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## Book reviews

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*Afary, Janet and Anderson, Kevin B.*  
**Foucault and the Iranian Revolution:  
Gender and the Seductions of Islam**

University of Chicago Press 2005 346 pp.  
£17.00 (paperback)

For many years, Michel Foucault's 'Iran writings' – a short collection of articles about the Iranian revolution published in the Italian and French presses during 1978 and 1979 – have been deprived of scholarly consideration. Foucault himself, disappointed by the Islamic revolution's authoritarian turn and beleaguered by criticism of his early enthusiasm for it, said virtually nothing public on the topic after 1979. Afary and Anderson have finally broken this silence with the publication of this ambitious book, which includes the first full appendix of Foucault's Iran writings in English translation. These are contextualized amongst interviews he gave about the revolution, other pieces of secular-left writing about the revolution, and critical responses to his articles from intellectual peers. The collection offers a font of new material which will be of interest to scholars of Foucault and Iran alike. However, the authors focus on theorizing, and criticizing, Foucault's personal attraction to the revolution; arguing that his own sexual politics and critique of European modernity led him to romanticize the Islamist approach to the revolution and misrecognize its masculinist and authoritarian elements. Their presentation of subjective limitations, biases and wish-fulfillments in Foucault's Iran writings is

largely convincing. In concentrating on these, however, the authors sometimes align themselves uncritically with his contemporary critics and fail to recognize the many ways in which Foucault's observations of the early revolutionary process were radically perceptive. Nevertheless, the project to explore the linkages between Foucault's subject positions and his reading of the Iranian revolution, particularly with regard to gender and sexuality, is highly worthwhile.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first, Afary and Anderson make a persuasive case that the anti-modernist politics of the Iranian revolution, as well as its religious rituals and symbolism, resonated with Foucault's own critiques of modernity and liberalism. Indeed, alternatives to existing socio-political movements excited him: 'modernization as a political project and as a principle of social transformation is a thing of the past in Iran', he wrote approvingly in 1978 (p. 196). The authors also argue that Foucault was nostalgic for pre-modern social relations, which created an 'Orientalist subtext' in his work and prevented him from acknowledging authoritarian tendencies embedded in traditional forms of politics that were construed as alternatives to European modernity. This argument is somewhat less compelling as it is challenged by Foucault's articles themselves, which become increasingly critical and suggest that he was not naively 'seduced' by the Islamist movement. They rather suggest that he was intrigued by a

popular revolt against monarchism which he believed challenged all existing concepts of legitimate political change, and disappointed when its new forms of 'political spirituality' were routinized into traditional types of religious ideology. Regardless of debates over the interpretation of Foucault's texts, however, the authors' analysis of his Iran writings in the context of his other work is provocative.

The second part of the book concentrates on the articles themselves, specifically with regard to issues of gender and sexuality in Iran. Chapter 3 deals with major critiques of Foucault's work as he was writing. Chapter 4 continues this theme by exploring the controversies surrounding his positions after Ayatollah Khomeini assumed power in 1979, and concentrates on differentiating his analysis of the revolution from those of feminists and other activists writing at the time. Finally, Chapter 5 considers the (ir)relevance of these articles for contemporary gay and lesbian movements in the Muslim world. Each of these inquiries highlights previously unexplored dimensions of Foucault's work; Chapter 5 exposes masculinist limitations in his observations and discusses alternative interpretations of the revolutionary process from feminist perspectives. In this section, however, there is a palpable struggle between Foucault's approach to the revolution and the authors'; at one point they wonder why certain feminist thinkers 'have succeeded in arriving at a *more appropriately critical* stance toward the Iranian revolution' (p. 135, italics mine).

The parameters of this judgment are clarified in the epilogue, which both contextualizes Foucault's Iran writings in the recent history of political Islam and elaborates the authors' more normative project to 'transcend Islamism' (p. 172). Their discussion of 'Western leftist and feminist responses to September 11' is daring, though it exposes the authors' own biases against anti-imperial critiques of Islamic radicalism that do not prioritize gender. However, it does raise interesting questions about the dynamic meaning of political Islam. For example, if

women such as Shirin Ebadi (Nobel Peace Prize 2003) are indeed 'elements of a new feminist and more tolerant and democratic politics in Iran' (p. 176), particularly one which does not disrupt the western liberal consensus, does this necessarily imply that Foucault's notion of 'political spirituality' or his hope for alternative forms of political action should be rejected as naïve and illiberal? I think not, but also believe that the book enables us to debate these fundamental questions in a new and exciting way.

Overall, the book is well researched and organized; its theses are bold and original. There are, however, some criticisms of Foucault that I think the authors take too far. For example, they argue that he 'stood out in his celebration of [the revolutionary movement's] dominant Islamist wing, including the latter's rejection of Western Marxist and liberal notions of democracy, women's equality, and human rights' (p. 136). This image of Foucault as illiberal ignores his enthusiasm, recorded in his articles, about the development of new commitments to human freedom, approaches that he thought transcended the secular liberal and Marxist categories then dominant in French intellectual and political discourse. Foucault is also accused of collapsing all 'Islams' into a single idealised concept. To the contrary, his articles and interviews seem to express frustration that his peers were unwilling or unable to dissociate any form of Islam from authoritarianism and that they were thus prevented from seeing the revolutionary potential of religious faith and popular political will in modern society. Finally, what the authors identify as a weakness in Foucault's Iran writings – his inability or refusal to 'see ahead' to Khomeinism – may also be seen as a source of strength, albeit one with limitations. As a 'journalist,' Foucault endeavoured to capture the spirit of the movement, unfinished and unpredictable, as testimony to the fleeting reality of collective resistance and the creation of political alternatives. Nowhere does he claim to have captured this in its complex entirety; he was accused of 'ignorance' about Iranian society,

and he himself admitted to understanding it little. However, his willingness and courage to explore and defend the possibility of 'political spirituality' amidst cynical hostility and against the odds of institutional power politics is an important lesson to be learned from his encounter with Iran.

This book will be of keen interest to anyone interested in either the Iranian Revolution or Foucault, and particularly to those who have been waiting for a volume on Foucault's Iran writings. By providing the full appendix of these articles, it also lays the ground for further analyses of this rare collection.

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*Bearman, Peter* **Doormen** University of Chicago Press 2005 304 pp. £17.50 (paperback)

This is a book that can be thoroughly recommended, to newcomers to sociology, and to jaded lifers alike. Indeed even readers unfamiliar with the arcane orthodoxies of sociological codes will enjoy this warm, carefully detailed account of the world of New York's doormen. However, I would particularly recommend this book to any student who returns from the field claiming that 'nothing happened'.

'Residential doormen' are the uniformed custodians of New York's apartment blocks, and as such are the literal gatekeepers to a world that, as Bearman expertly shows, is as interactionally complex as the worlds of cops, gang members, drug dealers or any of the other usual suspects found in ethnographic monographs. For this reviewer, anything that can liven up sociology teaching is gold dust, and *Doormen* started life as a collaboration between Bearman and his students on an introductory sociology class. The end result manages to combine observation, interviews, and survey information, and succeeds in constructing a highly readable ethnography of the occupational role of doormen.

Doormen acquire a deep knowledge of what their tenants eat, what kind of movies they watch, whom they associate with, their drinking habits, and much, much more. Familiarity and social distance are constantly negotiated in the residential lobby, the arena where the ebb and flow of the building is both observed and shaped by a profession whose very status is in a state of eternal arbitration. Benign security and the everyday provision of the resident's needs and wishes can coincide or clash with those of the doorman. Distance and intimacy, professionalism and financial reward are played out in the residential lobby, while a constant battle is fought against the persistence and ingenuity of encroaching posters of take-away menus.

Like so many occupations, but resonating in particular with the experiences of patrolling police officers, doormen find their jobs both boring and stressful, with lurking supervisors ensuring that the art of looking busy is alive and well. At the core of this wonderful book is a section on the unwritten rules concerning the amount given to doormen by tenants as a Christmas bonus, which if revised as a script for a TV sitcom would be an obvious hit. The unspoken dialogue between doormen and tenants after a year of what may have been excruciating everyday transactions involving loneliness, alienation, or the mere delivery of pizza or pornographic video tapes, says much about contemporary urban sensibilities and class relationships. It is also enormously entertaining, conjuring up the best of Samuel Becket and Woody Allen, and injecting their observations with Goffmanesque insights.

This is a book about a very specific negotiated order, and Peter Bearman is to be congratulated for presenting his sophisticated analysis of that order in such a readable format. It is normal in academic reviews of this kind to highlight the specific readerships that would benefit by reading the book being reviewed. Everyone should read *Doormen*.

