

Reviews

No condition is permanent: the social dynamics of agrarian change in Sub-Saharan Africa, by Sara Berry; University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. xiv, 258 pp.

Reviewed by Miriam S. Chaiken, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Sara Berry has synthesized an impressive body of literature from history and anthropology, political economy, and policy to challenge the assumptions of many social theorists and development planners regarding the nature of African societies. The title is an indicator of her central thesis: the nature of both social institutions and individuals' networks and resources are in flux and highly variable. This necessary flexibility has precluded African farmers from participating in the "Green Revolution" and the improvements in agriculture that have affected many tropical farming systems. Additionally, she argues that these variable relations have prevented the political structure from totally capturing or controlling the African peasantry. Berry uses her personal research experiences and an extensive literature review to examine the dynamics of change in four African regions, the cocoa producing areas of Ghana and Nigeria, the Kenyan central highlands, and northeastern Zambia.

Berry begins the book with an overview of her thesis and an extremely coherent and useful summary of important models of economic theory and development. The balance of the book uses a temporal sequence to examine social dynamics during the precolonial and colonial periods, and the more recent patterns associated with the period of independence and planned economic development. She argues that the nature of the indigenous African societies was far more fluid than was commonly understood at the period of European contact. Despite the emphasis in the colonial period on uncovering the principles of "native law and custom" in the colonized cultures, administrators failed to recognize that most African societies were not characterized by highly rigid roles and laws, but rather interpersonal interactions were characterized by negotiation and manipulation of kin, economic, political, and social networks. The outcome of any negotiation, especially concerning usufruct land rights, was a product of an interplay of these varied factors and contemporary alliances and power struggles, not the result of highly codified legal principles.

With the imposition of colonial rule, specifically the patterns of Indirect Rule, this variability became even more pronounced. Rather than achieving order and regulation in legal relationships, the competing systems of European and traditional laws, and the varying interpretations of indigenous law and authority produced a system built on "conflict and change." Berry notes that highly effective individuals capitalized on this flux and often enhanced their positions, contributing to increasing socioeconomic differentiation and factionalism in African communities. The patterns of conflict were especially common in land tenure disputes and regarding policies governing the

increasing commercialization of agriculture, both issues that are important for contemporary programs of economic development.

Independence did not resolve the conflict between competing rural systems. Instead, the growth of African bureaucracies and the struggles for power in the new political arenas further destabilized the economy of rural communities. The optimal strategy for many rural people was to increase the diversity of their social networks and clientele to cope with the instability of resource allocation, labor availability, and pricing. Berry argues that this has been a key factor in contributing to growing economic inequality and the frequent failure of development projects, regardless of efforts to be more inclusive, participatory, and culturally sensitive.

In her final chapter, Berry reiterates the odds facing the typical African farmer: often inadequate access to land or quality of landholdings, increasing problems in mobilizing labor, constraints to large-scale irrigation development, and general economic instability. She notes that many practices of African peasants decried by agricultural scientists and development planners--planting "uneconomic" crops (e.g. cassava), intercropping, investing in marginal petty trading--are strategies to increase flexibility and reduce risk for smallholders. In her conclusion, she notes that the possibilities for successful economic development hinge on planners' appreciation of this diversity, flexibility, and change that characterize African communities. Failure to address these issues will result in continued problems in programs of economic development. Berry has written a scholarly, persuasive volume that incorporates rich case study material to support her hypotheses.

Although the volume might be too dense to be easily accessible to undergraduates, it would be an appropriate reading for any scholar examining African development and certainly for advanced students. The book would be useful both as an ethnographic source for understanding the processes of change in the 20th century in the four study areas, and as a critique and analysis of colonial and postcolonial policies and economic planning in Africa. While primarily a historical source, the implications for future policy of Berry's work is clear, and the importance of her message unquestionable.

Ethnic Groups Across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia. Gehan Wijeyewardene, editor. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990. viii, 192 pp.

