalize native peoples, but he does offer a clear-eyed account of the varying degrees of colonial exploitation, in Siberia for example, versus North America. In many ways, this is a book about colonization, in its many aspects.

There are, necessarily, limitations to such a synoptic overview. Richards came to environmental history from previous research on Mogul India, and his own specialization naturally gives some chapters a sophistication not always achieved in others. He has had to simplify, and, to the specialist, some of his area studies lack perfect pitch. Given my own interests, I noticed a few examples in the chapters on the transatlantic cod fishery and the Arctic whale hunt. Richards uncritically cites the imaginative journalist Mark Kurlansky as an authority on the early Basque transatlantic fishery (which dates to the 1520s, not the 1490s, as here [547]). Mussels cannot be dug for bait from a beach (554); they grow on rocks. The English fishery used three-man not four-man boats (557). The French did not "retain" possession of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon in 1763; they regained what they had lost to the British in 1713 (560). Trees left uncut in coastal Newfoundland grow much bigger than four to five inches at breast height (562); the trick, of course, is leaving them uncut. Specialists in other areas will perhaps notice similar, relatively minor, confusions. The occasional false note aside, what is impressive here is the persuasiveness of the general picture. Recent discussion by Jeremy B. C. Jackson and others of the collapse of coastal ecosystems might be taken to suggest that Richards actually underestimates human impact on some

early modern Atlantic environments.¹ Still, an exponent of world history can hardly synthesize what the specialists have not yet hammered out.

In sum, this is a valuable guide, well written and well illustrated, with useful maps and a good index. *The Unending Frontier* is an excellent synthesis of environmental history beyond the usual geographical arenas of this field. Readers might not find their area of interest here, but they will probably find a parallel—and perhaps a close one. This substantial contribution will make a good senior undergraduate or graduate student text, and it will certainly serve as a well-documented reference to recent work on environmental history over a wide geographic range. I would guess that the author sincerely hopes that it will be outdated by further research. Some of that work will be inspired by this synthesis.

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Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self

Laura Bear

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In one of the most memorable Bollywood scenes of recent years, superstar Shahrukh Khan and a full supporting troupe dance agilely on top of a train that moves, slowly but surely, through breathtaking mountain scenery. The film is *Dil Se (From the Heart, Mani Ratnam, 1998)* a revolutionary exploration of postcolonial nationalism, marginalization, bureaucracy, and violence. While it failed at the box office, the train sequence continues to circulate on South Asian cable television programs devoted to Bollywood music. Notwithstanding the attractions of Khan and his faux-tribal dance partner, its enduring qualities are subliminally linked to the shaping importance of trains within the Indian psyche. As the train chugs through the Indian heartlands to the nation's peripheries, signaled by the mountain scenery, it literally carries forth the fantasies of modernity and progress through which the post-

colonial normative subject (the character played by Khan) imagines he will benevolently transform its other, the subject on the national margins, figured in the desirable yet unknown “tribal” woman he dances with. Suturing center and periphery, fantasy and normativity, the train here functions as what Laura Bear, in the book under review, calls a “vector of capitalist modernity” (1). Yet, as the film goes on to reveal, that modernity, again in Bear's words, is shot through by “the hidden histories of the effects of colonial bureaucracies and popular responses to them on both intimate and public forms of life” (9) and by an ever-present sense of “the inappropriate irruption of the past in the present” (17).¹

Lines of the Nation does not reference *Dil Se*, but it does cite modern Indian poets, peri-urban folk singers, and novelists to reinforce its basic premise: that the tight, almost axiomatic, link between the railways as a colonial project and the emergence and consolidation of India's modernity unravels, on some scrutiny, to reveal an altogether more fraught role relationship to modernity borne by this venerable institution with a robust postcolonial life. This complexity is drawn out through Bear's focus on the historical relationship between Indian Railways and the community known as Anglo-Indian (the South Asian term that replaced the original “Eurasian”). The book is thus a simultaneous exploration of the Anglo-Indian world and the Indian Railways, with both foci pressed into mutual illumination. Two major sources offer the primary material for this task: colonial archives of the Eastern Railway, headquartered in Calcutta, and the lives, stories, genealogies, and memories of a cluster of Anglo-Indian railway families from a long-established railway colony at Kharagpur, some few hours train journey away from Calcutta; to sharpen the significance of the latter, parallel material from Bengali railway families and Anglo-Indian families from Calcutta (rather than Kharagpur) is also included. The book, accordingly, falls into two, roughly equal parts, which follow an introduction that establishes its premises. Part 1 is a historical account of the ways in which colonial bureaucracy sought to establish and manage the railways as an institution and the foundational role played by the Anglo-Indian community within this enterprise. Part 2 is an ethnographic account of selected Anglo-Indian railway families whom Bear interacted with in the course of fieldwork, showcasing, in particular, their con-

1. Jermev B. C. Jackson, MX Kirby, WH Berger, KA BJORNDAL, LW Botsford, BJ Bourque, RH Bradbury, R Cooke, J Erlandson, JA Estes, TP Hughes, S Kidwell, CB Lange, HS Lenihan, JM Pandolfi, CH Peterson, RS Steneck, MJ Tegner, RR Warner, “Historical Overfishing and the Recent Collapse of Coastal Ecosystems,” *Science* 293, no. 5530 (2001): 629–38.

1. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, “Allegories of Alienation and Politics of Bargaining: Minority Subjectivities in Mani Ratnam's *Dil Se*,” *South Asian Popular Culture* 1 (2003): 141–60.

tinuing sense of being genealogically intertwined with the railways—as the very term “railway family” implies).

