

paths taken to these points are plotted by gender, and the quality and success of the journey is measured by whether one is male or female. Smith is not arguing that gender is a “bias” that men should shed in the search for a more inclusive and accurate history, or a “barrier” that women must overcome in order to be recognized as “real” historians. Instead, in this work, as she takes apart and recasts the story of Western history from c. 1800 to 1940, she convinces us that history itself is a conscious and unconscious work, as well as an expression of gender.

This book is impressively erudite, drawing from multiple disciplines and perspectives, and resting on diverse and extensive archival sources, autobiographies and published collections of letters, and works of history. Smith uses careful reading of critical theory in a wide range of fields to interpret and give meaning to the records and expressions left by men and women who engaged in the project of writing history.

Especially important to her analyses and conclusions are contemporary interpretations of trauma and its effects and of theories about identity production, cognition, and the connections between the body and the gendering of knowledge. With these tools Smith recreates for us the “traumatic narratives” and “better stories” of early women amateurs (51, 57), and introduces us to the scientific male historian engaged in “manly and useful” work as a “virtuous citizen” (112, 114). She shows how facts became “historical facts” (135), and then acquaints us with turn-of-the-century early professional women historians, “spinsters,” and “bad girls,” whose lives and works are paradoxes, but contribute to the “modernist impulse” (186, 211). The gender dance continues as male professionals, forced to confront the changes and challenges of the times, expand the horizons of their studies and refashion themselves, almost as supermen whose “muscular, cognitive claims” carry them to new heights of wisdom, “all the while preserving hierarchies and protecting gender” (228).

The resulting work is an intellectual tour de force filled with tension, discord, and challenge. Gone, thankfully, is the clear, linear, and progressive narrative of history’s rise to greatness. Instead, Smith presents an equally “real” and valuable story that circles through the traumas, differences, contests, and victories that constitute the web of historical practices and writing in the modern era.

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A Sin Against the Future: Imprisonment in the World. By Vivien Stern (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1998) 432 pp. \$47.50 cloth \$18.95 paper

As the title warns, this is not a cautious and dispassionate study of prisons. Stern sets out to state “the case for change in our system,” and the book’s

foreword—by Carl Niehaus, imprisoned seven years for his opposition to apartheid and now South Africa’s ambassador to the Netherlands—aptly praises it for avoiding “cold academic analysis” (xix, xvi). Stern approaches her subject less as a scholar than as a seasoned and well-traveled reformer. Her principal sources are government statistics, reports by public-interest groups, accounts by prisoners themselves, news stories, and her own visits to prisons all over the world. Stern’s firsthand observations figure prominently in the book and lend it strength and credibility. She writes in the tradition not of Foucault or Rothman, but rather of Howard, the peripatetic and influential critic of eighteenth-century prisons in England and Wales.¹ But Howard simply wanted prisons to be run better; Stern wants imprisonment both improved and greatly curtailed. Whereas Howard focused on the ways in which bad prisons differed from good ones, Stern emphasizes not only the horrors of particular institutions, but also the pathologies to which, she suggests, all incarceration is prone.

The book begins with a brief sketch of the history of prisons in the West, drawing heavily on secondary sources and highlighting the export of British and European penal policies to colonial Africa and the New World. Stern then surveys prisons in four countries with widely different styles of incarceration: the United States, with its skyrocketing and racially lopsided prison populations, its often gratuitously punitive conditions of confinement, and its growing enchantment with the ideology of preventive confinement; Russia, with its long tradition of punishment through exile and forced labor; China, which Stern suggests combines the cruelties of the gulag with Benthamite efforts at coercive “rehabilitation”; and Japan, where Stern finds clean, quiet prisons, minutely and repressively regulating every aspect of prisoners’ behavior. Stern follows this institutional overview with an examination of the prisoners themselves, stressing their disadvantaged backgrounds and the dehumanizing aspects of prison life. She discusses the special situations of female prisoners, juvenile prisoners, and prisoners serving life sentences.

The disciplinary problems presented by “lifers” lead Stern to her most important themes: the dynamics of abusive prison conditions, and the possibilities and limitations of reform. Drawing partly on her own considerable experience, she describes the sundry mechanisms of prison oversight currently in operation—official and unofficial; local, national, and international—and offers a mixed assessment of their success. Firmly committed to reform, she nonetheless argues that the inherently antisocial nature of incarceration, especially when coupled with ever-present political pressures for tougher punishment, guarantees the endless recur-

1 Michel Foucault (trans. Alan Sheridan), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1979); David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston, 1990; rev. ed.); *idem*, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America* (Boston, 1980); John Howard, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* (Warrington, England, 1777).

rence of a downward spiral of prisoner misconduct and repressive control. She therefore suggests that the recent trend toward prison privatization is troubling not so much because privately operated prisons are more brutal or more squalid—in fact, she notes, they “often sort out their teething problems and settle down”—but because they create a “prison-industrial complex” with a vested interest in carceral expansion (295, 301). The book closes with a call to abandon imprisonment for the great majority of offenders and to replace it with “restorative justice,” based on what Braithwaite has called “reintegrative shaming” (326, 323).²

In the course of the book, Stern briefly addresses recent contentions that high rates of incarceration reduce crime, but her arguments on this point are largely perfunctory. It is obvious to her—as it will be to many but not all readers—that, except for the very violent, imprisonment serves little purpose. Her aim, in any event, is not to debate fine points of statistics and deterrence theory, but rather to get her readers to stop “tak[ing] prisons for granted” (xx). In this aim she succeeds admirably.

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A Cursing Brain? The Histories of Tourette Syndrome. By Howard I. Kushner (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999) 303 pp. \$29.95

If you think that it is easy to define an illness by sorting through the confusing tangle of symptoms and signs that exists in nature, read *A Cursing Brain?* to find out just how difficult it is. The history of Tourette’s Disease is replete with off-key thinking that mistakes effects for causes, professional politics that substitutes for logic, the use of anecdotes to draw vast conclusions, and the power of theoretical preconceptions to alter the interpretation of data. All of these sins of science were committed for 175 years by highly intelligent, distinguished, dedicated members of the medical profession who were doing their best.

The story begins in 1825 when Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, chief physician at l’Institution Royale des Sourdsmuets in Paris, recorded the behavior of the Marquise de Dampierre, a twenty-six-year-old woman. “In the midst of a conversation that interests her extremely,” he reported, “all of a sudden, without being able to prevent it, she interrupts what she is saying or what she is listening to with bizarre shouts and with words that are even more extraordinary and which make a deplorable contrast with her intellect and her distinguished manners” (10). Sixty years later, Georges Gilles de la Tourette, a young Parisian neurologist, cited this case as the first example of an illness that he called “maladie des tics.” Jean-Martin Charcot, his mentor, had encouraged Tourette to

² John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (Cambridge, 1989).