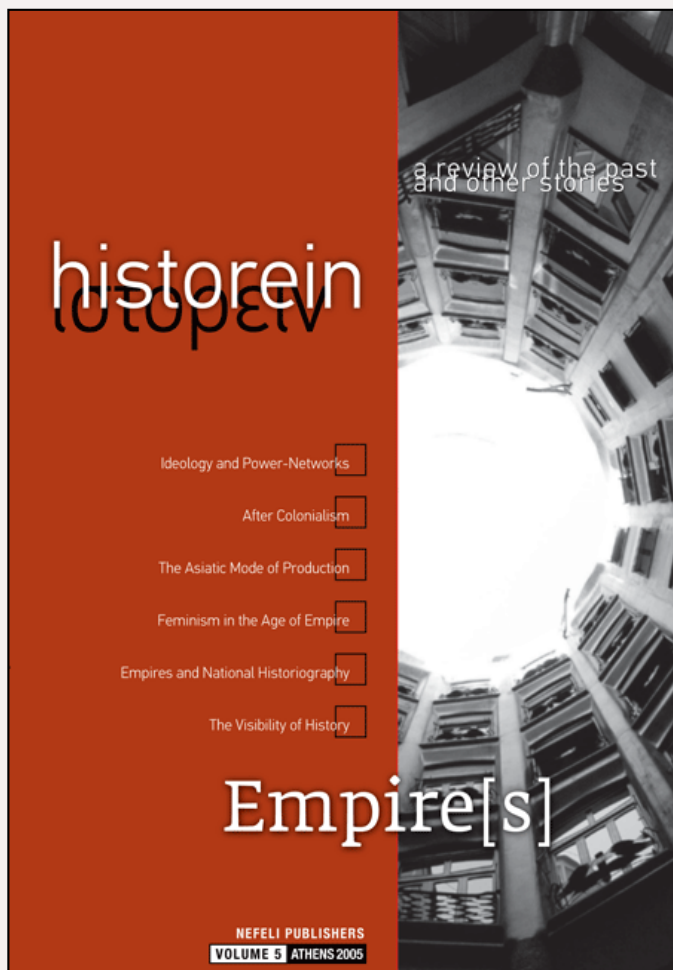


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BOOK REVIEWS

Efi Canner

***Φτώχεια και φιλανθρωπία
στην ορθόδοξη κοινότητα της
Κωνσταντινούπολης,
1753-1912
(Pauvreté et philanthropie dans
la communauté orthodoxe de
Constantinople, 1753-1912)***

Athènes: Katarti, 2004. 443 pp.

de Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont

EHESS

Dans cet ouvrage dense et foisonnant d'informations, Efi Canner cherche à démontrer que le contrôle et la gestion de la pauvreté ont joué un rôle fondamental lors du processus de formation du *millet* grec orthodoxe dans l'Empire ottoman du XIX^e siècle et de définition de ses caractéristiques culturelles. D'après l'auteur, au cours de cette période, aussi bien la charité que l'éducation des couches populaires ont permis d'encadrer et de surveiller des populations aux sentiments identitaires flous et donc particulièrement vulnérables.

L'évolution de la pauvreté et de la philanthropie -phénomènes autant parallèles que complémentaires- est examinée pour la période allant de 1753 à 1912. Si le choix du milieu du XVIII^e siècle est facile à comprendre, on a en revanche du mal à voir les raisons qui font de l'année 1912 la date butoir de ce travail.

La seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle est marquée par des profonds changements structurels pour l'orthodoxie grecque d'Istanbul : participation active des corporations d'artisans dans la gestion des finances du Patriarcat ; début d'un processus de centralisation au profit du Phanar et au détriment des paroisses jusque-là relativement autonomes. Ces changements ne sont pas une particularité grecque. Attentive à intégrer l'élément orthodoxe dans le cadre ottoman général, l'auteur souligne que des développements similaires ont lieu au sein des autres communautés confessionnelles. Ainsi, lorsqu'ils enferment leurs pestiférés, les Grecs d'Istanbul sont en conformité avec l'esprit de leur temps. Á la même époque, l'Etat ottoman prend lui aussi des mesures pour débarrasser l'espace public des mendiants.

Chronologiquement, c'est vers le milieu du XVIII^e siècle, avec la création du premier hôpital grec d'Istanbul (1753), que le besoin de cerner la misère fait l'objet d'un acte collectif au sein de l'orthodoxie constantino-politaine. Pauvres, malades, délinquants : trois catégories d'individus que l'on retrouve consignés dans l'établissement « hospitalier », conçu pour restreindre et non pas pour réhabiliter ; trois catégories que Canner confond sans cesse (volontairement ?) faisant ainsi encore mieux ressortir l'ambiguïté du lieu, qui fonctionnera à la fois comme prison et comme asile mais qui n'aura, jusqu'au milieu du XIX^e siècle, rien d'un centre de soins médicaux. La présentation des « premières tentatives d'organisation des institutions philanthropiques » couvre une durée d'environ un siècle. Dans cette partie

riche en informations, l'auteur cherche à mettre en évidence la continuité des phénomènes étudiés. Nombreuses, les références aux périodes antérieures permettent de prendre la mesure des évolutions décrites.

Dans le contexte ottoman, il est inutile de préciser que ceux que l'on enferme dans un centre hospitalier grec orthodoxe sont en principe des Grecs. Santé et éducation constituent des champs d'action quasi-exclusifs des communautés confessionnelles. Chacune d'entre elles s'occupe des « siens », c'est-à-dire ceux qui se réclament de la même appartenance ethnico-religieuse. Cependant, il n'est pas question pour l'État ottoman d'accorder une telle autonomie dans les domaines ayant un rapport avec l'ordre public. Les paragraphes consacrés à la juridiction pénale des paroisses chrétiennes et en particulier à celle du Patriarcat suscitent, à cet égard, une certaine perplexité. Canner note que jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle « les prisons communautaires étaient installées dans les cryptes des églises dans chaque paroisse ». Mais elle omet d'indiquer que, utilisés pour les cas « légers » de la justice pénale, ces endroits ne représentaient qu'une partie infime de l'appareil pénitentiaire ottoman. Quant à la juridiction pénale du Patriarcat, elle concernait des délits s'inscrivant dans la sphère du pouvoir spirituel de ce chef religieux, mais ne pouvait en aucun cas s'étendre à des crimes tels que l'homicide. Dans les registres de la prison de l'arsenal impérial de Kasim pacha (*Tersane Zindanı Defterleri*, 1 068 vols., années 1648-1802), conservés dans les archives ottomanes de la Présidence du Conseil à Istanbul, figurent des nombreux non musulmans parmi les détenus. L'épaisseur de la population carcérale chrétienne ou juive confirme le fonctionnement, du moins en matière de droit pénal, de plusieurs justices parallèles et à différentes vitesses.

C'est donc par un espace d'exclusion (hôpital-prison-asile) que débute l'institutionnalisation de l'action philanthropique de la communauté grecque orthodoxe d'Istanbul. Un siècle plus tard, les modes d'expression de celle-ci seront notablement diversifiés : à côté de l'hôpital, désormais de plus en plus médicalisé, un réseau scolaire considérable et des nombreuses sociétés de bienfaisance composent l'essentiel du dispositif philanthropique orthodoxe dont les couches indigentes sont les principales bénéficiaires. Une philanthropie qui est cependant conditionnelle et qui s'accompagne de la mise en place d'un système de valeurs auxquelles il s'agit d'adhérer. Le travail, la famille, la vie décente, l'éducation élémentaire pour tous sont quelques-uns parmi ces idéaux qui visent à doter de repères précis et communs à des populations rurales aux identités multiples et encore hétéroclites. Ceux qui se chargent de cette mission de construction de l'identité du *millet* orthodoxe et de son intégration définitive dans le giron de l'hellénisme (version XIX^e siècle) appartiennent à une nouvelle couche sociale de grands commerçants, banquiers, négociants, membres de professions libérales, aisés et surtout instruits. En cette seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle, ceux-ci ont le vent en poupe : dans toutes les composantes de la société ottomane, des mécanismes similaires se mettent en place grâce à l'institutionnalisation, voulue par l'État, des structures administratives communautaires.

Les phénomènes qu'E. C. étudie avec finesse et avec un grand souci de précision sont complexes et il est évidemment impossible d'en présenter ici -fut-ce sommairement- tous les aspects. Certaines idées maîtresses de ce travail nécessitent cependant d'être signalées et discutées.

L'auteur affirme que l'éducation et l'aide aux pauvres -qui apparaissent comme des objectifs prioritaires dans les nombreux règlements des communautés ou des associations rédigés après 1870- s'inscrivent dans la lutte contre le « bulgarisme ». Le lecteur ne peut que s'étonner de constater que la crainte de la percée des missionnaires catholiques ou protestants et surtout celle, bien réelle s'agissant de couches populaires, des conversions à l'islam sont passées sous silence. D'autant plus surpris que les références au climat de concurrence entre communautés confessionnelles, pour occuper le terrain, ne manquent pas dans le livre.

L'éducation des filles et d'une manière générale la définition ainsi que la revalorisation du rôle de la femme dans la société grecque orthodoxe d'Istanbul sont incontestablement parmi les thèmes forts de l'étude. En analysant le discours de ceux qui composent le monde associatif de l'époque, E. C. démontre l'importance qu'accorde la collectivité au contrôle de la sexualité des jeunes filles qu'elle espère assurer par la systématisation de l'instruction. Là aussi, l'auteur semble ignorer que le risque d'islamisation qui rôde autour des jeunes filles grecques issues de milieux pauvres est une préoccupation sérieuse des élites orthodoxes, Patriarcat en tête. S'agit-il de contrôler la sexualité ou le choix du futur conjoint ? Il importe de rappeler à cet égard que, dans la culture turque, la coutume de la dot est inversée : contrairement aux Grecs qui sont tenus de doter leurs filles, les Turcs « achètent » leurs épouses en versant une somme (connue sous le nom de *baslık*) aux parents de la future mariée. D'un « poids » qu'elle représente depuis sa naissance pour ses proches, la jeune fille grecque se transforme en « capital » (même

modeste) dans la perspective d'un mariage avec un musulman.

Indirectement, E. C. soulève aussi la question de savoir si le *millet* orthodoxe fait partie, à travers le Patriarche qui le représente, de l'édifice étatique ottoman. Les réponses sur ce point restent évasives et parfois même contradictoires. De l'analyse qu'elle nous propose il ne ressort pas clairement si une volonté d'intégration a vraiment existé ou si les *millet* (grec, mais aussi juif, arménien, etc...) n'ont au contraire été que des excroissances des structures ottomanes. Reconnaissons toutefois que le flou sur ce sujet traduit en réalité les hésitations et la diversité des points de vue de l'époque : au fil des dernières décennies de l'Empire, le fossé entre les Grecs irrédentistes et les adeptes de l'« ottomanité » (*osmanlilik*) n'a cessé de s'accroître.

Le chapitre qui concerne les associations des immigrés est probablement le seul qui laisse le lecteur quelque peu sur sa faim. Toujours avec la même méticulosité, E. C. présente le réseau associatif de ceux qui - Cappadociens, autres Anatoliens, gens originaires de la Roumélie ottomane ou du Royaume de Grèce - se sont installés à Istanbul à la recherche d'un avenir meilleur. Si nous parvenons à nous faire une idée précise des activités dans la capitale ottomane de ces « expatriés », les rapports avec leurs lieux d'origine et surtout l'impact de leur action sur ces derniers sont très sommairement évoqués et restent inexplorés. Cette lacune est sans doute à attribuer au caractère rural des populations des pays d'origine. Peu familières avec le monde de l'écrit celles-ci n'ont laissé que de rares traces de leurs itinéraires ; de même, la production de textes imprimés sur les œuvres des associations des immigrés à Istanbul a été relativement maigre.