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Crossley, Nick, John Roberts and John Michael (eds) **After Habermas. New Perspectives on the Public Sphere**

Blackwell Publishing/The Sociological Review: Malden MA. 2004 184 pp. £17.99 (paperback)

The introduction is the best part of this book. It provides a useful overview of debates about the public sphere, starting with an accessible and comprehensive account of Habermas' arguments in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, and in his later work. It then gives an extensive and well-structured overview of critiques of Habermas' position. The section on 'Practical' critiques draws out three main historical or empirical criticisms of his work: that he ignores the fact that historically the public sphere never was rational and inclusive; that he fails to see that the masses are active participants in the construction and circulation of mass media; and that he fails to take account of the historical existence of alternative public spheres. The section on 'Theoretical' critiques lays out three main schools of thought which have offered alternative formulations of the public sphere: the 'late-modern' school, which accepts normative accounts of the public sphere but argues that its norms should be developed from the resources of a number of cultures rather than just that of educated white males; a 'post-modern' school, which proposes a heterogeneous public sphere with a number of different sets of rules for communication, which may overlap or engage in dialogue; and a 'relational and institutional' school which takes the public sphere to be a historically and socially situated institution, whose form should be explained with reference to its context.

This overview is exceptionally valuable and should be useful for teaching the history of political philosophizing about the public sphere. The rest of the collection is less inspiring. Some arguments simply aren't worth having. There are well-known points of contention in political philosophy where opposing positions are familiar and it is clear

that there exist no useful argumentative resources by means of which supporters of one position will be able to convince supporters of other positions of the rightness of their claims. There are three broad forms of such attitudinal disagreement in public sphere theory: disagreement about the *importance* of things (which areas of public life need most urgently to be addressed); disagreement about the *value* of things (which areas of public life are worth preserving or developing); and disagreement about the *reality* of things (what counts as genuine public communication, real freedom, authentic communication, the 'essence' of a phenomenon and so on). We possess no forms of evidence or argument which can convince people who hold different positions on these issues to change their positions. In the absence of such resources, we are reduced to simply asserting the truth of our positions, writing things like 'As Always rightly points out . . .' (p. 41), 'This is a mistake Kant makes . . .' (p. 93), 'Habermas' error is . . .' (p. 127), or 'To see it as anything other is a misinterpretation . . .' (p. 123) – as though simply insisting repeatedly that our own position is correct is likely to convince others that this is the case. This is what most of the chapters in this collection do.

Michael E. Gardiner contrasts 'overly abstract and formalistic' models of human interaction with 'the irreducible complexities' of 'everyday human life' (p. 30), favouring the latter over the former (p. 33). Ken Hirschkop insists that it is more important to acknowledge 'wider social structures' than to focus on 'isolated subjectivity' (p. 60). John Michael Roberts argues against 'abstract-[ing] knowledge from 'real ideological relations' (p. 77). Nick Crossley dismisses 'false abstractions' in favour of 'actual social contexts' (p. 110). Gemma Edwards insists that 'materialist' issues (p. 121) of 'production and distribution' (p. 119) are the structural 'essence' of the 'system-life-world dynamic' (p. 114). Lisa McLaughlin downplays the importance of 'amorphous networks of communication' (p. 171) in favour of the need for 'structural changes' (p. 170) in society.

These are all familiar arguments, the authors taking familiar positions against familiar opponents and – as far as I can see – adding little to the debates as they insist, in familiar fashion, that they are right and those who disagree with them are wrong in their value judgments about importance, value and reality – and with the only proof for their positions being repeated and self-righteous assertions that this is indeed the case.

James Bohman's paper is more useful, suggesting the ways in which it is possible to re-think definitions of the nature and functioning of the public sphere in light of communicative practices emerging on the Internet.

One final thought: there is not a single 'pro-capitalist voice' in this collection: a missing element from theorizing about the public sphere, perhaps?

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*Crow, G. The Art of Sociological Argument* Palgrave 2005 189 pp. £18.99 (paperback)

This book has an ambitious title and the jacket information proclaims that is a study of 'the ways in which sociological arguments are constituted and presented'. The book contains eight substantial case studies: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Parsons, Mills, Goffman, Foucault and Oakley. The jacket assures us that 'by the end of the book, readers will not only be familiar with the main concerns and theoretical strategies of eight major thinkers, they will also have a clear idea of the choices open to anyone who wishes to present a sociological argument that is engaging and persuasive'.

One may ask is this book about theory or method? Is it about logic or rhetoric? Is it about exposition or persuasion? Does it have a sociological argument or commentary on style? The book does seem to be designed in a way so that it could be used for theory teaching: each writer is given a biog-

raphy and a bibliography of main works, and each writer's theories are discussed at length leading to comments on how the arguments are written-up. At the end of the book there are ten conclusions which include: 'it is more productive to work with audiences than antagonise them', 'shock tactics' are effective, humour is also effective, writers sometimes aim to 'perplex' their readers, the employment of good metaphors and analogies also helps, it is good to have an 'imaginative question', and it is best not to claim too much or too little.

These conclusions confirm that the book is really about the way successful sociology is presented not with 'theoretical strategies' as such. Thus for example the chapter on Marx gives a detailed account of Marx's ideas on capitalism and the various ways they are presented in his writings (his footnotes were often too long for some readers), but the overall strategy and adequacy of the theory is not critically engaged – this is left to later sociologists in the book to do in turn, and this is not at all systematic. And when we get to Ann Oakley, whose work is given a very detailed but completely uncritical presentation, there is no subsequent sociologist to give her her own critique. The book assumes there is such a thing as sociological literature and a canon of great texts and a pantheon of great sociologists, and teaching this literature is really about understanding the theories and how they successfully communicate to the readership of sociologists. The style of the book is heavily academic and there are some paragraphs in which every sentence contains a reference, reading rather like a list of citations.

The book takes the sociological literature and art of argumentation and presentation to be fairly unproblematic. But one could ask not how theories are presented in the most successful way, but rather how is it that sociologists often get away with covering up crass errors with brilliant rhetoric. Although one of the conclusions of the book is that no bad argument 'can be corrected by good presentation' the book does not examine to what extent good presentation can disguise

manipulation of the reader. Thus another project, more shocking for sure, would have been to ask how did Marx cover up embarrassing evidence, how did he sell his audience a dummy or two? Had this book done that with all eight authors it would certainly become required reading. As it is the book seems to be about how to write successfully so as to maximize the number of sales.

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*Devine, F., Savage, M., Scott, J. and Crompton, R. (eds) Rethinking Class*  
Palgrave Macmillan 2005 230 pp. £18.99  
(paperback)

This is a really useful book providing an excellent overview of cultural perspectives on social class from an international perspective. As well as offering a reflexive and considered re-appraisal of debates on class and stratification the book comprises an interesting array of empirical studies that range from working class localized identities in Finland to middle-class identities in America. These six empirical studies are framed by four theoretical chapters that engage conceptually with concerns around culture, identity and subjectivity.

Many of the chapters draw on Bourdieu's conceptual framework, most explicitly in Savage, Bagnell and Longhurst's 'Local Habitus and Working-class Culture', where it is refreshing to read an analysis of working-class culture that centres heterogeneity and differences within the working classes. This positive understanding of working class culture is repeated in Michael Vester's chapter where he develops a typographical map of class cultures in Germany. Of particular interest is his theorization of a skilled manual worker habitus where he is able to demonstrate the existence of spaces of innovation and positive cultures of autonomy. However, references to Bourdieu and his concepts abound throughout the book. This is perhaps unsurprising as Bourdieu's conceptual tools readily facili-

tate a focus on the ambivalent, contradictory and complex values, identities and forms of awareness embedded in social class that the authors are attempting to grapple with. His concepts allow for a much richer understanding of culture within class cultures than more conventional approaches to class analysis. The rewards of his approach can be seen in the empirically based chapters but also in the chapter by Bev Skeggs. Skeggs' argument in 'The Rebranding of Class' takes a different view of value and symbolic exchange to Bourdieu's own, arguing powerfully that working class culture has become a resource which more powerful others use and draw on to authorize themselves.

It is good to have the chapter by Floya Anthias on 'Models of Intersectionality and Identity'. While other chapters refer to gender and ethnicity for the most part the emphasis is on social class. In contrast, Anthias' focus is on the intersections of class, ethnicity and gender, reminding us that all three aspects of inequality are in complex interplay, and also of the importance of both positioning and positionality.

*Rethinking Class* provides a powerful counter argument to accusations that the cultural turn in relation to social class theorizing has resulted in the abandonment of issues of inequality and materiality. Threaded through all the chapters whether theoretical or empirical is a reflexive consideration of the ways in which the discursive and the material are intertwined. It is, in particular, the tensions that emanate between culture and economic and material aspects of structured inequality that constitute the central concern of the final chapter by Crompton and Scott. They have more reservations about the utility of a Bourdieurian approach than the book's other contributors, arguing as many of Bourdieu's critics do, that economic and material aspects of structured inequality are at risk of being marginalized if culture is taken too seriously. Rather, they argue that it is important to develop theories that conceptualize culture and economy as in dynamic relationship

with each other. And this is what the book does, admirably illustrating that beyond the cultural turn there are rich analyses, which in working with the tension between culture and economy, generate complex and insightful analyses of class cultures that avoid pathologization without losing sight of structural inequalities.