Holding together both aspects of the book is Bear’s argument for the colonial formation and postcolonial perpetuation of the Anglo-Indians as a “railway caste.” The biomoral and racist logics of high colonialism demanded an ideal colonial community, free of the cumbersome accoutrements of *jati* (in the narrower sense of “caste” as well as the broader sense of distinctive “community”) that, from the colonizer’s perspective, rendered Indian groups variously unsuitable to the daily management of railways. Instead, domiciled Europeans and Eurasians, assumed to be free of such baggage, were mobilized into filling this niche. But paradoxically, this mobilization, according to Bear, succeeded in reifying the Anglo-Indians as a *jati*, or a de facto, castelike grouping, even while demanding that they produce signs of European genealogical affiliations that would guarantee them employment within the railways. Furthermore, as a railway archive began to form through the accumulation of documents “proving” those affiliations, confusions set in through a shift from an existent colonial emphasis “on nationality and race as signs on the body to one of domicile proved by state documents” (140). Consequently, the genealogical project for Anglo-Indians, introduced through the necessities of bureaucracy, increasingly “collided with the more fragmented and present-oriented family formation of domiciled European and Anglo-Indian workers,” whose “representations to bureaucracy tell a story of broken connections, particularly to European fathers and grandfathers” (141). As Bear’s ethnography subsequently reveals in touching detail, the anxieties produced through these collisions suffuse contemporary Anglo-Indian railway families, whose place in postcolonial India is precariously maintained through “strategies of love” and through a fusion of Catholic and “railway” moralities, which together are used to combat continuing stereotypes of Anglo-Indians as unmoored, immoral, and, ultimately, somehow un-Indian.

Through the methodology of historical anthropology, then, Bear makes a bold claim to unsettle standard assumptions about not only the

railways as an institution and of Anglo-Indians as a community but also colonial and postcolonial modernity itself. While the biomoral imperatives of Empire, as played out through the bureaucracy of the railways, form an important theme in part 1, their internalization as *jati* characteristics by postcolonial railway families and workers, Anglo-Indian as well as others, preoccupy her in part 2. Common to both is the desire to read against the grain of the archive (although Bear does not explicitly call her methodology such), whether through the overwrought language of petitions in part 1, or, in part 2, through the archive’s traces on the Anglo-Indian body through photographs, letters, food, and dress. This nuancing of Empire’s grand narratives through a closer look at how assumptions about race, family, and morality were tested and refined through their application to colonial subjects brings her work in dialogue with that of other cultural historians of the colonial intimate, such as Ann Laura Stoler, whose commendation graces the book jacket.² The fracturing of the edifice of the modern that colonialism claimed for itself is of course an established scholarly project: the crux of the debate now concerns the relationship between the respective modernities of the metropole and the colony that such a rethinking implies. Is colonial modernity merely, in Partha Chatterjee’s phrase, “a derivative discourse,” or is it a means, to quote Dipesh Chakrabarty, for “provincializing Europe”?³ Or, as Bruno Latour claims, does such investigation reveal that “we,” postimperial, postcolonial, all, “have never been modern”?⁴ It would seem that Bear possibly espouses the third position, given that one of her introduction’s epigraphs quotes Latour’s claim that “we have never been rational, scientific, disenchanting. This is a story we tell ourselves in order to produce and purify the hybrids modernity has produced (1).”

Instead of pronouncing on the nature of colonial and postcolonial modernity, Bear prefers to let readers draw their own conclusions through the contradictions thrown up by her painstaking archival work and her sensitive ethnography. The Anglo-Indians emerge as exemplary of modernity’s hybrids-in-spite-of-itself, while the myth of disenchantment is exploded through the many ghosts

2. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

3. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

4. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf Press, 1993).

and spirits that literally stalk the stories she and her interlocutors tell, haunting grand colonial buildings and humble homes alike. Yet Bear neither references the best-known postcolonial theorist of the hybrid and the uncanny, Homi Bhabha, nor engages in detail with scholarship on the impossibility of complete disenchantment provided by a range of colonial anthropologists and historians, ranging from Michael Taussig, working from the South American context, to Chakrabarty, working from the South Asian.⁵ This undertheorization is a major scholarly lacuna in Bear's otherwise engaging and suggestive work: the "uncanny" and the "archive" are both key terms for her, but there is an ad hoc air about their usage, with no evidence of engagement with even the locus classicus of the uncanny (*unheimlich*, "unhomely"), Sigmund Freud, although Freud's interest in the idea of *heimat* (home, homeland) is mentioned in a footnote (322n14).⁶ Likewise, there is now extensive theorization of the idea and practice of the archive, including its relationship to colonial bureaucracy that often uses Jacques Derrida's seminal *Archive Fever* as a sparring partner.⁷ Again, a stray footnote summarizes this work (319n5), but neither it nor any other theorizing on the archive finds a place within the argument proper. Most glaringly absent, as a cumulative impact of these omissions, is any engagement with the idea of colonial and postcolonial melancholia, which, once the "archive" and the "uncanny" are contemplated as complications of modernity, theoretically becomes the next move to make.⁸

Greater intertextuality with scholarship that has been dealing with the same issues Bear is interested in would have had another possible benefit on what I find most problematic about this work: its tendency to essentialize *jati* as a category through which (all?) Indians make sense of their place in society and in history. Even if there does exist such an all-pervasive stranglehold of *jati*, should the work of scholarship silently replicate it by accepting it as a fait accompli rather than a construct that demands historicization? Is the formation of an aspirational Anglo-Indians "railway caste" the whole story? Is it not possible to probe how notions of *jati* might have been, and continue to be, "disfigured" (to use one

of Bear's own privileged terms; 109) and destabilized by groups that do not conform to those essentialized notions, such as the Anglo-Indians? If we accept, with Latour, that the hybrid is a necessary by-product of modernity, then should that hybridity not extend to a transformation of categories that are putatively essential to an Indian sense of self? Finally, there are a number of unfortunate typographical and transcription errors that it is the reviewer's duty to point out. Hindi and Bengali words and phrases are mistranslated or mistranscribed with a frequency somewhat alarming for a book based on ethnography: the *salwar* is not a "long shirt" (45); *dakka gele* should be rendered as *dhakka gele* (62); a *nika* is not a "temporary" marriage (80; does Bear possibly mean *mut'ah*?); there is no locality in Calcutta called "Tiljoia" (188; Bear probably means "Tiljala"); "has become" in Hindi is *ban gaya*, not *ban beya* (212); the Bengali phrase for "women's association" should be transcribed as *mahila samiti*, not '*mahila samhiti*' (238); and both *Upadhyay* and *Uphadhyay* are cited as an interviewee's name (239; the first version is probably correct). These and other small errors, sprinkled throughout the book and its bibliography, distract from the work's argument and potentially weaken its ethnographic authority.