Cette constatation confirme une évidence : l'histoire est une construction intellectuelle, faite avec des sources disponibles, pour la plupart écrites, et condamnée pour cette raison à demeurer partielle et arbitraire. L'essentiel de la documentation consultée par E. C. est constituée de règlements, c'est-à-dire de textes programmatiques qui fixent le cap, qui affichent les priorités souhaitées, mais qui ne renseignent pas sur les résultats obtenus. L'auteur en est non seulement parfaitement consciente, mais tente -et c'est un des principaux apports de ce travail- de combler les lacunes en faisant appel chaque fois que cela est possible à d'autres types de matériaux, tels que la presse, les rapports d'activité, etc. Et même si le déséquilibre persiste, elle parvient à broser un tableau vivant et convaincant des stratégies réellement mises en place pour obtenir l'homogénéité identitaire des Grecs orthodoxes à travers l'Empire ottoman entre 1753 et 1912.

Miglena Nikolchina

***Matricide in Language:
Writing Theory in Kristeva
and Woolf***

**New York: Other Press,
2004. 192 pp.**

by Athena Athanasiou

Panteion University, Athens

***In the Name of the M/other:
Abjection, Poetics, Exile***

*Subjects of theory must be themselves
subjects in infinite analysis.*

Julia Kristeva, 1980¹

Miglena Nikolchina's preoccupation is an intertextual reading of Julia Kristeva and Virginia Woolf, one that focuses on the notion of "matricide": the matricidal impulse upon which literary traditions are premised. In this powerfully argued and masterfully written book, fittingly dedicated to Joan Scott, Nikolchina proposes to examine matricide as the tacit and persistent phantasmatic mechanism of suppressing women's contributions to culture. According to Kristeva, matricide is the violent separation from the archaic mother on which civilization and phallic idealization are founded; it is a loss, or murder, that is established as the organizing principle and necessary condition of signification and subjectiv-

ity. In her wide-ranging intertextual analysis, Nikolchina – a professor in the Department of Theory and History of Literature at Sofia University – takes her cue from Kristeva’s own concept of intertextuality, which indicates the processes by which different signifying systems and practices are transposed into each other; she does so in order to further develop Kristevan intertextuality in terms of reverberations, resonances, echoes, and above all, new beginnings. In reading Kristeva *with* Woolf, Nikolchina draws our attention to “matricide in language” as a topic of investigation that is indispensable for theoretical perspectives committed to questioning hegemonic liberal, humanist, and masculinist renditions of subjectivity and signification.

A linguist, practicing psychoanalyst, and novelist born in 1941 in Bulgaria, Julia Kristeva did her graduate work in the nineteen sixties in Paris with Lucien Goldmann and Roland Barthes. While in Paris she finished her doctorate in French literature (*La Révolution du Langage Poétique*, 1974), became involved in the influential journal *Tel Quel*, and began psychoanalytic training. Currently, Kristeva is a professor of linguistics at the University of Paris VII and a regular visiting professor at Columbia University and at the New School University in New York. Her writing is an intersection between philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and cultural and literary theory. She developed a textual theory of what she calls “semanalysis”, which is a combination of Freud’s psychoanalysis and Saussure’s and Peirce’s semiology. With this textual theory – a theory committed to the exploration of the intense and complex conjunctions of corporeality, subjectivity, and signification – she challenges conventional psychoanalytic theory, linguistic theory, and philosophy. Kristeva’s theory of the semiotic

dimension of language implies the necessity of establishing “poetic language” as the object of linguistics. In exploring the possibilities of displacement, disruption, or subversion of the paternal law within the Symbolic, she seeks a specifically feminine locus of unsettling the paternal law within the realm of linguistic signification. The maternal chora, the semiotic, and the abject are all modalities of the feminine in Kristeva’s work – a feminine that is repressed by the paternal symbolic order and represents a potentially disruptive threat for its power.

While Kristeva retains an ambivalent relationship to feminism, her theories provide some innovative approaches for feminist theory (as certain readings of her work – even the critical ones such as Judith Butler’s response – illustrate). Nikolchina seeks to reclaim Kristeva’s work, particularly those aspects that focus on the creative potential of the feminine, for the purposes of feminist theory and politics. But if Kristeva has focused on male poetic work to explore processes by which the poetic effects a semiotic disruption of the symbolic, Nikolchina shifts the perspective towards the work of Virginia Woolf, which is misconstrued and repudiated by certain feminist criticism, but also read as “asymbolic” by Kristeva herself. While Kristeva has recently shifted her writing on the feminine to the singularities of what she defines as “female genius” (in her trilogy on Hannah Arendt, Melanie Klein, and Colette) in order to investigate poetic-textual transgression, Nikolchina is more interested in bringing to the fore “the irreducible collectivity of thinking, which is the unsaid ideal behind my own take on matricide” (10).

One of Kristeva’s most influential contributions to philosophy of language has been her distinction between two inseparable

functions of signification – the semiotic (*le sémiotique*) and the symbolic (*le symbolique*) – through which she displaces Lacan’s distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The dialectical oscillation between the semiotic and the symbolic is what makes signification possible. The semiotic element refers to the organization of drives in signifying practices. It is occasioned by the primary relationship to the maternal body and associated with rhythms, tones, intonational repetitions, unconscious pulsations, (infant) echolalias, and (psychotic) glossalalias through which bodily drives are discharged. It does not yet refer (in infant talk) or no longer refers (in psychotic discourse) to a signified object. It is anterior to the first phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, and sentences. It lies beyond the realm of sign, of signified object, and of conscious transcendental-phenomenological ego. Tallying with its disruptive heterogeneity, the subject emerging from the semiotic must be a questionable subject-in-process (*sujet en procès*): the unsettled, disrupted, and questionable subject-in-process of poetic language; a subject that is able to allow the semiotic *jouissance* to undo the symbolic order. As an indeterminate and undecidable articulation of the original libidinal multiplicity, the semiotic introduces wandering – or semantic non-closure – into language. The semiotic refers to a plurivocal signifying disposition that is heterogeneous to meaning but always in some relationship to it: either a negative or surplus relationship. In figuring the semiotic, Kristeva draws the term *chora* (χώρα), from Plato’s *Timaeus*, to connote a space – a receptacle – that remains unnamable and anterior to naming, to the One, to the father (see her remarks on the *chora* in *The Revolution in Poetic Language*).² This un-

cathected semiotic activity is marked by autonomy from meaning and dissonance within the thetic, paternal function of language. The heterogeneousness to meaning and signification that characterizes the rhythmic pulsation of maternally connoted, pre-Oedipal semiotic appears “only in a few rare flashes of writing”. For example, carnivalesque discourse, Artaud, Joyce, vocalic timbres in Symbolist work, the modernist poetry of Lautréamont and Mallarmé, Céline’s laughter, certain Dadaist and Surrealist experiments all attest, in different ways, to a revolutionary form of writing. The poetic speech of these (male) writers and artists, Kristeva claims, recovers the primary libidinal continuity and contiguity with the maternal body; some of them may even literally drop the “name of the father”: Céline, for example, signs with his grandmother’s first name. As a reinstatement of maternal territory into the economy of language, poetic language is an attempt to sublimate the abject. From the realm of such poetic language emerges the confrontation with what Kristeva designates as “feminine” – the unnamable otherness – one that goes beyond abjection and fright. Let us note here that although she refuses to define “woman”, she understands “woman” to mean that which cannot be represented, which remains marginal to the patriarchal symbolic disposition of signification.

In deftly reading various texts (with special attention to Virginia Woolf), Nikolchina unravels in a nuanced way Kristeva’s investigation of the dominance of the semiotic in poetic language. She brilliantly transposes Kristeva’s emphasis on marginality, which is central to her concept of abjectivity, into “mergency” to indicate an alternative route to literary assassination (or the abjective in-

attentiveness of the text), namely the fusional rhetorical technique that erases alterity. Drawing on Joan Scott's account of the oscillation between fantasies of uniqueness and fantasies of fusion as characteristic of women's movements,³ Nikolchina argues that these fantasies are (destructive but also creative) deployments of the matricidal phantasms. Both abjectivity, as obliteration of the author's text, and merginality, as amorous fusion into its sameness, render the female speaking subject a solitary atemporal presence, where she imagines herself to be the first of her kind, (examples include Mary Wollstonecraft's "I am the first of a new genus", Simone de Beauvoir's "Women have no history", or Virginia Woolf's "Why isn't there a tradition of the mothers?") She puts it eloquently: "The ultimate problem with abjectivity and merginality is that they facilitate a compulsive forgetfulness that dooms a female voice to repeat incessantly its inauguration" (9).

Semiotic processes prepare the future speaker for entrance into meaning and signification (the symbolic) as a unitary agent of a language structured by the paternal law. The symbolic modality of language is the domain of univocal signification and judgment; it is associated with the grammar or structure of language that enables the speaking subject to signify something. Language as symbolic function – as nomination, sign, and syntax – constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and the relationship to the mother. The symbolic modality of signification becomes possible by repudiating the relationship to the maternal body, by castrating the pre-oedipal, semiotic, phallic mother. Social-symbolic-linguistic contract constitutes itself by, and at the cost of, repressing instinctual and maternal processes.

If the Symbolic is predicated upon the repudiation of the "name of the mother", however, this repressed maternal authority returns in some forms of literature and art. Kristeva is interested in investigating how the artist accesses and reactivates the repressed maternal semiotic (without repudiating her/his symbolic disposition or sliding into psychosis). But while the male artist can appropriate the archaic, maternal territory for himself and still maintain his position in the social order, the female artist's retrieval of the maternal semiotic jeopardizes her position because of her identification with the abjected maternal body and of her already marginal position within a patriarchal culture.

Nonetheless, women can indeed gain access to the repressed maternal body and challenge the symbolic element of signification. They can do so, according to Kristeva, through the biosocial form of "split symbolization" (meaning the intersection of language and instinctual drive, of sign and rhythm, of the semiotic and the symbolic) that the event of childbirth constitutes. In other words, women have privileged access to the maternal body through childbirth. In her essays "Stabat Mater" and "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini", Kristeva maintains that the female desire to have children is a sublimated incestuous desire for reunion with the maternal body. By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her Master-Mother. In that respect, she is open to her own psychosis: the contact with the mother is aphasia, a complete absence of meaning. In casting motherhood as a phallic attempt to attain the mother, Kristeva points to what she understands as the homosexual aspect of motherhood.