Reviewed by Brian L. Foster, Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, University of Nebraska.

As its title suggests, this book is about ethnic groups whose areas cross national boundaries. The editor's introduction promises, in fact, an analytical, or even theoretical, examination of how ethnic relations are related to special features of nation states--especially features that produce states' boundedness. This is an important and difficult set of issues, and the mountains of Mainland Southeast Asia provide an ideal vehicle for studying them--a variety of nations (China, Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Vietnam) with varying degrees of political stability, boundary integrity, degrees and modes of sociopolitical integration of ethnic minorities, and a bewildering variety of ethnic groups

with different histories and different forms and degrees of political integration (Lue, Karen, Hmong, Tai, Yao, and Mon). Unfortunately, the potential of neither the ethnological and historical nor the topical foci are realized. Although individual articles--especially Rajah's and Lilley's--are substantial contributions, and others provide useful if less penetrating material--especially Miles, Tapp, and Wijeyawardene's--the book as a whole is disappointing.

The book is one of a series of studies published by the Social Issues of Southeast Asia program of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Singapore. All of the articles except Miles' and Tapp's were written especially for this volume. The conceptualization of the project at the outset is not described. The variety of viewpoints the various authors bring to their articles could have been a strength for the book, collectively capturing the complexity of the broader topic. The relative weakness of several of the individual articles reduces this potential. Moreover, although the editor's introduction provides insightful comments on the issues, in my view he fails to provide a coherent framework for the papers, leaving the reader without guidance in a set of unconnected articles of uneven quality, with little value added by their being brought together in a single volume. His main contribution to integration of the papers is a facile classification scheme that is neither original nor illuminating, and a peculiar insistence that ethnicity cannot be productively defined.

Lilley's concluding chapter, in contrast, is a provocative and penetrating review of the issues that the book might have been about, drawing on the other papers here and there to illustrate a point, or taking issue as the opportunity arises. I would strongly advise readers to begin--and possibly end--their reading of the book with a careful reading of Lilley's chapter. I found the Bauer and Cholthira articles least useful, since they do not squarely address the central theme of the book, either ethnographically or topically. Bauer clearly knows more about Mons--especially Mon language and linguistics--than anyone, and there is useful information in his paper, but he is clearly not at home in this social science genre, and the material is often of marginal relevance. Cholthira's article argues for a broad historical perspective; I find it difficult to grasp the main thrust of her substantive argument about ethnicity and national boundaries.

Wijeyawardene presents fascinating material on three Thai intellectual documents published in 1988--one an epic, one a political tract, and one a history--that create different Thai identities through constructions of political and historical materials of varying kinds. These very rich materials receive less analysis than warranted, but their potential for examining the active construction of identities is considerable and suggests a potentially valuable line of research. His rather extensive descriptive presentation is especially useful, since it is unlikely that any of these works will be translated from Thai.. Rajah addresses the Karen movement, focusing especially on differences between the participation of the Karen on the Burmese and Thai sides of the border. He sees the Karen political and military organizations as aspects of a kind of nation state; he shows how the Thai-Burmese boundary becomes a resource to the Karen, and how various state "imperatives" become aspects of ethnicity for the Thai. This is a thoughtful and complex piece that doesn't really present new ethnography, but which directly addresses the topic of this book, and is a good example of what the entire book could have been.

Miles discusses two Yao villages, one in Thailand and one in China. Although they are in very different political, economic, physical, and social environments, they are in non-trivial ways Yao. He focuses on the differentiation of inheritance systems, showing how bilaterality and patrilineality developed in response respectively to commerce and land

scarcity in the one case and of labor needs in the other. It is an excellent ethnographic comparative analysis, but its relation to the book's central topic is marginal. Nicholas Tapp, working from a dependency perspective, examines development projects among the Hmong in Thailand, showing how historical peripheralization of the Hmong was defined by many of the same external economic and political forces that gave rise to the national boundaries of the Thai state. The political and cultural status of the Hmong in Thailand, and the failure of various development projects, was determined by many of the same historical forces that produced the peripheralization that was in part being addressed by the development projects. In summary, although several of the contributions are valuable, they are somewhat uneven, and the book doesn't quite come together around the central theme indicated by the title and the editor's introduction. It is an important and difficult topic, though, and the Southeast Asian mainland is an ideal laboratory for studying it.

Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand. By J. L. Taylor. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993. xii + 377 pp. 6 plates.

Reviewed by William Galloway, University of Washington.

Those whose lives have been more than superficially touched by Thailand will recognize the image of wandering forest monks, "walking by themselves or in small bands in single file... patched ochreous robes the colour of burnt mustard," meditation umbrellas over their shoulders and attention focused a "plough length" ahead. Taylor's study meticulously traces the historical process by which "monks residing on the fringe of organized space and domesticated order" could be transformed into "the heart of Thai religiosity." This account will be of considerable historical value to JPE readers as the forest monks are apparently unwitting participants in their own demise, turned to introspection as the forests of northeastern Thailand rapidly disappear. The monastic career and pupillary lineage of Ajaan Man Phuurithatto, founder of the modern "kammathan" (ascetic meditation) forest tradition, forms the exemplary center around which Taylor's analysis unfolds.

While there have been wandering ascetics since the time of the Buddha, this type of forest monk first appears in the context of religio-political reforms integral to the process of Thai state-building during the reigns of King Mongkut (1851-68) and King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910). Taylor asserts that many such monks were "effectively frontiersmen for the nation-state in the outer provinces, caught in the nexus of prevalent social and political conditions" (136). The changing status of Man's revived forest tradition at the periphery in relation to the still-expanding influence of the centralized Thammayut order, linked to "a pervasive patronage system with the royalty in the capital," provides the particular circumstances within which Taylor explores the universal dynamics of a doctrinal Buddhism in its most "primitive" mode of expression, "a living system of beliefs and ritual practices set in their historical and sociocultural context."

Northeastern forest monks, in their conscious attempt to regain “the mystical source of normative religion” are seen as the cynosures of change in a traditional dialectic between theory and practice, embedded in the complex increments of reform. Historic and contemporary features of forest monasticism in Thailand are understood not as expressions of “an undifferentiated, ossified, or impervious movement” but as “segmentary pupillages sharing common features,” whose existence attests to the vitality of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia today. Segmentary pupillages show a distinct evolutionary trend from radical social critique to social domestication as the secluded meditator comes to be recognized as “the very image of purity through self-mastery” and so the object of “profuse patronage, especially and importantly by the royalty,” in a process Taylor calls “the routinization of individuated charisma.”

Paradoxically, the more a monk withdraws into the periphery, the more sought-after he becomes. Taylor traces this “clear processual pattern” through four phases from the first points of “impact” through the construction of a jedii (traditional burial mound) in memory of the teacher. Practicing meditators will have by this time “hived off elsewhere” and been replaced at the forest monastic center by “institutional” monks from the town and village.

While Taylor bemoans “the last resort... selling cheap artefacts, 'blessed water,' pictures of the deceased master, medallions, and the like,” he notes that in a wider sense such popular devotions have long been a feature of Buddhist Southeast Asia, “where the landscape is potted with jedii, indigenous Buddhological sacra.” The ecological impact of this evolutionary process is less sustainable. The northeastern forests were effectively domesticated by the early 1960s and are now disappearing at an alarming rate, together with the remaining forest monks. The implications of Thailand's entrance into the world economy and the penetration of capital and state into “these patternless distant provinces” are hauntingly clear as Ajaan Thui Chanthakaro remembers, “less than twenty years ago the forest monks' dwellings were the only cleared part of the primal forest... today the forest monastery is the only forest in the cleared surrounding countryside.” Although some forest monks evince concern with matters of ecology and the environment, Taylor reports that most of his monastic informants felt that wider social, political, and economic changes, while leading to their own demise, were, as “kammic consequences,” inevitable and thus “stressed introspective mental cultivation.”

