

## BOOK REVIEWS

Early Modern Conceptions of Property. Ed. by John Brewer and Susan Staves. [Consumption and culture in 17th and 18th centuries, 2.] Routledge, London [etc.] 1995. xiv, 599 pp. Ill. Maps. £80.00.

CARRIER, JAMES G. Gifts and Commodities. Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700. [Material Cultures.] Routledge, London [etc.] 1995. xvi, 240 pp. £45.00.

In 1982 Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb helped to open up a new area of social and cultural history by publishing *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Europa). There had been earlier studies, but in economic history consumption had clearly caught the imagination less than production. Social historians had focused on the living standards of those who were supposed barely able to survive. But mass production at one end of the economy presupposes mass consumption at least somewhere else, in a domestic or foreign market, among workers or other classes.<sup>1</sup> Production was in fact the vantage point of much early research in the history of consumption. The range and quality of goods produced gave at least some information about the buying public.

As the title of the seminal work by McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb indicates, one of the questions which prompted the history of consumption is how (and when) mass consumption originated. Once, long ago, goods were typically produced for known customers, on demand and to their specifications, as single items or in small quantities, by workers they knew personally. Mass production, on the other hand, is production in large quantities for unknown markets. In the twentieth century, it has been argued, social classes distinguish themselves more by a different style of consumption than by their position at the production site. As research proliferated, the crucial change to a commercial or mass-consumption society, which had initially been thought to have coincided with the Industrial Revolution, was found in every part of the early modern and modern period.<sup>2</sup>

Consumption research spread not only in time, but also conceptually, profiting from trends in social history. Probate inventories threw light on the consumer durables people held at death. As research focused on the middle classes and women, two groups were highlighted which were supposed to be more typical consumers than working-class men. Consumption proved to be a gendered field. Cultural history raised questions about the meaning of goods and the mentality involved in buying and appropriating them.

The debate was fuelled by a large research project on “Culture and Consumption in

1. Sara Horrell, “Home Demand and British Industrialization”, *The Journal of Economic History*, 56 (1996), pp. 561–604.

2. It is found in the twentieth century in John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880–1980* (London and New York, 1994). A recent overview of the literature which notes the broadening time scale of the commercial revolution is Paul Nolte, “Der Markt und seine Kultur – ein neues Paradigma der amerikanischen Geschichte?”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 264:2 (1997), pp. 329–360. Overviews of the literature in history and other disciplines are to be found in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies* (London and New York, 1995).

the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” organized by John Brewer at the University of California at Los Angeles. Three large volumes of edited papers resulted from it. The first, *Consumption and the World of Goods*, which John Brewer and Roy Porter edited in 1993, contained a number of important overviews in the field. The volume edited by Brewer and Staves followed, and focused on property. The third volume, edited by Bermingham and Brewer, tackles the consumption of culture.<sup>3</sup>

Property and consumption are obviously related, but if there is anything the volume by Brewer and Staves makes clear it is that property has to do with a lot of things. All in all, this volume is not very focused in general, and not very focused on consumption in particular. This is not to deny that some very interesting links are explored. One of these is the right producers, especially artistic producers, have in their products. Property law may be the most developed part of civil law, but it has had to get that far by trial and error. In what sense can one own a literary product, or a breed of animals? These rights had to crystallize. The same holds true for other special property rights, such as the monopoly on trade with certain countries or regions. But the section on special forms of property also includes a study on Mme de Coudray, a famous eighteenth-century French midwife, which is a joy to read but in which property’s role is a minor and metaphorical one. Property in offices is tackled through a study of French stock-brokers. Although venal offices are an interesting case, it is strange that the monopoly of trades as exercised by corporations is not taken into consideration.

Other sections include studies on property in legal and political theory, and property and the construction of the self. This last section deals with different kinds of “proper” behaviour. Very interesting is Donna Andrew’s analysis of the charity dispensed by Lady Spencer, based on the begging letters sent to her and the administration of sums given by the noble Lady. The section on property and the family sails what are by now relatively well-charted waters: the property rights of women and the division of the family inheritance between the oldest son and other children. In the last case Susan Staves shows how the state was instrumental in creating and buttressing supposedly natural family relations. A section on Empire details the creation of property rights in colonial possessions, including people.

Other interesting studies include Margaret Somers’s analysis of Chartist ideas about property in labour. The right to an apprenticeship and the skill acquired through it were seen as a form of property for which social inclusion in the community of workers was an essential condition. In other words, property is extended here to include one’s relations through family, kin and other collectivities.

Of the twenty-six studies collected here, one deals with Paraguay and four with France. One is struck by how English the majority of the contributions to this volume are, notwithstanding the fact that the large majority of them are written by Americans. In several instances Anglo-Saxon or English law is contrasted with what is perceived as one legal tradition which is supposed to rule all of continental Europe. Barbara Diefendorf, for instance, speaks of “continental legal traditions, like Roman law” when she is actually discussing two French regions.

Even if James Carrier in *Gifts and Commodities* claims to cover Western capitalism, his book is also firmly rooted in the Anglo-Saxon world. Carrier tackles the commodification of gifts. As an anthropologist who has done fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, he

3. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800* (London and New York, 1995).

was confronted with the ideas of Marcel Mauss about the change from a gift society to a market society. Gifts are not only goods, but also personal services rendered. A gift remains linked to the person who gave it, as opposed to exchanges in commodity societies.

In line with the literature mentioned above, of which *The Birth of a Consumer Society* is often quoted, Carrier depicts the golden age in which goods were produced in the households of people known to the customers, and production, exchange and consumption were not yet separated. He sees this separation taking form in the seventeenth century, when the artisans of London and Paris still had shops at their homes, while those of Amsterdam no longer did. Around 1800 the same situation prevailed in London. Because of the standardization in mass production, consumers need no longer know the producer personally to be assured of good-quality goods. Around 1900 British workers had access to mass-market products, even if department stores were still primarily selling to the middle classes.

As we are alienated from the production of the goods we consume, we have to appropriate them. We can give them meaning, even if they are mass produced, because they were bought at a special place or we take special care in presenting them. This is typically a task for housewives, who will regard their household tasks as gifts to the household. Retailers present many of their goods in such a way as to make it easier to attach values to them.

Carrier's analysis is attractive. If there is something like alienation in the mass production of goods for an anonymous market, it is logical to think that the consumer must put in a special effort to appropriate these goods. Carrier analyses the American way of celebrating Christmas and sees the ordeal of Christmas shopping in crowded stores as one of the ways to lend special value to the right personal gift. His analysis fits well with another case he does not discuss: in the Netherlands gifts are not exchanged under the Christmas tree but on 5 December, the eve of St Nicholas's day. These gifts are personalized, for instance by being presented with a poem the giver writes about the receiver. Supposedly, the poem is more important than the gift itself. Even if Carrier's analysis is attractive, in the end it is not totally convincing. The emphasis on alienation and appropriation leaves the reader feeling that Carrier fails to convey the sheer joy that people put into the consumption of goods produced for an anonymous market.

*Lex Heerma van Voss*

YEO, EILEEN JANES. *The Contest for Social Science. Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*. Rivers Oram Press, London 1996. xx, 396 pp. £30.00.

Eileen Yeo's *The Contest for Social Science* is a richly textured, multi-layered, and theoretically sophisticated analysis of the development of social science from the revolutionary period of 1789 to 1850 to the last half of the twentieth century. In her story, Yeo is concerned to show both the contributions of subaltern groups to social science practices, and how subalterns were eventually marginalized as social science became professionalized, made academically respectable, and situated in universities. While this may be the main storyline of the book, a kind of David and Goliath struggle that ends

with David's retreat and the promise of new battles to come (over the issue of objectivity, for example), the plot takes many twists and turns. A primary contribution of the book is its well-documented argument concerning the impact of gender and class representations and relations on the construction of social science knowledge.

Yeo draws much of her theoretical inspiration from Raymond Williams and Michel Foucault. She uses this "dynamic duo" to focus on discourses as systems of knowledge that exercise power through a variety of different kinds of practices. She examines language as a way of seeing power relations in operation, for she argues that languages justify particular power relations – that is, they are ideological. And, along with Raymond Williams, she maintains that language is constitutive of non-linguistic social practices. One of the distinct virtues of the book is that Yeo always keeps her sights trained on those with less power, thereby avoiding some of the pitfalls of focusing attention on those discourses which are hegemonic. Groups with less power are not merely subjects of discourse (or subjected to it), but, rather, Yeo shows that they often manipulate the discourses of the powerful to their own advantage. One of the unintended and ironic consequences of the language of the powerful is that it can open discursive space for those with less power to state their claims to knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

One major theme, then, concerns the contests among and between the more elite and those further down in the social hierarchy over the nature of approaches to and knowledge about "the social" – about the lives, living conditions, moral circumstances and prospects for betterment of the poor. The contestants include, among others, Utilitarians, scientific philanthropists, Owenites, Christian, Fabian and Marxian socialists, new liberals and idealists, the Social Science Association, feminists, the LSE, Malthusians, social hygienists, eugenicists, cooperators, slum priests and the Charity Organization Society. And central to this narrative of jostling perspectives is the consequence of gender difference for women's involvement in the production of social science, women's contributions to knowledge of "the social", and how different forms of knowledge were evaluated.

