

tensions of the Cold War. Nevertheless, it should be noted that some nationalists who opposed the shah's increasing power still hoped for American support in the early 1960s and even on the eve of the revolution.

Another view from inside Iran comes from Abbas Amanat's excellent contribution, "Khomeini's Great Satan: Demonizing the American Other in Iran's Islamic Revolution." The author sets out the surprising pedigree of the term "Great Satan," which has come so effectively to encapsulate views of the United States in revolutionary circles. Amanat argues that Ayatollah Khomeini adopted and developed this term early in the revolution as a way to make the religious establishment socially relevant. This was especially attractive because the religious establishment had continued to eschew intellectual modernity, openness, and legal reforms. His argument is convincing, for Khomeini's views did come to eventually dominate. One might also recall the minority views of leading 'ulama' such as ayatollahs Montazeri, Shariatmadari, and Taleqani, who embraced a more modernist perspective.

Michelle Hartman's "'Besotted with the Bright Lights of Imperialism?': Arab Subjectivity Constructed against New York's Many Faces" analyzes three contemporary works of Arabic literature, each focusing on a character's experiences in the iconic American city. Hartman discovers an "orientalism in reverse" (p. 169), a civilized East opposed to a barbaric West. These Arab writers, however, often reveal a narrow, simplistic understanding of American society, one that does not always represent accurately the complexities of the United States.

Lawrence Davidson's essay, "Christian Zionism and its Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy," is a continuation of themes raised earlier by Obenzinger and especially Marr concerning the role of evangelical Christians in the redemption of Palestine. He carries the story to the present, detailing the symbolic relationship between Christian Zionists and other Zionists. This powerful alliance, he argues, has come to dominate U.S. foreign policy toward Israel-Palestine. Davidson concludes that former president George W. Bush's fundamentalist beliefs prevented him from ever validating Palestinian complaints.

In her essay, "A Cultural History of the War without End," Melani McAlister discusses the consistent condemnation of Islam based on biblical references and a bipolar view of the world, which, I think she would agree, too often determine American perspectives to this day. McAlister traces cultural influences in the shaping of U.S. foreign policy, detailing the evolution of the term "terrorism" in films, novels, and "expert" testimony. She observes that Islam has become identified "as the dominant producer of terrorism" (p. 215), thus exposing, according to its critics, a serious flaw in the very "nature of Islam" (p. 215).

The editors have selected wisely. The essays in this collection are well crafted and complement one another. Taken together they reveal a sobering tale of American insensitivity in its relations with the Middle East since the early 19th century.

FLAGG MILLER, *The Moral Resonance of Arab Media: Audiocassette Poetry and Culture in Yemen*, Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007). Pp. 525. \$29.95 paper.

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All scholarly books perform different kinds of competences, whether literary mastery, academic erudition, historical research, or ethnographic "being there." Flagg Miller's book on the mediation of poetic texts in Yemen is a performance of several kinds of expertise, although erudition is perhaps the most prominent among them. As a scholar trained in a

linguistic-anthropology approach to cultural analysis, Miller employs the vocabulary of that discipline. What this performs first and foremost is his place in a particular discursive world (to invoke Foucault, as he does), a place that is undeniably substantial and authoritative. There is much to distill from Miller's lengthy work, but it primarily teaches us how contemporary Yemeni poets craft moral authority and employ knowledge of the media to put power back into the hands (and mouths) of persons. He analyzes "cassette poetry as an especially contested public space" wherein "not only the aural but also the visual and the inscriptive play important roles" (p. 32). Building on the important work of Steve Caton, Miller delineates the rich transformation of this poetic tradition as it circulates in print, graphic images, and cassettes, and on television.

Miller's primary focus is on how new media shape sensorium and sensibilities such that new forms of moral action are created from older texts and genres. To this end, Miller delineates two kinds of aesthetics: circulation and resonance. The former "enables reflections on abstract concepts" employing representations and symbols that can be easily circulated and repeated. The latter "enables reflections on the emergence of such objects from the sensate, dynamic and . . . partly metaphysical qualities of the media" (p. 24). Discussing how the poet Muhammad Murshid Najī fosters Arabic linguistic unity among speakers of Yemeni dialects through his songs (thereby creating sentiments of nationalism), for example, Miller notes that the "sensory experience of song . . . creates language that can circulate in the world as a set of iterable 'dictionary' units. Through the subtle cases of sonorous emotion, linguistic units become standards for a new social populace" (p. 27). Because cassettes are cheap and easily reproduced, they circulate widely and form alternate channels for public-opinion formations outside the purview and control of the state. Through cassettes and other more sophisticated media, Yemeni poets construct "audiences as 'addressees'" and self-consciously shape "ideas about social collectivity" (p. 30).