As the forest monk tradition reaffirmed and reinvigorated by Man fast recedes with the nation's forests and the spoiling of Man's remaining first-generation pupils through “perfidious attention from the laity,” it becomes increasingly problematical and is beset with contradictions and distortions. Speculating on a conscious need for revitalization, Taylor notes that in Thailand potential reformers like Man have tended to work within the establishment, though “undoubtedly on the fringe of social acceptability,” emerging “from time to time in response to particular historical conditions.” The current rise of the predominantly urban and fundamentalist Santi Asoke movement springs immediately to mind. Taylor's “oral accounts, interviews... published and unpublished textual accounts... monastery histories and early tamnaan (Buddhist legendary tales),” in part collected during his own experience in the meditative vocation as a monk in 1982, have yielded a wealth of data on this modern inflorescence of the forest monk tradition.

While he claims to have assessed critically all material “along with its mode of transmission,” noting in particular how “doctrinal themes are internalized, reinterpreted, and expressed by the actors,” the personalities of these “actors” or “catalysts” of historical change haunting “charnel grounds” and “the taboo-loaded zone” at “the purlieu and

interstices of social order,” remain elusive. Individual practitioners, pupillages and segmentary lineages differ widely in their ability to maintain their status “at the terminus of civilization,” in the world but not of the world. Taylor's detached perspective on the subjects of his study may be necessitated by respect for his informants, who justifiably fear excessive publicity and the risk of “spoiling,” but this perspective gives the work its theoretical flavor, despite the attention to detail. It is widely believed that Ajaan Man, in life “an enigma to the authorities,” attained release from the conventional world and entered “nippaahn” (nirvana) upon his death in 1949. His ultimate release coincided with a surge of national attention for “the old 'vagabond' monk” and “infusion into the stream of orthodoxy.” A compelling image of Man, as “arahan” (saint), is the still core of this book. For the reader, this book is his jedii. The irony is that he cannot be eulogized without it.

Women and Change in the Caribbean, edited by Janet H. Momsen. Kingston: Ian Randle; Bloomington: Indiana University Press; London: Currey, 1993. x, 320 pp.

Reviewed by Marietta Morrissey, Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio.

The study of women and gender in the Caribbean has quickly expanded as major works have appeared on women in slavery, in late nineteenth and twentieth century free labor forces, and in contemporary politics and economy. The Caribbean is particularly intriguing to scholars of women and gender because of Caribbean women's historically significant roles in both the economy and the domestic sphere. Moreover, women's position differs among Caribbean societies, both across major language groups (the English, Spanish, and French-speaking West Indies) and within geographically and culturally defined areas.

It is challenging to capture the range of current research and theorizing on women in the Caribbean. Janet Momsen manages to do so, however, offering a comprehensive and exciting synthesis of recent scholarship in her anthology, *Women and Change in the Caribbean*. Momsen is a well known geographer with extensive research experience in the eastern Caribbean. She presents eighteen articles on women's work and status in various Caribbean nations, all focusing on the contemporary era, but with many discussing Caribbean women's history as well. As Momsen suggests in her thoughtful introduction, the collection is valuable for its pan-Caribbean and multidisciplinary focus and strong base in field work. The authors criticize several traditional theoretical paradigms, including the presumed dichotomy between women's public and private roles. They offer alternative perspectives that stress women's multiple and intersecting roles and the constant interaction of race, class, and gender throughout Caribbean history. Momsen divides the articles into two major sections, one, on private and public spheres, and the second on women's economic roles.