On balance, however, *Lines of the Nation* is an enjoyable and thought-provoking read, with a particularly moving ethnographic section. It makes an important contribution to our understanding of an Indian institution iconic of bureaucratic authority and an Indian community iconic of social marginalization. Whether one agrees or not with all her conclusions, Bear convincingly demonstrates how they are intertwined, not only with each other but also with the complexity of the postcolonial modern condition in contemporary India.

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5. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Time of History and the Times of the Gods," in *Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 35–60.

6. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953–74), vol. XIV, 239–58.

7. E.g., James L. Hevia, "The Archive State and the Fear of Pollution: From the Opium Wars to Fu-Manchu," *Cultural Studies* 12 (1998): 234–64; Thomas Richards, "Archive and Utopia," *Representations* 37 (1992): 104–35; and Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87–109. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

8. Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination

Gil Z. Hochberg

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007
192 pp., \$35.00 (cloth)

Comparative
Studies of
South Asia,
Africa and the
Middle East

The intimate relationship between Arab and Jewish cultures, histories, and identities has in the past three decades garnered steadily increasing scholarly attention. Gil Z. Hochberg's *In Spite of Partition* joins this body of scholarship, developing and adding to themes and ideas first proposed by Ammiel Alcalay, Ella Shohat, Edward Said, and others. This important and timely new book aims "[to] challenge the dominant ideology of separation" that characterizes mainstream understandings of the relationship between Arabs and Jews (ix). While several other books have engaged in literary analyses that reveal commonalities and bonds between Arabs and Jews (a recent example is Rachel Brenner's *Inextricably Bonded: Israeli Arab and Jewish Writers Re-visioning Culture* [2003]), Hochberg's thesis focuses less on questions of mutual tolerance, coexistence, and even cultural dialogue, instead provocatively proposing "a future made of love" (137) and suggesting that "libidinal ties" link these identities (2, 6, 140). As such, it constitutes a valuable new contribution to the existing discourse.

The book is divided into five chapters and an introduction that provides political, cultural, and historical grounding for the literary analyses. The first chapter deals with the figure of the Arab Jew as articulated through a comparative reading of Albert Memmi and Edmond Amram El Maleh. The second chapter discusses the reclaiming of Levantinism by two Jewish authors, the Egyptian Jacqueline Kahanoff and the Israeli Ronit Matalon. Anton Shammas's famous novel *Arabesques* is at the center of the third chapter's concerns with language and the figure of the Israeli Palestinian. The fourth chapter returns to the figure of the Arab Jew and Israeli orientalism through an analysis of the important novel *Aqud* by the Moroccan-Israeli author Albert Swissa. The final chapter is devoted to the battle between the collective memory of Israeli Jews and that of Palestinians, comparing texts by Mahmoud Darwish (notably and unfortunately, the only major text examined that was written originally in Arabic) and Amin Maalouf.

One of the many strengths of this book is its devotion to literature and the seriousness that it ascribes to literary analysis. Comparative literature, a field at the forefront of theoretical discourse, sometimes produces studies that have very little to do with literature. Hochberg's admiration for Said clearly extends beyond his humanism and politics

to his production as a literary scholar, which was very much about literature. She devotes much of her brief preface to articulating the important role that literature should play in the politically charged issues her book confronts, insisting that empirical analyses alone cannot account for the complexities of these issues. In particular, her nuanced and illuminating analyses of Shammas's *Arabesques* and Swissa's *Aqud* demonstrate her attentive, multilayered, and innovative engagement with the texts and their poetics. Her close reading of one of Shammas's biblical allusions in *Arabesques*, for instance, reveals his masterful shifting between classical and modern Hebraic registers and structures, the irony produced by his playful rearrangements, and the proximity it suggests between the historical experiences of Jews and Arabs (84–85).

Hochberg complements her eloquent close readings with a sophisticated theoretical grounding. Her analysis moves seamlessly between the primary texts at hand and a wide spectrum of theorists, including Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Homi Bhabha, Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, and many others. Providing fascinating and innovative prisms through which to view these texts, her erudite application of theory does not (as often happens) come at the expense of her discussion of the literary texts themselves. For example, her discussion of scatology in Swissa's *Aqud* draws on the relationship between abjection and social differentiation as developed by Kristeva, Judith Butler, and others to demonstrate how, "[mimicking] and embellishing the very contaminating force ascribed to the abject-being, *Aqud* exposes the fact that the effects of abjection necessarily exceed a mere narrative of victimization, for they paradoxically grant the abject-being the ability to 'endanger' and 'contaminate' others" (104). The firm theoretical foundation of this book is one characteristic that makes it readily applicable and relevant to a range of situations beyond the immediate topic at hand.

Hochberg's insistence on the strong ties that bind Arabs and Jews never discounts the harshness of the present reality. She acknowledges the complexity of this reality from the beginning and reiterates this awareness throughout the book: "This grim reality is undeniable, and it is by no means my intent to suggest otherwise," she writes. "My goal, however, is not to trace this hostile reality but rather to expose the conditions of repression and active forgetting that bring it about and make it seem pregiven and unchangeable" (ix). Similarly, she is critical of the rhetoric of separatism of both Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, without overlooking their different points of origins and driving forces.

