



Eugene Rogan, ed. *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002. vii + 263 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-86064-698-0.

Reviewed by Mary Ann Fay (Department of Sociology, American University)

Published on H-Gender-MidEast (September, 2003)

Gender in Construction and Designation of Marginality

Gender in Construction and Designation of Marginality

Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East is a collection of ten articles about marginal men and women in Middle Eastern society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The editor of the collection is Eugene Rogan, who has also written the introduction to the volume.

The collection is divided into four parts or thematic fields. The first by Francois Georgian examines patterns of consumption of coffee, alcohol, and drugs. The second focuses on the institutions by which the state, law, and society confined individuals, and includes articles on prisons, the poor, and prostitution in nineteenth-century Cairo by Rudolph Peters, Mine Ener, and Khaled Fahmy, respectively, and on insane asylums in Egypt and Lebanon by Rogan. The third section or theme is port cities and includes a study of migrant workers in Ottoman Salonica by Eyal Ginio and one of European migrants to pre-colonial Tunis by Julia Clancy-Smith, as well as an examination of public morality in Beirut by Jens Hanssen. The final theme is that of entertainers in twentieth-century Baghdad by Sami Zubaida and Cairo by Karin van Nieuwkerk.

In his introduction, Rogan describes the study of marginality as a division of history from below, that began with the social history of the French Revolution by such scholars as Jules Michelet, Georges Lefebvre and George Rudin. The last two of these, by assigning political agency to the Third Estate, influenced British Marxist historians like E. P. Thompson writing on the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of the working class, and urban outcasts. Some of the consequences of this non-elite history or New Social History include the emergence of women's history as a distinct field and of subaltern studies in South Asian social history.

The New Social History, evolving as it did from Marx-

ist theory and left-leaning historians, was not just the study of the non-elite or the marginal. Rather, the history of the common people was linked to a theoretical perspective that assigned agency to non-elite social groups and even, at times, power to change the course of history in radical or revolutionary ways. Indeed, the position of the non-elite at the periphery or the margins of society was no longer seen as simply a site of oppression but as one of resistance, agency, and even power. The elites who held formal power were no longer regarded as the sole or even the most significant historical actors. Social history transformed the non-elite, the common people and the marginal from the acted-upon to actors and from the objects to the subjects of history. It was not just a collection of studies about those who were absent from elite historiography; it was also a statement about history itself.

Post-modernism, with its critique of meta-narratives like Marxism or the Enlightenment and the claims these narratives made to universal "truths," poses a significant challenge to social history by undermining its theoretical foundations. So does the cultural turn in history and cultural studies in general, which take a discursive approach to historical and social scientific analysis derived from the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's discursive method of analysis calls into question the concept of the unified autonomous self who has the will and the freedom to act against power and authority.

Post-modernism has undermined the theory and foundations on which social history and the various fields that it spawned have been constructed. Unfortunately, there is no discussion of this in the volume under review, although the reader will notice the absence of a common theoretical perspective or a common approach that links the individual articles to each other. What unifies the volume comes from the subject—marginality—and its open-ended definition as an individual's non-conformity to legal and social norms. The various au-

thors have turned their attention to the local and the particular in specific locales in the lands of the Ottoman Empire before and after its dissolution, by focusing on various marginal groups such as the poor, the insane, migrants, prostitutes, tavern keepers, drinkers, and entertainers, among others. One of the strengths of the volume is the focus on groups that have been seriously understudied in Middle East history. In so doing, the collection expands our knowledge of Middle Eastern society at a time of transformation and contributes to our understanding of the functioning of the Ottoman administration, European imperialism, the emergence of the hegemonic states of the region, and the transition to the modern. In addition, many of the articles emphasize the historical nature of marginality, showing how this category changes over time as the marginal becomes central or what was once vice becomes virtue.

Three of the strongest articles in the collection are those by Ener, Ginio, and Clancy-Smith. All three focus on the socially constructed nature of marginality and the way that the law and the state define new categories of marginality in order to protect its revenue base, control the flow of labor, or ensure order and public morality. Ener, in her study of the poor in "Getting into the Shelter of Takiyat Tulun," shows the relation between the creation of new categories of deserving poor and able-bodied poor as well as the centralizing tendencies of the nineteenth-century Egyptian state and its intervention into areas of public and private life that had previously been beyond state control. Ener shows how new laws and a state apparatus to manage, police, transport, and institutionalize the poor developed between 1847 and 1878. The division of the poor into the deserving and the able-bodied happened when the state attempted to harness the labor of Egyptians in agriculture and meet the demand for labor in industrial projects. Thus, begging was forbidden; the able-bodied poor were put to work and non-residents of Cairo were sent back to their villages.