The first section explores the relationship of women's work in production and reproduction and the intersection of domestic and community-level activities. Two essays are critical of traditional conceptual approaches that lend little to our understanding of women in the Caribbean. Besson questions the utility of Peter Wilson's dualism of “reputation and responsibility” for the study of women, presenting research on a Jamaican

peasant community to support her claims. Berleant-Schiller and Maurer explore the blending rather than the separation of women's private and public roles in Dominica and Barbuda. Several essays in this section consider important Caribbean institutions in new ways. Pulsipher's paper on houseyards in Montserrat shows how men's and women's places in domestic networks are spatially represented in the yard and how these roles shift over the life cycle. Brana-Schute traces the recent history of women's groups in Suriname, suggesting a mix of political and social functions, while raising questions about why women have not assumed more prominent and powerful political roles. Women's extensive obligations to kin, even after migrating, are explored by Olwig in an essay on women's intra-regional and international migration from Nevis.

The second half of the collection, on women in the economy, examines women's work in both rural and urban sectors. Contributions on women in rural economies generally point to women's historically extensive participation in farming. Papers on Barbados, Grenada, and Trinidad describe patterns of work, land control and crop selection. Stubbs' article on women's involvement in Cuban cooperative agriculture in relation to recent changes in political economy is especially interesting. Momsen's comparative analysis of women's farming and patterns of labor force participation in the eastern Caribbean also addresses structural economic changes in the region. Papers on women in the urban sector treat some new dimensions of women's work experience. Pearson's essay on gender and Jamaican information processing firms suggests that while national investment and control has increased industrial dynamism it will help women workers only if their technical abilities are acknowledged and easily transferred to better jobs. McKay's research on women and tourism in Negril, Jamaica, illustrates the constraints women marketers and landladies face from government regulation and from competition and control by men.

This collection is significant for its comprehensive scope and its rich empirical base. The second half of the book, on women in the economy, may be more successful in offering new information and ideas than the first, on the relationship of the public and private spheres. Momsen's Introduction and the precis to each section are acute; she could have offered further theoretical synthesis and more comparisons among societies without damaging the integrity of the empirical work. Essays on the English speaking West Indies significantly outnumber offerings on other areas. However, these problems do not diminish the value of the collection and its importance to the study of women and gender in the region.

**This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India.
Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha. Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1992. xiv, 274 pp.**

**Reviewed by Sonja Brodt, Professor of Geography, University of Hawaii, Manoa
Honolulu, HI 96822**

In a time of increasing polarity between North and South, first world and third world, over issues regarding natural resource use and management, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha manage to move beyond the usual narrow, postcolonialist debates to construct a wider framework for analysis of Indian ecological problems in *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*. Although not evident in the title, this book is

specifically about the history of forest use in India, the understanding of which is enhanced by approaching forest management on two levels. On the one hand, the authors place it within the larger context of a conceptual framework that is broad enough to encompass a wide spectrum of resource use practices from hunter-gatherer to industrial modes. On the other hand, they narrow the scale of analysis by focusing on important details of Indian forestry that illustrate the larger concepts. Overall, *This Fissured Land* is a well-researched and clearly written book of relevance to cultural ecology and political ecology. It presents both a wealth of carefully chosen historical material and some useful thoughts on the origins of resource use problems and conflicts that are bound to stimulate debate.

The text is organized into three sections encompassing from one to five chapters each. In the first section the authors introduce a new theoretical framework for environmental history which they term “modes of resource use.” This framework distills four basic resource use categories from human history: gathering (including shifting cultivation), nomadic pastoralism, settled cultivation, and industry. The authors admit from the outset that this framework is an “ideal type” (p. 13) and that not all societies may be so simply apportioned among its four categories. Given this disclaimer, the framework for the most part is illuminating. Occasionally, however, Gadgil and Guha devote too much effort to distinguishing one mode from another, with the result that they make a few questionable claims, such as that hunter-gatherers have a limited knowledge base and use only a small variety of resources. Such overdone statements could have been omitted without weakening the overall framework.