Despite the theoretical and literary sophistication of this book, however, some of its most fundamental terms require more thorough explanations and contextualization. *Arab Jew* and *Israeli-Palestinian* particularly, have generated controversy among some of the very people whom they purport to designate. Hochberg herself relates the case of Memmi, who railed against the concept of an “Arab Jew” already in 1974. Moreover, the category of Mizrahim (Arab and African Jews in Israel) as such rarely arises, though the book is firmly grounded in the context of Zionism and in the effects the Israel/Palestine conflict has had on the relationship between Jews and Arabs. The Mizrahi and the Arab Jew are conflated repeatedly, presumably because of Hochberg’s (legitimate) criticism that the term *Mizrahi* hides the “hyphen connecting and separating the Jew and the Arab” (39). Nevertheless, the terms *Mizrahi* and *Arab Jew* designate two distinct, though sometimes overlapping, categories of identity. A brief comparison of the two, and perhaps also a mention of the familiar and oft-misused term *Sephardim* (descendants of Spanish Jews), would have been helpful. Similarly problematic is the term *Palestinian Israeli*. While it is clearly meant to salvage the Palestinian component of these people’s identity from erasure, it warrants at least a footnote explaining that not all of them desire to be thus differentiated and that some even resent that differentiation (which they interpret as exclusion), as well-intentioned as it may be. In two pages, Shammass is discussed as a “Palestinian,” “Christian-Israeli-Palestinian,” “Arab-Israeli,” and “Israeli” (75–76). While this wavering or blurring between identities may be precisely the point, it does not lessen the need for a brief explanation of each term, its usage, and its implications.

On a technical note, this book would have benefited from more rigorous proofreading. Inconsistent transliterations, misspellings of names and words, and grammatical errors detract from what is otherwise an elegantly written work. For example, *Sabras* (Hebrew: native Israelis) is spelled “Sabres” and “sabers” (95). Theodor Herzl’s name is spelled “Hertzl” (82), and Mahmoud Darwish’s name is rendered “Mahmud” (93, 171). These are minor flaws, but they disrupt the book’s flow and dull some of its polish.

These points do not diminish the overall richness and importance of this study. *In Spite of Partition* is significant not least because it strives to attain something more than the hope for coexistence expressed in the opening epigraph by Said. Situating itself firmly against the grain of the predominantly separatist accounts of the relationship between Arabs and Jews, this book makes an important contribution to the study of literature written

by them. Moreover, it forces us to acknowledge the intimate and inextricable bonds between Arabs and Jews, who, Hochberg compellingly shows, are not only writing about each other but also writing about themselves through each other and about each other through themselves. Ultimately hopeful but never naive, this book accomplishes at least the beginning of the liberation of Arabs and Jews from enforced and unquestioned separation.

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Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-revolution Iran

Roxanne Varzi

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006

290 pp., \$79.95 (cloth), \$22.95 (paper)

In the year 2000, I was invited to a conference in Shiraz. The organizers arranged for a car with a driver to take me back and forth during the conference since I had many people to see in various places in the region. It is my custom, even in New York City, to engage a driver in conversation. My trip to Shiraz was no different. I wanted to find out whether my driver had participated in the “Imposed War” between Iran and Iraq. He was very hesitant in answering my question. Finally, he said, “Yes.” I said, “Thanks be to God, you are well and seem to have survived with no major injuries.” He rebutted, “Unfortunately.” I was confused. I asked him to explain his comment. He paused again and then finally opened up and told his story.

It appeared that he and his brother, Rasul, both enlisted in the Basij Volunteer Corps when they were in their late teens. However, they did not serve in the same unit. After a year, Rasul had a few days leave and went to Shiraz to visit his parents. He bought tickets for himself and his mother to fly to Mashhad for a pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Reza. Upon arrival in Mashhad, they hastened to the Haram, and, once there, Rasul asked his mother to petition the imam to grant her son the glory of martyrdom (*shahadat*). His mother was shocked and distressed and refused to make such a prayer. The two left the shrine and went to their inn, and during the whole evening Rasul tried to convince his mother to pray for his desire to become a martyr. The next morning, they returned to the shrine, and, under Rasul’s relentless pleading, his mother gave in. However, she could not bring herself to pray out-

right for the death of her son, so she instead prayed for the fulfillment of Rasul's wishes. In late afternoon, they returned to Shiraz; Rasul stayed with his parents for a few more days and then returned to his unit at the front. Within five weeks, his prayers were answered, and he was killed in action and became Shahid, or "martyr".

My driver finished his story by saying, "And I remain." I could hear the regret in his voice that he had not died on the battlefield like his brother. For the remainder of the trip, he did not say another word. Neither did I.

Had Roxanne Varzi heard this story, she would have included it in her book, *Warring Souls* and analyzed it from the Karbala paradigm and Sufi mystical point of view, as well as from many other perspectives. Yes, she wears many hats in her research, or should I say many hijabs. She is fascinated with the mechanism of martyrdom. The chapter on the subject is a tour de force. She writes, "I tell the story of the many young martyrs who died and then were seen later in the murals covering the city walls" (7).

During the eight-year-long bloody war against Iraq (1980–88), hundreds of thousands of young men died and were immortalized in murals. At that time, Iran could be likened to an artist's atelier, as walls everywhere provide endless surface space for murals, posters, and graffiti. The traditional Iranian dwelling is surrounded by adobe or brick walls, and very often the surface of these walls are whitewashed. During the war, this space was used to the utmost to depict what Rumi calls "the bleeding martyrs." Rumi says:

Don't wash the blood upon the martyr's face
It suits a martyr better that he bleeds,
and that's worth more than countless
pious deeds.¹

Since the conclusion of the war, a rapid demographic surge and an accelerated migration from villages to towns have changed the urban design of Iranian cities. Now cities grow vertically at the expense of the traditional horizontal dwelling, but the taller buildings provide new surfaces for expression. Since building orientation in Iran is usually toward the south, a several-story-high space is usually found at the east-west axis at the end of a row of buildings. These huge surfaces are now covered with gigantic murals visible from a great distance, and most of these illustrations are devoted to the martyrs. Further, the martyrs have been immortalized on posters, postage stamps, book illustrations,

and even banknotes. In addition, streets, avenues, squares, parks, sport complexes, schools, highways, and other public facilities are named after the martyrs. In the 1980s, I counted more than fourteen hundred streets carrying the name of a martyr. This is a martyrdom culture.