Kristeva rewrites Freud's thesis that the social is founded on the murder of the

father and the incest taboo. In her alternative account of the infant's entrance into signification, individuation requires what she calls "abjection", "the journey to the end of the night". Like the broader concept of the semiotic, the abject – or rather, its expulsion – is a necessary condition of the constitution of the subject within the symbolic. Nikolchina rightly points out that the notion of the abject is "one of Kristeva's most engaging masterstrokes" (4). Drawing on anthropologist Mary Douglas's groundbreaking analysis of purity and defilement,⁴ Kristeva delineates in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) the abject as that which calls into question the borders and limits demanded by the symbolic as that which establishes a threatening precariousness and ambiguity in the subject's constitution of self and identity. "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity", writes Kristeva.⁵ Neither subject nor object, neither inside nor outside the body, the abject is the terrifying and contaminating "matter out of place" that is jettisoned out of the boundaries of the symbolic order; it is quintessentially rendered "Other". It is disavowed, abominated, expelled from social rationality, discharged as excrement, declared to be a non-object of desire. The abject is an exile who asks "Where am I?" rather than "Who am I?"⁶ The notion of abjection refers to the process through which the boundary or threshold of the "clean and proper" civilized body is demarcated. Through abjection, proper sociality is achieved by means of expulsion of the perilously improper and unclean modes of corporeality. To put it differently, the boundary-constituting taboo that Kristeva calls abjection attests to the construction of the culturally intelligible speaking subject through expulsion and repulsion. In Elizabeth

Grosz's terms, "abjection is a reaction to the recognition of the impossible but necessary transcendence of the subject's corporeality, and the impure, defiling elements of its uncontrollable materiality".⁷ Or, as Judith Butler puts it, "this is the mode by which Others become shit".⁸

The most powerful location of abjection in the process of individuation – namely the process of attaining a stable enunciate, psychic, and sexual position in the symbolic – is the maternal body. The maternal body poses the greatest threat to the border of the subject's sense of totality, integrity, and cleanness. Like the abject, maternity is the splitting and blurring of identities. In order to map her/his self's proper body, it is necessary for the developing infant to abject the maternal body, to subdue its generative power. For Kristeva, before the mother becomes an object for the infant, she becomes a defiling otherness – an abject. Through this process of abjection, the infant is required to leave behind the maternal body, and the ambiguous and ambivalent sentiments that it causes to her/him, in order to enter the social (language–symbolism–paterernity). The infant marks her/his difference from the maternal body of instinctual drive, enters the phallic, legal, symbolic establishment of patrilineal filiation and maintains the ensuing order of oedipalization. Acquisition of language and accession to the status of a clean and proper body are premised upon the repression of maternal authority and the expulsion of the abject. Feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz is right to point out that Sigmund Freud had already claimed in *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and its Discontents* that civilization is founded on the expulsion of pre-oedipal incestual attachments.⁹ What Kristeva's rereading of Freud really con-

tributes to the theory of subjectivity is her claim that what is expelled from the subject's corporeal and psychic delimitation can never be fully repudiated but remains ambiguously present to mark the threateningly provisional border of the subject's identity. Such excessive residue of the attempted (albeit always incomplete) repression recurs not only in socially illegitimate forms but also in socially sanctioned activities such as forms of literature, poetry, and the arts.

Kristeva's semiotic emerges, quite problematically in my view, as a pre-discursive libidinal economy that maintains an ontological status prior to language. As Butler has shown, the maternal body is conceptualized by Kristeva as a locus of drives that are essentially prior to discourse and culture. Furthermore, Kristeva disarticulates the emancipatory dimension of the semiotic, as the Symbolic always reasserts its hegemony: "In the end, it seems that Kristeva offers us a strategy of subversion that can never become a sustained political practice."¹⁰

Nikolchina is entirely aware of the feminist critical responses to Kristeva. Her point, however, is to invite us to read Kristeva's work as a whole, to open it up to new and innovative readings, rather than to hastily, and abjectively, close the text of her theory and foreclose the challenge it delivers. In dealing with such aporetic aspects of Kristeva's theory, Nikolchina chooses to turn to the writing, and unwriting, of Virginia Woolf, the novelist who asked in the early twentieth century why there was not a tradition of literary mothers, and someone who, in Kristevan terms, has been abjected by criticism. Woolf was vehemently criticized by feminist critic Elaine Showalter for being "too passive" and "too subjective". Woolf's crucial concept of

androgyny is seen by Showalter as an "embrace of death".¹¹ Showalter's abjective criticism, as Nikolchina masterfully shows, turns Woolf into a body (a faulty, frigid, childless, molested, melancholic, and suicidal one), only to "throw[s] this body out of literary history" (87). In an attempt to redress such distorted criticism, Nikolchina reads Woolf's textual practices, through Kristevan theory, as figuring the speaking subject's relation to language in terms of exile: "Woolf's foreignness to language places her in the category of the singular achievements of the female geniuses that Kristeva studies in her latest work and – to use Joan Scott's term – echoes Kristeva's own constitutive foreignness" (81).

Various queries might emerge in the light of Nikolchina's provocative intertextual (or reverberating) reading of Kristeva and Woolf: what is it that makes Kristeva read Joyce as "feminine" and Woolf as "asymbolic"? What is this "femininity" that in Kristevan terms can be recuperated in the poetic language of male writers? What is it that makes female writers remain estranged even from the madness of poetic language? As Kristeva puts it, "Virginia Woolf describes suspended states, subtle sensations and, above all, colours – green, blue –, but she does not dissect language as Joyce does. Estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak."¹² Maintaining that Woolf's work indicates a promising break with symbolic language, Nikolchina reads the spasms, silences, broken syntax, the ruptures and interruptions that punctuate her writing as textual practices that unsettle unified spatial and temporal linearities.

We might ask ourselves whether Nikolchina subscribes to Kristeva's conception of sexual difference and female subjectivity

wherein maternity and the maternal body are attributed a crucially central position; or, how she deals with Kristeva's placement of maternity strictly outside symbolization; or, whether she seeks to problematize Kristeva's essentialist categories such as "woman" and "maternity", as well as their heterosexist connotations (suggesting, for example, that the only way in which a woman-to-woman can exist is when a woman becomes a mother herself). These questions, I believe, refer less to Nikolchina's writing theory than to major controversial aspects of Kristeva's work on the persistent theme of the powerful but dreaded and lost maternal figure. Nikolchina's own reading of Kristeva *with* and *through* Woolf is committed to deconstructive reading and not to abjective criticism. Reading Kristeva's oeuvre as a polylogue (Kristeva's own chosen term), she puts forward a writing theory (theory of writing, theory as writing, and writing as theory) built upon a benign and innovative countering of the text at its limits and its crossings rather than an antihermeneutic, abjective putting-to-death of the text. This, I think, is what motivates her own reading of Woolf through a dynamic and creative re-appropriation of Kristeva's theoretical, fictional, and poetic rehabilitation of the maternal figure.

Nikolchina reads Woolf's final answer not (only) to be her silent sinking into the frozen waters of the river, but (also) the "perpetuum mobile" of her work – a work completed through its incompleteness, a work that, unlike Joyce's closing of the cycle in *Finnegan's Wake*, never ends. In this mode of promising new lineages beyond linearity, Nikolchina reiterates Woolf's promise; she posits the final word of her own theoretical narrative with an inspiring gesture of hope and justice – by

undoing (not abjecting) the abjective criticism to which Woolf has been relentlessly submitted: "And she fills her pockets with stones but not before this maternal gesture that allows us to be" (133).

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Julia Kristeva, "From One Identity to an Other", in *Desire in Language*, transl. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia UP, 1980, pp. 124–147.
- 2 Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, transl. Margaret Waller, New York: Columbia UP, 1984 [1974].
- 3 Joan Scott, "Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 27 (2001), pp. 284–304.
- 4 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.
- 5 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, transl. Leon Roudiez, New York: Columbia UP, 1982, p. 9.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 7 Elizabeth Grosz, "The Body of Signification", in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia, and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, New York: Routledge, 1990, pp. 80–103 (87–88).
- 8 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 134.
- 9 Elizabeth Grosz, *op. cit.*
- 10 Judith Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
- 11 Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lesning*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977, p. 280.
- 12 Julia Kristeva, "Oscillation between Power and Denial," in Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.), *New French Feminisms*, New York: Schocken Books, 1981, pp. 165–167 (166).

Juan Suriano (general editor)

Nueva Historia Argentina

**Buenos Aires: Sudamericana,
2000–2005. 10 vols.**

by Maria Damilakou

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The *Nueva Historia Argentina* (New Argentine History) series comprises of ten volumes, which corresponded to different periods of Argentine history, as well as two special supplementary volumes, an *Atlas of Argentine History* and a *History of Argentine Art*. The first volume, entitled *The Native People before the Conquest* (edited by Myriam Tarragó) covers the pre-Hispanic period before 1516. The second volume, *The Colonial Society* (edited by Enrique Tandeter), deals with the period from 1516 to 1806, when the process towards independence began. The third volume, *Revolution, Republic, Confederation* (edited by Noemí Goldman), covers the period from the beginning of the independence movement (1806) to the battle of Caseros (1852), which led to the overthrow of Juan Manuel Rosas, the promulgation of a constitution and the separation of Buenos Aires from the rest of the provinces. The fourth volume, entitled *Liberalism, the State and the Bourgeois Order* (edited by Marta Bonaudo), analyses the ‘enlightened’ presidencies of the years from 1852 to 1880, a period considered as the stage of the ‘nation

building’. The fifth volume, entitled *Progress, Modernization and their Limits* (edited by Mirta Lobato), covers the time of conservative hegemony (1880–1916). *Democracy, Social Conflict and Renovation of Ideas*, the sixth volume and edited by Ricardo Falcón, deals with the first part of the interwar period in Argentina (1916–1930), when the country was ruled by radical governments. The second part of the interwar period, from 1930 to 1943, is analysed in the seventh volume, *Economic Crisis, State Advance and Uncertainty* (edited by Alejandro Catarruzza). The Peronist era (1943–1955) is the subject of the eight volume, *The Peronist Years* (edited by Juan Carlos Torre). The ninth volume, *Violence, Proscription and Authoritarianism* (edited by Daniel James), covers roughly the period beginning in 1955 with the “Liberating Revolution”, which resulted in the overthrow of Peron and the subsequent suppression of the Peronism, and which ended with the overthrow of Isabel Peron in 1976. The tenth and final volume, entitled *Dictatorship and Democracy* and edited by Juan Suriano, focuses on recent history, beginning with the harsh dictatorship of 1976 and ending with the overthrow of the radical president Fernando de la Rúa after the social protests of 2001.

The principle aim of this series is not only to explain the various historical processes – arguably the very idea of ‘social process’ gives unity to the collection – but also to present the historiographical advances of the past two decades. Based on new theories on the construction of historical knowledge, the series attempts a multilevel analysis of historical processes while at the same time showing the most prominent features of each particular period. Although it has a classical structure and respects chronological and thematic divisions, it proposes a more accurate

“internal” periodization and its topics are novel and innovative. In each volume new interpretations are presented for the problems under discussion, thus calling into question aspects of previous historical interpretations.

This review is limited to the volumes relating to twentieth-century Argentine history. The fifth volume takes a global view of the period from 1880 to 1916 which was characterized by deep transformations at the economic, social, political and cultural levels. At the same time, it highlights the conflicts and the tensions that accompanied this time of great change. During the period, the transformation process that had begun in the first part of the century accelerated and the country gained all the steady characteristics that made it one of the most modernized countries of Latin America. However, this process was not homogeneous: the transformation resulted in the unequal economic development of the country’s regions, social sectors and classes and modernization was accompanied by multiple social and political conflicts. Overall, this volume offers an innovative view of the period through recent research that deal with regional inequality, the dynamics of urban transformation, the complex relation between immigrants and politics, and the formation of the public and private spaces. The volume’s chapters discuss different aspects of the process of structural transformation of the country, the problems in its formation and the limits of modernization. They also question in detail established concepts of Argentine historiography related to the “oligarchic regime” of this period or presenting Argentina as an exclusively “farming and livestock exporting country” and as a “melting pot society”.