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*Du Gay, Paul* **The Values of Bureaucracy**  
Oxford University Press 2005 345 pp.  
£50.00 (hardback)

This book is a courageous undertaking in today's world where journalists and academics alike are announcing the non-bureaucratic age: innovation, entrepreneurship, networking, decentralization, matrix structures, self-organization, Enron-style dynamic leadership and 'innovative' financial tools, and so on. Unfortunately, few of the issues are examined empirically; heavy post-modern language of the dominates, but some chapters are very good.

Paul du Gay has written a book on his own with a similar title, *In Praise of Bureaucracy*, and here gathers a loyal band of followers to explore the details of this thesis. In his introduction, he claims that the book will show that bureaucracy, contrary to the views of its many detractors, is 'alive, well, proliferating and hybridizing, rather than simply disappearing or decaying'. Since he defines bureaucracy as many-sided, evolving, and diversifying, there is no clear separation of the modern and post-modern. This is true of other chapters that celebrate hybrid forms and bureaucracy's adaptability. With such elasticity, a defense is easy.

Paul du Gay's main chapter first takes us back to Hobbes and then to a lengthy exegesis of Max Weber. Bureaucracy has not disappeared; society is profoundly dependent upon it in the form of sovereign states and their 'public bureaux' (p. 42) Bureaucracy provides freedom. Or as he would prefer to

put it, bureaucracy is a 'non-sectarian comportment of the person'. I found his chapter to be overly discursive and general; I doubt that it would impress the critics of bureaucracy, and am surprised that so many authors in this collection cite it as providing guidance.

Charles Goodsell is the prime defender of bureaucracy in the USA. Successive editions of his book, *The Case for Bureaucracy: A Public Administration Polemic*, have demonstrated that government bureaus are as efficient, and often more efficient, than private organizations for carrying out similar tasks; that in addition they have far fewer negative side effects than private for profit organizations (less discrimination in hiring and in service, less corruption, less environmental damage, etc.), and are more responsive to the public. The values of public servants match those of the general public, and they are only slightly more liberal in their politics. It is a secret that is very closely guarded in the USA, where the attack upon bureaucracy is widespread. But Goodsell's work goes beyond even this important job of correcting the biases against bureaucracy. Like many others in this reader, fortunately, he asserts that it is not enough that it be efficient and representative. The government bureau has to be the centre that can hold, that can 'weave together the strands of dispersed public action into coherent policy'. With many more strands, because of privatization and decentralization, the importance of the bureau for coherent policy has increased. No other form is positioned as well to provide coordination and accountability. He offers some brief case studies to illustrate his point. They are not equally convincing, but in a book that scores a nine out of ten on generality, they are welcome.

Thomas Armbruster presents a cogent examination of the theoretical positions of today's anti-bureaucratic theorizing. He actually finds reluctant support for bureaucracy in some passages of Milton Friedman, von Hayek and Oliver Williamson. He places communitarianism in the same anti-bureaucratic camp: it would rely upon



morality to achieve the good society, and it finds bureaucracy to be deadening to community values.

Paul Thompson and Mats Alvesson turn to the private sector. Bureaucracy should be defended 'less on grounds of efficiency or instrumental rationality, but through claims of substantive rationality – that bureaucracies represent positive values, ethics, and practices'. That is, indeed, the focus of most of the chapters, though illustrations of it are scant.

Conventional theory sees power as centralized in a bureaucracy, but moderated by professionalism and rules that protect employees. Thompson and Alvesson and several others, argue that the new systems 'facilitate rather than remove managerial power', and while there is decentralization of production, it is replaced by the 'concentration' of finance, distribution, and especially control – but these fearsome mechanisms are all bureaucratic, so where is the change? Networks have 'concentration without centralization'; decentralized units still have a hierarchical chain of command with explicit rules, and the supposedly transformed public sector still has central regulation, hierarchical authority, conformity to rules, and bureaucratic rules. The new forms, thus, are still repositories of bureaucracy. But this does not encourage anyone in the book. No one in this volume carefully distinguishes the good aspects of bureaucracy and those they might be critical of. The problem is that for Weber bureaucracy is of a piece, and no one strays from, or is critical of, Weber in this volume.

Michael Reed restarts the Weberian exegesis that du Gay had seemingly exhausted, and turns his fury to the post-modernist theorists, such as Castells, Bennis, Elias, Bell and even Schumpeter. A typical sentence runs thus: 'Both the explanatory logic and substantive content of contemporary network theory and analysis suggests, indeed insists, that a complex, interactive multi-causal chain of economic, technological, social, and cultural change is at work and that is fundamentally

undermining the material, ideological, cognitive, and moral foundations of vertically integrated bureaucratic corporations.' He sees a 'radically unstable and crisis prone environment' which network forms will not tame, leading to the ever recurring crisis of capitalism.

Graeme Salaman introduces a note of realism by observing that the largest organizations throughout the world are still essentially bureaucracies. In a book defending bureaucracy, is this good or bad? Without answering this implied question he turns to the enemy, 'the new anti-bureaucratic, market- and enterprise-focused structures'. They do not liberate the worker but impose 'more insidious forms of control'. Obedience is replaced by a requirement of commitment (hardly a revolutionary change I would think, and maybe not a bad one). And they are not pure post-bureaucratic forms, but hybrids. The chapter is one of the few presenting empirical examples of actual organizational behaviour. Yet his 'hybrid' organizations sound rather conventional, and he does not tell us what kind of bureaucracies run without control, or what kind of control is acceptable if indeed control is needed.

Paul Hoggett focuses upon public bureaucracies in Britain. They are 'simply a means of delivering goods and services', rather than a site for the enactment of particular kinds of social relations. This is an argument against privatization, and against the business model being used in government. It may not have much to do with the values of bureaucracy. Like du Gay, he has an extensive interpretation of Weber, but he also ventures into psychoanalytic theory. This gets him into some trouble, because it privileges judgment, discretion and flexibility, which is just what the anti-bureaucratic critics say is absent in bureaucratic forms. In the end he sounds more like an advocate of the new forms than a defender of bureaucracy, calling for democratic renewal, equating stagecraft with 'soulcraft' by engaging citizens in moral dialogues, and calling for reflexive redesign and reflexive authority.



Janet Newman conducted interviews and group discussions with senior managers involved in the 'New Labour' initiative. Despite the new philosophy of this initiative they did not see themselves as change agents, but as the subjects of change that they were now more empowered to carry out. They had a strong sense of public values and felt they were benefiting the communities, and despite the centralizing thrust of the new initiative, they have considerable room for maneuver and negotiation. This is not what the other chapters would lead us to believe. She stresses that they were bending rather than breaking bureaucracy, but despite her evidence that the new form seem to be working and invigorating the bureaucracy, she reverts to the book's template and concludes that rather than a shift to network governance there is a resurgence of hierarchical, bureaucratic governance. Again we find the puzzle this book avoids exploring in any consistent way: bureaucracy is being stripped of its valued properties and dismantled, but the replacement is hierarchical and bureaucratic. Nevertheless her contribution is welcome for its sensitive analysis of actual behaviour.

Clarke is concerned with performance measures in British public agencies, or the 'performance/evaluation nexus' as he prefers to call it. He views the subject darkly; nowhere does he suggest that some performance measures might be relevant, nor does he openly argue that public agencies should refuse to have their performance evaluated. In his view, evaluation measures are so contingent and constructed, they can serve any ends, and appear to be worthless. Does this mean that something like death rates in childcare facilities are socially constructed and thus meaningless in any absolute sense? Even success is a dubious claim for an organization in this constructed world. However the public appears to engage in evaluation since he makes much of the 'credibility gap' between claims and performance, something his deconstructionist view should not allow.

The Miller piece is exceptional in that it reports the results of anthropological

research on the 'Best Value' programme in local councils, designed to make service providers accountable to the public. It is a distressing account, arguing that the paperwork overwhelms any presumed savings in funds. Attempting to de-bureaucratize government and make it more responsive, it seems only to increase the bureaucracy. For those who cite the advantages of bureaucracy this should be a problem; how do you achieve accountability without counting.

Due Billing provides a modest defense of bureaucracy in her discussion of gender equity. One might think there is a ripe opportunity for the pro-bureaucratic perspective to critically examine feminist appeals for radically decentralized, communitarian organizations that would reflect feminist values, but this might be awkward for defenders of bureaucracy. Unfortunately, there is no mention here or elsewhere in the book of the research which shows that large bureaucratic corporations have inadvertently brought about the emancipation of women in the workplace to a much greater degree than any social movements or non-bureaucratic organizations could. (See Robert Max Jackson 1998 *Destined for Equality: The Inevitable Rise of Women's Status*, Harvard University Press, 1998) In a book on the values of bureaucracy, I think it would deserve a mention. So should the very interesting work of Frank Dobbin, Laura Edelman, and their associates showing how bureaucracies require professionals, who in turn apply universalistic criteria to personnel matters such as discrimination, and public policy issues such as pollution, forcing top management to alter its behaviour. It is a signal 'value of bureaucracy', nowhere mentioned. (F. Dobbin, J. Sutton, J. Meyer, and W.R. Scott 1993 'Equal Opportunity Law and the Construction of Internal Labor Markets', *American Journal of Sociology* 99: 396-427; F. Dobbin and J. Sutton 1998 'The Strength of a Weak State: The Employment Rights Revolution and the Rise of Human Resources Management Divisions', *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 441-76.)

