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stymied by a tendency to restrict the definition of the social. Schiffer's exclusions were listed at the start of this review, and the objectivism and evolutionism of structural-Marxism as it has been used in archaeology provide their own blinkers. But we see, toward the end of the Kristiansen and Rowlands book and in some of the chapters in the Schiffer volume, a fuller account of the social that enters into contemporary debates. We see how debate in archaeology has moved on to a consideration of the ways in which embedded and embodied material practices constituted and transformed the social.

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Modern Reflex

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Facing Modernity: Ambivalence, Reflexivity and Morality. Barry Smart. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999. 206 pp.

Questions of Modernity. Timothy Mitchell, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. 229 pp.

If, for 19th- and early-20th-century European intellectuals, modernity was experienced as a disruption of the moral and epistemological bases of social and political life, for contemporary knowledge it is the sedimented but unstable ground of social scientific practice. Europeans characterized the "modern" in ways that are familiar to us today because those characterizations formed the foundations of the social scientific endeavor. Concepts like "alienation," "anomie," and "ideology," as well as supposedly first-order descriptive terms like *family*, *individual*, and *community*, have structured that version of human inquiry called "social." Sociology's objects would be the causes and the products of the disruption of life that conjured the social and the individual from the community that Europeans imagined their own pre-modern to have been. Its object would be modernity itself. Anthropology's objects, constituting its disciplinary apparatus and achieving for it a place at the table of modern inquiry, would be the peoples who Europeans imagined had not undergone that same disruption. Anthropology's objects, the core of its self-constitution as modern, would be the nonmodern. After World War II, the disciplines converged in visions of development and modernization: sociology would tackle

the "social problems" of modern life and anthropology would identify the "barriers" preventing nonmoderns from acquiring the moral and material goods of civilization. The new world society that the social sciences would document and help to create would represent the inevitable and one-way motion toward the end of ideology and the end of analysis, as, eventually, the analytical apparatus would resonate precisely with the clockwork harmony of the real world.

It did not happen. And it is this predictive failure of social science and the unfolding of other possibilities that animates the books under review. Composed of seven chapters that review theorists from Foucault and Lyotard to C. Wright Mills and Ulrich Beck, Smart's volume is about the fate of sociology after the exhaustion of its modern paradigms. Smart centers on a new appreciation of theoretical reflexivity and ambivalence. The literature Smart draws on and the debates he engages are from sociology, primarily (and refreshingly) outside its neopositivist U.S. formulation. Despite the disciplinary focus, this book will be accessible to a range of anthropologists seeking to be brought up to speed on recent social theory and a reflection on modernity that emphasizes the ethics of social thought. Timothy Mitchell's volume contains a short preface and introduction situating it in a conversation between Middle East and South Asia area scholars who are redefining area studies as a theoretical project and developing accounts of modernities outside the West, "rediscover[ing] the parochialism of the West" rather than "deparochializ[ing] Western history and social science" (p. viii). The volume contains a chapter by Mitchell, five chapters on South Asia, and two on the Middle East.

For Smart, the predominating feature of modernity is its unceasing and reflexive auto-innovation. Social science is part of that innovation and ethical accountability for social research is a moral obligation. Modern reflection on modernity and its knowledges as represented in the disciplines, however, unsettles scientific authority and introduces ambivalence in social analysis. Skepticism of moral and epistemological certitudes also renders problematic the category of the political for the left. But for Smart this does not necessarily imply crying "postmodernism!" and throwing up one's hands. Modern reason itself has had "longerstanding" concerns with its own "equation of increasing rationality with progress" and its own "limits and limitations" (p. 36).

Indeed, Smart argues that the blurring of the distinction between modern and postmodern, whether the former be taken as historical or epistemological antecedent to the latter or the latter taken as critical reflection on the former is itself characteristic of modernity's ambivalence. The modern and the postmodern form "a single constellation" (p. 36), and the exhaustion of modern projects reveals "that the practical consequences of modernity" are always "at odds with its programmatic promise" (p. 37). Sociology should embrace these contingencies and ambiguities, and leave open-ended a discussion between selves and others that maintain plurality and nurtures "relations of tolerance and solidarity" (p. 63). If there is a flaw in this masterful book, it is its incessant citationality: at times overly derivative, at times too cursory in its treatment of theoretical figures, the book would have benefited from more of Smart's unencumbered voice.

Different in tone and project but resting on similar theoretical foundations as Smart, Mitchell's collection is held together by an attachment to key texts in the modern tradition and attention to how postcolonial situations escape them. Volume 11 in Minnesota's "Contradictions of Modernity" series, it suggests new questions and new objects beyond the by now comfortable analytic of contradiction. Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty use literary and historical material to query the category of tradition in the complex genealogy of modernity in India. Chatterjee contrasts Western understandings of civil society with what he terms political society, which emerged in India in the late colonial period and counterposed the emergent civil society elites had organized. Political society would not be a public oriented around institutions like newspapers and literary associations but rather the population as a political force of popular mobilization and mass movement. Political society contained "the possibility of a different mediation between the population and the state . . . not ground[ed] . . . on a modernized civil society" (p. 45), outside the secular categories of most nationalists. Where Chatterjee considers the public, Chakrabarty turns toward the private, focusing on the figure of the Hindu widow and the problem of compassion in liberal humanism and its colonial transformations. Describing an interior emotional landscape different from the Western pas-

sions and interests, Chakrabarty discerns in colonial Bengal theories of the person from European philosophy and Indian aesthetics "jostling together" and "supplementing" one another (p. 60). The result: a "different hermeneutic of the social" (p. 60), "practices of the self that call us to other ways of being civil and humane" and that "leave an intellectually unmanageable excess when translated into the politics and language of liberalism or Marxism" (p. 82).