Ever since the Shi'i faith became a state religion in the sixteenth century, the slogan "Every day is Ashura and everyplace is Karbala" has been instilled in the minds and hearts of the Iranians. The passion and death of Imam Hussein on the Ashura Day in the plain of Karbala (AH 61/680 CE) is considered by the Shi'is to be the greatest suffering in human history. This notion was exploited by Ayatollah Khomeini during his speech in Qom on Ashura Day in 1963. This speech is now considered the beginning of the Iranian revolution, which in 1979 transformed Iran from a monarchy to the Islamic Republic. Most Iranians believe that participating in Karbala rituals commemorating the suffering and death of Hussein will facilitate their salvation through his intercession. The supreme occasion on which Hussein may intercede for a man's salvation is at the moment of a combatant's death on the battlefield. Using archival material, including film clips, the last wills of soldiers, and personal interviews, Varzi describes the psychological makeup of the Iranian fighters within the Karbala paradigm. It is moving reading.

It is an extraordinary book written on many levels by an anthropologist who acts sometimes as a psychologist and sometimes as a sociologist. And when the described reality sounds too harsh for the reader, she balances it with a poetic prose narration. What Varzi promises in the introduction, she delivers in the eight chapters that follow. In the introduction, she writes, "This book is a journey through the various veils or curtains of reality to meditate on the many possible meanings of reality for the young Iranians in post-revolution Iran who were the targets of the Islamic project that attempted to construct a specific Islamic reality" (5).

The use of Sufi terminology outside of the Sufi brotherhood to describe reality is very risky and daring since many believe that mysticism implies self-delusion or dreamy confusion of thought. Two paragraphs farther down on the same page, she notes, "Like the mystic journey as a movement in time and space that is neither linear nor monochronic, this book moves through different moments and themes in post-revolution Islamic Iran to look at how the Islamic Republic was constructed, sustained, consumed, and transformed. In this work, I aim to

1. Rumi, *The Masnavi*, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), bk. 3, 103.

narrate the political poem of the Islamic Republic through the lens of anthropology, framed by the mystical allegory of the journey” (5).

In order to use the mystical allegory throughout the book, the author must be very well versed in Sufi doctrine—and she is. In addition to her knowledge and understanding, she has an innate feeling for mysticism. The cover page does not indicate the mystical dimension of the book. But the reader gets an inkling of it in the prologue in which Varzi provides a one-page summary of Attar’s great mystical work, *The Conference of the Birds*. There are two Sufi terms that Varzi constantly and skillfully employs: *batin* and *zahir*. *Batin* means “inner, hidden, esoteric.” It is the opposite of *zahir*, which means “external,” “apparent,” “exoteric.”

This book is not only about the war with Iraq but also about the war for survival in contemporary Iran. Iran is a very old country with a young population. The number of people under twenty-five years old is staggering, and a great many of them are unemployed. The daily code of behavior for both sexes is very strict, and there are very few outlets for venting frustration. In her description of boy-meets-girl in Tehran (or maybe more accurately, boys-and-girls-attempt-to-meet-one-another), Varzi is at her best. A vignette titled “Traffic Jam, Summer Night 2001” is dramatic and hilarious at the same time. Here, with the well-trained eye of the anthropologist, the author paints a dramatic picture with words. Young men and women take advantage of weekly Thursday night traffic jams on a popular stretch of a major thoroughfare to flirt from inside their cars. Thursday is the last day of the workweek, and both sexes driving on Jordan Street are coifed and made up with extra care, and also segregated. Girls toss slips of paper with their phone numbers out of their cars to boys they fancy and then drive off. The boys hang out the windows and even open the car doors to catch the papers, playing loud music all the while. As the traffic jam subsides, both boys and girls become more restrained and serious. The music is turned off, makeup is wiped away, and everyone is in his or her own seat. No one wants to be detained by the Basij, who have set up a checkpoint farther down the boulevard.

In the introduction, Varzi writes, “This book is about the intersection of religion, vision, and power and whether the individual ultimately has the power to turn an image on or off” (7). Most of the pages of her book are infused with mysticism. Metaphorically, the warring souls are Attar’s birds on a journey. The book ends when the journey of the birds ends. Thirty birds out of several thousand reach their destination, only to find out that they are the Simorgh, the “thirty birds.” In her epilogue, Varzi concludes,

“At the end of *The Conference of the Birds*, we see that power is not outside the individual in the *zahir*, but rather within the self in the *batin*” (214).

Thank you, Roxanne Varzi, you are a very good Hoopoe.

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Of Irony and Empire: Islam, the West, and the Transcultural Invention of Africa

Laura Rice

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007

ix + 240 pp., \$70.00 (cloth), \$21.95 (paper)

How are we to arrive at a fully postcolonial world? This would be a world in which the legacies of nineteenth-century European empire—racism, orientalism, the myth of the West as the vanguard of History—are disabled. It would be a world able to overcome barriers to mutual recognition across cultures, where ideologues justifying imperial aggression would not get away with denying their victims’ humanity. More positively, we would have the means to appreciate how we are all products of transcultural invention, reflected and defined by our relations with one another. Perhaps we will never arrive, but Laura Rice suggests that we can move toward this state through the awareness of how irony marks and makes our age.

Other historical periods have been called ironic. But Rice posits that Europe’s imperial nineteenth century was an age of “stable irony,” in which relations between cultures were marked by “disdain, superiority, and detachment rather than empathy” (17). The First World War violently shook this stability, opening gaps between pronouncement and practice further shaken by the long crumbling of European empires. Our irony emerged from the incongruities of our global and contradictory age: from the tensions between modern progress and malaise, from observing the dehumanizing effects of the civilizing mission. It thrives because the multiple alternative modernities that have been built outside the West both universalize and provincialize the West, a situation that an ironic sensibility engages as familiar certainties collapse. “The formula in stable irony, moving from false to true, from rotten to solid, becomes dialectical in unstable irony, a movement from same to other and back” (9). Unstable irony, then, “is able to translate the relativity of our epistemologies, and by that very

fact, opens the way to new understandings” (2). Indeed, this sensibility was even theorized across boundaries. In treating the familiar array of relevant theorists, Rice highlights how many had colonial and postcolonial connections that shaped their thinking—not least with Muslim Africa, which is the focus of her concern. Thus she draws not only on the likes of Richard Rorty and Kenneth Burke, not only on Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Derrida, but also on Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and, of course, Frantz Fanon.