Palumbo and Scott offer a very interesting discussion of the commons problem, effectively rebutting Hardin, and presenting a 'non-conventional model of bureaucracy' that is all too briefly delineated. It depends upon secondary associations or groups which intermediate between the marketized individual and the iron-caged bureaucracy, utilizing the advantages of both, rather than their disadvantages. It is a pluralist society but with a strong role for bureaucracy.

In another fine chapter, Mike Savage drops to the particular by demonstrating just how these intermediate associations are positive examples of bureaucracy. His important research unfortunately shows a decline of working class members and a rise of the service and professional class in these vital intermediate organizations. They are becoming more insular and socially exclusive. Once again we get the uneasy speculation that perhaps bureaucracy is not being replaced after all. 'It is perhaps not the erosion of bureaucracy itself, so much as the dominance of a particular form of centralized commercial management form, which should concern us.' (p. 330) (He is close to exploring 'forms of bureaucracy' but this is not to be in this book.) The Savage piece and Newman's are rare examples of concrete data that bear upon the issues this book addresses primarily at a theoretical level. They also address the ambiguities inherent in the topic that are not often acknowledged by the others.

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*Enri, J. N. and Chua, S. K.* (eds) **Asian Media Studies: Politics of Subjectivities**  
Blackwell Publishing 2005 261 pp. £55.00  
(hardback) £17.99 (paperback)

In this edited collection the production and consumption of Asian media forms are analysed within the context of the transnational political, economic and cultural transformations brought to the region by globalization. The book is divided into three

sections. The first examines how global flows of media technology and cultural products, largely emanating from western transnational corporations, also prompt intra-regional cultural flows in Asia. The second section examines such media flows within the history and politics of Asian nation-states, questioning how far audience interpretations constitute a critique that can challenge global hegemony. The third section considers new theoretical approaches to non-western audience studies that problematise the concept of the audience and its formation in Asian states.

The chapters all emphasize the dominance of western capitalism in Asian nations, suggesting that the de-centering often attributed to globalization is far overshadowed by the structural inequalities framing global and intra-regional flows. Several contributors argue these regional and global inequalities are naturalized through temporal frameworks that evaluate how far nations and regions 'approach' or 'lag behind' the western model of economic and political modernity. For example, Iwabuchi suggests that the popularity of Japanese, rather than American, TV dramas in Taiwan reflects a shared sense of temporality with Japanese 'progress', underwritten by the common pursuit of American modernity. The sense of a gap or gulf to be bridged, characteristic of modernity in Asia, as elsewhere in the world, is targeted by advertisers. Chua and Junaid show how MacDonald's advertising in Singapore inculcates consumer demand in children in order to exploit the conceptual and cultural distances that exist between children and adults.

Several contributors note prevalent ahistorical forms that naturalise advertising images and depoliticize news narratives. In advertising and popular culture nostalgia traces the progress of modernity, its focus on long-lost social relations obscuring current inequalities. Chua and Junaid suggest MacDonalds' advertising commodifies children's culture in part by appropriating children's nostalgic memories of toys and idealized family relations. Similarly, Ma

suggests that the nostalgia present in Hong Kong advertising imagery after 1997 has the ideological purpose of reconciling contradictory values of 'atomised individualism' and 'community' in an era of rapid social and economic transformation. Abel's discourse analysis of news bulletins in Singapore shows how concern with 'looking to the future' substitutes political debate in the present with a manufactured sense of popular participation in the speculative discussion of future policy.

The pervasiveness of nostalgic advertising and the future-orientated news suggests that information enabling the audience to pose critical questions that challenge media hegemony is limited. The book questions the relevance of western audience studies for Asia, and in doing so raise theoretical and methodological questions that could well be considered in the West. Several authors critique the 'imperial' post-modernism that deems audience studies an 'impossibility', while Lee argues that the micro-politics of Birmingham School theories of encoding/decoding that shaped communication studies in South Korea in the 1990s overlook the critical relation between audience, mass media and the state. The chapters by Hu, Ma, and Abel, and those in section three, do suggest that while mass media can be questioned and debated by Asian audiences, this critique offers an extremely limited form of cultural resistance to globalised economic power.

The themes of globalization, consumer society and audience studies central to this collection could be more closely related to neo-liberal expansionism and the process of deregulation that underpins it. Audience studies must now address a public sphere diminished by privatization in which audiences are fragmented groups of global consumers. The focus upon audience subjectivities in this book does identify the critical limitations of a cultural resistance based in the audience, but the analysis of audience formation needs to move beyond the paradigm in which the media is considered autonomous from the social. In approaching audiences as media receivers and consum-

ers, the book overlooks other ways debate can generate large audiences, and foster popular participation and dissent, such as the contribution of the Asian public intellectual noted by Abel.

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Feuchtwang, S. (ed.) **Making Place: State Projects, Globalisation and Local Responses in China** London: UCL Press 2004 214 pp. £28.00 (paperback and ebook)

In recent years, place, place-making and related concepts have experienced a revival of academic interest. Some of this renewed interest is undoubtedly a result of the homogenizing forces of global capital, the growing commodification of the intimate spaces of everyday life, and the expansion and fragmentation of urban life not least through the agency of Internet and television. But for all that, the word 'place' is a slippery one, and there are as many 'takes' on it as there are disciplines, approaches and points of view.

Social anthropologists have been prominent in the current revival (Augé 1995 *Non-places*; Feld and Basso 1996 *Senses of Place*; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003 *The Anthropology of Space and Place*). The present volume is an addition to this literature and for the first time focuses on the meaning of place-making in China. Feuchtwang is best known for his research on popular religion and politics in mainland China and Taiwan. His edited collection here is the result of a workshop on the treatment and theory of territory and place that was sponsored by the Department of History of Xiamen University in southern Fujian Province in 2001.

In an introductory chapter, Feuchtwang proposes a theory of place and place-making. He believes it to be a universal theory. 'Between the abstraction of "space" and the location of "place"', he writes, 'the middle term upon which we focus is territory. I shall argue that territorial place-making has

special qualities and that place-making is a process of centring. From the centres of a territory various perspectives outwards can be taken and shared. Small-scale territorialisation is a series of actions and their repetition, centring and thereby making a place' (p. 4).

Among the small spaces he has in mind are markets, a street, a square, part of a park, an urban neighbourhood, a territorial cult, a village. In all of them, the centre is vital in giving the territory its interiority, its meaning. This may be a temple, a ritual practice, an ancestral hall, an indigenous *yangge* performance, even a procession. A bounded territory without a centre is a 'not-yet place'. But he goes on to say: 'there is huge variation in what constitutes a centre: whether its boundaries are marked or not; how many focal points or centres are salient for those who refer to it; whether the centres are centrifugal or centripetal. There is in addition the question of the extent to which reference to focal points as "home" reinforce each other, whose home it is and who are considered to be latecomers or usurpers. And finally there is the difference that reference to a state makes' (p. 7).

This theoretical introduction is followed by a series of eight case studies written by prominent anthropologists, including two scholars from Beijing University. Each one approaches place-making from a unique perspective, not necessarily the editor's. Mingming Wang, for example, is interested in uncovering the interaction between state and locality in a double re-mapping of territorial life from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Graham Johnson traces the place-making rituals of Hakka migrants in the New Territories of Hong Kong down to the present, though by now they have been all but erased by spreading urbanism and repeated displacement. Several other migrant stories carry this theme forward, focusing on diasporic centres. Feuchtwang contributes with a case study of his own of a Chinese village struggling to survive as economic change from a nearby city engulfs it. 'The commercial threatens the local with

disintegration and dispersal', he writes, though he holds out a hope that the hegemonic claims of abstract economic space will be humanized by a sacred landscape of places and remaining networks of trust. A commentary by L.K. Hart on all of the chapters concludes this important contribution to the study of place-making in China.

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*Forment, Carlos* **Democracy in Latin America 1760–1900. Volume I, Civic Selfhood and Public Life in Mexico and Peru** The University of Chicago Press 2003 454 pp. £24.50 (hardback).

As the title suggests, Forment seeks to replicate for nineteenth century Latin America De Tocqueville's study of civic life in nineteenth North America. To this goal the book provides a 'semi-thick' description of civil, economic and political society in Mexico and Peru from the period after independence to the late nineteenth century. A second volume on Argentina and Cuba is set to follow. This is a work of considerable scholarship. There are a number of studies on associational life in nineteenth century Latin America, including in Mexico and Peru, but these are studies of specific civil associations or limited to a city or region. Forment adds his own databases to the secondary sources to paint a much wider canvas. The result is what is probably the most comprehensive study of early civic life in any Latin American country published so far.

Forment's ambition goes beyond the chronicling of nineteenth century civil society. He examines the differences and similarities in democratic life in the northern and southern hemispheres. He argues that De Tocqueville and his modern day followers (Huntington, Bellah and Putnam) have misunderstood these differences and by claiming that Latin Americans lacked civic habits they have misconstrued the nature of postcolonial life in the region.