Alongside the story of the contesting voices that contributed to the development of social science, Yeo shows which sorts of people had access to positions of influence and authority in social science at different points in its history. Central to this theme is the professionalization of social science and its consequences for class and gender representation in the production and organization of social knowledge. The book concludes with a discussion of the consequences of the legitimation of social science (primarily sociology and social administration) by its acceptance as university disciplines. These developments saw the progressive removal of subalterns from participation in social science as formal, university training became a requirement for the practice of social science. While bourgeois women were the first to be affected by professionalization, the "second wave" of professionalization removed working-class women and some working-class men from the caring professions which became dominated by women from the upper social echelons. Bourgeois men, even in those professions occupied by women, held positions of authority. Eventually, with the acceptance of social science in the academy, the more activist, practice-oriented and socially engaged form of social science became feminized in contrast to the more abstract, theoretical and "scientific" forms of social science.

1. For a brilliant exposition of this idea see Kathleen Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience", *Signs*, XIX (1994), pp. 368–404.

In one of the most insightful sections of the book, Yeo argues that the bourgeois women who became what she calls “social mothers” and were active in social science at mid-century and later, divided motherhood into three different types: the empowering, the protecting and the disciplining or punishing mother. By suggesting that these middle-class women could play the role of disciplining mother, she explicitly does not intend to demean their commitment, courage and compassion. Yeo reminds her readers of the courage it must have taken for women at this time to step outside of the boundaries of their prescribed gender roles, even to be social mothers. The same women who acted out the nurturing side of mother love in relation to women of their own class, could also, by infantilizing the adult poor, show their protective face by emphasizing their clients’ powerlessness and inability to speak for themselves. And by likening their clients to children, they displayed their disciplining stance by stressing their need for moral guidance and control. Yeo writes

[. . .]in nineteenth-century Britain, motherhood was a woman’s discourse and the most paradoxical of the languages of devaluation because it tried to force renovation while talking of love. [. . .] The posture of the scolding mother [. . .] kept femininity intact, by preserving motherhood, and it kept hierarchy intact, by creating the need for dominant maternal authority figures to look after the infantilized poor. (p. 145)

Yeo’s discussion of the intersections and interweaving of gender and class is admirable, and her demonstration of the power of language as well as the power of hierarchical relations in shaping the development of social science is much to be admired. While the close empirical analysis and wide-ranging nature of this book makes it a stellar example of contemporary social/cultural history, there were points in the book when I wished that Yeo had made reference to historiographic debates and issues on which her evidence and analysis touch, but which are not crucial to her argument. Two come immediately to mind.

Part II of the book deals with the post-Chartist “class compromise” and its relation to social science. There is a large literature that discusses this relatively quiescent period, and Yeo could have made a contribution to it by explicitly drawing out some of the implications in her work for understanding how these particular years in British history came about.<sup>2</sup> Given that there have been occasional scholarly challenges to the seamlessness of this period of accord, Yeo’s observations would have been especially welcome. Her work implies that mid-century social harmony developed from numerous sites that included the trade unions, paternalist factory owners, and significantly social science. It was, in other words, a discourse in the Foucaultian sense of the word.

Perhaps more directly relevant to her project, Yeo let pass the opportunity to explore the implications of her research for debates in the feminist literature on “maternalism”

2. This is a voluminous literature. It includes the labor aristocracy debate, as well as discussions of factory paternalism, e.g. Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (Brighton, 1980) and critiques by Neville Kirk, *The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Urbana and Chicago, 1985); Richard Price, “Conflict and Cooperation: A Reply to Patrick Joyce”, *Social History*, IX (1984), pp. 217–224. See also, H.I. Dutton and J.E. King, “The Limits of Paternalism: The Cotton Tyrants of North Lancashire, 1836–54”, *Journal of Social History*, VII (1982), pp. 59–74. Also see my “Respectable Men, Disorderly Others: The Language of Gender and the Lancashire Weavers’ Strike of 1878 in Britain”, *Gender & History*, V (1993), pp. 382–397.

and the development of the welfare state. Some historians have claimed that women as social actors were able to influence state policy, in spite of the fact that they were not enfranchised and lacked formal political power, because they claimed a maternal identity. Justifying their work in voluntary associations, charities and in local government by asserting that it was an extension of motherhood, women's efforts, as women, influenced policies that defined and affected the needs of mothers and children, and thus they had a powerful impact on the development of the welfare state.<sup>3</sup>

Yeo's discussion of middle-class women's "social motherhood" might seem to support this argument. Bourgeois women, Yeo maintains, did indeed claim that their public roles were extensions of their familial maternal roles. Yet, in one of the most insightful and provocative chapters of the book, Yeo explores the significance of what she calls the "body metaphor" in social science from 1850–1930. The chapter considers the development of different offshoots of evolutionary thinking, and the key representation of society as an organic body. Building on the work of contemporary cultural studies of science, Yeo argues that "body metaphor became intertwined with a discourse of biology so that figures of speech became transformed into scientific truths. This alchemy biologized social differences and turned social inequalities into natural inequalities" (p. 184). Her analysis of "the competitive social body in historical motion" shows the dominance of this body metaphor in social science, especially in discourses about eugenics and social hygiene. Eugenics and social hygiene, in turn, built upon and magnified concern about working-class mothers' fulfilling their maternal responsibilities that was growing in British society especially from the 1870s. These anxieties intensified in the early years of the twentieth century in the wake of the Boer War, as "a heavy responsibility for the health and vitality of the British race [was placed] squarely on the shoulders of working-class mothers" (p. 246). Yeo, thus, complicates the picture of "women's agency" in the production of "maternalist policies", by showing, in other words, how women were participants in a cross-gender *nationalist* focus on the body and reproduction. One might argue that a "maternalist agenda" was successful precisely because it was tied into nationalist and imperialist agenda, which depended upon male and female elites.<sup>4</sup> Yeo's study, by illuminating the metaphor of "the competitive social body in historical motion", shared by the discourses of imperialism, social hygiene and eugenics, shows that maternalism was produced by something other and more complex than "women's agency".

*The Contest for Social Science* presents an incredibly broad analysis that bears on many different issues and debates in contemporary British social history. The fact that Yeo didn't pursue all of them is understandable given the scope of the book. Among its many virtues is that it clears many paths for scholars to follow. Admirably, Yeo tells her story, and presents her analyses with considerable passion. That makes it all the

3. This argument is made by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and Origins of the Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880–1920", *American Historical Review*, 94 (October 1990). For a critique of the thesis that women were active in welfare state politics, see Jane Lewis, "Gender, the Family and Women's Agency in the Building of the Welfare States: The British Case", *Social History*, XIX (1994), pp. 37–55.

4. See a path-breaking essay by Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", *History Workshop*, 5 (1978), pp. 9–65. See also Antoinette Burton's demonstration of the significance of imperialism to feminists who used it to justify their claims to equality in *The Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill and London, 1994).

more interesting that one of the themes she develops in this important book is how various forms of action-oriented, socially and politically engaged social science ended up being located on the “feminized margins of an academic map of learning”.

*Sonya O. Rose*

PHILLIPS, PAUL T. *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880–1940*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvania 1996. xxvii, 303 pp. Ill. \$55.00; £49.50. (Paper: \$16.95; £15.50.)

As this book demonstrates, the history of Anglo-American Social Christianity continues to arouse interest. This study differs from numerous earlier ones by its unusual choice of period and by taking a broad view of the movement from both sides of the Atlantic, including the usually neglected Canada. In analysing social, economic and political conditions, Phillips finds profound similarities in the development of Social Christianity in the three English-speaking countries and tries, using a comparative approach, to identify “the common obstacles on the road to the New Jerusalem”.

Traditionally, studies on Social Christianity begin in the late 1870s and end with the First World War, but Phillips intentionally extends the period up to 1940. He believes that “the present framework of the modern welfare state was laid” with the Second World War and that this fact “was of great importance in the final disposition of Social Christianity”.

His main aim is to prove that “religious thought profoundly affects temporal affairs”, and that in the mixture of sacred and secular “the sacred was never forgotten” but rather constituted “the wellspring of Social Christian thought and activity”. Of course, few of his predecessors have seriously suggested the opposite. As to the old question of whether Social Christianity was a vehicle of secularization, Phillips takes the side of those who see Social Christianity generally as a force that helped to strengthen genuine religiosity.

Phillips sets out to analyse the ideas of the Social Christians, then moves on to examine their practical activity. This approach defines the structure of the book. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the interplay between theology and social thought in Social Christianity. Using a wide range of primary and secondary sources the author holds that, in spite of the theological diversity associated with Social Christianity, social policy remained “wedded to the idea that it was ethically necessary to realize the ideals of the Brotherhood of Humanity” (p. 26). He does not delve too deeply into the influence of Social Christianity on the development of social thought: instead, his study of its political activity should sufficiently answer that question.

Chapter 2 focuses on the impact of urban life and its attendant social ills, with clergymen becoming suppliers of information to parliamentary investigations of social problems. The difference in urbanization in Britain and North America did not prevent Church circles in both countries from thinking about its effects. But if in Britain it was mainly clergymen who wrote about social ills, in North America this role fell to the representatives of civil professions “with a secular outlook”. Their books and pamphlets had a strong moralistic overtone “undoubtedly influenced by religiously flavoured publications and were in turn exploited by Social Gospellers” (p. 65). Some readers might get the unwarranted impression that there was no difference between Social Christianity

and the churches, since the author tends to equate them. True, there were many advocates of Social Christianity among the various denominations, but Social Christians often had their own organizations. Indeed, older studies frequently stressed the struggle between the latter and the official churches.

In chapter 3 Phillips draws attention to the interplay between social service and social science, the employment of new techniques of social investigation, the attempts to found organizations and the acceptance of aspects of the modern state. His conclusion that “In Britain the emerging welfare state had made the social services of the Church of England and other churches appear redundant”, while “In North America this was a slower process before 1945, but the pattern of the transformation was emerging” (p. 115) could profit from additional arguments since it provokes questions on, again, the degree to which Social Christians and churches may be identified, and the real importance of their role in the struggle for the welfare state (after all, they were not the only force in favour).