The sixth volume deals with the characteristics of the new regime created by the

radical governments of the years from 1916 to 1930 and deals with subjects such as the social problems related to the labor movement, the party political system, the problems that resulted from urban transformation, the integration of the wider population into the “electoral market” through the enlargement of the political system, the appearance of the literary avant-garde, and the communication revolution. The volume highlights the complex continuities and discontinuities at the political, social and cultural level that characterized the period.

The seventh volume analyzes the crisis period from 1930 to 1943 and tries to demonstrate its proper historical value, since recent historiography has tended to examine the period only in relation to Peronism, the “enigma” of Argentine history. This volume offers a novel view of the nineteen thirties, the interpretation of which up to now has been determined by Peronist discourse and the political debates that emerged after 1955. It takes a different approach in examining the history of the period. Apart from dealing with classical topics such as the economy (especially the attempt to reduce imports and increase exports by means of industrialization), the political impact of the 1930 coup, the evolution and policies of the political parties, the growth in electoral fraud, the expansion of the labor movement, it also deals with new topics that go beyond the analytical model of general crisis. These include the formation of new identities among the popular classes, the changes in the concept of citizenship, the construction of images about the past and the nation and the public debates surrounding these, the movement from a modernity conceived in urban terms towards one based on the “rural myth”, and the historical revisionism attempted by a sec-

tion of the intelligentsia and official state attitudes towards this. The volume demonstrates that even during periods of serious political crisis, certain economic, social and cultural processes can develop at a pace that does not necessarily correspond with the predominant political features of the period.

The subject of the eighth volume is Peronism. In general, the interpretation of the Peronist phenomenon has been conditioned by the political passions that characterized its path. The historians of this volume try to provide a more balanced and precise view of the Peronist years by addressing topics such as the changing relations between Peron on one hand and the armed forces and the church on the other, the problems resulting to the policy of economic development implemented towards the end of Peron's second presidency, the effects of the social policies, the internal conflicts that forced the labor unionism to choose between political loyalty to Peron and the workers' demands, Peronist doctrine, the phenomenon of "anti-Peronism", and the limits of an independent foreign policy. One of the main arguments put forward by the volume is that the experience of social ascent and the protagonist role assumed by the working class through the labor unions gave workers a capacity for political and social intervention that went on to develop its own momentum, independently of the particular political conditions that had made it possible. Peron himself experienced the capacity of workers to intervene in the political system when he attempted to change some aspects of his economic policy.

The ninth volume provides new interpretations for the period from 1955 to 1976 and relies on recent studies that deal with the political system, the creation of a trade

unionist bureaucracy, political and social protest, cultural modernization and the social contrasts brought about by the process of urban expansion. At the economic level, the volume focuses on the search for a new development model that tried to deal with the problems and the limits of the populist model. At the political level, it emphasizes the paradox of a democratic constitution which was based on the exclusion and banning of Peronism. At the social level, it highlights the emergence of a new youth culture which, apart from preferences in fashion, music and cinema, had a strong rebellious tendency. A central argument of this volume is that, in order to understand the historical process of the period, the focus must move from the economy, which existing studies have tended to emphasize, to politics and culture, as despite the relative economic prosperity of these years, strong political and social conflicts became apparent.

The last volume attempts to deal with the recent history of Argentina. The intervention of historians in contemporary history may help combat the many popular versions and lead to the development of new interpretations which, in most cases, is a duty of journalists who, regardless of the level of their professional standards, are influenced by public opinion, mass media and social pressures. However, fixing the boundaries of contemporary history is a difficult task because the present is not a well-defined historical period but a constantly moving temporality requiring permanent interpretation. Setting the cut-off point of the series was a complicated task and owing to the dramatic incidents of 2001 the volume's contributors chose finish with the overthrow of the radical president Fernando de la Rúa. The central

argument of the volume is that during the last quarter of the twentieth century, Argentina has changed a great deal owing to the considerable transformation of the economy, society and political system. Since the beginning of the dictatorship in 1976, the policies of full employment and the protectionism have been gradually abandoned as has the role of the state as regulator of salaries and guarantor of social prosperity. Despite the deficiencies of these policies, their abandonment has not improved the quality of life of Argentines. On the contrary, this has generated a long process of unprecedented social exclusion, which exists to the present day. The impact of these changes is obvious in the area of trade unionist and social protest and, as a result, new social agents have joined older ones (unemployed and workers) in engaging in older and newer forms of social protest, such as strikes and road blockages. The volume also examines in detail the political changes of the period: after years of harsh dictatorship since 1976, democracy returned in 1983 and despite its problems, deficiencies and crisis, it seems to be more established than at any other time in the past.

**Faruk Birtek and
Thalia Dragonas (eds.)**
*Citizenship and the
Nation-State in Greece
and Turkey*
(= *Social and Historical
Studies on Greece
and Turkey*)

**London and New York:
Routledge, 2005. xv + 192 pp.**

by Vangelis Kechriotis

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“Hüseyin Bahri Efendi was a high-ranking bureaucrat in the Turkish Republic, a member of the political elite and a distinguished gentleman of his period”, writes Faruk Birtek, one of the editors of this volume (38). In fact, the author continues, Hüseyin Efendi was once known as Hristo Bahri, a Christian born somewhere near Salonica. Not a pious Christian, Hristo’s conversion to Islam did not result in him becoming a devout Muslim, because as the author explains, he could not care less about the difference as “he was already too ‘modern’ to think in religious terms” (38). This anecdote illustrates, Birtek argues, how “people made choices about their identities and where they stood in the new construction. This choice was not at all a religious one; it was a question of which society, which geographi-

cal area they were to belong to, which heritage, which tradition they would personally profess to" (39).

This argument forms a solid ground for the scholars from several disciplines who have contributed to the volume. As described in the introduction by Faruk Birtek and his fellow editor, Thalia Dragonas, the volume inaugurates a series which is "the outcome of an effort to initiate a dialogue among academics working on the intertwining histories of their respective societies" (x). After the Second World War, a whole body of literature developed through publications that focused on the "traditions of cooperation" among different countries. This corpus might have served ideological purposes at times, but it also reflected the need of political and intellectual elites to transgress the stereotypes of nationalist historiography. Relevant examples are provided by the Hungarian series on Hungarian-Slovak and Hungarian-Romanian common pasts or the Czech-German partnership in historiography, not to mention the French-German model of reconciliation.

Those who follow political developments in the Balkans and the Middle East are aware that in recent years, and particularly in the aftermath of the catastrophic earthquakes experienced by both countries in 1999, the relations between Greece and Turkey have improved considerably. Indeed, Turkey's candidacy for European Union membership and the overall reorientation of Greek foreign policy should be taken into account particularly in this respect. However, before this particular conjuncture, those academics who recognized the necessity to reconsider historical accounts and public discourse pertinent to the omnipotent presence of a "phantasmic other" in each society had already been motivated

in scholarly and political terms to work with their like-minded colleagues from across the Aegean. As early as 1995, at the initiative of Thalia Dragonas and Halil Berktaş, the University of Athens and Boğaziçi University in Istanbul signed an agreement initiating student exchanges, the setting up of lecture tours and joint research projects, of which this volume is the first outcome. This brief chronicle was deemed necessary in order to demonstrate that Greek-Turkish academic dialogue is an independent activity which can be reinforced in this favorable political atmosphere. Since it has developed in a space provided by state universities but supported by civil society, it retains a capacity to withstand any turbulence at the level of official policy-making.

Actually, the notion of "civil society" is one of the "hidden cards" in the theoretical game which builds on the commonalities and disparities in the social development of both countries. The other hidden card is "Empire". This is true in particular for the Turkish contributors and makes sense if one considers not only the promptness they demonstrate in studying the issue of continuity and rupture in the political apparatus but also the unresolved social and ethnic problems this transition has bequeathed to the present. These hidden cards appear in the titles of the book's two sections, namely "Empire and Nation-State" and "Nation and Civil Society".

Faruk Birtek's contribution, which as we have seen above discusses the way the relation between "self-identity" and "public persona" is articulated in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, reaches the admittedly paradoxical and ironic conclusion that "while during the last hundred years of the Ottoman state, citizenship did not require a profession of Islam but was ecumenical (if I may use the

word loosely), the secular republic was basing its citizenship on religion" (41). Eventually, after he argues that the republic emerged "in a context of national mobilization" and as "a response to projects of ethnic partition" (40), he rhetorically asks himself whether "republics, the true political form of the Enlightenment, are more vulnerable in this regard than pre-modern empires, because of their innate 'regime logic' to withstand mobilisational exigencies" (45). In the same vein, Padelis Lekas reflects on the "liberal or tyrannical, progressive or reactionary" "Janus face" of nationalism (49). National self-determination has been "intertwined", he claims, "with the concepts of citizenship and universal franchise or popular sovereignty and democratic politics" (50), whereas at the same time, when it fulfils its task of setting up a nation-state, it produces a set of ideas acknowledged as "national interest" which are dictated by a broadly accepted "raison d'état". Therefore, Lekas reminds us, "one of the most hideous and abominable crimes of our times is taken to be that of high treason perpetrated against one's nation" (50). In applying these principles to the kind of nationalism pertinent not only to Greece but the Balkans in general, Lekas argues that the ideological struggle to define the nation in ethno-cultural terms can be better understood as a result of irredentism (in its expansionist or imperialist form) and cultural engineering within the newly emerged nation states (57). In the Greek case, he concludes, "the appeal and legitimizing force of Greek nationalism ... owed much to the built-in populist elements" (58).

The first part of the book, entitled "Empire and Nation-State", includes two articles on Greek and Turkish nationalism. In his contribution, Çağlar Keyder points out that unlike the

case of the non-Muslim communities of the Empire, there was no socially bound Turkish group that opposed the Ottomanist project. Therefore, Turkish nationalism "was more of a political choice by the elite than the result of a groundswell of accumulating sentiment incited by pioneering nationalist intellectuals" (4). Moreover, according to the author, the formation of Turkish nationalism in the newborn Republic relied on the denial of "the previous existence of non-Turkish populations in the land which eventually became Turkey" (6), promoting thus a concept of "Turkishness" which presented the population as homogeneous, rejecting any notion of diversity (7). Through the assumption that the ancient populations of Anatolia were proto-Turks, official history legitimized the view that "the formation of the nation-state had returned Anatolia to its rightful heirs" (8). Even the transfer of the new capital to Ankara from the contaminated Byzantine and Ottoman Istanbul contributed to the construction of "a geography of nowhere ... to correspond to the claim in the official discourse that our real geography was elsewhere" (9). This denial of territory has resulted in a sense of not-belonging, which is manipulated by a nationalism which stresses that "what makes the motherland ours is the fact that we died for it and may do so again when we are called upon" (10). The suppression of the "common memory" regarding the elimination of the Christian population by the republican ideology broadened the gap between the elite and the masses while "establishing a complicity of silence which worked to the detriment of mutual transparency" (11). Turkish nationalism, unlike anti-colonial nationalism, did not negotiate with the masses. Nevertheless, Keyder argues, despite its effort to avoid cultural opposition to the West, the cultural

resentment of the masses took the form of political Islam (13).