Forment uses his empirical study to support the argument that the democratic tradition in the region is far more robust than assumed by most scholars but that the citizens of nineteenth century's Latin America practiced democracy horizontally in civil society rather than vertically in government institutions. His argument is only partially convincing. He is certainly right that the people of Latin America have deeper democratic roots than the 'colonial-catholic-corporatist heritage' argument would make us to believe. He is also right that civic life in some regions was richer than previously thought (although as his own study shows 'civicness' varied enormously from region to region and at different points in time). But the claim that democracy flourished in social life in the context of authoritarian politics and highly unequal economic societies is almost as simplistic as the barren civic desert portrayed by some American scholarship on Latin America.

Forment clarifies (pp. 18–19) that his study focuses on democratic practices across the core and ignores the fringe where authoritarianism continued to be dominant and widespread. But, as he himself acknowledges, in the nineteenth century the majority of Mexican and Peruvians continued to live and work in the fringe, which makes the fringe rather central for understanding social life. Moreover, even within the so-called core, for every religious activity that fostered socio-ethnic cohesion and political integration (p. 228) there were others that reinforced racial and ethnic differences (p. 229). And while voting clubs promoted electoral participation (although not necessarily free and fair elections) the vast majority of Mexicans remained uninvolved in electoral life (p. 344).

Unavoidably, even at the core, social life reflected the social order in which it was grounded, and nineteenth century's Mexican and Peruvian societies had little of democratic. It is in the tension between the language of equality and sovereignty of the people that from the time of the struggles for independence to the present has been

the 'new nations' main legitimizing political discourse and the reality of a hierarchical, racist and economically unequal society, rather than in the sharp divisions between a democratic civil society and an authoritarian polity, that the conundrum of Latin American democracy (or lack of) may be better understood. But while Forment's argument may be questionable his book is a welcome contribution to a debate that in his book is as much about the present as it is about the past.

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**Harrison, Michael I. *Implementing Change in Health Systems*** Sage Publications 2004  
241 pp. £60 (hardback) £21.99 (paperback)

After a decade in which the assessment of contemporary health system developments has been predominantly the preserve of political scientists, managerial commentators and health economists, a fresh sociological perspective is particularly welcome. The advent of novel organizational forms, with alternative sources of power derived from the interactions of 'stakeholders' previously unknown to the publicly funded and regulated health systems that are the subject matter of Michael Harrison's new book, would, after all, seem to lend themselves to a researcher's scrutiny of the emergent social structures and processes. The author, an Associate Professor of Sociology at Bar-Ilan University in Israel does not disappoint. He has produced a masterly and multi-layered text which should be of real value not just to sociologists, but to students of public policies and their delivery from a wide range of different disciplines for many years to come.

In his closing 'counsel of perfection' for future policymakers (pp. 200–203), Harrison sets out seven guidelines. Given the insistently hectic pace of post-Millennium modernizing health reforms in each of the three countries examined – the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK – these seem almost

quaintly counter-cultural, but nevertheless wise and, more important, authoritative, in terms of being supported by the evidence of the preceding text. Harrison commends careful diagnosis of the needs for systems change, programme planning and feasibility assessments, with the allocation of proper resources for evaluation and support to ensure effective policy implementation. In all this he urges 'allow sufficient time', and in his approach to his subject he is certainly true to this dictum. The subject of the study, the introduction of market-oriented health policy reforms, belongs firmly to the previous decade and indeed the bulk of the interview material deployed is drawn from the 1994–7 period. But the passing of time has not reduced the relevance of the author's findings. Indeed the insights seem the sharper for his subsequent capacity to synthesize the abundant literature, both academic and official, that has been produced in relation to change in contemporary health systems.

The result is a stripping away of propaganda and partisan points of view in Chapters 3 to 7 (pp. 58–172). These supply accurate and finely balanced accounts of the individual country systems developments which will be of particular practical value to those seeking to understand the background to today's priority issues of patient choice, local resource management and provider diversity. In themselves, however, these accounts contain little that is new. What is distinctive, and sociologically driven, is the fourfold multi-frame analysis which Harrison uses to both select and order his material. This framework allows readers to reflect with the author on not just how policies are identified and formulated but also on the ways in which they are implemented.

The analytical focus on the new relationships of power and the new symbols and significance of sources of meaning in what Harrison terms 'bargaining' and 'interpretative' frames, combined with conventional administrative and institutional appreciations of health policy development, does produce real insights. The book, for example,

concludes with a diagrammatic definition of the 'policy fashion life cycle' (pp. 191–7) which every politician should memorize, alongside the author's unequivocal assertion that 'market reform in health increases the financial burden on lower income families and reduces equality of access to care' (p. 193). This is one of the 'unanticipated consequences' of health policy implementation (p. 35) that revealingly punctuate the narrative of national health systems changes, sometimes to devastating effect. That these changes produced not just unexpected behaviour but actually opposite effects to those postulated in formal policy statements suggests, according to Harrison, that Western governments should now rely on a mix of market and regulatory mechanisms to promote health system change (p. 198). Neither on their own is sufficient to ensure the effective implementation of policy goals with new patterns of professional relationships, in particular, possessing enough bargaining power and rhetorical legitimacy to counter the albeit recently strengthened positions of central governments and their executive agencies.

In summary, Michael Harrison's reflective and readable case study approach will satisfy those looking for practical intelligence as much as theoretical insights. It is a testimony to the sociological perspective and its capacity, despite the limited number of sites studied, to produce genuinely transferable learning. This is a book to be strongly recommended.

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**Keller, S. Community: Pursuing the Dream, Living the Reality** Princeton University Press 2003 334 pp. £35.95 (hardback) £10.95 (paperback)

The discrepancy between myth and reality is a recurrent sociological theme, and investigations of community provide compelling illustrations of the point. Suzanne Keller has been researching community life in different



contexts for four decades, and this depth of knowledge makes her particularly well-placed to reflect on questions of how and why people's experiences so often diverge from their expectations. An important part of her answer is that expectations of community are unrealistically high. She suggests that utopian aspirations of harmonious, supportive and fulfilling social relationships are rooted in deep-seated traditions of social thought going back to the ancients. Such ideals are open to reinforcement by clever marketing, as is the case with the particular community of Twin Rivers, New Jersey, on which her book concentrates. People were attracted to this planned development from the 1970s onwards by the promise of a fresh start to their lives in a new environment, and at several points in the book their situation is discussed in terms of the unmistakably American imagery of pioneers and the frontier. But in reality Twin Rivers was settled by people who sought a comfortable suburban base from which they (or at least the male heads of household amongst them) could commute to New York or Philadelphia. (It is also within easy striking distance of Princeton, Keller's University.) Describing Twin Rivers as 'this ex-potato field' (p. 66), Keller traces how 'the lure of community' (p. 281) was assisted by the term's vagueness and the somewhat naïve optimism that characterized the people who moved in: 'They seemed to believe that the purchase of a townhouse was an automatic ticket to community' (p. 237). The bulk of the book is devoted to telling the story of how community relations did emerge, but emphasizing that they did so by a much more difficult path than the people who bought into the project imagined would be the case.

The fact that community relationships evolve over a lengthy period and the suspicion that people's understandings of community processes are susceptible to romanticism make it necessary for research methods to be selected with care. Keller's book benefits from being based on a longitudinal study over three decades, and

thereby sidesteps the criticism frequently made of community studies that 'time is rarely systematically dealt with' (p. 282). The inclusion of material generated from surveys of residents from 1975 to 1999 allows Keller to convey the dynamic nature of community development, and the inclusion of the survey schedule as an appendix is instructive for those readers looking for guidance about how to carry out such research. Alongside survey data the book also draws on observations (including participant observations), and material drawn from local newspapers (Twin Rivers being, it would appear, populated by its fair share of campaigning letter writers). Keller also notes that 'photography proved a useful ally of research' (p. 163), and the book includes mood-setting pictures at the start of each chapter. If respondents experience difficulty in articulating 'community' in interview settings, a useful alternative is to 'find ways to observe what it is that they do' (p. 287). What these various methods combined are able to convey with great vividness is that everyday life is mundane, the sort of thing that motivates people to set up 'The Committee for a Reasonable Pool Policy' (pp. 93–4) or to organize 'Husband Appreciation Night' (p. 113). Such activities are just as much the stuff of 'community' as are the high-minded ideals to which abstract rhetorical appeals are made.

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*Layard, R. Happiness: Lessons From a New Science* Allen Lane 2005 310 pp.  
£17.99 (hardback)

The level of material comfort experienced by the average person in Western nations today is roughly equivalent to how the top 5 per cent lived a half century ago. In 1940, for example, one-third of all homes in the USA did not have running water, an indoor toilet, or a bath, and more than half had no central heating. Today, the typical house has not only running water, two or more baths, and



central heating, but is twice the size, with an average of two rooms per person, and comes equipped with microwave ovens, dishwashers, color televisions, DVD players, and personal computers. And real monthly personal income has more than doubled. Yet, when asked to rate their overall satisfaction with life, Americans in 1940 reported being 'very happy', with an average score of 7.5 out of 10. Today, their average rating is 7.2.