Chapter 4 studies the ways in which Social Christians sought to enlist public support through art, music, theatre, sport, novels, books, etc. Although Phillips credits Social Christianity with “a significant cultural role”, he also notes that Social Christian activists “were popular, but primarily in intellectual circles and in seminaries. The political recruitment of their followers tended to bolster the socialist, Communist and other leftist parties rather than churches and congregations” (p. 151).

The desire of many Social Christians to establish a Christian commonwealth and to eliminate the division between Church and state is soundly examined in chapter 5. Differences of opinion within the ranks of Social Christians did not prevent them from attempting to achieve unity. Phillips studies the extremely complicated process of the Social Christians’ move towards ecumenism, concluding, however, that “the idea of a truly National Church remained a dream” (p. 191). It would seem, though, that the aspirations towards unity were engendered not only by a particular fondness for ecumenical solutions, but also by fear of an evolving secularism.

The final two chapters are devoted to the political activity of the Social Christians, treated in a chronological order. Phillips recognizes two trends: an ever-growing interest among Social Christians in political science, and an expanding involvement in municipal politics. Before the First World War Social Christians sought to compensate for their failure in political organization by a “concentration upon theory and education”. In Britain they tried to define “socialism” and “Christianity”, whereas American Social Christians showed less interest in socialism “in virtue of their native pragmatism and the fate of third parties” (p. 217); the “progressivism of respectable Republicans and Democrats” was more important to their ideas. In Canada, where organized socialist political activity on the part of the clergy was restricted before the Great War, Social Christians never used the word “socialism”, but endeavoured to “Christianize [. . .] democracy and democratize [. . .] christianity” (p. 225). Remarkably, the goals of Social Christians and their aspiration towards religious unity did not stop them from energetically supporting the war effort, occasionally exhibiting an appalling national chauvinism.

Phillips finds new trends in Social-Christian activity in the interwar period – its struggle with “unregulated capitalism”, and its collaboration with the labour movement. Yet most earlier researchers have already noted that Christian Socialism was always connected with labour and they would have been surprised to see the link termed “new”. It seems that Phillips’ argument springs from his other thesis, namely that Social



Christianity was “a response to concerns generated by modernization” and rejected the “revolutionary activity of labour”. Some will take issue with the author’s definition of Social Christianity as “a primarily religious movement within the wider social environment”: “primarily religious” it may have been, but without “the wider social environment” it can hardly be seen as “a movement” rather than a mere tendency in social thought. Of course, it is no coincidence that Phillips speaks about “Social Christianity”, not “Christian Socialism” or the “Social Gospel”. The latter terms were traditionally used for those who regarded themselves as “Christian Socialists” and “Social Gospelers”, or defended a specific set of ideas, sometimes during a rather short period of their life. Phillips essentially enlarges the ranks of Christian Socialists by shifting the accent from “Socialism” to “Christianity”, and proclaims every Christian who had or maintained social ideas a Social Christian. Consequently, in his opinion, L.T. Hobhouse, Joseph Chamberlain, Charles Masterman, Lord Rosebery, Lloyd George, Lord Randolph Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt and William Beveridge were Social Christians, because being Christians they realized some social ideas.

According to Phillips, politics was the most important and fruitful field of social activity. Yet the very success of Social Christianity, “in the achievement of many of its mainstream social objectives through the agency of government and in the new directions of politics”, contained the germs of its failure, caused by the decline in public interest. The Kingdom on Earth became the welfare state. And as soon as the Social Christians achieved a social environment based upon social justice, society lost interest in them.

If we follow Phillips, Social Christianity was the major force in the creation of the welfare state. This is not too convincing. He also appears to regard the First World War and the Second World War as major landmarks in the period under consideration. Important as these are, it would take some arguing to make them as decisive in a broader historical perspective. Much of the case for the influence of Social Christians in the emerging welfare state is based on artificially swelling their ranks while limiting their ideas.

In his conclusion, Phillips formulates his research desiderata: wider geographical and theological coverage. Here, we can certainly agree: it is desirable to have broad-ranging comparative studies on Social Christianity in Europe and North America. This most informative book, with its new, though debatable, interpretations, will serve as an excellent starting-point.

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FAGGE, ROGER. Power, culture and conflict in the coalfields. West Virginia and South Wales, 1900–1922. Manchester University Press, Manchester [etc.] 1996; distr. excl. in the USA and Canada by St. Martin’s Press, New York. x, 290 pp. £45.00.

The contrasts between the coalfields of South Wales and West Virginia were sharp indeed during the years covered by this concise and well-written study. Both were major sources of bituminous coal in their respective countries: South Wales had become the largest coal producing field in Britain by 1913, employing some 233,000 miners; West Virginia ranked second by output in the United States, with a labour force of almost

117,000 in 1921. While South Wales expanded at a faster rate than any other British coalfield in the decades after 1880, it was outpaced by West Virginia: the latter's workforce had been a mere 28,000 in 1900. The author's central concern is to explore and explain the differing patterns of industrial protest and political mobilization of their miners by reference to their "contrasting social relationships and cultural formations" (p. 1) during these years of growth. Both regions displayed significant levels of industrial conflict, but while West Virginia was characterized by episodic, intensely violent outbreaks of "civil war", South Wales experienced consistently high levels of more peaceful strike activity. The central explanation for this variation, argues Fagge, lay in their respective community patterns, with the culturally more homogeneous Welsh enjoying a significantly greater degree of empowerment within the civil society of their coalfield.

The book begins with a short chapter framing the economic history of the two coalfields and indicating the relatively fragmented ownership structure in each. Perhaps because of the book's central concern with community variables, little attention is paid here to the labour process. This is a pity, for the varying patterns of popular mobilization explored in later chapters ultimately had their roots in economic conflicts at the point of production, in particular over labour costs. While we are told that contrasts in geology meant that coal was predominantly extracted from smaller, shallower, but more highly mechanized drift mines in West Virginia and from larger and deeper pits in South Wales, detailed figures on mining labour forces are not examined systematically, nor the implications of this difference fully explored. It is relevant, however, not only to considerations of work and community, but also to the plausibility of political movements such as syndicalism, that almost 60 per cent of the South Wales miners worked in pits employing more than a thousand workers, and almost 10 per cent in pits with more than 3,000 by 1910.

The longest chapter in the book on "Power, Culture and Community" provides a finely wrought dissection of the contrasts between the two regions. Of critical importance was the difference in housing tenure. Whereas perhaps 80 per cent of West Virginia's miners lived in company towns, less than a quarter of the housing stock in the South Wales coalfield was company owned. The social relations constructed by the coal operators in their company towns allowed little space for independent initiative by workforces fragmented by ethnicity, religion and geographical mobility, while the late and rapid development of industrial capital saw the operators acquire not only large tracts of land but also concomitant political and judicial power at the levels of township, county and state. The more gradual expansion of the comparatively stable and homogeneous South Wales communities took place within a pre-existing social order and allowed their workers to develop cultural institutions under their own control, such as the chapel, the union lodge and the miners' institutes and libraries.

The remaining four chapters provide separate narratives of industrial conflict and politics respectively in each coalfield. The central industrial relations issue in West Virginia was over the right to organize, and the author's use of the term "civil war" is an entirely appropriate one to describe the bitter and violent disputes analysed in detail here. For example, during the 1912–1913 strike, a specially armoured train, the "Bull Moose Special", was manned by mine company riflemen and machine gunners who strafed an encampment of striking miners. Three days later an encounter between the armed miners and company guards left sixteen dead. In South Wales, the right to organize was well established, although the greater cultural "empowerment" of the region's miners could not guarantee victory in a number of major disputes.

With regard to politics, the Socialist Party of America (SPA) could make only temporary and limited inroads in the most radical areas of West Virginia, the Industrial Workers of the World even less. The political consciousness of the state's miners, argues Fagge, was limited by a focus on the "struggle immediately at hand rather than broader class concerns" and emphasized the denial of union rights (p. 221). Against Corbin, who argues that they espoused a version of "Americanism" inflected with class-consciousness, Fagge counterposes "a vague political language constructed against the odds amidst a severely fragmented social and political culture" (p. 226). His argument is not wholly persuasive and this temporary "descent into discourse" does not articulate readily with his earlier materialist analysis of community structures and cultures. Rather it indicates the complexity and difficulties of decoding "languages of class"; but the account he provides of the miners' actual practices in the pursuit of their "struggle immediately at hand" nevertheless describes a class conflict in a singularly intense and unmediated form. The account of politics in South Wales is less nuanced and pays insufficient attention to agency; instead there is an opposite tendency towards a reductionism in which community and cultural patterns provided "the building block" (p. 245) for Labour's electoral advance.

Fagge's succinct accounts of the two coalfields are well told and in places provide valuable historical insights. There are inevitably a number of quibbles. The periodization, ending in 1922, is not fully explained: why is there no treatment, beyond a three-sentence paragraph, of the five-year-long strike which began in West Virginia in 1924, or more than passing reference to the 1926 lockout in South Wales? The treatment of statistics on the incidence of strikes in South Wales (p. 169) is perfunctory, apparently intentionally so (p. 263). This is surprising given the role this aspect of conflict plays in the framing of the book's central comparison. Moreover the implications of the important revisionist conclusions published by Church and his colleagues in 1990 concerning the chronological and geographical unevenness within regional strike patterns in the British coalfields are wholly ignored.