In his contribution, Kostas Kostis elaborates on similar themes. He considers that by ignoring the Ottoman reality which preexisted the Greek Revolution and the way it was related to the building of the new state, the study of modern Greek society and state has suffered a major ideological drawback. It is basically assumed that this development took place within a modern institutional framework while traditional values and relations simply resisted and undermined it. This can be described as the modernist approach, whereas the opposite approach claims that traditional society and "Greekness" were eroded by these modern institutions. In any case, "both these perspectives share a belief in the impossibility of the coexistence of a traditional society with the modernity of western institutions" (19). Kostis suggests that the Greek state was a traditional or pre-modern one where "the government focused mainly upon the management of conflicts within the framework of the ruling class" (21). On the other hand, it is impossible to understand the development of the Greek state without reference to the interstate system. The author argues that there are two approaches in this respect. The first approach is a naive Marxist one which stresses the element of dependence and considers imperialism accountable for all the malfunctions of the Greek state, while the other approach, more traditional and internally oriented, considers domestic social developments independent of international conditions (27). Kostis concludes with the strong statement that "the dynamic of change in the state apparatus does not seem to constitute an element inherent in the state's nature. It emerges from external incentives and adapts to them" (30). One wonders whether there is an element

of determinism in this approach, something that the author clearly wishes to avoid.

The crucial period initiated by the Greek War of Independence, which marked the introduction of nationalist vocabulary both in the administration and society at large, is tackled by Hakan Erdem. The author claims that although the *shariat* (religious law) did not permeate the decisions of the Ottoman government, the latter used religion "to justify the treatment of the rebellious subjects or to create a more corporate Muslim-Ottoman identity which did not allow much for internal dissension" (67). Interestingly, the 1821 Uprising obliged the Ottomans to distinguish between the ethnic Greeks who revolted and the Bulgarians who did not as well as to make a legal distinction between those Greeks who revolted and those who did not. Thus, at the end of the conflict, the Ottoman Empire "was ready as it never had been to accept modernity together with its nation-state building tools" (67).

The second section of the book addresses the issue of citizenship. In this respect, three different aspects are addressed: civil society, gender and education. In their article on civil society in Greece, Mouzelis and Pagoulatos argue that in the repressive, post-civil war atmosphere, Greek society witnessed an extreme form of "partitocracy" where "the logic of political partnership and party clientelism permeated the whole of society" (91), therefore ensuring patronage of civil society by state institutions. This pattern combined economic underdevelopment with nominal democratic institutions (91). However, in the post-1974 period, during which the repression receded, the "partitocracy" was transformed into a "plutocracy", dominated by interrelated politico-economic interests, which curtailed the autonomy of Greek civil

society (98). The authors discern two periods. The first one, in the nineteen seventies and eighties, saw the primacy of politics over the economy and the persistence of clientelism. The second period, in the nineteen nineties, saw the colonization of various civil society spheres by the private economy which was accompanied by de-ideologisation and public cynicism (99). Indeed, it is a pity that a similar essay on Turkey does not appear in the volume. Whatever problems civil society in Greece might face, a comparison would certainly broaden the scope of analysis.

The three articles that follow discuss the place of women in the two countries. According to Yeşim Arat, the definition of citizenship in Turkey was “a ruling class strategy to westernize and modernize the polity” (112) and as such was imposed from above. As a result, even though there had been a campaign for women’s rights before the proclamation of the Republic, the political elite ignored it and granted women “the rights that would suit their particular project of modernity” (105). Despite the fact that equality was one of the proclaimed principles of the new Turkish state, it failed to deliver equal rights to men and women in several public sectors (113). As a result, in the nineteen eighties, both Islamist and secular feminists challenged state policies in an attempt to define their own rights from below and not according to the exigencies of the ruling class. In this respect, their claim for “positive discrimination” dominated their agenda. Secular feminists focused mainly on the protection of women from physical violence and on equality with men, whereas Islamist feminists used it as a means to allow them to practice Islam in the public sphere. In the event, as it was organized beyond political parties and parliament, the struggle for women’s rights

expanded democratic practices in Turkey. However, many of the demands have yet to be accommodated.

In her contribution on the place of women in Greece, Efi Avdela focuses both on the legislative framework and the discursive transformations of women’s aims. Her initial hypothesis is that the petit bourgeois nature of Greek society can explain both the early introduction of liberal parliamentary institutions and the exclusion of women from them. Moreover, she argues, the adjustments to the legislative framework were contingent on social practices. At the end of her analysis, Avdela argues that “the principle of male supremacy” was never systematized but remained negotiable, thus creating a fluidity which was not always appreciated by the women’s movement. In order to prove her case, she evokes examples from different historical periods, demonstrating that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the focus was on women’s civil and social rights, whereas in the inter-war years the struggle for political rights prevailed (129). Eventually, Avdela concludes, women gained their political rights after their position in the family and the labor market had improved. In her article, Dicle Kağacioğlu follows a similar line, addressing both legislation and its implementation. She argues that the inequality women have experienced results not only from the content of legal texts but also from their non-application. She also introduces the terms “state feminism” and “state patriarchy” and claims that “there is a social and cultural order that displays characteristics of both” (144) and that only the interrelation of these phenomena can offer us a better picture of the tensions in gender relations. In order to illustrate her point, she gives several exam-

ples containing these two aspects and concludes that problems in legislation are related to “state feminism” whereas the disregard for the everyday life of female citizens by state institutions is a feature of “state patriarchy” (156). However, both aspects ultimately reinforce the family as an institution. Therefore, the author argues, the relation of the family to other institutions is of critical importance and should shape future research.

The last chapter of the volume is the outcome of a comparative study carried out by Thalia Dragonas, Buşra Ersanlı and Anna Frangoudaki as part of the broader project “Youth and History: The Comparative European Project on Historical Consciousness among Teenagers”, which investigated the political opinions and attitudes of European adolescents. The results of the survey reveal similarities between young Greeks and Turks. It found that the majority in both cases is highly ethnocentric and considers its history and language as unique. The two main fields addressed by the survey were the sense of national belonging and the educational system. Regarding the first field, the authors point out that the break-up of the traditional political and social order and the desire for solid principles have pushed adolescents to embrace national identity. However, the authors argue that in addition to the problems of modernity, it is “the destabilizing effect of adolescence that makes youths turn toward the imaginary security provided by nation and religion” (183). Regarding the second field, it is evident that the ethnocentric attitudes of young people have been shaped by educational systems which cultivate an ahistorical conception where “history is still a reproduction of the romantic version of the nation formulated as a rhetoric of past glory and national destiny” (184). These

conclusions trigger important questions, according to the authors, as to what extent the historical knowledge provided is capable of answering modern needs and as to what kind of historical education would contribute towards a democratic society and peaceful coexistence between nations. In this respect, I would argue that in the long run, the historical information an adolescent acquires from his or her family, the mass media and political discourse is equally if not more important than the historical education provided in school. Indeed, the case of education proves how state institutions are intertwined with civil society.

At the volume’s conclusion, which takes the form of an epilogue, İlkay Sunar argues that the actual aim behind national culture and identity is standardization which in turn is “the key leading to modernity” (190). In both Greece and Turkey, a national culture was imposed over all other social and civic definitions. However, Sunar claims, there is considerable difference between the two. The private domain, which in the Ottoman era was organized according to the principles of the semi-autonomous *millet* system, became extremely restricted and has been dominated by the public domain since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The research agenda that Sunar proposes, which in my opinion corresponds to both the general and more specific tenets of this comparison, is to understand that the standard universal culture utilized and imposed by the two states was actually a mixture of ethnic and civic culture, the actual dosage of which differed in content and application according to the period, but whose impact on the two societies marked both self-identification and the image of the other.

**Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina
Harlaftis, Ioanna Pepelasis
Minoglou (eds.)**

***Diaspora Entrepreneurial
Networks. Four Centuries
of History***

**Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005.
xxii + 440 pp.**

by Katerina Papakonstantinou

Historian

This book is the product of two conferences, the first held in Corfu, Greece, in 2001 and the second in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2002. It deals with the entrepreneurial networks and more precisely the entrepreneurial elites which were successful overseas in the early modern and modern periods. The fact that the volume is the result of two conferences is obvious in many of its articles and the contributors frequently cross reference to other articles in the volume.

In total, there are 19 contributions reflecting a wide-ranging subject matter; there are references to diasporas and merchant networks around the globe, but there is a concentration on South and Southeast Asia as well as on Europe and the Balkans. Some contributors examine the types of trade networks and on the methods and strategies of their operations (Harlaftis, Pepelasis Minoglou, Chatziioannou,

Plüss, and Betta), while others present specific cases of traders (Broeze) or trading groups (Israel, Baghdiantz McCabe, Chaudhury, Wray, Fusaro, Vassallo, Schijf, Clarence-Smith, Plüss, Betta, Chung, and Brown).

Naturally, almost all contributors choose to discuss the terminology they use, such as diaspora, network or ethnic group. They decide for particular terms after discussing the advantages and disadvantages of all of them (Israel, Baghdiantz McCabe, Harlaftis, and Sheffer). In many cases, the term ethnic/ethnicity is interwoven with terms such as group, network or community.

Many articles discuss Philip Curtin's book, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge UP, 1984), which presents trade diasporas as cross-cultural brokers without any political role in the host country. Cases such as that of the Armenians in New Julfa or in India from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries are used to challenge Curtin's thesis (Baghdiantz McCabe and Chaudhury). In this discussion, central issues are the "national interest" versus the business interest of trade diasporas or the role of trade diasporas as foreign representatives of states. Apart from trade diasporas, Sheffer discusses the role of ethno-national diasporas in modern politics, making the distinction between stateless and state-linked diasporas. This raises the question whether Greeks in history constituted stateless or state-linked diasporas given the non-existence of a Greek state before 1828. This applies to other diasporas also. The distinction between stateless and state-linked ethno-national diasporas seems somewhat ahistorical. As Stathis Gourgouris points out in his contribution, diaspora studies needs to take historical change into serious consideration, stressing how the use of the

term “diaspora” has changed over the past two centuries. He is also critical about the use of the term “minority” in connection with trade diasporas in the multiethnic empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the term presupposes a nation-state.

This book provides an excellent overview of the debates regarding commercial networks and operating strategies of the trade diasporas. Almost all contributions discuss the following issues:

1. What keeps a network viable?
2. What makes a trade diaspora economically successful?
3. How can trade diasporas survive over time?

We can summarize the conclusions and remarks of the volume’s contributors as follows:

1. In discussing the trade diasporas of the Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Chinese, Maltese and Scots, terms such as family, common origin, and relationships are used as keywords to describe the creation and maintenance of the networks. They mainly guaranteed trust, but also flexibility, security, fame, reputation and credit (Israel, Chaudhury, Vassallo, Harlaftis, Pepelasis Minoglou, Schijf, Plüss, Betta, Chung, and Brown). These networks may be described as communities (Vassallo, Pepelasis Minoglou) or even moral communities (Chung), coalitions (Pepelasis Minoglou) with a common culture (Harlaftis, Chatziioannou); intermarriage and chain migration were used to maintain them (Pepelasis Minoglou, Schijf, Betta, Chatziioannou).