In the case of Salonica, Eyal Ginio looks at the relationship between migrants to this port city and the desire of the Ottoman government to ensure the flow and stability of revenues and the provisioning of its cities. In his article, "Migrants and Workers in an Ottoman Port: Ottoman Salonica in the Eighteenth-Century," Ginio points out that most port labor was casual, short-term, low-waged, and relatively unskilled. As such, the port was a magnet for migrants from the countryside. The only officially recorded laborers were the porters who were in the employ of merchants and not the port administration. The Ottoman government tried, by imperial edict, to ban

the migration to the capital of day laborers, nomads, and others from the Balkans. Peasant migration was forbidden and punished because it was regarded as a serious threat to agricultural production, tax revenues, and general order. Ginio explains, "In a society in which the individual's main obligation was to pay his taxes regularly, those who did not have a settled address or occupation deviated from the expected norm" (p. 134).

Like Ener and Ginio, Julia Clancy-Smith demonstrates that marginality is a social construction by showing how a disparate group of European migrants to Tunisia before the protectorate was declared in 1883 became marginalized. One of the facts of European colonialism/imperialism in North Africa, according to Clancy-Smith, is that it became a dumping ground for political undesirables and ne'er-do-wells as well as social groups unable to cope with the dislocations of nation-state building and industrial capitalism. These included European settlers from Algeria, Maltese, and Sicilians, along with those unwilling to serve in the Italian army, bandits and criminals fleeing the police, and lovers escaping unhappy marriages. Clancy-Smith calls them "subsistence migrants" and challenges the notion that they moved into the ranks of the colonizer and into the category of "European." Instead, she argues, Mediterranean marginals who peopled North Africa were considered only marginally "European" for much of the period and that gender relations played a significant part in calibrating "Europeanness." She writes, "Who could claim to be 'European' was uncertain, unstable and contested in the past century—and some of that uncertainty sprang from the intersections along the migration-marginality-gender axis" (p. 154).

What Clancy-Smith means by this is illustrated in her example of an impoverished Maltese widow, Hanna, and her daughter who sold wine in the market. They came to the attention of the authorities because they stayed open after normal business hours. As women without men, and thus deprived of male surveillance, and who sold spirits, they were regarded as women of uncertain virtue and a source of public scandal, social disorder, and danger. Thus, they violated the gender norms of the time, which was an indication of non-Europeanness. Clancy-Smith is the only one of the ten authors to integrate gender analysis into her study and show its importance in the construction and designation of marginality. As she points out, women experience migration differently from men and while migration results in the restructuring of gender relations, the most common result is the restructuring of gender asymmetries.

In two articles, the authors question or problematize the categorization of two groups that are commonly believed to have been marginal in Middle Eastern society, namely, the consumers of alcoholic beverages and prisoners. In the first, "Ottomans and Drinkers: The Consumption of Alcohol in Istanbul in the Nineteenth-Century" by Francois Georgeon, the author points out that while Muslims were forbidden to consume alcohol, it was not forbidden to Christians and Jews. Thus, alcohol consumption became an issue of identity and boundaries between groups. The Ottoman government banned alcohol from time to time along with tobacco, coffee, opium, and wine. However, besides upholding religious orthodoxy, the government was also interested in avoiding public assembly, limiting promiscuity between different social groups and different communities, and protecting public order. Thus, public consumption became the target of official condemnation rather than private use. In the nineteenth century, the reforming Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) was a drinker and encouraged his ministers to drink as a sign of modernity. The new penal codes of the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) did not prohibit alcoholic drinks. The drinkers included the two ends of the social spectrum, the Ottoman elite even before the Tanzimat and, at the other end, soldiers, sailors, artisans, workers, coachmen, and other members of the lower classes.

In the case of prisoners, Rudolph Peters in "Prisoners and Marginalisation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt" argues that prison sentences had no strong stigmatizing effect and released prisoners were not marginalized socially. According to the author, many offenses contained in the penal code and punished by the state were based on norms not shared by ordinary Egyptians. Some of these offenses, Egyptians realized, served the interests of the state and the ruling group, while others conflicted with established customs relating to honor or feuding. There were other offenses that Egyptians did not see as criminal including tax evasion, draft-dodging, desertion, sheltering deserters, and escaping the corvée. Those imprisoned for such offenses were considered victims of state oppression. Peters is investigating the Egyptian prison system before the British occupation of 1882 and admits that little is known about the system of judicial punishment before that time. Therefore, he acknowledges that he cannot give an unequivocal answer to the question of whether the prison system led to the stigmatization and the social exclusion of released prisoners.