More significantly, the substance of the narrative is hardly original, working as it does in previously well-hewed seams, especially in relation to South Wales: for example, almost three-quarters of the references in chapter four on mining unionism in that coalfield are to secondary sources. The structure of the book, which mainly intersects two parallel studies, inevitably leads to a compressed narrative which in places threatens to crowd out analysis. Thus it is difficult adequately to address the complexities of politics in the South Wales coalfield in only thirty pages, especially compared with other books such as Chris Williams's recent *Democratic Rhondda* which is devoted entirely to the politics of one (albeit highly significant) valley within it.

An evaluation of *Power, Culture and Conflict in the Coalfields* must therefore depend on the effectiveness of its comparative method. Here some difficulty is presented by the sheer range of *differences* between the two coalfields. The book tends to oppose a series of contrasting elements – the type and scale of mine, demographic patterns, urban setting, housing tenure, ethnic and religious composition, residential stability, leisure activities, judicial systems, military attitudes and national political cultures – rather than conduct an effective comparison within which the influence of key variables can be evaluated. A fuller conclusion than a page and a half might have provided a framework for such evaluation rather than merely restate that "huge contrasts" were found in the two regions (p. 263). This emphasis on contrast leads at times to an overdrawn picture. For example in the concern to emphasize the peaceable nature of South Walian

industrial protest, the violence during the Tonypanydy disturbances in South Wales in 1910 is regarded as having been “exaggerated out of all proportion” (p. 184); “thereafter, other than odd clashes with the police, violence was virtually non-existent” (p. 184). This sits uneasily with Francis and Smith’s account of “guerilla and open warfare” in the coalfield in 1926, including eighteen “major clashes” that year, during one of which a thousand miners attacked a colliery manager’s house (*The Fed*, pp. 56, 60, 67).

This tendency towards insufficiently differentiated contrast is perhaps a consequence of the *region* being constituted as the only unit of comparison. This level of analysis inevitably encourages a portrayal of each coalfield as displaying an illusory homogeneity. In South Wales, it was clearly local, not regional identifications which underpinned the dynamics of trade unionism before 1926. West Virginia, too, experienced a spatial division between the non-union southern counties and the better organized northern and central ones. Although Fagge demonstrates his awareness of intra-regional diversity at a number of points – for example, the very different culture and economy of the anthracite area of South Wales from the rest of the coalfield, the more significant implantation of syndicalism in the Rhondda valley, the greater militancy and political support for the SPA in Kanawha County – the specificities of these local political traditions and trajectories remain largely uninterrogated.

The book therefore raises important questions concerning the nature of comparative mining history and the capacity of its methodology adequately to analyse the complexities of work, community and politics both between and within the two coalfields. One conclusion which can be drawn is that such comparisons require a more complicated and flexible prism with which to view the relationships between localities and regions, and the character of social protest and political identities within them, than the simple juxtaposition of two coalfields drawn from two very different countries.

Alan Campbell

BLOMBERG, EVA. *Män i mörker. Arbetsgivare, reformister och syndikalister. Politik och identitet i svensk gruvindustri 1910–1940*. [Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Studies in History, 53.] Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 1995. 432 pp.

It may be a paradox, and a puzzling one, that the Swedish model harbours the only syndicalist trade union still in operation. Although no longer as direct-action oriented as it used to be during the interwar period, the SAC (*Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation*, Swedish Workers’ Federation) did not fall apart when other syndicalist organizations shattered. Though it was a dwarf in comparison with the LO (*Landsorganisationen*, Swedish Trade Union Confederation), the SAC did not become a purely propaganda apparatus for anarchists.

In her book Eva Blomberg presents new and challenging insights on syndicalism in Sweden. Focusing on syndicalism among Swedish miners, Blomberg has established new links in a field relatively unexplored by Swedish scholars. Indeed, there has been only one previous study of syndicalism in Sweden,<sup>1</sup> though in his study of the industrial

1. Lennart K. Persson, *Syndikalismen i Sverige 1903–1922* (Kungälv, 1975). See too Lennart K. Persson, “Revolutionary Syndicalism in Sweden before the Second World War”, in Marcel van

democracy debate after World War I the economic historian Christer Lundh examined the contemporary influence of syndicalism in Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the literature is full of ignorance or misunderstandings, partly due to a general neglect of non-factory labour. Since much of the industrialization process in Sweden was a rural-based process, casual and unskilled labourers played an important role, and one that still needs to be investigated. Though some limited research has been conducted, we continue to lack a social history of lumberjacks, construction workers – primarily navvies – and miners.

In addition to this mission, Blomberg has caught the syndicalist paradox, at least in so far as it is possible to explore this by examining one of the main industrial branches in which the SAC had some influence. Construction and forestry, of major importance in northern regions, were two strongholds of the SAC until the 1970s. Mining was a third.

Blomberg's aim is to analyse the rise and fall of the syndicalist movement as well as its relationship to reformists and employers. The question of marginalization or integration, raised by Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, is discussed and reinterpreted in the light of the Swedish experience.<sup>3</sup> Changes in power relations and gender identity form the theoretical approach. Blomberg's book is divided into three sections: the structural preconditions of mining, the development of collective agreements and collective bargaining, and the survival of the syndicalist movement.

Introduced in the first decade of this century, syndicalism meant new threats to the smooth functioning of the production process, and it was frenetically opposed by the mining companies. Because of a division of ownership and different market segments, mining lacked a common management strategy. Until the industry was restructured and an organized employer's front established, management was arbitrary rather than long term and patriarchal. In newly established mining communities syndicalism was a natural preference for the young, unskilled and unmarried mobile miners. They needed the kind of action the syndicalists offered as an alternative to the routines the reformists were trying to establish. However, cooperation and symbiotic relations with reformists often made syndicalists the stronger union in a number of communities.

During the interwar period employers were more united, and national-level collective agreements were introduced. This process was strengthened by the labour legislation of 1928, when the Collective Agreements Act and the Labour Court were introduced. In the same year the reformist *Svenska Gruvindustriarbetareförbundet* (Swedish Miners' Union) went on strike with secret support from the Russian miners' union. When this support became publicly known, it contributed to the social democrats losing the election and to the exclusion of the communist opposition. Interestingly enough, a syndicalist "renegade" – the SAC's former general secretary – administered this purification of the reformist miners' union.

The end of the 1920s was the scene of factional battles within Swedish syndicalism too. While the majority stuck to the SAC, one faction formed a competing syndicalist

der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot, 1990).

2. Christer Lundh, *Den svenska debatten om industriell demokrati 1919–1924. I. Debatten i Sverige* (Lund, 1987).

3. Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism", in van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary Syndicalism*.

organization. Another faction, consisting mostly of influential officials and newspaper editors, left for more prosperous careers within the LO and its trade unions. This decisive and ambiguous split is rather sketchily covered. Further research is necessary for a systematic examination of the ideological diversities between the factions and of their ability to reorient ideologically as well as organizationally.

The argument introduced by Persson, namely that after World War I the SAC developed an independent strategic path at odds with that of traditional anarcho-syndicalism, could have been more systematically examined in the light of the ability of the SAC to challenge the constant threat of marginalization or integration. Unlike in other syndicalist organizations, reformist elements were presumably integrated into this ideological *and* organizational transformation. Various factions were visible in this process, but with few exceptions “reformists” (more correctly described as guild socialists) did not leave the SAC until 1928–1929. This time anarcho-syndicalism was strengthened, even at the cost of establishing a competing organization during a ten-year period.

Although mining companies modified their politics, they still relied on a stable labour force, consisting of married miners. Syndicalism’s advance was halted since it preferred to recruit among young and mobile bachelors, who were the first to be unemployed when workers were laid off. But the syndicalists who remained formed families themselves and gradually changed attitudes. Above all, they developed an impressive proletarian educational culture, partly independent of and partly within the educational project cultivated by the labour movement in general.

The revolutionary outsiders grew more and more introvert, Blomberg argues. Yet one is hardly justified in considering the educational project as a repercussion of a hollow revolutionary *élan*. This project was rather closely integrated with the new conceptualization of the social revolution that accompanied the syndicalist upsurge after World War I. Although I agree with Blomberg that the discussion on *Eigensinn* among Swedish scholars tends to fall into a number of traps, the obstinate resistance to collective bargaining was crucial. A more developed discussion on syndicalism as an ideology could have served some purpose here. The absence of this means we have to rely on explanations based on structural aspects alone.

By the time a more conciliatory view on collective agreements was confirmed by the SAC, it was too late for it to retain any national influence among miners. It managed to remain a partial, but deteriorating local competitor. Perhaps the agreement in 1938 between the LO and the SAF (*Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen*, Swedish Employers’ Association) had a minor influence in mining, but greater emphasis could have been given to the overall impact on Swedish syndicalism, especially since this agreement complemented the 1928 legislation and was just as crucial as the Right of Association and Negotiation Act of 1936. One of the decisive aspects of the Swedish model can be found in the mix between laws and agreements.

The focus on masculinity opens up new perspectives. During the prosperous years at the end of World War I a specific syndicalist identity was visible, one built on virility and physical as well as moral strength. Syndicalist miners were young, willing to conquer the world for the proletariat. They took what they wanted and did not stand on any ceremony.

This was an aggressive masculinity, and Blomberg suggests that this attitude was commonest among syndicalists, though it was also shared by miners in the reformist organization. More importantly, she claims that syndicalists built trade union politics

as a continuous initiation ritual in a world where women were excluded. There was hardly room for any “rebel girls”. Women were a threat to male identity, and unionism established as a disguised, distinct separatist male affair. But a gradual transformation can be identified, since this identity was composed of different layers: that of the man, the trade unionist and the member of the local community.