2. Members of trade diasporas were financial and commercial intermediaries; they linked the host society with either the

place of provenance or with other parts of the world such as Europe (Israel, Baghdiantz McCabe, Chaudhury, Fusaro, Vassallo, Pepelasis Minoglou, Plüss, Betta, Chatziioannou). They occupied positions within transregional networks and had privileged access to the resources and skills enshrined in them (Plüss). They became active in those areas which the local authorities or the colonial powers preferred not to get involved (Pepelasis Minoglou, Clarence-Smith). Language was a crucial issue owing to the fact that trade diasporas usually spoke and wrote a different language to that of the host society. This permitted them to maintain business secrets and facilitate the flow of information. Trade diasporas also possessed high degrees of literacy (Vassallo, Harlaftis) and knew foreign languages. This was crucial in their role as intermediaries (Israel, Harlaftis). Chatziioannou proposes the interrelated examination of ethnicity and entrepreneurship as a way to explain how the members of trade diasporas were in a position to adjust to the conditions and circumstances they found in their operational area.

3. As for the question regarding the survival of trade diasporas, the opinions vary. Plüss and Chaudhury point out that trade diasporas adopted the characteristics of the ruling class while at the same time maintained common characteristics with their co-ethnics of the diaspora. As a result, trade diasporas formed multi-local identities which integrated the cultural characteristics of different networks.

While Brown claims that diasporas became indigenized, if not vernacularized, operating and responding directly to their environment rather than to an ethnic trademark or to diasporic loyalties, Harlaftis points out that the

Greek diaspora retained all the characteristics of their own entrepreneurial tradition.

New environments forced diasporas to reassess their commercial strategies and reinvent their commercial practices which in turn enabled them to flourish (Chaudhury, Betta, Chung, Chatziioannou). Vassallo argues, however, that there was little innovation adopted on the part of the Maltese diaspora as it maintained the well-proven strategies and methods of relying on kith and kin.

The case of the Japanese diaspora in the seventeenth century, presented by Wray, is particularly informative. As it did not follow the same strategy as other trade diasporas, the result was its quick assimilation by the host society. As the Japanese diaspora shows, diasporas are studied because they have survived over time. Researchers rarely take notice of the less successful or short-lived diasporas. As Harlaftis points out, studies in Greece until the nineteen seventies focused on the Greek state which made Greeks living outside the country's borders invisible to researchers. With the shift in focus from the nation-state to people, research priorities have changed accordingly. It is also important to examine unsuccessful trade diasporas as this may open up new avenues of discussion in the debate on trade diasporas.

As Baghdiantz McCabe and Reid propose, diaspora networks are very different over time and place and only by clearly categorizing them can we begin to see the usefulness of the concepts of diasporas and networks. There is a need to compare cases of diaspora with a common social and political background, but belonging to different ethnic, cultural or social groups, who were active in the same milieu within the Habsburg or Russian empires, for example, in order to see how

they developed their strategies, used their cultural background, and adjusted to their new environment. Focussing on only one diaspora may lead to the false conclusion that its way of living and acting were in some way unique. The comparisons made in the book, such as between Middle Eastern people living in Southeast Asia, or between the Jewish, Armenian and Greek diasporas of the nineteenth century, have lead to some crucial conclusions. They show that there were differences as well as similarities between trade diasporas active in different periods or places. This is what makes the book a crucial contribution to the discussion on diaspora and networks.

**Martin Daunton and Matthew
Hilton (eds.)**

***The Politics of Consumption:
Material Culture and
Citizenship in Europe and
America***

Berg: Oxford, 2001. 310 pp.

by Athena Syriatou
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If nationalism has been one of the major fields of interest to historians eager to study the relationship between the modern state and citizenship – especially during the last quarter of the twentieth century – is consumption becoming another? Consumption has been studied by political thinkers since the nineteenth century as well as by economists and sociologists alike since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, it is mainly in the last fifteen years that historians have turned to consumption not only to address matters of economic and social history, but also matters concerning the history of the relationship between the state and the consumer. Consumption is linked to most of the issues which have preoccupied historians since the emergence of the bourgeois state and it is closely tied up with the formation of civil society. Thus, the shaping of national tastes and aesthetics by the state through the promotion of consumption, perceptions of gender

differentiation and consumer behaviour, as well as the history of rights and duties which societies and individuals attach to consumption are only but a few of the issues which have appeared in the historical studies of consumption.

This book, which has arisen from the “Material Politics: States, Consumers and Political Cultures” colloquium held at Churchill College, Cambridge in 1999, has become a standard book on the history of consumption since its publication in 2001. In fourteen fascinating chapters, a spectrum of themes addresses the dynamics of consumer politics throughout European history (more specifically Britain, Germany and France) and America since the French Revolution. Whether it was because of “the consequence of the triumph of capitalism over socialism, the replacement of the worker with the consumer in the appeals of mainstream political parties, or the replacement of a politics based on individual and group identities in the sphere of production with the one of individual rights in the sphere of consumption” (6), the interest of scholars in the study of consumption has risen during the past fifteen years, according to the lengthy introductory chapter, which describes the recent scholarship on consumption and not just the area of historical studies. The book’s editors set out to discuss this re-conceptualization of the relationship between material culture and citizenship in the realization that it is difficult to construct a unifying theory of the politics of consumption. Instead, they sketch four intertwined themes which are elaborated in the subsequent chapters, which deal with: the moral critiques relevant to the discussion of consumption, the way the consumer is defined or constructed, the examination of the economic system which produces goods for

consumers, and finally the constantly renegotiated relationship between the consumer and the state in their attempt to develop new notions of citizenship.

Morality has always been central to matters of consumption. Starting from the general question whether consumption subverted the social order or integrated classes into one nation, and passing on to particular moral critiques such as the moral status of a particular product (for example alcohol), or the ethics of the process of a commodity's production, as well as its desirability and place in a household or in a society – moral issues have always been at the core of consumption studies. Nineteenth-century liberal economic thinkers were keen to comment on consumption but they did not produce a consistent theory of it. Rather it was through a series of binaries and dichotomies that they articulated their view on the purpose and the utility of consumption within society. Thus, John Stuart Mill distinguished between “productive” and “unproductive” consumption; that is, between necessary items, which further contribute to production, and luxurious or unnecessary ones, which “give no assistance to production nor any support to life and strength” (14). John Ruskin differentiated between “useful” and “wasteful” consumption; the former adding to his notion of wealth where “the right thing should belong to the right man”, which suggested that the state should interfere to moralize the market (15). Furthermore, J. A. Hobson suggested that the excessive incomes of the wealthy elites, which surpassed what was necessary for their “natural” level of consumption, were wasted in savings. Therefore, the excess should be distributed among the poor in order to increase their spending power which he felt would benefit the economy (16).

Although most of these ideas project British liberal economic thought, it is surprising how durable these binary oppositions have been in specific historical circumstances during the last two centuries. In chapter two, Rebecca Spang places these arguments within the framework of the French Revolution and more specifically during the Reign of Terror when the General Maximum, the comprehensive consumption law of the French Revolution which regulated wages and prices from September 1793 to December 1794, was enforced (37). Eight barrels of rum found in the cellar of a former member of the National Convention sparked a dispute whether rum was “a good of prime necessity” and therefore subject to confiscation, or a “luxury”. This dispute also highlighted the political demands of that phase of the Revolution in which consumption, according to Spang, was to articulate the “material, physical and substantive” aspects of equality (47).

Early socialist thought was to see a reconciliation of luxury and necessity, as Noel Thompson argues in chapter three, by attributing opulence for the public sphere and asceticism for the private sphere of the worker. By employing the binary of “natural” versus “unnatural” needs of society, early nineteenth-century communitarian socialists turned their attention to the unnecessary toil needed to manufacture luxurious goods for individual consumption. However, if luxury was produced for collective consumption and “all would derive gratification from the result” (62), then it would serve the community. And since the labour used to satisfy communitarian consumption would not be forced but collectively embraced, it would also be free of the ethical diseconomies which infuse that “acquisitive instinct which personal

consumption always threatens to inflame” (63). Therefore, as they would ensure collective consumption, real or imaginary socialist communitarian utopias would be opulent; and as a result they would “celebrate community values, creativity, achievements and aspirations” and not just gratify individualistic and egotistical aims as in the case of the idle rich (64). The moral idea that consumption had the capacity to determine the qualitative standards of production was also adopted by thinkers later in the nineteenth century, such as John Ruskin and J. A. Hobson (66), who envisaged the decline of machinery production and the return of craftsmanship with the help of discriminating consumers who would ask for qualitative products.

But who are consumers? Are they rational human beings making purchasing decisions which maximize their personal economic interest in the marketplace? To what extent can individual and social circumstances shape consumer politics to serve different agendas, such as those of the economy, the nation, class, gender and race empowerment? As Lisabeth Cohen argues in chapter ten, consumers may negotiate citizenship with the state through acts of consumption, thus introducing another binary: that of the “citizen consumer” versus the “customer consumer”. Examining the US case between 1890 and 1970, she suggests that there were three different periods in American history where the consumer was centre stage not only in shaping economic policy, but also “buying the economy’s way to prosperity”. Furthermore, consumers reshaped the public sphere in the time of abundance and mass consumption, a period Cohen refers to as the “Consumers’ Republic”. The Progressive Era in the late nineteenth and early twentieth cen-

turies was a period of transformation from the artisanal to the fully industrialized age. During the last decade of nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries, “citizen consumers” strove for “a living wage” for the workers and to help them in acquiring their full rights as citizens (205). During the prosperity of the nineteen twenties however, “customer consumers” believed that they had common interests with manufacturers and that the free market would manage to provide them automatically with the best quality goods at the cheapest price.

The New Deal period, which lasted from the early nineteen thirties to the Second World War, was perhaps the most crucial in the history of American consumerist political culture. As government spending became the prevailing strategy to pull the US out of depression by expanding consumer demand, the conviction emerged that the present and future health of the American capitalist economy relied on consumers (207). Furthermore, this turn to the consumer offered otherwise underrepresented groups the opportunity to renegotiate power in American society. Women and African Americans found themselves at the forefront of this struggle. Whether it was female citizen consumers striving “for a safer and more equitable marketplace for the good of the nation” (208) or African Americans consumers mobilizing against racial discrimination (the famous slogan “Don’t Shop Where You Can’t Work” was only one of many), consumer activism was an essential part of bargaining for citizenship through purchasing.

Not all these battles were won and the new policies adopted did not come to benefit those who struggled against gender and race discrimination, both during and after the Second

World War. Yet, the postwar economy, driven by mass consumption, came to mean not only the availability of goods to buy, Cohen argues (214), but also “an ideal of economic abundance and democratic political freedom, equitably distributed”. This ideal became “a national civil religion” of American life from the late nineteen forties to the nineteen seventies. In this new “Consumers’ Republic”, gender and racial discrimination not only survived, but were actually reinforced, while an economic and social segmentation of the public sphere enhanced by marketing and advertising changed the notion of “mass consumption” and created sub-markets based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, age and lifestyle (219). Moreover, the late twentieth-century introduction of the laws of the marketplace into the state/citizen relationship has led to a “consumerization of the republic” where government services are privatised and commodified and where costumer-voters can refuse to fund public services that they do not use (220).

Consuming choices are also made to shape individual and collective identities, Leora Auslander claims in chapter six, examining the case of Jewish communities in Paris and Berlin during the interwar years. She argues that the willingness of a minority community, such as the Jewish community in Paris, to conform to dominant French culture forced them to comply with average middle-class tastes. More specifically, it made them refute modernist styles in furniture, instead adopting styles which made direct reference to France’s historical past. Although these styles were named after kings, they were not attached to a monarchical heritage. On the contrary, Auslander sees these styles as quintessentially republican as they could unite

all French citizens regardless of their regional background, place of birth or class into one family, one nation, and one past. In this way, those who wanted to become French could absorb Frenchness and republicanism from objects which demonstrated a French historical past. Auslander argues that this “nationalization of the everyday” (119) was part of France’s assimilationist citizenship policy which derived from France’s centralist state conception of citizenship.