So, people are better off financially, but not emotionally. They are much richer, but not any happier. This 'progress paradox' lies at the centre of Richard Layard's thoughtful and engaging book, *Happiness: Lessons From a New Science*. An economist and member of the House of Lords, Layard brings an interdisciplinary perspective to *The Problem* (Part I) – that is, 'If we are so rich,' to quote Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 'why aren't we happy?' – and to *What Can Be Done?* (Part II). Interweaving a variety of subjects and disciplines – most prominently psychology, but also neuroscience, sociology, social policy, economics, and philosophy – he incisively analyses the limitations of mainstream economics in its understanding of what makes people happy. Notably, however, Layard presses beyond mere criticism by offering solutions – providing practical suggestions for how to place happiness at the core of social and economic policy.

Economists and policy makers have assumed that financially better off citizens are happier, thus focusing their policy recommendations on increasing GDP and ignoring the 'true' causes of happiness, which lie in such ineffable qualities as the magic of family life, the value of being a community member, and the fulfillment of a job well done. Also ignored have been the potent cognitive processes that rob people of the potential happiness to be gained from material riches – namely, hedonic adaptation (becoming accustomed to the big new house), escalating expectations (desiring an even bigger mansion), and social comparisons (feeling that one's home is inferior to the next-door neighbour's). Although the

economists' assumption is partly true – happiness and money are somewhat correlated – happiness, Layard argues, should not be equated with income or purchasing power. His arguments are powerful and important, and the world would be a better place if his proposals are read widely and penetrate public policy.

Although the science of happiness has been around for decades, only recently has its growing sophistication captured the attention of academics in disciplines outside psychology, not to mention self-help gurus and the media. This contribution by a prominent economist is a must-read, for several reasons. First, it is characterized by a lucid and appealing writing style – accessible to the layperson, but without loss of seriousness or complexity. Second, instead of ruminating about the problem of how to increase a society's happiness, Layard devotes fully half of the book to laying out multiple, detailed recommendations, from an economic and social policy perspective. Finally, although not trained in psychology, he gets the psychological literature exactly right.

Layard puts faith in Jeremy Bentham's Greatest Happiness principle, his call to 'create all the happiness you are able to create; remove all the misery you are able to remove'. This is a worthwhile goal, perhaps the most worthwhile goal of all.

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**Munck, R. Globalization and Social Exclusion: A Transformationalist Perspective** Kumarian Press, Inc. 2004  
224 pp. £15.95 (paperback)

At first glance, this book appears to be yet another addition to the ever-expanding literature on the diverse and contested nature of 'globalization'. Indeed, there are the familiar discussions of the expansion of global capitalism, new forms of communication technologies and challenges to the nation-state, but Munck combines these with a foregrounding of issues around social exclusion

and inequality. Munck's aim is to provide a broad overview of the transformational possibilities of 'globalization', recognizing the ways in which different social actors are implicated in the construction and implementation of 'globalization'. Munck's argument is not that 'globalization' is inherently 'good' or 'bad', but that, following Polanyi, there are decisions to be made about how global transformations can be shaped and managed to achieve different goals.

Munck's main foci are the social and spatial impacts of different elements of globalization. While recognizing broad global differences between 'rich' and 'poor' countries, he skilfully identifies the ways in which such distinctions are challenged by considering social exclusion in poor urban neighbourhoods in the USA and Europe, as well as diverse experiences within the 'Global South'. Class, gender and race are the key themes of three separate chapters, with Munck arguing that different elements of globalization have exacerbated inequalities along these three axes. Some of the arguments are familiar, such as the predominant use of female labour in multinational factories, but other less widely-discussed aspects such as the sex trade and people trafficking are also incorporated into the discussion.

I particularly liked the way in which Munck engages with the debates and policies linked to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations. For example, in Chapter 3 on 'Global Integration/Social Disintegration', Munck considers the pro-free-market arguments made by the World Bank in relation to poverty reduction. He considers what is measured and how it is measured when assessing issues of poverty and income inequality. By doing this he challenges the optimistic interpretations of certain macro-economic policies adopted under neo-liberal agendas. He also interrogates the ways in which multilateral agencies use terms such as 'empowerment' and 'gender equality', highlighting the need to go beyond rhetoric to examine understandings and usage.

The book covers a large amount of material and a broad range of ideas, thus nothing is discussed in great depth. As Munck argues in the preface, his aim is to provide a 'broad canvas' or a 'road map' (p. xiii). He also limits his focus to a consideration of the structures of globalization and social exclusion, rather than the ways in which these structures can be contested. Resistance and challenges are to be covered in a later book. I found this division of labour rather frustrating. Munck's summaries of key debates are clear and he draws on a range of diverse and contemporary examples which make this an excellent text for students. However, given the book's focus on transformations and the ways in which different social actors are implicated in globalization, the exclusion of many key actors, such as non-governmental organizations and other members of so-called 'global civil society' is problematic. As a result we are left with a highly readable and comprehensive overview of how globalization has exacerbated inequalities and social exclusion, but very few examples of how such patterns and practices can be shaped or challenged to create what Munck would regard as 'positive social transformation' through processes of empowerment and democratization.

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*Milton-Edwards, Beverley* **Islam and Politics in the Contemporary World**

Oxford: Polity Press 2004 240 pp. £55.00 (hardback) £15.99 (paperback)

One welcome unintended consequence of the embrace between a sensation-seeking mass media and media-savvy terrorist activity in the name of Islam, has been a renewed interest in the sociology and politics of religion which threatens to make the latter attractive again, both to academics and their students. However, such a renewal demands the avoidance of snap judgments and a capacity to control for prior national, religious and emotional commitments in order

to produce more realistic understandings and explanations of recent developments. Reading Samuel Huntington, Daniel Pipes and others, it becomes clear that this has proved particularly difficult in relation to studies of Islamic resurgence. All the more so following the al-Qa'ida attacks on symbolic American targets in 2001 and the subsequent 'war on terror' (the starting point for this book), which have led to and sustained elevated levels of fear and mutual suspicion between Muslims and non-Muslims in many societies.

*Islam and Politics* is therefore a very welcome addition to the scholarly literature. Although written within the disciplinary tradition of political science rather than sociology, there should be enough historical, political and cultural substance here to interest sociologists looking to grasp the contours of current debates on the character of contemporary Islam. The book is structured through seven main chapters plus a short Introduction and conclusion and the now obligatory glossary of terms. After Chapter One has dealt with the early history of Islam and definitions of political Islam, succeeding chapters then go on to cover relations between Islam and the state, forms of Islamic protest, debates around Islam and democracy, gender relations in Islam, terrorism and violence in the name of Islam and the discourse of 'Islam and the West'. This is a book which tells the story of Islamic political engagements over (mainly) the twentieth century and guides readers through some highly significant debates not only between Muslims and non-Muslims but also and tellingly, within Muslim communities. This proves to be a useful and effective antidote to stereotypical Islam vs. the West interpretations which allows the diversity and complexity of the contemporary global political situation to emerge. The author carefully traces the faultlines of such debates across national political contexts, showing, for example, that democratization debates, arguments over women's social position and interpretations of the use of violence for political and religious

ends all have an intra-Islamic context which must be understood.

There are some minor irritants. One is the repetitive use of the concept of 'domain(s)' as in, 'Muslim domains', 'Western domains' and so on. This could have been mitigated if the concept had been explained at the outset, but it is not, so continuing usage serves only to remind readers of its ambiguity. This should have been avoided. A second problem is the inconsistent approach towards referencing of source material, which becomes problematic when reporting long statements and quotations. Some short quotes are web-referenced, whilst long ones simply float un-referenced. This is hard to explain and does not set a good example for students.

Thankfully, such slight annoyances do not spoil the book. This is a very well written, generally reliable and sober analysis of the varied forms of political Islam within the similarly varied political, economic and social contexts across the societies of the contemporary world. As such, it ought to be recommended reading for all teachers and students looking for an alternative to those one-dimensional studies of Islamic resurgence that fail to recognize the complexities of current engagements between Islam and political institutions.

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**Magubane, Zine Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa** Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 2004 222 pp. £28.50 (hardback) £11.50 (paperback)

It is seldom disputed that colonizers, throughout history, have had an impact upon the colonized; discussions of impact in the other direction, or even of mutually constituting interaction and interconnection, however, are rare. The asymmetry, as Edward W. Said has often remarked, is striking. Similarly, whilst the phenomena of race, class, and

gender have been of concern to academics for many years, the intersection of these phenomena and the different ways in which they combine and re-combine, has only come to the fore more recently. Zine Magubane's book, speaks to both concerns. In her study of the relationship between discourses of blackness and black bodies with narratives of the historical development of capitalism, Magubane explores the dynamic nature of phenomena such as race, class, and gender and examines the ways in which they intersect and reinforce each other. Further she addresses not only the images of blackness within the discourses of dominant groups but assesses how these images impinged upon their own self-understandings; she also focuses on constructions of blackness and whiteness within the discourses of the dominated groups. Her study is situated within the social and political life of South Africa, Britain and the USA in the nineteenth century and brings historical analysis to bear on the theoretical concerns identified above.