This perspective is integrated into an interpretation of how Swedish syndicalism survived in mining. Blomberg’s conclusion is that it was marginalized as a trade union; it had a constant presence in the industry and occasionally formed a majority at some smaller mines. At the same time, syndicalists were integrated into the local community, where they had a more significant influence on the local political culture. The movement survived where local industrial relations were accepted by the minority.

Using a longer time span, Blomberg could have considered this experience in the light of the pronounced parliamentary project initiated after World War II, when the party formed by some syndicalists in the local elections of 1950 – as part of a process of ideological reorientation – ran for seats only in forest communities. Areas dominated by mining seemed to be more indifferent, if not hostile, to this kind of political project. Syndicalism among forest workers was marginalized much later, gradually and slowly, until it was wiped out during the 1980s.

A dynamic social-history approach seems necessary, since with few exceptions the SAC failed to attract intellectuals. On the contrary, Swedish syndicalism has had an accentuated proletarian character, lacking grand theorists. At the same time, Swedish syndicalists have introduced new strategic and tactical elements virtually foreign to purer anarcho-syndicalist organizations. The *Register*, administered locally and coordinated at the industrial level, was an interesting expression of how different experiences combined and formed a viable alternative to reformist collective bargaining. There is no doubt that syndicalists failed to establish this instrument for pricing and agreements in mining, but it formed the basis for their prominent presence in forestry from the 1930s to the 1950s.

There is still much that remains to be researched. Apart from offering a good narrative and convincing arguments, Blomberg’s book provides us with an agenda and interesting suggestions for further research.

*Kristian Falk*

BRODERSEN, MOMME. *Walter Benjamin. A Biography*. Transl. by Malcolm R. Green and Ingrida Ligers. Ed. by Martina Derviş. Verso, London [etc.] 1996. xvi, 334 pp. Ill. £25.00.

*Walter Benjamin. A Biography* originally appeared in German as *Spinne im eigenen Netz* in 1990, published by Elster in Bühl-Moos. This English translation has been updated and also includes information on Dani Karavan’s monument to Benjamin in Portbou.

The German title refers to an irony impressed on his pupils by Gustav Wyneken, whom Benjamin virtually idolized in his youth. Wyneken was the flag bearer of the *Jugendbewegung* of the time. It tried in so many ways to break down the fossilized hierarchical relations between the generations, campaigning not only for changes in relations within the family and changes in sexual relations but also concentrating its efforts on fostering emancipation in schools and universities and on culture in general.

Walter Benjamin regarded his encounter with Wyneken as the decisive intellectual event of his youth; but he felt obliged to break with his mentor over Wyneken's support for the First World War. Many of those familiar with the esoteric work of Benjamin will recognize an element of truth in Wyneken's irony. Figuratively, the German *Spinnen* means something like "being touchingly naïve".

What Wyneken perhaps could not or did not want to accept was that the naïveness, or to put it more directly, the esoteric, was not incidental to Benjamin's work, let alone alien to it. Benjamin believed that only by distancing oneself as far as possible from the perverted social and political relationships could one properly understand them. "Always radical, never consistent" was the motto Benjamin later adopted. "Being consistent" would mean acquiescing in the principles of the system and then help in remedying its defects through reform. Later, when it came to the question of his joining the Communist Party, that was not Benjamin's option. But his earlier position was characterized by a remarkable vacillation between self-will and a sense of reality. Obdurately, he continued to use "Mark-Thalle" rather than "Markthalle", and "Blume-zof" rather than "Blumeshof", where his grandmother lived. The reality for Benjamin was not only the terrifying voice of his father on the telephone, but the increasingly unbearable authority of his father and of others. The vacillating alternatives of flight from reality and the impulse radically to transform that reality have been carefully researched and convincingly documented by Momme Brodersen in his beautifully illustrated book.

There are two other biographies of Benjamin available: Bernd Witte's brief *Bildmonographie, Walter Benjamin: In Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (published in 1985 by Rowohlt; an English translation appeared in 1991 published by Wayne State University Press: *Walter Benjamin: An Intellectual Biography*) and the earlier study by Werner Fuld *Walter Benjamin. Zwischen den Stühlen* (which appeared in 1979, published by Hanser). Fuld's biography is extremely creditable, if only because it was the first reliable biography of Benjamin. It sketches a convincing picture of the *Umfeld* of Benjamin's life, but in terms of content it is somewhat superficial. In this respect Witte's book is quite the reverse. With great assuredness Witte sketches the systematic problems that interested Benjamin and how he approached them. In more than one respect Brodersen's biography is *der Dritte im Bunde*.

Almost half of Brodersen's masterfully and elegantly written book is devoted to the period up to 1919, when Benjamin received his doctorate. This is not only because Brodersen is principally concerned with Benjamin's activities during his youth and years as a student, but also because he provides an extremely detailed examination of the political, social and cultural conditions of the time. It is no minor achievement that Brodersen's extensive research enables him to document in detail the interaction between social constellations and Benjamin's intellectual development. It is precisely in the conflicts Brodersen so meticulously documents that he reveals how much Benjamin was caught in his own web. Paradoxically, this was perhaps also how Benjamin managed to endure the disastrous conditions in which he lived for so long. He was long capable of creating his own reality, without having any illusions about the durability and strength of national socialism. On the occasion of their marriage, his wife, Dora, confided to friends that Benjamin had only married her because he needed someone to prevent him from committing suicide. In 1931 Benjamin wrote that suicide "was not worth the trouble", but it was a temptation to which he became increasingly susceptible.

The great intensity with which Brodersen describes the early years of Benjamin's



life and work is less in evidence in his chapters on the period 1920 to 1940, when Benjamin, fearing capture by the Gestapo, committed suicide. It was during those two decades that Benjamin wrote *Ursprung des Deutschen Trauerspiels* [The Origin of German Tragic Drama] and his essay on Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* [Elective Affinities], which demonstrated not only a high degree of self-will of literary interpretation but also many original approaches to methodological problems. One cannot demand too much from a biography in this respect, but from an author whose other publications attest to his brilliant mastery of the material the reader may reasonably expect more. An exception here is the brief but lucid treatment of the concepts of "porosity and interpretation". Unfortunate again though is the extremely abridged treatment of Baudelaire, and even more so that of Proust and Kafka, who were so important for Benjamin in the discovery and development of his own vision. Remarkable too is the virtual absence of any consideration of the significance of the *Passagen-Werk*. For this the reader will have to resort to Witte's monograph. Nevertheless, for the period after 1920 too Brodersen has assembled information that is either difficult or impossible to find elsewhere.

It is unfortunate that a number of mistakes in the German edition of Brodersen's study, such as the date on which Benjamin received his Ph.D., have been reproduced in the English edition. Benjamin received his Ph.D. not on 23 June 1919 as Brodersen states but somewhere between 19 and 24 July of that year. Brodersen confuses 23 June with the date the Faculty approved Benjamin's thesis; but that was 27 June 1919 not 23 June 1919. In at least one place Benjamin's *Analytische Beschreibung von Deutschlands Untergang* is mistranslated as "Thoughts about an Analysis of the Conditions in Central Europe" in the English edition. Furthermore, an irritation mentioned in a review of the German edition has escaped unscathed: the marginal texts accompanying the photographs are often confusing; it is not always clear whether the remarks quoted are by the people illustrated or about them.

It is not only the engaging balance between sympathy and distance that Brodersen observes in relation to Benjamin that prevents him from claiming Benjamin for one or the other virulently antagonistic dogmatic camps, but above all his intellectual integrity. Benjamin himself always shrank from partisan loyalty, even though the precarious circumstances in which he lived more than seldom forced him to formulate his comments diplomatically. Benjamin was not prepared to commit himself, either when it came to historical materialism (which his friend Brecht would have so warmly encouraged) or Jewish theology (which his lifelong friend Scholem would have applauded), let alone Zionism. His was a philosophy of extremes in which historical materialism and Messianism continually vacillated with one another.

Brodersen's study, so thoroughly documented, richly illustrated and easily accessible for the philosophical layman, will be of value to all those wanting to study more closely the work and life of Benjamin in the context of his time. It offers valuable information not published elsewhere, and for fellow historians it is quite simply a "must".

W.L. van Reijen

PAUL, GERHARD [und] KLAUS-MICHAEL MALLMANN. *Milieus und Widerstand. Eine Verhaltensgeschichte der Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus. [Widerstand und Verweigerung im Saarland 1935–1945.]* Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachfolger, Bonn 1995. 663 pp. DM 48.00; S.fr. 48.00; S 375.00.

With this weighty volume the authors have completed their trilogy on resistance and refusal in Saarland between 1935–1945. The previous volumes were *Das zersplitterte NEIN. Saarländer gegen Hitler* [The Fragmented NO. Saarlanders against Hitler], published in 1989, and *Herrschaft und Alltag. Ein Industrieviertel im Dritten Reich* [Power and Everyday Life. An Industrial Region during the Third Reich], published in 1991. In these two volumes the two authors are listed in reverse order.

The first two key words of the overall study – “resistance” and “refusal” – already point to the authors’ conceptual differentiation between two attitudes during the nazi dictatorship. At the opposite end of the spectrum they posit the gradation from silent majority to fellow travellers, accomplices and the leadership and command strata.