This contrasts directly with the tastes of the Jewish community in Berlin which seemed to encompass a variety of styles rather than a genuine German style in their homes – an assortment of German, French, English and oriental goods and styles were found in the homes of Jews evicted by the Nazis in the nineteen thirties. The stylistic corollaries deriving from the choices of the Jewish community in Berlin, Auslander claims, reflect a different history of state and nation making and the place of taste within it. As the German nation-state defined citizenship genetically and because the German nation encompassed a past which was made of different components deriving from the segmented German fatherland, different regions, religions, classes and collective organizations were of great significance. Therefore, there was no unified grand narrative of one past as was the case in France and there was no unified appeal to a particular historicism which would foster those desiring German nationality. German nationality was non-negotiable and therefore could not be traded off with the historicist trick. This is why modernism flourished in Germany especially during the Weimar republic as a modern style. *Modern* Germany represented a Germany with a new history in contrast to the old, segmented Ger-

many. Yet all parts of old Germany together with modern, even foreign, ones were welcomed, since nationality could not be bought out by compliance to common convictions. One should not assume that the Parisian and the Berlin Jewish communities sought to uphold an exclusively French or German identity. Parallel to conforming to the majority identity, they strove for a Jewish identity and this led them to make different consuming decisions in different circumstances.

If different consumers struggle with different means for citizenship, what is the role of “agency”, namely the market by which goods are brought to consumers as well as the nature of a public or private utility in shaping the politics of consumption? Margot C. Finn argues in chapter five that in an attempt to modernize the economy in the nineteenth century, the British state passed laws to wipe out the itinerant drapery trade, which at that time supplied mainly working-class households, in order to promote more centrally controlled mass consumption. In passing laws to stop the imprisonment of husbands for their wives’ debts (the latter were allegedly the victims of deceitful Scottish traders), the state not only reshaped the market by reforming the way goods were distributed but also it reshaped class, gender even national roles as instead of meeting Scottish tradesmen in their homes, working-class wives from then on entered the new palaces of consumption: the opulent department stores or their local corner shops. What makes Finn’s contribution especially interesting is the fact that she not only examines the change of the market but also the narratives concerning national, class and gender identities as represented in the arguments of the legislators favoring the abolition of imprisonment for small debts.

Thus, gender and economic vulnerability were tightly connected – as men were represented as thrifty and women as fallible. National identities were also contested and Scotsmen insinuating themselves into Englishmen’s homes in their absence were represented as swindlers engaged in personal relations with their working-class plebian women costumers as opposed to the anonymous relations developing in the bourgeois mass market of the emerging stores. In demonstrating a process of modernization in the market, Finn also deals with the inconsistencies and conflicts which construct the historical perceptions of all parties accounting for this transformation, namely traders, consumers and the law.

Forms of ownership and consumer interests can also determine the politics of consumption. In chapter four, Martin Daunton deals with the politics of consumption of one natural monopoly – gas. The consumption of natural monopolies made it a more complicated task for the state in defining the interests of the consumer and thus to shape public policy for this type of consumption. Although the establishment of free trade meant that the state was committed to defending the consumer whose interests were supposed to coincide with the ‘public interest’, defining who the consumers were was not an easy task. Gas consumers were invariably public bodies, industrialists, shopkeepers, or individual householders. These consumers projected different interests and consequently a different rhetoric favoring at times tariff structures which benefited large users, at others constraining the power of the monopolies in order to benefit smaller consumers. Yet, defining who the producers of gas were or who had the power over the gas companies proved to be an even more

complicated case as gas company commissioners reflected the class driven system of early Victorian Britain and more specifically it reflected the debates over the franchise. In some places, large landowners and occupiers – the ‘responsible’ hands – had as gas company commissioners more votes while in others, ratepayers had only one vote each (74).

As progressive reformers articulated the desire to make gas a cheap commodity for the many, they campaigned for the widest possible distribution of the dividends of gas companies, envisaging that their shareholders would eventually be identical to gas consumers. The complicated history of the gas market not only depicts the efforts of the British state to protect the public against monopolistic companies; it also illustrates the limitations of the powers of the state agencies over company owners be they public or private. Daunton argues that in Victorian Britain the market was permeated with notions of fairness and morality as well as with distributional contests over the claims of shareholders for profits and consumers for low prices (87).

What is the role of civil society in shaping the politics of consumption? As Frank Trentmann shows in chapter seven, in the early twentieth century the British Consumers’ Council was at two minds as to whether the government should intervene to protect consumers by ensuring fair prices for good quality food and especially milk, or whether this was best left to the free market to resolve. Some of its members favored a classical liberal free trade organization of the economy while others demanded state intervention to regulate prices and quantities. Free trade, in the minds of early twentieth-century radicals and liberals, not only represented the remedy to the “hungry forties” caused by the repeal of

the Corn Laws in 1846, but was also considered capable of reinforcing “the self-regulating powers of society and insulate it against organized interests, be it the state, aristocracy or trusts” (134). The white loaf of bread came to “symbolize the civilizing achievement of free trade”, which was looked upon as a guarantor against famine. As the increase in monopolies, trusts, and combines pushed prices up and quality down after the First World War, popular demands for state control and an interventionist food policy changed the picture as it became apparent that competition alone could no longer be trusted to protect the consumer (147). Yet, co-operative societies (backed in cases by the Women’s Co-operative Guild) were opposed to this trend, arguing that social agents and not the state were the best guarantor of the rights and interests of consumers as citizens; indeed, the nationalization of the British nutrition trade was seen by some as a cause of war and thus disruptive to international trade and peace. However, during the interwar period a fusion of these views emerged to form a “social-democratic consumer politics”, strongly supported by the co-operatives, where the state would guarantee public health and fair distribution of food and not just low prices. Controls, rationing and the nationalization of certain companies within a free market economy were welcome policies after the Second World War and organized consumers completely disassociated themselves from free trade. “The transition from the politics of bread (advocating free trade) to the politics of milk (advocating state controls) amount to different meaning of the place of consumption in the political system in Britain”, Trentmann argues, and considers the consumer politics of milk at the beginning of the century as the

first step towards the creation of the values and predispositions that preoccupy present-day major modern consumer movements against world hunger (162).

After the Second World War, the politics of consumption became central to most Western capitalist societies as consumers' movements came to play a crucial role in formulating government policies. Post-war British society lost the collectively-based notion of citizenship which had developed during the war in relation to consumption, Matthew Hilton argues in chapter twelve. Thus, the British Consumers' Association was easily incorporated into the state apparatus and saw itself as a watchdog rather than as a source of radical alternatives for the government. Post-war consumer politics in France and Germany were different to each other as well as to Britain and America, Gunnar Trumbull argues in chapter thirteen. In France consumers strove for more state protection and opposed industry in the nineteen seventies, yet the trade unions were too fragmented to set up consumer groups and to realize that consumer politics could reinforce class politics. Although the politics of consumption did not enter the mainstream political arena in France, consumers articulated their demands as a political movement. In Germany, state-created consumer organizations negotiated with industry to achieve "a fair domestic marketplace for quality goods", thus ensuring, to some extent, that consumer consciousness emerged from above rather than from a consumers' movement. In chapter fourteen, Garry Cross claims that throughout the twentieth century the consumer rights movement in the US has been weak, pointing out that it was successful only in the periods when business interests lost control in Congress (293).

Most of the themes sketched by the editors in the introductory chapter feature in the book's consequent chapters. There is a moralizing aspect to the restrictive laws, successfully proposed by the consumers' movement, designed to protect uninformed or innocent consumers from defective products or physically and psychically dangerous substances such as drugs, alcohol and even cigarettes. The preoccupations of consumers and the political and social aims they aspired to are also centre stage in the volume's contributions, as is the structure of the market, its agents, and the relationship between consumption and citizenship. Those looking for the theoretical aspects on this subject will not find a unified framework encompassing all the issues tackled in the book. Most of the chapters examine the empirical parameters of consumption, citizenship and policy making, and in so doing they reveal the ways modern societies identify political and cultural agendas and how citizens adopt personal, political and social identities through consumption.

**Yve-Alain Bois, Hal Foster,
Rosalind Krauss,
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh**

***Art Since 1900. Modernism,
Antimodernism,
Postmodernism***

**New York: Thames and Hudson,
2004. 704 pp.**

by Lia Yoka

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I.

In the last decades new approaches to modern art, following the breakthrough of cultural studies, have favored either a post-structuralist historicization of the institutional and social conditions of the avant-gardes, or a counter-historicist, sometimes indeed intentionally anti-historical, thematization of modern art movements of the pre-war and interwar twentieth century. The MoMA in New York, and later the Tate Modern in London, initiated their mass audiences to a kind of new icono-formalism. In the MoMA 'experiment' (an ironic term when applied to the world's most influential modern art collection), groups of works with thematic or formal similarities are coupled with a single work of a different era, style and group which acts as a pointer in a different conceptual direction or as a reminder that there are similarities of form or topic elsewhere. The Tate Modern, taking this motif of visual didactics a step

further, instituted five dominant categories of themes, and attempted a kind of contemporary typology of twentieth-century works. In this typology, modern art works are hung next to contemporary ones under the common denominator of 'Still Life/Object/Real Life' or 'Nude/Action/Body' etc., making a point about how the avant-gardes now have the status of a rearguard; they are a classical era for contemporary artists. Richard Brettel's handbook *Modern Art: Capitalism and Representation* for the Oxford Art History Series introduced a different thematization based on modern art's dominant iconology (body/portrait, nationalism/internationalism, etc.).

The authors of *Art Since 1900* do not even mention Brettel and hardly pay tribute to other attempts at reconfiguring the narrative of modern art in terms of cultural and institutional approaches (e.g. of the British Open University course books) in their rich bibliography. The volume's tripartite subtitle, *Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* would lead one to expect a historical account of successive worldviews exemplifying three twentieth-century period models with certain constant features – i.e. iconological or thematic, technical or formal, ideological and conceptual – followed as they develop over time. The expectation is lifted already in the introduction. A second overlapping structure consists of four declared methodologies – formalism, psychoanalysis, social history and poststructuralism. This choice suggests there is no a priori master archive of the material, only 'approaches'. These approaches, in the first of the two round table discussions published in the volume to recapitulate each half century unit (1900–1944 and 1945–2003), are handled by the authors as having grown organically out of each of their careers, and as legitimately

complementary methods ultimately allowing a holistic encyclopedic overview. Each decade is accorded a separate introduction and each year of the twentieth century has separate entries (up to four) describing key moments of that year. There are inserted boxes with excerpts from primary sources, indexes and cross-references throughout.

II.

The preface (“a reader’s guide” (12–13)), a kind of apologetic table of contents and instructions for use, explains the panoramic character of the work. Indeed, it invites us to understand the “tensions” in the text, inevitably arising from irreconcilable concerns and approaches, as being “dramatized” in order to produce a Bakhtinian “dialogical” work. According to the authors, the “‘intertext’ [multiple voices on the same subject, cross-references] not only allows two different positions to coexist but also, perhaps in relation to the third perspective provided by the reader, dialectically binds them” (13). However, reading further down the pages reveals much more than side-effects of overexposure to the terminology of reflexivity. This textual moment is a clear example of the postmodern tendency to turn analytical methods into rhetorical techniques: where a historical record (or archive) should be recognized, dissected and historicized as consisting of multiple responses to other voices, in a post-structuralist one the mark of its multiplicity derives directly from a consciously announced representation (a transparent theatrical reenactment) of this structure.