Magubane begins by addressing the ways in which women's labour has been devalued, and in many cases erased, from historical narratives regarding the transition to capitalism. She then relates this move to a discussion of how ideas of embodiment intersected with the development of discourses of capitalism and colonialism through the figure of the 'native' woman. Her focus on aesthetic discourse is contextualized through an examination of images of empire, in particular of colonized bodies, within the discourses of British reformers who, she argues, used empire as 'a kind of semantic tool kit' (p. 47) with which to analyse poverty 'at home' and to further their own political ambitions. Magubane discusses the ways in which trade unionists and suffragists, for example, used such images 'to represent their own experiences of political disenfranchisement and exclusion from the body politic' (p. 95) and to argue for the extension of the universal principles of liberal democracy to themselves whilst accepting racial exclusion from these very same principles. In addressing the repre-

sentations of whiteness within the African imagination, Magubane highlights the variety of alternative conceptions of race that were to be found within indigenous ideologies and the possibilities such alternatives open up. She ends the book with a discussion of what it means to imagine oneself black and the extent to which the history and experience of blacks in the New World influences almost all representations of blackness elsewhere.

The premise with which Magubane begins the book – the intersectionality of race, class, and gender within specific historical contexts – is kept at the forefront of discussion throughout the book and binds the different aspects into a coherent whole. There is interesting historical detail in each of the chapters and a succinct summary and analysis of the key themes under consideration in the conclusion. This book goes some way towards redressing the concerns highlighted at the outset of this review and should provide a useful resource for scholars within the field.

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*Offe, Claus* **Self-Observation from Afar: Tocqueville, Weber and Adorno in the United States** Polity Press 2005 128 pp. £45.00 (hardback) £12.99 (paperback)

The millions of additional votes George W. Bush obtained on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, perplexed many in the Old Continent. His victory also highlighted the difficulties Europeans experience in understanding the USA, a country that allegedly belongs to the West. The question Claus Offe tries to answer in the book could be put as, what is wrong with the way Europeans conceive the USA? He seeks an answer by looking at three giants of social thought and travellers to the USA – Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber, and Theodore Adorno.

The book is structured around three main chapters, each dedicated to one of the noted social thinkers and to their varying

interpretations of the USA. The core chapters are preceded by an introduction and followed by a chapter comparing the merits of the travellers' interpretations of America. The title of the book, *Self-Observation from Afar. Tocqueville, Weber and Adorno in the United States*, suggests a work centred on Europe. However, the author offers valuable insights on American exceptionalism and its consequences for domestic and international politics. At the same time, Offe suggests that Tocqueville's ideas on the democratic, capitalist societies influenced decisively Weber's and Adorno's sociological work. Offe suggests that the idea of modernity as an 'iron cage' proposed by Weber may have its roots in Tocqueville's 'tyranny of the majority'. Offe explores thoroughly the links between Adorno and Tocqueville, emphasizing that the French traveller had reflected on the perverse consequences of democracy for both the arts and high thinking a hundred years before *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Accordingly, Tocqueville may have inspired Adorno's indictments on the alienating character of the culture industry, particularly on how this could damage culture as the last source of autonomy for the individual in capitalist societies. In a similar way, the intolerance against deviants, which in Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* characterizes contemporary American society, is reminiscent of Tocqueville who had recognized the dangers for equality inherent to economic individualism.

For readers more interested in current developments in American politics, the appeal of the book lies in Offe's insights about the contribution of foreign policy to the effectiveness of the American melting pot and to social cohesion. He argues that in the second half of the twentieth century, the USA became a country vastly different from the European nation-states because it achieved unsurpassed technological, scientific, and military predominance worldwide. This way, Offe distances himself from the three social thinkers' assumption that the USA was just another Western country.

Imperial status implies that America need not abide by international law because no entity can credibly threaten the USA with legal sanctions. This status helps the occupants of the White House to profile themselves as protectors of the American values in the international scene, a particularly appealing claim for the President of a country where certain democratic values such as equality do not necessarily pervade public policies. Whereas Tocqueville praised the numerous checks and balances limiting the power of the USA federal government, Offe argues that these restrict the ability of the American chief executive to increase social cohesion in such a huge, multi-ethnic country. Consequently, the President compensates his constrained ability to act domestically by resorting to foreign policy, where his power is unrestricted by either domestic or international law and the danger of military defeat is almost inexistent. Offe's essay ends here, but the echoes of the recent past are unavoidable: opting for an aggressive, militaristic foreign policy could be a structural need for the weak executive of an imperial republic.

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*Sutton, P. and Vertigans, S. Resurgent Islam: A Sociological Approach* Polity Press 2005 235 pp. £55.00 (hardback) £16.99 (paperback)

*Moadel, M. Islamic Modernism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism* University of Chicago Press 2005 424 pp. \$65.00 (hardback) \$24.00 (paperback)

These two books are an illuminating addition to the increasing amount of literature on the geopolitics of Islam on the world stage. *Resurgent Islam: A Sociological Approach*, as its subtitle suggests, differs from existing commentaries which are predominantly journalistic and political. It aims to offer a refreshing and rigorous sociological analysis of the worldwide resurgence of Islam, focusing on 'the underlying social processes

produced by the expanding figurational relations of interdependent people within Muslim societies and between nation-states' (p. 13). This aim is achieved with style. Lucidly and confidently written, this book uses sociological perspectives to challenge as well as improve current understanding of, and explanation for, the growth of the Islamic faith and activism across the world, significantly since 9/11. To this end, it demonstrates the multi-facetedness of the structural position and character of global Islam on individual, social, and political levels.

The book is broadly organized into two parts. Part 1, comprising three chapters, focuses on global Islamic resurgence and the reinterpretation of Islamic beliefs and practices. Being committed to demonstrating the multi-layered character of different forms of Islamic resurgence, Sutton and Vertigans provide a rigorous critique of the current preoccupation with high-profile violence committed in the name of Islam, which skews Western scholastic and populist discourses of Islam. They also take to task the Western-centric secularization thesis and the 'clash of civilizations' thesis that over-homogenize Islam, and assume its incompatibility with democracy. To them, such theses – which also argue that the emergence of Islamic resurgence, specifically Islamic fundamentalism, is due to poverty, alienation, frustrated hopes, and Muslim nations' inability to come to terms with modernization – are limited and biased. Instead, they argue that Islamic resurgence, despite secularizing efforts within Muslim nation-states, is an outcome of religious and secular knowledge production involving the re-interpretation of religious doctrine and practices. This analysis casts new light into the comparatively recent resurgence that attracts relatively highly-educated, socially well-integrated, and economically well-off Muslims, propelled by a host of factors such as nationalism.

Not surprisingly, the authors devote an entire chapter to the recent terrorist attacks in the name of Islam, given their social and political prominence. Here they creatively draw upon the work of Durkheim (i.e. on

suicide) and Weber (i.e. salvation beliefs) to explain Islamically oriented suicidal terrorism.

The second part of the book expands some previous themes, focusing on the critique of globalization, civilization and world-systems (e.g. the spread of capitalist division of labour) theories in explaining Islamic resurgence. Rather than 'movements of reaction' to globalized modernity, Islamic resurgence, to Sutton and Vertigans, are a product of socialization processes – transformed in an increasingly networked world – which facilitate the development of Muslim identities that enhance religiosity within the individual, as well as community, national and international relations and activities.

The authors are most passionate and vocal in their critique of Huntington's contentious but influential 'clash of civilizations' thesis which in their view inaccurately emphasizes Islam's incompatibility with democracy, ignoring the fact that democracy does exist in some Muslim nation-states, and the increasingly vocal call for it in others. In its place, the author effectively uses Elias' work on the 'civilizing process' to offer an alternative study of civilization, which focuses on intrastate and interstate social processes, in particular how social groups become established and how the process creates 'outsiders', closely linked to concepts such as 'group charisma', 'group disgrace', and 'group stigma' (p. 142). With this, the authors demonstrate the serious limitations and counter-productivity of the America-led 'war on terror' initiative. The book concludes with a challenge – in order to understand 'the new world order', we need to move beyond spatially and temporally specific conceptual frameworks (e.g. that of the 'Cold War'), and construct new understandings based on what takes place at ground level across the world, particularly the Muslim world, with a sense of sociological detachment.

In a nutshell, this well-written and balanced book challenges the over-generalization of Islam, and offers new insights into the multi-layered nature of Islamic resurgence across the world, which



is often subjected to partisan and prejudiced interpretations, concretizing Islam's image as a 'religion of the sword'. This book demonstrates the importance of recognizing the heterogeneity of Islamic faith and practices embedded within diverse socio-economic, historical, cultural, and political contexts globally.