The authors' analytic approach is reminiscent of a Marxist “mode of production” framework, which they intend to complement. The main shortcoming of the Marxist approach, however, according to Gadgil and Guha, is its lack of reflection on ecological parameters, and they conclude on these grounds “that the mode of production concept is not adequately materialistic” (p. 12). This statement sets the tone for many subsequent chapters, which are written from a strongly materialistic perspective. Everything from economy to ideology is seen to derive from resource use modes. Some of the resultant ideas are intriguing, if somewhat debatable. For example, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism are presented as arising in response to resource abundance or scarcity. Notwithstanding the fact that the focus of this book is on relationships between living resources and human society, the authors' failure to acknowledge the possibility of other influences on social formations--such as purely social and cognitive factors--is disconcerting.

Another prominent feature established in the first section and reminiscent of traditional cultural ecology is the repeated use of terms and concepts from biological ecology. For example, modes of resource use are compared to r and k strategies of different species. In a later section the caste system is interpreted simply as an ecological adaptation by which caste groups have come to occupy different resource “niches” according to Gause's principle of competitive exclusion. To a point, such analogies enrich the analysis by providing useful conceptual footholds. The danger, however, is that they disregard cognitive aspects of human behavior (see Ellen 1982).

The two latter sections of the book fill the theoretical framework established in the first with specifics of Indian forest management during the pre-colonial period and modern (colonial and postcolonial) times, respectively. Details are prudently compiled from an abundance of primary and secondary source material. This information alone would make the book worthwhile reading for any student of the history of Indian forest use. One of the

most salient legacies of a Marxist approach evident in these sections is the focus on conflicts between different resource use modes. Refreshingly, Gadgil and Guha avoid dwelling at length on the usual, overused stories of conflict, such as that of the Chipko movement, and instead move quickly to lesser-known incidents which serve just as admirably to illustrate their points. They also avoid some of the black-and-white clichés so common in writings about colonial resource exploitation in the third world. For example, although British forestry policies are pinpointed as one major cause of forest depletion and conflicts, the authors also clearly demonstrate, often with direct quotes from colonial administrators' writings, that some of the administrators openly opposed the prevailing policies. They also decline to exonerate all Indian rulers, some of whose directives are shown to be more deleterious to forest dwellers and farmers than British policies. The result is an analysis that for the most part is refreshingly frank and balanced in its assessments.

Having detailed many problems in Indian forest use, the authors' closing remark that "it is too early to say" (p. 245) whether a new mode of resource use will prevail is initially disappointing. However, from the very first chapter Gadgil and Guha maintain that "given the complexity of ecological communities, precise prescriptions for the prudent use of living resources are difficult" (p. 23). Recognizing this complexity, they thus avoid the simplistic suggestions, such as that resource management should devolve entirely to local communities, that often conclude similar books. Finally, given the subtitle "ecological history," perhaps one should not expect solutions for the future to be explicitly laid out. Rather, it is ultimately contingent upon the reader to delve deeply into the historical analysis for any lessons it might hold.

Reference cited: Roy P. Ellen, *Environment, Subsistence, and System: the Ecology of Small-Scale Social Formations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. pp. 89-93.

Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia. By Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, editors. 1993. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. viii, 355 pp.

Reviewed by James F. Fisher, Professor of Anthropology, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota.

In 1978 Edward Said of Columbia University published a book, *Orientalism*, which created a sizable stir among humanists and social scientists concerned with the non-Western world. Said argued unequivocally, and trenchantly, that western knowledge about the Orient was not just the product of disinterested scholarship, but "a systematic discourse by which Europe was able to manage--and even produce--the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively." Orientalism, as he called this phenomenon, helped the West to control and exploit the Orient. Said, a Palestinian by origin, used the Mideast as his prime example of Orientalism, but he meant his sweeping claim to apply to all of the "Orient."