Against a familiar view that thinks unstable irony is disabling—because its dialectic is unable to support final positions—Rice asserts with Fanon, Edward Said, and others that it in fact pushes us toward effective activism, toward “revolution and transformation.” “It is affirmation through denial. It demystifies. Through mockery, it unmasks petty error and encourages analysis of the scheme of things. Yet through paradox and reconciliation, irony at its best affirms by opening our structuring of the world to transformation” (4). With this **multi-layered definition of irony in hand, Rice offers a collection of essays exploring the “transcultural invention” of Muslim Africa, from Senegal to Sudan.**

Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s well-known novel *Ambiguous Adventure* provides material to build a very solid section of her case. In the standard reading, Samba Diallo’s journey to the West and back ends in inevitable failure. The premise that the West is modern, and that Islam and Africa are not, means the two cannot coexist—Samba therefore dies of the inherent contradiction upon his return home. But Samba’s life interweaves two cogent narratives—his movement to Paris and back and his Sufi spiritual quest. “Western narrative conventions . . . do not suffice to explain an experience that involves religious struggle rather than progress, community rather than individuation, and revelation rather than development through time” (100). The first ends in death, but the second, in the often-neglected final chapter, marks Samba’s spiritual transcendence. Kane’s “effort is at once apotropaic—he seeks to protect his own culture, and therapeutic—he seeks to protect Western culture from itself” and the self-deception that its material power entails moral superiority (85). This suggests a new ground for understanding how the modern took shape in Senegal, even if Samba’s adventure remains ambiguous in the sense of “obscure” (115).

A joint study of three more recent Muslim African novelists explores transcultural negotiations of identity. These writers are Tayeb Salih (*Season of Migration to the North*), in colonial Sudan; Mustapha Tlili (*Lion Mountain*), in the early postcolonial Tuni-

sia; and Malika Mokeddem (*The Forbidden Woman* and *La Transe des Insoumis*), in contemporary Algeria. All root their identity in the social imaginaries of their natal societies, but also imagine themselves across cultural borders: “abroad, they are representatives of their ‘homes’; at home they become outsiders by going abroad” (130). Salih most fruitfully and therapeutically sustains an ironic vision, but all three reveal under careful reading the problems involved in achieving a healthy sense of unstable identity that avoids nostalgia, reified nationalism, and empty cosmopolitanism.

The final chapter returns to the broad themes of intellectual commitment against enduring imperial power, not least current American endeavors in Iraq. Rice invokes Said’s appeal to intellectual engagement that moves toward the inclusive, the mutually recognizing, the unstable dialectic of “irony from below” (179) and away from those who would deploy the stable meanings of the imperial era to serve power.

The broad ambition of these essays is laudable. If irony sometimes gets stretched to cover many modes of self-distancing and incongruity, it also provides insight into where and how the play of power can be eroded and avoided. There is inspiration here against despair and substantive evidence that Said’s invocation can succeed. The oddity of the book is an early chapter that characterizes the colonial order through the horrific experiences of France’s “African conscripts” in both world wars. Certainly, colonial states were especially equipped to abuse and coerce their subjects. But power over soldiers and laborers was particularly effective. In other spheres, we now know, colonial regimes were often weak, confused, and stumbling, frustrated in their attempts to transform or even control their subjects. While they proclaimed hegemony, in fact their day-to-day power in many spheres was built on negotiation with colonized elites and local agents of the state. Rice’s treatment misses this and thus neglects to explore the ironies that arise within operative colonial systems, when, for example, colonized subjects turn imperial ideology to their own ends. Her treatment also tends to assume (though not always) a chronology of effective conquest followed by liberation, placing unstable irony as the spirit of decolonization. But colonized African Muslim societies were not silenced or wholly submerged, despite Fanon’s insights. Rice herself comments on the ironic perspectives on power conveyed in the popular Joha stories from North Africa. The cultural resources that inform both Kane and Salih suggest more continuity in their imaginaries than stark conquest and liberation allows for. A more nuanced

assessment of the colonial moment—encompassing both conscripts and collaborators—would only augment the vision Rice develops here of the cultural powers and resilience that a truly postcolonial world could draw on.

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**The Maghrib in the New Century:
 Identity, Religion, and Politics**

Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine, eds.
 Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007
 278 pp., \$59.95 (cloth)

This edited volume is the product of a workshop held by the Maghrib Working Group of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University on 28 May 2003. It contains an introduction penned by one of the doyens of Maghrebi studies, Benjamin Stora, and is organized into four thematic parts, of varying length and substance, that deal with postindependence Maghrebi states and societies. Algeria gets the lion's share in terms of focus and analysis, followed by Morocco, and then Tunisia. Libya and Mauritania, the other two Maghrebi countries, receive no coverage at all. Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia form the nexus of this volume not only because they are the "core" countries of the Maghreb but also because they fit the broad framework of concern and analysis of the workshop.

The Maghreb is presented here in the context of the "Greater Middle East," sharing much in common with the eastern part of the Middle East. However, the Maghreb has, according to the workshop organizers, an edge that makes it "more ripe than those in the Arab and Muslim East for the kind of partnership initiatives envisaged by Western policy makers that they hope will be transformative in nature" (ix). This statement explains a key motive behind the volume's discussion of themes and issues that relate to democracy, economic development, security, and political in/stability in the Maghrebi countries and their impact on shaping Europe's relationship with the Greater Middle East.