Miller enacts what he calls a "phenomenology of media," though his focus is on the audio-cassettes that, he says, situate "the human subject at the convergences of local sonic culture and translocal sound industries that are associated with mass production and commercial profit" (p. 35). His fieldwork takes place in the province of Yafī<sup>ṣ</sup>, where there has long been a community of literate nobles who "corresponded with one another through poetry" (p. 41). In Chapter 1, Miller introduces the reader to Yafī<sup>ṣ</sup>. We learn that the oral poets of renown are highly literate and that many read from texts as they perform. We also learn about the cassette market—what is available (popular songs, Islamic cassettes, and folk poetry) and how they are made and marketed. The cassette shops are local gathering places for poets, singers, and their audiences and promoters, where discussion about new work and critiques of older works and genres take place and where appreciation and taste are defined. These shops sell cassettes of "live" performances (often recorded at weddings and other occasions and bought by the attendees), performances of read poetry without musical accompaniment, and oral narratives labeled "speeches."

The genre of poetry employed is also recognized as an important arbiter of social relations among Yemenis. In a 1994 conflict between government forces and a separatist army, the genre of *zāmil* was chosen as the performance genre to mediate the tensions. This genre of hortatory poetry involves short, concise verses with a dance called the *bar<sup>ṣ</sup>a*, associated with tribal honor and politics. Recording this genre on cassette, its local resonances attained national currency.

Because the *qaṣīda* has become what Miller calls "the ambassador" of genres in the Arab world, and because it is both oral and written, Miller turns his attention in Chapter 2 to how "orality and literacy have been approached as specific styles of apperception and knowledge" (p. 135). What follows is a thorough discussion of this literature, beginning with the early work of Boas to later work on repetition, parallelism, and oral formulae by various contemporary

theorists. Agreeing with Ruth Finnegan, Miller acknowledges that orality and literacy do not index two different worldviews but rather represent two different choices, two forms of apperception. He defines style as “a convention of verbal practice whose differences from normative patterns of verbal expression is recognized by users as socially significant” (p. 137) and delineates how poets who employ the call and response form (*bid' wa-jiwāb*) index oral traditions while establishing stylistic association with metropolitan, literate culture. Literacy and “metropolitan style” are indexed through a scarcity of verbal formulas as well as variations in length, intertextual references, and other factors.

If literacy and the degree of literate-style use in Yemeni poetry signify a changing relationship to the highlands and to knowledge in general, then Miller also asks what attitudes Yemeni poets and connoisseurs hold vis-à-vis the mediation of the cassette. In Chapter 4, he introduces the reader to the history of the cassette industry and its local markets in the city of Aden. He also brings attention to the role of the radio in disseminating nationalist songs and poetry before the introduction of cassettes. Indeed, radio broadcasting prepared the ground for the listening practices to come. However, it was the relatively inexpensive technology of the cassette that was instrumental in “linking narratives of tribal history and regional identity to public discourse” (p. 245). This was particularly powerful in the postindependence years (after 1967), when “references to tribalism and regionalism were officially banned” (p. 245).

Miller explores the effects of the sociopolitical history of Yemen on the poets and particularly on their notions of authorship. He does this by reading the life story of one influential poet—Shayef al-Khaledi—whose talent emerged early in life, when as a child growing up in a village he composed poetry in traditional oral genres. Al-Khaledi made his living as a herdsman, composing verses all the while, but when a feud broke out in the tribe his skills were called upon in a more active way, and his renown as a “poet of response” became recognized. At this time Khaledi began exchanging poems with poets in the north, recorded on cassettes. The cassettes became a medium of dialogue on issues of politics, economics, and nationalism between groups of poet intellectuals. We also learn about more general metaphors of the creative process in Yemen, where poets are thought to have special access to muses, to “hear” whisplings they are then able to translate into verse.