In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, Breckenridge and van der Veer have brought forth a collection of articles devoted to discussing the Said thesis in the context of “the modern countries of South Asia, which include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.” Whether Nepal and other South Asian countries are excluded because they are not modern, or because they were not colonies, is not clear.

What is clear is that the Said position seems most compelling when applied to the colonial world in colonial times. The “postcolonial predicament,” or at least one part of it, turns on this point: in what forms does the Western creation of reality in which others have to live continue in today’s world of independent states? The editors of the volume argue that “decolonization does not entail immediate escape from colonial discourse [and that] this predicament defines both the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized.” Nobody, it seems, can escape from history.

Most of the chapters were originally delivered at the University of Pennsylvania as papers at the 1988-1989 Annual South Asia Seminar, devoted to “Orientalism and Beyond.” The ten contributors to the volume approach the predicament in different, albeit overlapping ways. The first section is called “The Postcolonial Predicament and Contemporary History.” Van der Veer argues not that Orientalism caused communalism, but that both are rooted in the common discourse of modernity. Lele claims not only that Orientalism distorts the Orient, but that its offshoot, the modernization paradigm, prevents us from seeing our own pathologies in the West. In a similar vein, Pollock shows how Orientalism, with its delineation of South Asia into Aryan and non-Aryan components, contributed to the development of anti-Semitism in Germany. Spivak focuses on English as an Indianized phenomenon in which it operates as a vehicle for controlling colonials. Along similar lines, Dharwadker demonstrates that what we might otherwise take as the common sense notion of “Indian literature” owes its existence to idiosyncratic European ideas of what constitutes literature.

In the second section (“The Genealogy of the Postcolonial”) the remaining five authors look at Orientalism more historically. Lelyveld draws a fascinating portrait of how a “native” language--Hindustani-- was actually a creation of “the colonial imagination that set out to create a common language” in north India, where languages changed every eight miles. Rocher traces much of the familiar acrimonious Hindu/Muslim division to 18th century British attempts to reduce complex and fluid indigenous matters to legal texts of those two traditions. Ludden attempts to show that what came to be regarded as neutral “facts” (such as the existence of autonomous village communities, Hinduism, and caste) were creations of systematizing and record-keeping for official colonial purposes. Alternative and competitive views of what constitutes bare-bones “facts” were silenced. Dirks discusses the case of Colin MacKenzie, an East India Company official whose collaboration with a corps of native assistants resulted in an enormous collection of documents and artifacts, which were eventually co-opted by later hegemonic colonial interests. Finally, Appadurai writes of the ways in which European concern with quantification (as in such seemingly innocent ways as measuring land by cadastral survey, and enumerating people by community in a census) helped create an assumption that aggregates of people were separable from any kind of territorial context.

All these writers share in the Saidian and/or Foucaultian tradition of concern with the insidious relations between knowledge and power, and their attendant buzzwords of “discourse” and its peculiar adjectival form, “discursive” (Lelyveld’s paper is refreshingly clear of this language). It is odd that in an otherwise admirably coherent and carefully edited volume the citation conventions of the different papers are not uniform; some are in

the form of notes while others are bibliographies. The restatements of the Orientalist project are at times repetitive, and inevitably so, but the subtly different takes on Said, and the thoughtful exceptions taken to his position, add to the clear problematic focus of the volume.

These papers add substantially to our understanding of how the western gaze has transformed South Asia. They also struggle to show how we can go beyond it, but one is left with the feeling that all this epistemological agonizing leaves us in a solipsistic state which denies genuine, discoverable cultural differences “out there,” quite apart from the way Orientalism has helped create them. The effect of Orientalism on our understanding is a little like the effect of childhood experiences on adult personality. We all have them, and we are unquestionably better off for recognizing and coming to grips with them, but we can't let them stop us from getting on with the problems of living. Certainly Orientalist history, like any history, is constructed out of our own parochial concerns and interests, but that admission need not paralyse us from investigating and making truth claims about the past of empirical cultural Others.

