

interacted in many carefully choreographed cultural exchanges.³ Grosrichard rather reductively relates how the Turk became a feared and “hated” enemy in Western Europe in the years prior to his study. However, it is the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with which *The Sultan’s Court* is concerned, “the Classical Occident” in which the Ottoman empire was visited more frequently, recorded in more detail and “understood” in more depth by Western observers than ever before. Grosrichard engages this Enlightenment project through the work of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire and others, methodically detailing each potent figure in this western imagination: the nature of the sultans power, and that of his vizier; the construction of the seraglio and its many phantasms: the dwarves, the deaf-mutes, and the eunuchs. Each is interpreted through Lacanian psychoanalysis as a manifestation and a reflection of “His Highness,” each a functionary within an economy of power and “*jouissance*” which provides an Otherness through which libertarian rational ideals could be opposed and legitimized.

The Sultan’s Court offers a remarkable insight into a Western fantasy of power that still influences modern relations between West and East. It is a classic of its kind.

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¹ Mladen Dolar, Intro, ix.

² See particularly Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge, UK 1998), 11.

³ See J. Brotton and L. Jardine, *Global Interests; Renaissance Art between East and West* (London 2000).

Jan F. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth, and Stephen P. Andrews Jr., editors, *Guns In America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

Guns In America: A Reader serves as a commentary on, and a contribution to, the current gun control debates in the United States. Although the editorial inserts illustrate an eagerness to appear somewhat disconnected from the concerns of other participants, there is little doubt that Jan E. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth, and Stephen P. Andrews, Jr., have done more here than gather together a number of articles loosely connected by the theme of guns and their love/hate relationship with U. S. society. An effort seems to have been made to turn away from the “polarized deadlock” between those that reject “mild restrictions” to a remarkably ambiguous Constitutional right to keep and bear arms, for fear that these would only be a first step towards confiscation, and those that regard privately owned guns as an unnecessary evil long overdue for extinction. *Guns in America* creates its own public forum for that silent majority drowned out by the cries of those at opposite extremes in the current media

driven climate; a silent majority convinced that guns will remain a permanent feature of US society, but also that gun violence needs to be addressed as a very real and immediate issue. The key to the riddle is presented as knowledge; knowledge about why people own guns, why some misuse them, and why others condemn the very idea that private citizens should be able to lay their hands on such potentially lethal instruments.

And thus we are presented with an immense tome of diversity in which academics from a wide range of disciplines rub shoulders with myriad others fascinated by the gun debate. Forty three articles cover a veritable feast of interrelated topics stretching across the political spectrum. Gun culture through the ages, gun manufacturing and advertising, guns and self-defence, guns as a defence against the state, guns and minority groups, the nature of the gun control debate, suggestions for reducing gun violence, and much more, leap out from the more than five hundred pages of empirical research, and less compelling examinations of belief.

Historians, psychologists, political scientists, sociologists, legal scientists, anthropologists, medical scientists, criminologists, and economists, have their analyses printed alongside the commentaries and investigations of numerous breeds of journalist, and the exhortations of belligerents in the current debates. The result is an intriguing assortment of material both secondary and primary in nature – as should be expected in a work described as “a reader.” At times, adjusting to the rapid transitions between disciplines, and between secondary and primary sources, proves a little jolting for the reader, but this is a result of the complexity of the subject under discussion rather than any undisciplined policy of placement on the part of the editors. The way material has been organized is in fact the shining achievement of this collection.

There are four sections to the work; each pasted to the other by an introductory editorial glue. Following the argument that fuelling the passion of gun debates “is an underlying clash of cultural values and competing visions of our past and our national identity,” comes “The Rise Of Gun Culture In America.” This is split down the middle: one half tracing the origins and shaping of gun culture, from colonial days up to the beginning of the twentieth century; and the other illustrating the pervasiveness of such a culture in modern day America, and how obstructive this is, and will remain, to any efforts geared towards expanding gun control laws. Next up, after a brief assessment of the use of opinion polls and attitude surveys in the present controversies, comes “The War Over Guns.” This is a neat collection of thoughts from participants in today’s struggle, divided into “pro-gun” and “anti-gun” factions. Perhaps the centrepiece of *Guns in America* is the immense third section with its rather catchy-title: “As American As Apple Pie: Guns As A Cultural Battleground.” Here is the most extensive exploration of how clashes over gun ownership have their roots in values, experiences, and beliefs, of a fundamental nature. “Southern codes of manly honor, traditions of the hunt, and inflated notions of

peacekeeping in a tumultuous and dangerous world” are presented as important contributors to the wide proliferation of guns. The emphasis, however, is placed on “diametrically opposed responses” from an American people increasingly convinced that government cannot be trusted to successfully combat crime, or to uphold the rights of the governed: for some, guns are the answer to the problem, for others they are the problem. The final section hints most poignantly towards part of the philosophy that would appear to have driven Dizard, Muth, and Andrews to put this “reader” together in the first place: “Living With Guns: Seeking Middle Ground in The Battlefield”