Lila Abu-Lughod explores television melodramas in the creation of modern selves that exceed their emplotment in liberal theory and state planning. Emphasizing the over-the-top sensibilities of melodramas, Abu-Lughod looks at how they "stag[e] interiorities" in a context where "kinship remains important and other forms of community and morality exist" (p. 89). Significant here, more than any overt political messages in the programs (p. 93), is the manner in which excess emotionality displayed in melodramas provides an "education in sentiment" and selfhood (p. 94). That selfhood consists of an "intense individuality" (p. 94) that, while legible within liberal forms of subjecthood, also pulls people toward other dramas, some of which state nationalists promote, and others, like those of religion, that they do not.

Nicholas Dirks and Veena Das look at tradition and nostalgia in Indian film. Dirks finds in Satyajit Ray's films an image of feudal India notable for its "transgressive rebellion against the colonial/capitalist regime" (p. 162). Using Bataille "with some trepidation" (p. 161), he analyzes representations of feudal excess as challenges to the "masquerades" (p. 162) of modernity. Ray's films contain a history that has "the means to escape the colonial incarceration of political forms and imaginings" (p. 164). Das, leaning on Baudelaire, finds in Indian cinema different stagings of temporality that index constructions of person and gender that reconfigure and dis-aggregate the category "tradition" into four distinct registers: as the resource and bulwark for Indian society against modernity; as claimed and incorporated by nationalism; as the "'past present' . . . toward which the subject experiences a fierce nostalgia" (p. 167) yet violently renounces; and as the natural ground from which one begins one's voyage out into the modern. Simultaneous and co-constitutive within individual films, these traditions open discontinuous temporalities and fields of subjectification, rendering incomplete any account of modernity that would stick to linear time, foreordained outcomes, or even Foucauldian predications.

Gyan Prakash argues that the colonial Indian state's attempts to control its subjects through the body and the population were organized around a sharp distinction between Western and traditional medicine. Premised on "sanitation," liberal reform sought to lift Indian subjects up from the "muck and misunderstanding" of dirt, disease, and the deceptions of irrational superstition (p. 196). In contrast to European biopolitical modes of self-governance and self-monitoring of healthy and clean bodies, the

colonial state relied on central control and health authorities who possessed extraordinary executive powers (p. 197). Elite nationalists were able to seize on the alterity assumed in colonial medicine for their own governmental ends. Thus arose "a mode of governmentality that located the modern Indian subject in the body and that formulated its norms by normalizing alterity" (p. 216).

For me, Timothy Mitchell's and Stefania Pandolfo's chapters offered the most provocative questions in the volume. Mitchell puts forward his compelling thesis that the signal feature of the modern is the process of representation. By representation, as those familiar with his *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge 1988) will remember, Mitchell means the particular modality of social reference through which the distinction between image and reality is configured. Understanding the "world-as-picture," or as eminently amenable to being represented (in art, bureaucratic plans, or social analysis), creates the effect of the "real" as standing outside any representation. Yet "every act of staging or representation is open to the possibility of misrepresentation" (p. xiv) such that while the iterative practices of representation stabilize the real, their very repetition introduces difference. Hence, "if modernity is defined by its claim to universality, this always remains an impossible universal" (p. xiv, see also pp. 24–25). Further, "if modernity is not so much a stage of history as a *staging*, then it is a world particularly vulnerable to a certain kind of disruption or displacement" (p. 23, emphasis added). Pandolfo takes an experimental novel, an essay on alienation, therapeutic debate, and psychoanalytic case histories from Morocco to illuminate such displacements. Like Das, she discusses the contingent and fractured temporalities of modernity, emphasizing the "cut" or "bridge" between "worlds experienced as at once contiguous and remote" (p. 118)—the worlds of traditional and modern, patient and analyst, past and present. Pandolfo attends to traumatic repetitions in the founding of a "subjectivity . . .

constructed in between sites" through the "exclusion from 'culture' and from the sense of community associated with it . . . and the exclusion from the 'present' of those who have not experienced that break or have experienced it in a different way" (p. 142).

In his introduction, Mitchell gestures toward recent work on alternative modernities that stresses the local, the hybrid and the contingency of the global (p. xii). As he remarks, the virtue of such work is also often the vice: finding infinite play and endless possibilities, we have no sense of what gives modernity its power. The more dangerous vice, for me, is the kind of fact-making that has characterized social inquiry since the Enlightenment, where facts are taken as real things in the world, just waiting to be represented in our theoretical accounts. This leads to what I call the "post office theory of modernity": a post office plus a few local traits makes an alternative modernity. The apparatus that makes the post office and the local trait a particular kind of data, and the analytical desire to see it as such, goes unquestioned. Pandolfo's attention to the traumatic repetitions through which psychic facts get made should, I am suggesting, be applied to the other sorts of facts, social and otherwise, that social inquiry takes to be its objects. Akin to the reflexivity of Smart's sociology, this way of doing social science would also need to account for that most peculiar of modern reflexes, the repetition compulsion (as Diane Nelson put it) to return to the scene of the crime of the colonial encounter, an encounter that engendered and endangered the modern itself (Nelson 1997:383–386).

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