Part 1, "A Half-Century after Independence: Rethinking Maghribi History, Memory, and Identity," consists of three chapters that analyze the rewriting and reinvention of Moroccan and Algerian history and the role of both collective and frag-

mented memories in that process. Chapter 2, "The (Re)fashioning of Moroccan National Identity" by Mickael Bensadoun, focuses on the Amazigh and the Islamist discourses against the official one. Chapter 3, "Algerian Identity and Memory" by Robert Mortimer, examines the writings of Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra in the context of competing secular and Muslim interpretations of Algerian history and identity. The Berber/Amazigh cultural movement in both Algeria and Morocco and its re/construction of Berber history and nationalist history are covered in chapter 4, "Berber/Amazigh 'Memory Work.'" The contention over that history reflects three main discourses and their counter-discourses: state and society, the secular and the Islamist, and the Arab and the Berber. While the secular-Islamist discourse and counterdiscourse in the Maghreb is dominant in any analysis, it is the Arab-Berber dimension of the debate over Maghrebi history and politics that has been gaining increasing importance and significance. Part 1 of this volume highlights the centrality of this issue and gives a clear indication of the direction of current and future research on the Maghreb.

Part 2, "Regimes and Societies: New Challenges," consists of five chapters, with two focusing on Algeria, two on Morocco, and one on Tunisia. The dynamics and the challenges of political Islam in the Maghreb are of utmost concern in this part, along with an assessment of the stability of the Maghrebi ruling regimes and of the potential for democratic development. The length of this part of the volume reflects the centrality of its themes to the workshop organizers and the volume editors. Certainly, political Islam and the civil war in Algeria have been receiving much attention from scholars and researchers, and the topic has been so exhausted that the two chapters, "Reflections on the Aftermath of Civil Strife: Algeria, 2006" by Gideon Gera and "The Fate of Political Islam in Algeria" by Louisa Aït-Hamadouche and Yahia H. Zoubir, read more like *déjà vu* analyses, with the exception of Aït-Hamadouche and Zoubir's interesting observation on the common features between the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The three chapters "From Hasan II to Muhammad VI: Plus Ça Change?" by Daniel Zisenwine, "Justice and Development or Justice and Spirituality? The Challenge of Morocco's Nonviolent Islamist Movements" by Michael J. Willis, and "Whither the Ben Ali Regime in Tunisia?" by Michele Penner Angrist break from that trend and shift the focus to Morocco and Tunisia, offering insightful analysis of their regimes and the challenges they face. Willis's suggestion that Morocco has not been spared

the wrath of political Islam, that it may be a “‘late developer’ with regard to Islamism,” is particularly intriguing (71).

Part 3, “The Economic Dimension,” contains two chapters, “The Constraints on Economic Development in Morocco and Tunisia” by Paul Rivlin and “Algeria’s Economy: Mutations, Performance, and Challenges” by Ahmed Aghrout and Michael Hodd. Both chapters evaluate the successes, failures, and challenges of the economies in terms of their implications on social and political stability in those Maghrebi countries, fitting in the general themes of the volume. The connections made between economic performance and political stability are a reminder that the latter is not simply the result of ideological shifts and cultural transformations but is rooted in economic policies and the in/ability of Maghrebi governments to implement them. Both chapters remind us that economic success or failure in those Maghrebi countries depends on global factors as well and that if additional political and social turmoil is to be avoided in the Maghreb, the international community must share the responsibility of providing a healthy economic climate.

Part 4, “The Maghrib in Europe,” consists of one chapter only, “The Maghrib Abroad: Immigrant Transpolitics and Cultural Involution in France.” An interesting and informative chapter, it offers a good narrative as well as an analysis of the politics and activism of the Algerian diaspora in France, the Berber one in particular. The author, Paul A. Silverstein, establishes the links between events and developments in Algeria concerning the civil war and the contentious definitions of Algerian history and identity and their impacts on diaspora politics. He also moves comfortably between that transpolitical dimension and a more local one, connecting the Algerian diaspora activism to French economic and social policies. It is unfortunate that “The Maghrib in Europe” was restricted to one Maghrebi community and to France only. Additional contributions to this part of the volume could have shed more light on the major issue concerning Maghrebi-European relations, that of the diaspora politics inside European societies and Europe’s policies toward that diaspora. This chapter also highlights the increasing significance of the “Berber question” as it is affecting and being affected by local events in the Maghreb and shaping the political landscape of the Maghrebi diaspora. Given the centrality of the Berber issue in any analysis of modern and contemporary Maghrebi societies and politics, a different form of organization for the volume could have highlighted that element more.

Overall, the volume addresses four of the five challenges cited by Stora as facing the Maghreb:

state legitimacy, emigration, alternative transnational political identities, and the question of language. The fifth challenge, the status of women, receives the least coverage in this volume. Mortimer’s analysis of the writings of Djébar, who represents both the voice of contemporary women and the experience of Algerian women in modern history, neither reveals nor explains enough about changes and developments in the status of women in Algeria, let alone the whole Maghreb, or in gender relations. Zisenwine offers a perceptive analysis of the conditions surrounding the Family Code reform in 2003 in Morocco, but the discussion remains within the confines of an assessment of King Muhammad VI’s leadership.

In sum, it is a volume with some significant contributions to the field of Maghrebi studies, and, for a change, the chapters offering new contributions pertain more to Morocco and Tunisia than to Algeria. The theme of Islamism in the Maghreb remains a dominant one, but it is facing new competition from the Berber question, which may prove to be as crucial and detrimental in shaping the future of Algerian and Moroccan politics and in setting research agendas for their histories. For many researchers and writers, the research agenda is now being driven by the debates over the effects of changes and developments inside the Maghreb on European-Maghrebi relationships (within the broader framework of West-Islam relationships) and on the Maghrebi communities’ presence in European societies. That this volume responds to those questions and others is not in doubt.

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**Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies:
Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Path to Confrontation**

Barbara Slavin

(New York: St. Martin's, 2007)
xi + 258 pp., \$24.95 (paper)

Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies: Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Path to Confrontation is a well-researched book written in a lucid prose style for the nonspecialist reader. It offers an erudite analysis of the complex and perplexing relationship between Iran and the United States. Barbara Slavin supplements her research with her direct understanding of current Iranian politics, which she has been involved with as a journalist since the late 1990s, when she became the senior diplomatic correspondent for *USA Today*. Her career has included covering Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa and reporting on volatile stories such as the Iran-Iraq war, the 1986 U.S. bombing of Libya, and the Palestine-Israel peace process.