The work as a whole relies on the assumption that, indeed, art of the twentieth century can be studied autonomously as a twentieth-century episode, a thesis that has

consistently been developed in the journal *October* (1976–). The ‘modern’ moment, the avant-garde impulse in art, is not traced back to the late eighteenth or the mid-nineteenth century, as other art historians would have it (Michael Fried in his *Absorption and Theatricality* or T. J. Clark in *The Painting of Modern Life* to name famous examples). In 1989, W. J. T. Mitchell, the editor of *Critical Inquiry*, summarized this preference for 1900 as a limit for abstract painting¹ and modernism since “the abstract as such only becomes a definitive slogan for modernism with the emergence of abstract painting around 1900”. In this volume too, modernism and abstraction and also the avant-gardes are treated as coeval. Interwar ‘Antimodernism’ is considered a reactionary move away from abstraction. What then of postmodernism, we might ask. According to this pattern is the shift to New York, the epicenter of artistic development, a new and hopeful beginning for the arts?

The emphasis on the beginning of the twentieth century as a definitive moment in art (rather than the anti-academicism of the romantics, or the politics of the realists) could be justified quite persuasively. Using 1900 as a starting point issues a claim on the epistemological priority of art history in the development of interdisciplinarity during the twentieth century. Yve Alain-Bois insists that “although the linguistic/semiological model provided by Saussure became the inspiration for the structuralist movement in the fifties and sixties, art history had already developed structural models by the time this model became known in the twenties” (33–34). This challenges a widely accepted view of literary theory as the mother of twentieth-century interdisciplinary critical thought. However, instead of providing new evidence and argu-

ments, this claim is a return to formalism (albeit an informed, poststructuralist formalism). It goes back to Meyer Schapiro's theorization of style as exemplified in his famous 1953 essay. There, Schapiro spoke for an internationalist historical approach in noting that art historians "have been able to break the parochial bonds of inherited cultural prejudices and conceive of a world history of art moving easily, synchronically among the cultures and epochs of museum exhibits".²

III.

The leading theme in the volume is declared to be the "complex dialogue between pre-war and postwar avant-gardes" (13). Yet the starting points of each decade and annual survey (Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, Matisse's visit to Rodin's studio and the dismissal of his style, Cezanne's death, Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, Marinetti's first *Futurist Manifesto*) are perhaps too familiar from narratives of modern art after the forties to account for this complexity.

The answer lies again in the method. The overarching approach to modern and contemporary art is a post-structuralist formalist one. What is actually followed through is the progression of an *avant-gardeiste* impulse as expressed in the progression of techniques of expression and creative forms. The methods and insights of social history and psychoanalysis are applied only instrumentally, upon material pre-selected by a corrected Greenbergian formalism. It differs from conventional formalism in that it does not limit itself to the media of painting, sculpture and engraving and in that it does not necessarily show up the mechanisms of

the creation of form. It is also more politically aware and seeks to attach an ideological affiliation to artists' and institutions' formal choices and development.

A work of such grand length and ambition seems to lack a coherent theory of the development of the role of the artist and the shifts in the category of the artistic and the aesthetic. An anti-formalist social history of art would require a new political view of the institutional dynamics of the visual arts, and would allow for social and geopolitical narratives of transfusion, transplantation and especially assimilation. From a psychoanalytical point of view one would expect a sensitivity to the mechanisms of art institutions and the forms and contents of artworks as a product of certain psychosocial interactions between centers and peripheries (or 'identities' and 'alterities'), rather than just a psychoanalytical glossing over of dominant formal categories. Without allowing for the complex mechanisms of influence, absorption, translation or assimilation and cooptation, we are merely accepting art history as a superstructural mirror or a direct effect of the history of political and geopolitical power (which leads us from the European powers of the Second World War to the United States, and from surrealist Paris to conceptualist New York). Yet does not a large part of art and aesthetic phenomena (from classicism and romanticism to rap music and ethnic cuisine) prove that the assimilation of the culture of alterity, the construction of the Other's difference or its cooptation, as well as processes of signifying and reinterpreting are far more important in art history than narratives based on a direct and vulgar notion of cultural imperialism? The spread of capitalism can hardly invent new forms: it is in great part a history of commodifying others.

IV.

Given the strength of the conviction with which the formalist arguments are carried out in the volume, the recycling of certain unwise banalities becomes all the more disheartening. Certain abstract descriptions are too worn out to remain at least mysteriously confusing or poetic, let alone analytically potent: the Dadaists “pledged to attack all norms” and “most of [Dada’s] participants viewed any coherence, any order, with derisive laughter” (135). Often, the offhandedness of such passages is compensated for with a new hunch for the careful reader. By the last chapter on 1916a, which is primarily about Dada, one acquires an understanding of Dada as having been socially, institutionally, as well as formally caught between Marinetti’s futurism and the expressionism of Paul Klee. What emerges is a critic’s musing on the general move of art towards Klee’s “cold romanticism of abstraction” – a purely formalist argument, interesting nevertheless for its political overtones. However, in such accounts, and given the authors’ repeatedly expressed disappointment with the depoliticization of modern art movements, it is hard not to expect a different contextualization of certain political aspects of modern art. What of, for instance, the institutional context of the mysticism of Kandinsky? Where are, apart from Breton’s relationship with Trotsky, the well-established political links of artists with wider non-artistic movements?

Furthermore, one wonders how one could declare the utter depoliticization of art after the Second World War and continue to write about another fifty years of art in the same language and indeed treat the Belgian Marcel Broodthaers much like the Belgian René Magritte. A clear political intention and effect is attributed to both, as if the role of the

artist and the concept of art itself remained more or less unchanged between 1927 and 1972 (212 and 549).

The liberal use of the political category throughout the book is highly problematic. One reads: “The Dutch painter [Mondrian] was not an anarchist ... He was too Hegelian, too totalistic in his ideas not only about painting, but also about the State” (323). What then is the political moment in art history? Is it merely the translation of an artist’s intention into a visual slogan? Is it not also perhaps a recognized affiliation with a movement connected to a certain work, or the effective use of a work in a particular struggle?

In general, there is a conscious resistance to the romantic trend in modern art, which in political terms could be understood as the bright side of an almost vindictive militance (of a Trotskyist rhetorical flavor). This resistance is at its most profound in the absence of the Brücke and Blauer Reiter groups as definitive moments in modern art, and in the extreme Greenbergian bias in favor of cubism and abstraction as the main motors of radical style.

The bitter style in the book is its most outstanding feature. The demise of revolutionary values and the waning of radical meaning within modern art are hailed as a belated confirmation of the authors’ own warnings. The closing remarks on the half-century round-table discussion by Benjamin Buchloh exemplify the volume’s overall borderline sarcasm: “That’s a nice arc [from the pre- to the postwar situation]: to go from the dream of a proletarian cultural sphere to an avant-garde internationalism, and from there to the State Department and International Council of the Museum of Modern Art” (328). The near cynical and politically overconfident attitude reaches an embarrassing apogee in the reading of T. J. Clark’s introduction to his

Painting of Modern Life: Manet and his Followers as being influenced by the theory of ideology of Louis Althusser (29). However, Clark's introductory text in this book on Manet is, to say the least, programmatically critical of ideology as consisting of "institutional apparatuses" or of any acceptance of the Althusserian exemption of art and science from the totality of ideological representations.³ Also odd is the discussion of the social history of art as being a dual between Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse with no reference to the early Georg Lukács (30–31), or the attribution of the Situationist International's concept of the 'situation' to J. P. Sartre (393). (The Situationists had reasons to oppose Sartre, a member of the French Communist Party, rather than plagiarize him creatively, both before and after their friendship with Sartre antagonist Henri Lefebvre had ended in 1962!) These points, which confirm the debt of the book to the post-war American-Trotskyist tendency of Greenberg, would be of secondary importance, or of none at all, if it were not for the depth and meticulousness of most of the analyses in the volume.

V.

Managing to go beyond the oversimplifying pocket course book, the pictureless critical essay, the art encyclopedia with contributions of uneven quality, or the exhibition catalogue which must cater to the needs of a certain collection, *Art Since 1900* remains the best overview of twentieth-century art to date. Let us return to the structure of this overview. The format of the book resembles a website. It uses the organizational techniques that produced the hypertext and -link aesthetics of online sources. But is this proposed 'dialogical' and 'intertextual'

reading style real author-reader 'interactivity'? Is the new encyclopedia the antidote to the post-structuralist 'death of the author'?

There is a lot to be admired in this book. While one may be critical of the over-interpretation of certain artists' political intentions, and suspicious of the suppression of the romantic and symbolist tradition in modern art (and of iconological and allegorical readings of art history), or of the tendency to treat contemporary art with the same language as modern art movements, much like the MoMA and great American institutions have tried to do in the last half-century, one should definitely respect the authors' own avant-garde ambitions. The great power of the book lies in the authors' will to identify with the motives of modern artists. They want to generalize, theorize, teach and be specific, authentic and original, radical and revisionist all at once. They seem to be proclaiming: *The avant-garde is – in fact has long been – dead. Long live the new [academic] avant-garde!* All four authors, far from self-effaced *auteur morts*, are in fact both professors of modern art history – at Princeton, Harvard and Columbia – and art critics for major publications, and are used to over-theorizing radical politics in relation to avant-garde artworks. But the gesture of the mass-produced coursebook-cum-calender-encyclopedia somehow defeats the avant-garde purpose.

In any case, the authors are addressing a broad problem, and they are addressing it with determination. How can one turn a historical appreciation of the avant-gardes into a kind of contemporary identification with the modern tradition? How does one tame a narrative of non-conformity and radicalism? How does one write an informed survey of the lasting impression of modern art upon

postwar practices (artistic, commercial or political) without treating modern and contemporary art as homogenous? How does one historicize the impulse to resist, when at some point it reached a moment when it managed to actually *speak the language of its time*?

FOOTNOTES

- 1 W. T. J. Mitchell, "Ut Pictura Theoria": Abstract Painting and the Repression of Language", in *Critical Inquiry* 15:2 (1989), pp. 348–371 (348), note 1, where he also mentions different periodizations.
- 2 Meyer Schapiro, "Style", in Morris Philipson (ed.), *Aesthetics Today*, Cleveland and New York: World Publishing, 1961, pp. 81–113 (81ff.). Schapiro's article was originally written in 1953.
- 3 It is however clear in *The Painting of Modern Life* that T. J. Clark bases not only his analysis but also his much discussed introduction of terms and theoretical premises on the Marxism of Guy Debord, or in any case the legacy of Georg Lukács, rather than on the concepts, arguments and interests of Louis Althusser. Ironically, Clark's own webpage at Duke University states: "His books brought out the political implications of the work of Courbet and Manet, suggesting that the paintings of these artists may have served an active role in the creation of social and political attitudes. Clark makes a distinction between 'ideology' and the work as a representation, a rejection ideology as theorized by Louis Althusser." (<http://www.lib.duke.edu/lilly/artlibry/dah/clarkt.htm>). See also a critique of Clark by Trotskyist Althusserians at <http://www.militantesthetix.co.uk/situationist/clarke.htm> (both sites accessed 20 November 2005).