If hearing and oral performance are primary modalities of Yemeni poetry, the poets nonetheless put great value in the written as well, and handwritten poetic texts with authentic and unique signatures are valued. Indeed, the written is reified for cassette poets who, unlike their predecessors, “read aloud from their own notebooks of handwritten originals rather than recite their verse from memory” (p. 328). As cassette reach is often indiscriminate in terms of audience and discourse community, the poets feel pressure to establish their authority and moral and poetic integrity by writing their poems down and being original.

Miller also mentions the hardships faced by women poets, who appear only as ciphers in this text. In the 1970s women poets sung in live concerts and were recorded on cassettes, but they sang mostly men’s poetry or traditional song. In the 1980s, the steady hegemony of conservative Islam, influenced by ties to Saudi Arabia, contributed to the disappearance of women from the public eye.

The theme of originality is expanded upon in Chapter 5, where Miller analyzes the ways poets establish their moral authority and “character.” Cassette poets face a paradox: their popularity depends on circulation, but that very dissemination undermines the posited originality of the work, because originality implies something that is close at hand and does not circulate. One must have “circulatory efficiency” yet maintain one’s “originality.” This, says Miller, involves the necessity for duplicity amidst morality. How do poets deal with this contradiction? The answer is in explicit content. Poets are “creating new vocabularies of

virtuous character” (p. 367), all the while explicitly acknowledging the compromises that the medium of the cassette necessitates. Metacommentaries on the paradoxes of mediation and the creation of authorial character are now embedded in the poems themselves, documenting what Miller calls the “scriptophonic”—“the vocal extensions of true script” (p. 370). This is important, because moral authority still resides in what is “written” in this tradition.

In Chapter 6 Miller expands on these issues by examining the life and death of one poet of national and international renown, Shayef al-Khaledi, discussing how “the function of a mass-mediated ‘personality’ [helps] Yemenis to consider their own moral relations to the collective nationalist demands” (p. 429). This occurs in part through the “secrets” of orality—that is, the polysemy and duplicity of the poetic form and its resistance to the evidence of the pictorial (as in television, for example). Public figures mediate history in a way that is different from script, allowing discourses about public morality to proliferate.

Finally, Miller concludes by reminding the reader of the social work of poetry and the poetic. Drawing on the legacy of Roman Jakobson, he notes the musicality of poetry as well as its inherent ambiguity in order to stress its self-reflexive role in human communication. Miller’s contribution, however, is not just to analyze Yemeni poetics or the social import of Yemeni poetry but also to bring attention to what happens when these forms—so essential to identity formation—are mediated.

Flagg Miller ultimately asks the reader not to be persuaded by arguments that implicitly associate orality with stages in a progression of modernity; rather he reminds us that the power of the media is determined by the use people make of it. He historicizes moral authority by looking at how authoritative texts come to be “differently mediated over time” (p. 10). Despite Miller’s inquiry into mediated forms of poetry, he stresses the importance and necessity of ethnographic inquiry into forms of expressive culture. Although other scholars might be content to watch videos and listen to cassettes only, Miller embeds these media in their cultural contexts of use and interpretation. He returns to the power and endurance of ethnography as a mode of knowing, asserting that “culture lies in transmitted ways of knowing how to clothe society’s needs in imaginative form” (p. 5). As a study of the social life of Yemeni poetry, this book builds on the groundbreaking work of Steve Caton to break further ground. It will be of interest to scholars of Arabic poetics and media, culture, and communication, as well as anthropologists of the Middle East.

CHRISTOPH SCHUMANN, ED., *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century Until the 1960s*, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008). Pp. 338. \$162.00 cloth.

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In the preface to the 1983 edition of his seminal work, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Albert Hourani observes that some intellectuals in the Arab world, when faced with the growth of European power and the seemingly unstoppable spread of European ideas, responded by “changing their own societies and the systems of beliefs and values which gave them legitimacy in a certain direction, through acceptance of some of the ideas and institutions of modern Europe.” *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean*, a collection of essays, extends and complicates this premise in order to challenge several common misconceptions about the Middle East that seem to persist in the public eye: the equation of economic