Titled after a popular Middle Eastern expression, the book makes an analogy between the relationship of Iran and the United States and any couple in a love/hate relationship and captures their interactions in an entangled web of conflict and infatuation. Slavin evaluates this tumultuous affair in the course of the modern history of Iran with a steadfast focus on the developments of the past three decades after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. She calls attention to the opportunities that both Iran and the United States have missed for diplomatically resolving some of their problems, now transformed into international conflicts.

The book is organized in twelve chapters and covers the major issues that surround this relationship. These include regional and international policy, radical Islam and its specific characteristics in Iran, the restless youth and its fascination with the West, public discontent, Muslim and secular intellectuals, the clerics, the law, terrorism, and the so-called axis of evil. It ends with a discussion of the prospects and the strategies that could be utilized in responding to these issues. Slavin addresses some of the questions that have been previously discussed by other writers; however, her analysis is strictly focused on the relationship between Iran and the United States, with the objective of understanding how the process of diplomatic negotiations has failed and how it can be restored. For instance, when she recalls the anti-imperialist fervor of the Iranian revolutionaries in the late 1970s and the subsequent hostage crisis, she is evoking historical memory to highlight the existing Iranian public attitude toward both the theocratic form of government and the

United States. Slavin captures this transformation with skill and economy as she explains that Iranians still use the famous "Down with the U.S." slogan as a masquerade, when they appear in government-sponsored rallies and certain public events. However, when they are not being watched, they repeat this slogan humorously in its revised version as "Down with the Dear U.S." In the same context, she refers to the vigils that the Iranian public held in sympathy with the victims of the 9/11 catastrophe and in condemning al-Qaeda, which is a shared enemy for both Iran and the United States.

During the early years of the 1980s, the Islamic Republic succeeded in establishing itself as a theocratic form of government through a complicated process. The general election that was held after the shah was expelled from the country provided two choices on the ballot: monarchy or the Islamic Republic. Slavin is rash in her analysis when, without clarifying the details of this election, she states that the Islamic form of government was overwhelmingly elected. Notwithstanding this detail, her statement is valid in the sense that the general public did not effectively object to this form of election because of the oppressive preoccupation with U.S. imperialism and the fear of a coup against the young revolutionary state. Unfortunately, the absence of critical responses to the reactionary actions committed by the provisional government paved the way for the strengthening of Ayatollah Khomeini's followers, which included the majority of the secular and leftist forces. In the next few years, the war between Iran and Iraq provided a perfect pretext for wiping out the opposition forces and silencing any voice of discontent in the interest of protecting the national sovereignty of Iran against Iraq and its internal collaborators. Slavin calls attention to the significance of the war campaign in order to bring to focus the severity of the threat it poses to the democratic process in Iran today. Her argument is sound when she says that the crises in Iraq have been extended to Iran, whose southern border regions are now more insecure than ever. From the perspective of American interests, Slavin argues that the Bush administration's decision to launch a war against Iraq has in fact strengthened the position of Iran in the region by removing its previously formidable neighboring enemy. In the event of a war against Iran, the current government of Iran will mobilize its disillusioned and demoralized public once again against the foreign invaders, as in the 1980s. The assumption that the United States is planning to invade Iran has already justified the crackdown on journalists, student activists, and the opposition forces in that country. Slavin explains that in recent years the neoconservative march to

power in Iran took place after it was put on the list of the axes of evil. These remarks damaged the Iranian democratic and human rights movement, whose proponents have been conveniently classified by the Islamic Republic as agents of U.S. imperialism. They have been imprisoned and banned from continuing their work.

During the past ten years, the author has been in direct contact with senior officials in the Clinton and Bush governments as well as the Rafsanjani, Khatami, and Ahmadinejad administrations in Iran. Factual evidence and personal insight bring the author to the main argument of the book, which demonstrates that Iran and the United States had several opportunities to resolve their problems through diplomatic negotiations. These missed opportunities are not exclusive to the present administration and go back to Bill Clinton's time in office. That period in Iran is characterized with mixed attitudes toward the United States. In 1998 Clinton sent a message to Iran through King Abdullah of Jordan, suggesting that the two countries should start a dialogue to resolve their issues. During the same time, Madeline O'Brien alienated the supreme leader of the revolution, Ali Khamenei, whose support was necessary for President Khatami to proceed with talks with the United States. A few years later, from 2001 to 2003, Iranian and American diplomats held several secret meetings in Paris and Geneva. Slavin provides a copy of a proposal drafted by the Iranian diplomats, which outlines both countries' objectives and strategies in regard to the issues of national interest and international security. This document vouches for dialogue and negotiation. The proposal was written by Sadegh Kharazi, one of many diplomats ostracized under the current administration in Iran. Kharazi was at the time Iran's ambassador to France. The proposal was transmitted to the Swiss ambassador but was solely drafted by the Iranians. Karl Rove and Colin Powell saw the proposal. Condoleezza Rice said that she never saw this document. Slavin regrets that it was ignored by the decisions makers in Washington and provides other instances that could have repaired relations between these countries and prevented their further deterioration.

Slavin concludes that the problems have now escalated to a critical level of complexity, though there are still chances to mend them without launching another war campaign. A most pronounced example is Iran's atomic proliferation project and the United States' inability to address it effectively. Slavin reminds the reader of historical evidence going back to the Cold War era and explains that, in the late 1950s, a few years after the Central Intelligence Agency plotted the over-

throw of the government of the nationalist premier Mohammad Mosaddeq, both Republican and Democratic administrations encouraged Iran to develop nuclear power. Such moments of historical insight function as the fulcrum on which the author builds her analysis of the conservative theocratic government of Iran and the neoconservative hegemony in the Bush administration.

Slavin treats the grim subject of her analysis in a voice that, similar to that of Iranians, appeals to humor in grave moments of frustration. In this manner, her writing allows the reader some relief in reading and thinking about a most important subject in contemporary global politics. The breadth and depth of the historical knowledge and cultural sensitivity that she brings to her analysis make this work a unique venture in understanding the current relationship between Iran and the United States.

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