The authors claim, no more and no less, that they are providing a description and analysis free of prejudice, partiality, apology and sectional self-interest. That should be self-evident, but not without justification they seek to distance themselves from historiographical studies which are open to criticism on one or more of these incriminating grounds. It must be said, however, that the focus on Saarland and on the emigration from that region (which included a considerable number of opponents of and refugees from the nazi regime who had fled there in 1933/1934) is abandoned quite often; the part (i.e. Saarland) is then taken as representative of the whole (i.e. Germany or the political emigration from it). The intended comparative approach cannot avoid examining, successively and sometimes rather awkwardly, the catholic, social democratic and communist circles or “milieus”. On the basis of extensive and diverse source material, the authors intertwine individual and group portraits and in some cases trace them back to the Second Empire. It is not until pages 530–548 that the authors undertake, as a summary, a generalizing synthesis of the individual findings on the basis of the “milieu” theorem. It must be said that at the end this comes over as rather moralizing – albeit engagingly so – in the light of the political and social situation in the democratic Germany of today. The two conclusions to be drawn are that on the one hand the segmentation of the “milieus” and their inability to communicate with each other contributed to the victory of nazism, while on the other hand it was precisely these characteristics which formed or at least could form the substrate for independent “refusal” and “resistance” behaviour.

The authors’ writing style is vigorous. Many of the chapter headings and subheadings are graphic and suggestive. All the fashionable issues are questioned, including that of the modernity of this or that political blueprint. That does not bother me, however. Quite the opposite, since it makes the overall presentation rather refreshing. But what does bother me is that the language, style and arguments remain stuck at the “milieu” level. In the end one is often not sure what was milieu-specific in the sense of the total of “the” catholics, “the” communists, “the” social democrats, and what was only true for a special (quarter of a) town, a village, a community or a kinship.

What is more, I rather doubt whether it is possible to sustain the “milieu” approach in the study of the catholic, social democratic and communist *emigration*. The authors themselves abandon it, for instance when they quote and paraphrase extensively from political sources, as if “Saarlandic”, albeit ideologically specific, “milieus” existed inde-

pendently of time, place and situation. For instance, with regard to the outstanding Social Democrat Max Braun it should be noted that his socialization and politicization did not happen in Saarland; he only went there as a 25-year-old, to take over the vacant post of editor-in-chief of the *Volksstimme*. Before then he had been active (after military service until 1918) in his birthplace Neuss in the lower Rhineland as a journalist and local councillor, becoming the party leader in the city council in 1920. In my view adopted home is not the same as “milieu”. I would not want to deny that external influences affected Braun, especially since he was so committed; or that because of his social democratic commitment to Germany he also had a strong commitment to Saarland, a League of Nations mandate up to the re-unification with the Reich after the January 1935 plebiscite. It is certainly true that in his plans for the post-war period he paid special attention to Saarland becoming a bridge for the reconciliation between Germany and France.

The two authors and especially this book, which follows in the line of current research interests,<sup>1</sup> deserve to be read. With their wide-ranging and obviously well chosen source material they offer much to think about, test, debate, adopt – and oppose. That is and should be the general aim of historical research, regardless of the method tried out, which after all invariably depends on problem definition.

Ursula Langkau-Alex

A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran. Ed. by John Foran. [Social Movements, Protest, and Contention, 2.] UCL Press, London n.d. [1995]. xvii, 263 pp. £35.00.

This volume examines social movements during the “five major potentially revolutionary” periods in Iran (1905–1911, 1918–1921, 1945–1946, 1951–1953 and 1977–1979), and the “Tobacco Protest” of 1891, the *coup d'état* of 1921, which overthrew the Qajar dynasty, and the turmoil and religious uprising of 1960–1963 (p. xii). In its eight chapters and concluding essay, it seeks to provide an integrated and uniform picture of what is referred to as “social movements in Iran”.

In chapter 1 Mansoor Moaddel analyses Shi'i political discourse and reinterprets the role played by the Iranian clergy in the tobacco protest movement of 1890–1892. Following a concession under which the Qajar king granted a monopoly over the distribution and export of tobacco to a British company, a mass protest erupted throughout Iran which eventually forced the king to retreat and abandoned the whole project. According to Moaddel the “three dominant interpretations of the role of Shi'i Islam in the politics of nineteenth-century Iran” somehow fail to explain the political role of religion in Iran. These three interpretations are constructed respectively in terms of “the specificity of the political theory of early Shi'ism”, “the institutional autonomy of the Shi'i ulama within the context of the weakness of the Qajar state”, and finally “the de facto separation, yet mutual reinforcement of political and Shi'i hierocratic domination in the

1. The latest publication is the symposium collection by Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann, *Anpassung, Verweigerung, Widerstand, Soziale Milieus, Politische Kultur und der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland im regionalen Vergleich* (Schriften der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, Reihe A: Analysen und Darstellungen. Hrsg. von Peter Steinbach und Johannes Tuchel, Bd. 3. (Berlin: Edition Hentrich/BUGRIM, 1997).

Qajar polity” (p. 1). Instead, Moaddel attempts to offer an “alternative explanation, one that focuses on the role of social classes in the historical trajectory that culminated in the tobacco movement” (*ibid.*). Although Moaddel examines the capacity of merchants as a class more systematically than Faridun Adamiyat did, he nevertheless reaches the same conclusion put forward by Adamiyat fifteen years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Moaddel, too, correctly remarks that prior to the appearance of the clergy on the political scene it was the merchants who made the public conscious of the results of the concession and brought the crowds on to the street.

In “Social Democracy and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–11” Janet Afary examines the role of left-wing politics in the Iranian constitutional movements. By further analysing the ideological setting as well as the political behaviour of the three main tendencies in this spectrum (the Social Democrats, the *anjumans* (Society) of the Mujahidins, and the Democrat Party), she correctly concludes that it was indeed the division and mistrust between the main streams within the radical wing of the constitutional movement, as well as their relationships with the liberal groups, which not only acted as an impediment to grassroots democracy in the country but also encouraged foreign powers – namely Russia and Britain – to interfere freely in Iranian local politics following the Constitutional Revolution.

In his essay on “The rise of Riza Khan” Michael Zirinsky examines the parameters which paved the way for the rise of an authoritarian ruler whose reign corresponded with the formation of a modern nation-state in Iran. Although in examining and analysing the public desire for and the political expediency of having a potent ruler Zirinsky fails to add anything significant to our knowledge of the era, his extensive review of the British Foreign Office records on Iran sheds more light on the Foreign Office’s obscure policy towards Iran during the period prior to the rise of Riza Khan (later Riza Shah Pahlavi, the founder of Pahlavi dynasty). Zirinsky’s remarks on the role of Sir Percy Loraine in convincing the British government to adopt a more sympathetic approach towards Riza Khan may be the most interesting part of his essay. Zirinsky’s endeavours in offering a review of documents kept at the Public Record Office are remarkable and excellent.

For those who had assumed that the era of Stalinist historiography had come to an end, Amir Hassanpour’s essay is prime evidence of their error. In his biased approach, often based on incorrect factual accounts, Hassanpour endeavours to analyse the history of the “nationalist” movements of two Iranian ethnic groups, the Kurds and the Azerbaijanis, during 1945–1946. In doing so he is inspired by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, which assumes “all reactionaries are paper tigers” (p. 98). In an introduction to his study, Hassanpour extends the twentieth-century ideological discourses of philological and territorial nationalism which patterned the process of modern nation-state building in the Middle East to the entire pre-modern history of the region. He dates the emergence of “secular [. . .] nationalism” among Kurds and Azerbaijanis to the sixteenth century (p. 99), when, he claims, by denouncing the “Arab, Ottoman Turkish and Persian enslavement” and “chauvinism” the Kurds formed their “principalities”. Through the centuries, these principalities “put up strong resistance to the two expansionist empires” (Iran and the Ottoman empires) (p. 84). Furthermore, in order to present a colourful picture of the repressive policies adopted by the “imperialist

1. See F. Adamiyat, *Shurish bar Imtiyaznama-i Rizhi* [A Revolt against the Rizhi Concession] (Tehran, 1981).

nations”, he refers to “the unceasing wars [which] led to numerous massacres, destruction (of cities, villages, farms, irrigation systems), the imposition of a war economy on Kurdistan for three centuries” (p. 84). Hassanpour not only fails to provide any evidence of such historical occurrences, but he also, and more importantly, ignores the fact that during the period of his investigation there was generally no ethnic dimension to the political cruelty of Iran’s arbitrary rulers. For example, the victims of Aqa Muhammad Khan (1779–1797), the founder of the Azerbaijani Qajar dynasty, included not only Kirmani Persians (in Kirman he had the city’s entire male population blinded), but also his co-ethnic fellow Azerbaijanis. The characteristic of rulership in Iranian history has been the practice of arbitrary rule and this has been intolerant of any challenge, regardless of ethnic origin.

Following his overlong introduction, in which he examines the history of the short-lived period of autonomous government in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan in 1945–1946, Hassanpour unfortunately reverts to presenting his own fantasies rather than describing historical reality. It is true that many Iranians saw in the Anglo-Soviet invasion of their country in August 1941, which led to the abdication of Riza Shah, an opportunity to put an end to autocratic rule. And equally that, inspired by the Eurocentric idea of “one country, one nation”, the sixteen years of his reign saw the adoption of a policy of consistent intolerance towards diverse ethnic groups and an emphasis on the supremacy of the Persian-speaking part of the population. It is also true that while there was an earnest outcry among Iranians in support of change and reform, nobody in this period, even among the minorities’ elite, called for the disintegration of Iran and the establishment of a series of ethnic-based independent states. Even the autonomous government of Azerbaijan – which the essay incorrectly refers to as the Democratic Republic of Azarbaijan (p. 78) – “based [its] action on the Iranian Constitution” (*ibid.*). However, here too Hassanpour endeavours to present us with a utopian picture of the sincere desire of the Kurds and Azerbaijanis for independence. Furthermore, he accuses the “reformist and liberal” leadership of these two autonomous governments of betraying their people, who were “ready and willing to fight for the overthrow of the monarchy”, by accommodating defeatist policies of “seeking freedom and democracy within the framework of the despotic Pahlavi state” (p. 97). To sum up, Hassanpour’s chapter is a forthright example of the bitter reality that in a multi-ethnic society such as Iran the hatred experienced by a minority elite enjoys as much potential to distort historiography as the chauvinism adopted by some elite circles among the titular ethnic group.