Sutton and Vertigans' call is uniquely met by texts such as *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism*. In this expansive, in-depth, and informative survey of ideological production in the Islamic world since the mid-nineteenth century, Moaddel convincingly demonstrates the social and cultural conditions that shape the discourses of Islamic modernism, nationalism, and fundamentalism. His analysis illustrates the diversity of the Islamic world, despite striking similarities. While Sutton and Vertigans' book argues their case using primarily contemporary case studies by demonstrating the limitations of current conceptual framework, and call for ground level understanding of diverse social conditions, Moaddel's book performs this task by taking a historical perspective. In this respect, the latter strengthens the case set out by the former.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1, with five chapters, examines the rise of Islamic modernism in India, Egypt, and Iran. The three chapters in Part 2 respectively address the rise of liberal nationalism, Arabism, and Arab nationalism in Egypt, Syria, and Iran. Part 3 deals with the subject of Islamic fundamentalism, focusing on the history and development of this phenomenon in Egypt, Syria, Iran, Algeria, and Jordan.

This theoretically-driven book does not make easy reading at times, but its breadth and depth are impressive. Emphasizing contextual specificity (e.g. colonialism, Muslim intellectual leaders, Christian missionary presence), Moaddel's survey is systematic and robust. His analysis indisputably demonstrates that the development of modernism, nationalism, and fundamentalism in these countries has never been one-

dimensional. Rather, they are a product of episodic, inconsistent, and discontinuous social transformations; and the trajectories are diverse. Analytically, Moaddel draws upon the sociology of culture, cultural studies, and theories of language to demonstrate that ideological production is characterized by discontinuities, and is episodic. Further, the production of ideas in relation to modernism, nationalism, and fundamentalism takes place within a discursive context, and the process is inextricably linked to an international context of cultural diffusions and transfer of meaning (p. 9).

Undoubtedly, Sutton and Vertigans' book makes a more engaging read, given the more focused and contemporary nature of the subject matter. Nevertheless, there is no denying that both texts share the same commitment – using a bottom-up approach to uncover the complexity of social relations within specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts, rather than conceptual frameworks that essentialize Islam. To this end, both texts succeed spectacularly.

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*Smith, Anthony D. The Antiquity of Nations* Polity Press 2004 266 pp. £18.99 (paperback)

*The Antiquity of Nations* brings together seven essays by Anthony D. Smith hitherto spread among different journals and an edited book. To these are added two new essays and an excellent introduction explaining the relationship and general implications of the total of nine essays or chapters which make up this volume. The essays have been carefully selected and written to produce a coherent, unified and cumulative exploration of the importance of the pre-modern past for the character of modern nations. This exploration is of two kinds: first, theoretical, and second, historical.

The theoretical essays constitute Part I of the book. They assess, in the clear



and patiently methodical manner to which Anthony D. Smith has accustomed his readers, the value of the claims, made by the leading 'modernist' theorists, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson, that the nation is a modern phenomenon, invented and imagined. As Smith shows in the essay 'Nationalism and Classical Social Theory', these claims are rooted in the analyses of modern societies by Marx, Weber and Durkheim.

The historical essays constitute Part II of the book. They each consider in great and scholarly detail the empirical and historical foundations of Anthony D. Smith's own ethno-symbolic and more nuanced approach to the analysis of nations as social formations which draw on both modernity and pre-modernity. As Smith explains, these essays show, first, the antiquity of the 'nation' as a particular type of human association; and second, the historical roots of modern nations. In so doing, they raise the important questions of conceptualization and comparison. They raise the problem of 'the nature of our conceptual categories of human community and identity' and their historical applicability (p. 127). They also offer some interesting and new typological insights, distinguishing, for example, between the modern 'western model' of the nation and 'comparable pre-modern collective cultural identities' such as ancient Egyptian, Armenian, Jewish and Greek (p. 129). Throughout this second part of the book, Smith also shows that we further need to distinguish between 'nation' and the theory or ideology of 'nationalism'. What separates these two phenomena which modernist theorists wrongly join together, is time: the nation can be found in different historical periods, whereas nationalism is modern.

One of the essays that particularly attracted me was the last essay, 'Romanticism and Nationalism'. Here, Smith offers the reader a brilliantly analytical, typically learned and systematic examination of the relationship between the two modern doctrines, Romanticism and nationalism. He

claims, first, that Romantic assumptions and concepts shaped nationalist doctrine at its core: 'All nationalisms are committed to the Romantic ideals of cultural diversity, authentic self-expression, and will in action, even where some of them supplement these ideals with other, more "civic" and liberal notions . . .' (p. 253); second, that Romanticism 'cannot be equated with nationalism' (p. 253) for Romantic ideals were pursued along a variety of paths – one of these paths was nationalism; and third, that the classical ideals of eighteenth-century neo-classicism should also be placed 'under the heading of Romanticism' (p. 254).

It must be said that the last claim, however interesting and suggestive, is, in fact, less convincing than the other two. Furthermore, it contradicts the first claim which distinguishes between 'romantic' and 'civic' ideals. These ideals, as he says, while distinct, may coexist in at least some nationalist thought. Consequently, it is not possible to equate Classicism with Romanticism. For the classical ideal, which, as Smith himself states, gave nationalism its first language and imagery, was, at least in its 'enlightened', eighteenth-century interpretation, a civic ideal: one bleached of local colour, even if in practice it could not avoid it.

This is an important book which advances and deepens our understanding of nations and nationalism. Indeed, one of the advantages of this book lies precisely in the fact that at one and the same time it re-visits and synthesizes into novel *aperçus*, major themes that Smith has studied separately, in shorter works, as implications of his ethno-symbolic approach. These include, the role of collective memory and of past 'golden ages' in the constitution, persistence and renewal of human communities; and the role of warfare in the creation of nations. This combination of focused and self-contained essays with 'link' essays, also enhances the coherence and richness of the volume.

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*Throsby, K. When IVF Fails: Feminism, Infertility and the Negotiation of Normality* 2004 Palgrave MacMillan 223 pp. £50.00 (hardback)

The dominant representations of IVF (*in vitro fertilization*) conjure images of 'miracle' or 'designer' babies. Focusing on the desired products of successful IVF treatment, these images obscure the processes involved in IVF and deny the prevalence and significance of its failure. For these reasons, a book deriving from a strong research project which explores what is involved in IVF failure has been badly needed for some time now. Karen Throsby's *When IVF Fails: Feminism, Infertility and the Negotiation of Normality* is important for this reason.

The book is carefully structured with an introductory chapter and an interesting second chapter which explains the author's 'feminist approach to IVF'. Throsby distinguishes between IVF procedure (the technical elements – 'fertilization in glass') and the wider IVF process (p. 12). Her investigation is of the latter, making readers aware that the preoccupation with procedures has generally pre-empted investigation of the full process. She declares that she is offering a feminist analysis. However, rather than advocating a 'feminist position' – 'a particular stance of resistance or appropriation in relation to the technology' (a polarization that has bedevilled feminist technoscience studies) – she employs an explicitly 'feminist approach' to IVF – 'which places women at its centre' (p. 18) reflecting the centrality of women's bodies and identities in the IVF process.

Discourse analysis is the author's main methodology and it is employed on a set of interviews conducted with 13 heterosexual couples and 15 women whose male partners opted not to participate in the study. Throsby conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants recruited through culling the patient records of an inner city NHS teaching hospital fertility unit. All but two of the participants were white and the

sample was predominantly middle-class and well-educated. Except for one couple, all had undergone IVF unsuccessfully, and over half of the twenty-eight women involved had children living with them at the time of the first interview.

The substantive analysis is presented in five thematic chapters. The first (Chapter 3) traces the negotiation of the nature (reproduction) versus technology (rational, progressive, cultural) tension by those undergoing IVF and their struggles to maintain their sense of themselves as 'natural' and 'normal'. IVF as a consumer activity is explored in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 foregrounds the public nature of IVF practice and the consequences of this for women. This is followed in Chapter 6 by an exposition of the gendered nature of the work involved in IVF, highlighting the female interviewees' bodily engagement and their taking of responsibility for accessing and organizing treatment and for its failure. Chapter 7 considers strategies which evolve for dealing with the end of treatment. The conclusion situates the analysis in relation to the wider picture of developments in biotechnology and offers a commentary on the implications of the study and on the relevance of feminism to these developments.

Throsby herself insists, she is 'not simply adding to the existing picture' of IVF but demonstrating how 'those dominant representations are . . . predicated on those exclusions' (p. 9). Her contentions are particularly important since, as she registers, IVF is the 'core technology' for a range of other newer biotechnologies (e.g. PGD, stem cell research and therapeutic cloning). She argues that, in recent developments in biotechnology, the dominant image of technology lending nature a helping hand has contributed to a process of 'technological creep', where concerns around particular technologies are diffused by normalizing them relative to newer, more controversial technologies (p. 189).

This carefully researched and intelligently argued book deserves attention because it

constitutes one of the most detailed examinations of the *living* of IVF currently available. The analytical framing of the study as the investigation of the discursive material work undertaken to achieve normality extends its importance in making a highly

original contribution, not just to understandings of new reproductive technologies, but to the conceptualisation of gendering, nature and technology more broadly.

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