Articles by Rogan and Khaled Fahmy consider two groups of marginalized persons, the insane and prostitutes, within the context of centralizing states and Eu-

ropean imperialism. The first, "Madness and Marginality: The Advent of the Psychiatric Asylum in Egypt and Lebanon" by Rogan, explores the social construction of mental illness and the emergence of psychiatry as a branch of medicine. Although in the nineteenth century, psychiatry was a pseudo-science, the treatment of those designated mentally ill in Cairo and Mount Lebanon did improve. There, unsanitary and often inhumane asylums were replaced by institutions that were hygienic, light, and airy. Patients were not restrained and were allowed to work outdoors in gardening, for example. What is objectionable, according to Rogan, is that psychiatry and institutionalization were introduced by Europeans who imposed the social norms by which mental illness was defined, thus displacing local norms with allegedly universal ones based on scientific principles. Rogan compares the situation in Cairo and Lebanon to the introduction of psychiatry as a branch of colonial medicine in India and the Cape Colony of Southern Africa. In all three, local norms were displaced by foreign ideas imposed by Europeans who had the political power to ensure that their ideas prevailed.

Fahmy, in "Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," considers the state's concern with and monitoring of prostitutes and brothels from 1834, when the government of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha banned prostitutes and dancers from Cairo and banished them to the south. Since the state collected considerable revenues from public dancers, musicians, and entertainers, and had an insatiable need for revenues, Fahmy speculates that it probably taxed prostitutes as well. Why, then, would it cut off this lucrative source of revenue by banning prostitutes from Cairo? Fahmy argues that the main reason for this was the Pasha's belief that prostitutes threatened the discipline and health of the troops in his newly formed army as well as students in government schools. Of particular concern was the high incidence of syphilis, which was believed to be spread mainly by prostitutes. Once the large army created by Muhammad 'Ali was disbanded and the threat posed by prostitutes had receded, concern shifted from the prostitute's body to brothels as the site of sedition, danger, and infestation.

In "Public Morality and Marginality in Fin-de-siècle Beirut," Jens Hanssen's study of marginal groups in Beirut is woven into an urban history of the city's expansion after the civil war of 1860 that included the emergence of venues of leisure and pleasure. Hanssen argues that marginal men and women were produced "not merely by objective alienating practices of rapid urbanization but, significantly, by the discourse on public morality that developed after 1860" (p. 204). Intellectuals

like al-Bustani and Zaydan were important contributors to the discourse on morality that viewed marginality as an obstacle to the imagined and industrious and prosperous future of Beirut. The Ottoman government viewed alcohol consumption in taverns and bars, theaters, brothels, and gambling as threats to social order and responded through licensing and opening regulations as well as police and hygiene surveillance.

The final two articles are studies of twentieth-century entertainers in Baghdad and Cairo. Sami Zubaida, in "Entertainers in Baghdad, 1900-1950," considers the shifting boundaries of marginality. He points out that entertainers were considered marginal for two reasons: first, the predominance of Jews among instrumentalists, and next the association of entertainment with drink and prostitution. Zubaida then considers the effect of the establishment of the Iraqi nation-state, the creation of conceptions and institutions of national culture, and the construction of the category of "art" to include music and song, on the marginality of entertainers. Zubaida argues that the boundaries of marginality did shift in the modern period for various types of musicians and entertainers, but he concludes that it is doubtful whether even now the social marginality was ever entirely removed.

Karin von Nieuwkerk, in "Shifting Narratives on Marginality: Female Entertainers in Twentieth-Century Egypt," looks not at shifting boundaries, but rather at changing attitudes toward female singers and dancers by

three generations of women in the same family: Umm Nawal, her daughter Nawal, and her granddaughter Bint Nawal. Von Nieuwkerk bases her study on extended interviews with the three women about their activities as entertainers, the business itself, and, most importantly, their attitude toward the business today and the women involved in it. Only Umm Nawal and possibly her daughter, Nawal, worked as entertainers, although the daughter denied doing so. The granddaughter, Bint Nawal, who never worked as a dancer or singer, strongly condemned the business and the women who worked in it as shameful and *haram* (forbidden in Islam). According to von Nieuwkerk, this is the opinion of most middle-class Egyptians. Nawal, a respectable housewife married to an engineer, denied her family background at the same time as she defended her new middle-class status achieved through education.

The volume makes a significant contribution to our understanding of understudied groups in Middle Eastern society as well as to late-Ottoman administration of the Arab provinces and its fiscal policies, European imperialism, and the emergence of the modern nation-states of the region. The authors make use of a variety of sources including government documents and reports, memoirs, travel accounts, and oral histories. Like many other collections, it is somewhat uneven. Nevertheless, it is recommended as a contribution to Middle East history, which lags far behind its European counterparts in the study of society's marginal men and women.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:

<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl>.

Citation: Mary Ann Fay. Review of Rogan, Eugene, ed., *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*. H-Gender-MidEast, H-Net Reviews. September, 2003.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=8157>

Copyright © 2003 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.