In her essay on the oil nationalization movement of 1949–1953 Sussan Siavoshi attempts to “analyze the factors that brought about the brief victory of the nationalist struggle and then led to its ultimate defeat” (p. 106). In doing so, Siavoshi not only analyses the external factor but also – and in more detail – examines the internal elements which contributed to the success of the *coup d’état* of 1953. Such an analysis bestows great significance on her chapter since most research on the period concentrates on the role of foreign intervention, namely by the CIA or the intelligence services, and is inclined to present a critical account of the Mussadiq era.

In chapter 6 Misagh Parsa presents a comprehensive analysis of Iranian politics during the period 1960–1963, which eventually ended with the 1963 uprising. By examining four different approaches towards a social uprising, Parsa, while rejecting the three theoretical perspectives of the social breakdown model, Davies’s J-curve and the Marxian theory of revolution, concludes that the “resource mobilization model” (p. 136) can

best explain the rise and fall of this religious uprising. According to Parsa, the June 1963 movement was a result of the economic crisis evident throughout the country, “combined with a set of pre-existing conflicts unresolved by the 1953 coup d’état and attempts at political liberalization” (p. 135). However, from an early stage it was clear that the uprising was doomed to failure, since not only did the government continue to have the resources to suppress any possible opposition, in the final stages of the uprising the absence from the political scene of the peasantry, the working class, public-sector employees and the radical youth left radical religious circles with resources too limited to mobilize the opposition.

John Foran’s essay on the roots of the Islamic revolution of 1979 explores the causes that brought the crowds on to the streets of Iranian cities and helped bring to an end more than half a century of Pahlavi rule. In addition to considering parameters such as dependent development, state repression, world-systemic opening and economic downturn as the main causes paving the way for the revolution, he argues that one should also consider the political culture of the opposition and the multi-class coalition that contributed to the alacrity of political change in Iran during 1977–1979.

Val Moghadam’s paper promises to deal with the outcome of the Iranian revolution “in terms of its most salient features: the trajectory of the Islamic-populist state and ideology, class conflicts, and the regulation of gender” (p. 189). According to Moghadam, although in its early stages the Iranian revolution can be considered to have been a “populist revolution”, it became an “Islamic populist” revolution, especially in the immediate years after its victory. Furthermore, she refers to the post-revolutionary Iranian state as “Khumainist” and argues that it could be understood “as a transitional state arising from exceptional circumstances in which diverse interests contended and no one class held sway within the state apparatus or over the means of production” (p. 210). Moghadam ultimately views the Iranian revolution as a “variant of the classic bourgeois revolution” (p. 217) and adopts a neo-Marxist approach to its understanding. The author criticizes previous studies of the Iranian revolution for ignoring the “gender dynamic of the revolution and its aftermath” (p. 192), and the title of her chapter suggests she intended to address this issue. Yet, apart from some brief references, she fails to do so.

John Foran’s concluding essay provides a useful summary of the contributions to this volume. However, in his endeavours to summarize “a century of revolution in Iran” he falls prey to some hollow generalizations which could be misleading. For example, he argues that “historically in Iran [. . .] women have marched literally in the forefront of the crowds that confronted the state in demonstration after demonstration” (p. 230). While the presence of Iranian women during some political episodes following the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911 or during the Islamic revolution of 1979 and after is irrefutable, to extend such a presence to the entire twentieth-century history of Iran seems to owe more to fantasy than reality. Likewise, in another concluding remark, when Foran refers to ethnicity as “a factor of division in the Iranian social structure along both tribal and confessional lines” (*ibid.*), one wonders if he is not unwisely applying Eurocentric ethno-linguistic discourse (in which ethnicity and language are treated as the central and increasingly the decisive or even the only criterion of potential ethnic and regional movements) to the entire twentieth-century history of Iran.

Notwithstanding these rather generalizing approximations and the absence of independent studies of other important social movements in this book – such as the post-First World War Kheyabani or Jangalis movements, or even the campaign launched by

the Democrats in seeking a new territorial identity for the Iranians – Foran’s volume contains many interesting and critical points. The harmony between the theoretical approaches adopted by most of the contributors gives this work a cohesion usually lacking in such publications. Furthermore, more than half of the essays have a well-presented theoretical framework. One is left with the comforting impression that one is reading a work of some scholarship.

*Turaj Atabaki*

YEH, WEN-HSIN. *Provincial Passages. Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism.* University of California Press, Berkeley [etc.] 1996. xxiii, 403 pp. Maps. \$50.00; £40.00.

*Provincial Passages* is a welcome addition to the revisionist historiography of the last decade on early Chinese Communism. The book provides detailed information on Zhejiang radicalism, which would subsequently feed into the establishment of the Communist Party in Shanghai. The research is interesting, and presented in a readable style. The analysis, however, suffers from a superficial integration of its conceptual premises into the historical narrative, which may account for some of its inconsistencies.

Yeh makes revisionist claims for her study which, “unlike many others, does not place emphasis on temporal issues of continuity and rupture. It seeks, instead, to examine the spatial dimensions of center versus periphery in the construction of the May Fourth Movement as a national phenomenon, and it does so by recognizing, first of all, the many threads of activism that went into the making of the moment” (pp. 2–3). The spatial dimension is important because different spaces also served as locations for different cultures. Yeh stresses “neo-Confucianism” (or, simply, “Confucianism”) as the cultural attribute of the Zhejiang locations from which many of the May Fourth radicals hailed. Thus a second “revisionist” feature of the study, that “draws our attention to the paradoxical relationship between a strong commitment to Confucian values on the one hand and an ardent espousal of progressive politics on the other” (pp. 3–4). As radicals moved from their places of origin in “the agrarian backwaters” of Zhejiang through Hangzhou to Shanghai, they traversed not just topographical spaces but cultural ones as well; hence “provincial passages”.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one deals with the physical and cultural topography of Zhejiang, supplemented marginally by discussions of the economic and social characteristics of the three main regions into which Yeh divides the province. Important here is the way in which the Zhexi region (with Hangzhou at the center) was oriented from the mid-nineteenth century toward Shanghai, distancing it from the central “provincial backwaters”, which suffered a decline in the modern period.

The second part is centered on Hangzhou, with emphasis on Zhejiang First Normal School and the Zhejiang Provincial Educational Association as the institutions which provided the context for the reception and unfolding of the May Fourth Movement. Linking the two institutions was Jing Ziyuan, the principal of one and the president of the other, whose career and struggles for a new educational system receive considerable attention. Yeh turns in this part to the growth of student radicalism in Zhejiang, through the early experiences of Shi Cuntong, whose passage from the provincial backwaters through Hangzhou student activism ultimately to Communism in Shanghai in

the early 1920s provides the thread that ties together the second and third parts of the book. This part concludes with the suppression of May Fourth activism in Hangzhou, and the departure of activists to other locations; in the case of Shi to Beijing to participate there in radical communal activities.

The third part follows Shi back to Shanghai, where he was to play an important part in early Communist activities. This passage also signalled a conversion from the anarchism of May Fourth days to a Communist ideologue. The author concludes with a brief account of Shi's post-Communist (after 1927) career as a member of the democratic center. Shi, who died in 1970, was rescued from obscurity in the 1990s, when his remains were returned to his home-place in Yecun near Jinhua, still "very much a middle county backwater" (p. 260).

When it was founded in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party was formed out of a merger of a number of radical groups around the country. The organizational and ideological orientations of these groups are important to grasping the dynamics of the Party and its politics in the 1920s. Future scholarship hopefully will provide detailed accounts of other locations as Yeh does here for Zhejiang.

It is disappointing that the study does not impart a clear idea of what in particular Zhejiang radicals brought into early Chinese Communism. Yeh provides valuable new details, but where the larger picture is concerned, the study largely confirms what we know already: rebellion against the particularistic ties, in particular familial ones, that seemed to be responsible for the corruption of Chinese society and politics; the appeals of anarchism to a generation of youth in search of alternative ways of living; and the turn to Communism in response to the failures (and suppression) of May Fourth radicalism.

A measure of conceptual crudeness in the end undermines Yeh's goal of demonstrating the particularities of Zhejiang radicalism. There is a gesture toward contemporary cultural analysis in her choice of the language of "space", but space here appears merely as a fashionable substitute for the "regions" of earlier analyses. The author unwisely sets space against temporality, which obviates the need to confront the question of "provincial passages" also as passages in time; which leaves the reader wondering about the meaning of her observation that the "disjointed quality of Shi Cuntong's life complements the fragmented landscape across which he moved" (p. 7). Spaces are not merely given, but constructed; it might have been worth raising the question of whether the "middle county backwaters" of Shi's origin were construed as such as he moved across different spaces. The author offers evidence of the entanglement of different spaces through organizational activities (such as those of the Provincial Educational Association), but this does not enter the analysis as she traces Shi Cuntong from the backwaters to the centers of modernity. What may be most puzzling is that while Yeh privileges "space" by locating it at the beginning of the narrative, yielding the impression almost of topographical determinism, by the time the reader reaches the founding of the Communist Party, it is hard to remember why space was relevant in the first place – which gives the narrative itself a "disjointed quality".