It all adds up to both a lively and interesting overview of guns in American life; past, present, and future. There are perhaps moments when certain inclusions seem to appear in one section of the book only because they sit less uncomfortably there than in any of the others. Also, at times, one wonders if certain pieces, which seem merely to repeat something that has come-before, needed to be included at all. But these are small quibbles as likely applicable to any collection of similar nature and size. Certain omissions from the “Suggested Readings” did seem to stand out. *The Gun in America: The Origins Of A National Dilemma* (1975), by Lee Kennett and James La Verne Anderson, would seem an ideal starting place for any interested in themes touched upon in this “reader.” Robert I. Cottrol’s three volume *Gun Control And The Constitution: Sources And Explorations On The Second Amendment* (1993) would also seem invaluable. This said, such lists are always incomplete, and it is only inevitable that different researchers will prioritise different starting points. The only other reservation is more of a regret that certain issues did not receive more attention: debates surrounding the meaning of the Second Amendment might have been explored further, as might the history of gun control itself. A line has to be drawn somewhere though, and adding to a work of this size might have proved problematic. Indeed, attempts at expansion would run into another hurdle: the limited number of sources, at least from an academic frame of reference, that are available. *Guns In America: A Reader* will serve most promisingly as along-awaited introduction to a complex and controversial issue. For those of us who began our investigations spending hours on the internet attempting to unravel the mystery behind articles on gun control appearing not only in political, legal, and historical journals, but economic, medical, social, and others as well, there is no doubt that to have been armed with such a text back then would have sped up the learning process. One would hope also that academics from a variety of disciplines might be encouraged by this enterprise to explore the subject much further. Certainly from an historian’s perspective it is difficult to understand the current dearth of enquiry into an area so rich in questions relating to the Constitution, American character, and beyond. As for its contribution to current concerns over gun violence, perhaps too much should not be expected. The call to gather knowledge, and then striking out along the “middle ground” is not new, but who’s to say this effort won’t make the difference. Dizard, Muth, and

Andrews are under no illusions, however, and speak very cagily about the possibility of the voice of moderation coming to dominate the gun control debate. Indeed, the fear would seem to be that the words of Robert Sherrill, in 1973, may remain true, at least in the foreseeable future: “Logic and evidence have absolutely nothing to do with the gun debate in or out of Congress; only instinct and emotion and gut reactions count for anything”

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Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become possible to gain access to the archives of the various institutions of the Stalinist and subsequent periods. While the general impression of strict thought control and censorship has been confirmed, there have been a number of revelations that indicate that the degree of totalitarian repression was something less than absolute. Among these revelations of the survival of civil society and honesty in the Soviet Union, often under excruciatingly difficult circumstances, one of the most persistent and revealing cases is that of the Nature Protection movement, broadly defined. In retrospect the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 detonated a series of explosions across the vast country, reflecting pent-up outrage against the way in which the communist system was perceived to have desecrated precious and often fragile environments and homelands. This feeling of betrayal at the most basic level – communities and homeland – not only among the non-Russian nationalities but also Russians themselves, hastened the eventual collapse of the system.

This book traces in detail the long struggle – ingenious and courageous – of biologists, geographers and natural historians, to maintain their integrity and somehow seek to preserve the cause of nature protection in the face of Stalin’s juggernaut of industrialization and social engineering. The tradition of engaged bio-geographical sciences had been strong in Russia in the nineteenth century and *Zapovedniki* or nature preserves had been established as inviolate, almost sacred areas strictly off limits to economic activity.

Weiner tells a stirring tale, buttressed by meticulous research in the archives and interviews with surviving scientists, of the stratagems employed to circumvent government commands and regulations. The “little corner of freedom” he identifies seems to have been enabled by the perception on the part of the powers that nature protection was somehow apolitical and patriotic and that the scientists involved were not generally seen as subversive. This rings true to me, since I was able to send many students to study in the Soviet Union in the 1960’s, to pursue themes under the rubric of Geography, which nevertheless had