Yeh's use of "Neo-Confucianism" to describe the local culture of the middle counties rules out the possibility of serious inquiry into what might have been the cultural particularities that distinguished them from other locations, especially with "Neo-Confucianism" understood in the most general terms, such as ethical orientation or "cosmic optimism". While it refers to "imbeddedness" in local culture, the study makes no effort to embed "Neo-Confucianism" in the everyday concreteness of these locations.



The interesting if brief description of an architectural landscape dotted with gentry homes of an earlier day ignores that such a landscape might have appeared to at least some of its inhabitants as a landscape not of “Neo-Confucianism” but of an inherited configuration of social and political power. Similarly, Yeh notes the challenge of a new nationalist ethos to the particularistic values of Confucianism, but rather than pursue the implications of the contradiction, is anxious to reaffirm the lasting hold of Confucian ethics on the new national subjects (pp. 83–87). In the case of Shi Cuntong, with his “disjointed” life, it is not clear that his Communism had anything to do with his origins in “Confucian” spaces. Indeed, the account is quite unclear on the question of the fate of Confucianism in these “provincial passages”; whether it was something to be left behind, or left an indelible imprint as a formative constituent of radicals’ lives. It is also noteworthy that the study has a quite narrow evidential base when it comes to such questions, as generalizations about questions of culture are based on the life trajectory of a single individual, Shi Cuntong.

In an interesting misreading of this reviewer’s work on early Chinese Communism, Yeh states that Dirlik’s argument is “framed around the question of whether Chinese Marxism was more ‘Chinese’ or ‘Marxian’” (p. 263). That work was intended to overcome just that question, which I have taken all along to be an obstacle to serious historical work on twentieth-century China. The statement is especially ironic in the context of a work which seeks yet again to recapture the history of Chinese Communism in some vaguely conceived Confucian space.

*Arif Dirlik*

THOMAS, J.E. *Modern Japan. A Social History since 1868*. Longman, London [etc.] 1996. xii, 340 pp. Ill. £42.00.

English-language scholarship on modern Japan has long stood out for its lack of attention to social history. Eager to showcase Japan as a successful case of “modernization”, specialists writing in the 1960s and early 1970s emphasized institutional change, nation-building, and the thought and behavior of political and economic elites. Aside from their appearances in a few studies of agrarian life and labor movements, ordinary Japanese seemingly seldom acted and rarely spoke.

The past fifteen years, however, have seen a steady stream of books and essays that illuminate various aspects of Japan’s social history. Some profile women, colonial peoples in the pre-1945 Japanese empire, and the many groups marginalized by mainstream society. Others examine everyday life, and a growing number analyze the inter-relationships between the state and elements within society.

This would be an excellent time for someone to write an accessible introduction to Japanese social history. In his interpretative overview of modern Japanese history, J.E. Thomas promises to do just that – to focus “on the people themselves”, in addition to political and military history. And in some respects, he succeeds. The writing is lively and, at times, impassioned. His chapter on World War II (or the “Pacific War”) ably places Japanese atrocities in historical context. It is also refreshing to read a book that takes seriously the widespread appeal of Japan’s pan-Asianist propaganda to nationalists in the occupied lands of south-east Asia. The author’s discussion of education in relation to the state is quite original. As demonstrated by Thomas, a professor of adult education

in Britain, despite some movement toward independent inquiry in higher education before World War II, the prewar regime successfully molded an educational structure that served official interests. Prominent in this project were seldom-studied programs of “social education”, in which post-enrollment adolescents and adults were instructed and exhorted to be good subjects.

Nevertheless, those seeking an up-to-date synthesis of Japanese social history will be disappointed by Thomas’s account. He seems singularly unaware of the seminal works in English, not to mention the literature in Japanese.<sup>1</sup> Instead he relies extensively on short entries from a certain encyclopedia of Japan that were written in the 1970s, prior to the recent wave of social history.

These omissions are not trivial. Thomas draws heavily from the first generation of social history that emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s. This literature generally portrayed weaker members of Japanese society as passive victims or occasionally as rebels, and it sought to correct the modernization school’s narrative of progress. Particularly influential was Mikiso Hane’s *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan* (New York, 1982). For the newer work, on the other hand, the mission is no longer simply to reveal the “underside of modern Japan”, but to capture the many voices of the people themselves and to analyze diversity within “the masses”. While sensitive to the obvious power imbalances between elites and the masses, recent scholarship examines the choices made by ordinary Japanese and the active roles they often played.

Thomas’s lack of attention to the complexity of the human condition pervades nearly every area of inquiry. His chapters on minorities and non-Japanese peoples are cases in point. He is content to describe the relationship between Japanese and the colonized Koreans as one of “seemingly implacable enmity” (p. 127). Similarly he dismisses Japan’s reforms of colonial policy during the 1920s as inconsequential and nothing more than “duplicity” (p. 138). Neither of these statements explain why large numbers of Koreans chose to work or study in interwar Japan (before the conscription of Korean labor in World War II). Nor do they account for the Koreans who increasingly exercised power over other Koreans in their capacities as teachers, policemen and businessmen within the colonial apparatus. As for Japan’s adoption of “cultural rule” in the interwar years, recent work spotlights the growing latitude granted to moderate Korean opinion leaders and the ongoing negotiations between these “cultural nationalists” and Japanese administrators over how much to expand Korean-language media. None of these studies deny

1. Among the newer studies in Japanese social and socio-political history that readers may consult are Gail Lee Bernstein (ed.), *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945* (Berkeley, 1991); Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York, 1992); Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* (Princeton, 1997) and *The State and Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, 1997); Andrew Gordon, *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan: Heavy Industry, 1853–1955* (Cambridge, MA, 1985) and *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley, 1991); Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, 1985); David L. Howell, *Capitalism From Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery* (Berkeley, 1995); Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton, 1984); Ian Neary, *Political Protest and Social Control in Pre-War Japan: The Origins of Buraku Liberation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1989); Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925* (Seattle, 1988); Thomas C. Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750–1920* (Berkeley, 1988); E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan* (Princeton, 1990).

the tragedy of Japanese rule, but they do present the Koreans, as well as the Japanese, in more human terms. Likewise, Thomas describes resistance by Japan's outcasts (Burakumin) and their Levelers Society during the 1920s, while overlooking the profound divisions within the Burakumin community and its growing cooperation with the regime in the late 1930s.

The chapter on women rehearses earlier narratives of Japanese women's history. Repeated are accounts of the harsh conditions among female textile workers, the pervasive system of licensed prostitution, the fight for suffrage and other political rights by well-known women, and the wartime suppression of the "women's liberation" movement. Although none of these stories is false, they do not begin to describe the varied ways in which Japanese women acted in public and political life. As the field moves from "women's history" to "gender history", fewer scholars will accept Thomas's premise that relations between Japanese husbands and wives constitute a "seemingly unchangeable pattern" (p. 107).

Indeed, recent books and articles argue that women's roles within Japanese families and society have undergone striking changes in the course of the twentieth century. One hundred years ago, most married women engaged in arduous productive labor, occupying lowly positions within three-generation households. Only gradually, against the backdrop of urbanization, Western influences and wartime mobilization, did they assume the better-known roles as household managers, mothers and volunteers in civic life. Although some feminists suffered persecution during World War II, a great many prominent and ordinary women enthusiastically collaborated with the regime – parlaying their new image as guardians of the home into official positions within the mobilization apparatus. In the postwar era, too, millions of women belong to local and national organizations that ultimately assist the state in governing everyday life, in such areas as promoting household saving.

For a "social history", the discussion of labor is surprisingly brief and uninformed. In the space of two paragraphs, we learn that a labor union movement arose after World War I, only to be crushed in the authoritarian 1930s and war years; it revived in 1945, declined when the US-led Occupation "reversed course" and favored conservatives over the Left; and finally "settled into a collusive relationship with conservative politics" (p. 308). Missing is any reference to newer analyses of the origins of the famed "Japanese employment system". The distinctive mix of job security, seniority pay and enterprise unionism found in many Japanese companies has now been shown to have emerged not simply from employers' "paternalism", but from decades-long struggles among workers, employers and the state.

Although the author pledges to present political history in a less traditional manner, macropolitical developments and social change are not effectively interwoven. The opening chapter on the early modern or Tokugawa era (1600–1868) highlights the roles of officials and thinkers, while scarcely mentioning agrarian transformation, rapid urbanization, cultural flowering and widespread protoindustrialization. The discussion of the prewar role of the emperor is rudimentary. Thomas merely asks if the emperors as individuals ruled autocratically, concluding that they did not. He does not consider what Japanese scholars term the "emperor system", under which the prewar military and civilian bureaucracy ruled in the name of a sacrosanct emperor and disseminated "emperor system ideology" to the masses. Neither does he address new work that demonstrates how relatively progressive Japanese played important parts in forging this ideology.

Thomas's discussion of democracy in Japan is similarly disappointing. He sees no meaningful differences between the two major political parties during the 1920s, oblivious to the fact that one of the parties responded to the new era of universal manhood suffrage by offering an impressive reformist package of labor and farm-tenancy legislation. With respect to postwar politics, he is troubled by the nearly continuous rule of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party since 1955. Nevertheless, he sloughs off the serious question of whether Japan is a functioning democracy as the work of American "Japan bashing". It would have been more fruitful to explicate Japan's more "social" (as contrasted with liberal) understanding of democracy, in which the polity expects the accommodation and balancing of demands made by many key groups – not only big business, but also labor unions, small-business organizations, Burakumin, and others.

In 1945 or 1970, this book would have been a credible account, filled with stories of how a despotic Japanese state controlled society from above and how mainstream society subordinated minorities and foreigners. However, as the many new social histories of Japan and elsewhere reveal, life is a lot more complicated than that.

*Sheldon Garon*