We have always known the ethnocentric pitfalls of judging other people's corn by our own bushels. This volume sounds the additional warning that counting dry volume measures may blind us from understanding what the most important and relevant things about grain are. It shows us not just how colonialism constructed the Orient, but how we continue to be trapped in our “postcolonial predicament” by the political and social categories we have inherited from the colonial era. History becomes in more ways than one the Joycean nightmare from which we are trying to awake.

EcoPopulism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice. By Andrew Szasz. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Reviewed by Daniel Brook.

Along with many other social movements, environmentalism grew stronger in its 1960s incarnation. In 1970, the year of the first Earth Day (on 22 April), it looked like payday for the environmental movement as a flurry of legislation passed through the Congress and was signed by President Nixon: the Resource Recovery Act, Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Clean Air Act, Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration, Consumer Product Safety Commission, and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Whereas the first wave of environmentalism in the United States focused on the conservation of beautiful locales and culminated in the construction of a National Park System (beginning with Yellowstone National Park on 1 March 1872), the second wave of the 1960s emphasized general health and safety in the age of modernity, as opposed to aesthetics, and resulted in the Acts of 1970 and the institutionalization of Earth Day. The third and current wave of environmentalism began on 2 August 1978, when the mass media ran stories on the tragedy of Love Canal. It is to the genesis and development of this current wave that EcoPopulism is dedicated.

Interestingly, though not surprisingly, the Nixon Administration latched on to an obscure passage in the 1970 Resource Recovery Act in an attempt to undermine it through delay. Indeed, the Haldeman Diaries (1994) reveals that as late as 9 February 1971, Nixon “feels the environment is not an issue that's worth a damn to us.” The passage in the Act called for “a report on ‘the storage and disposal of hazardous wastes.’” Nixon's idea was to study hazardous waste rather than regulate solid waste. The report, though, later became the basis for the Resource and Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976. So, without any public pressure, the federal government technically began regulating hazardous waste for the first time. However, RCRA essentially remained dormant until Love Canal. Love Canal, an unused navigation channel in Niagara Falls, New York, was physically covered up in the early 1950s. After having been a chemical company dumping area since 1942, it was sold to the local Board of Education in the 1950s for one dollar and a release from future liability. When a school and houses were then built on the site, families moved into the area. In 1976, following heavy rains, toxic waste started oozing to the earth's surface, showing up on school grounds, on people's yards, and in basements. Of the 88 chemicals identified, many at very high levels of concentration, 12.5 percent of them were carcinogenic, with other chemicals linked to other health hazards. The mass media began to popularize and (inter)nationalize this local disaster in 1978, only after two years of intense local activism, thereby “manufacturing consent” (Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 1988) for public awareness and mass fear. Thereafter, Szasz asserts, Love Canal became a “political icon” within environmental consciousness and a rallying cry against the siting of hazardous waste. With an estimated 19,000 hazardous waste sites as of 1980, according to the EPA, toxic waste was clearly a public problem. Now, thanks to political activism and media coverage, toxic waste had finally become a public issue.

In the aftermath of Love Canal, legislators scrambled to pass some sort---any sort---of hazardous waste cleanup law. After much compromise, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), more commonly known as Superfund, was signed into law by President Carter the month before he left office. While other social movements either floundered or struggled for survival in the repressive era of the Reagan 1980s, the hazardous waste movement grew both stronger and more radical. Indeed, according to Szasz, hazardous waste laws are the only environmental regulations to have gotten tougher under Reagan (after initial weakening). The issue was too powerful to ignore, and the actions of so-called ordinary people had made it so.

Before Love Canal became a national issue, hazardous waste protests were sporadic and isolated. Local groups occasionally formed throughout the 1970s as a response to threats to their local environments, essentially reinventing the wheel in each neighborhood. However, after August 1978 when the image of Love Canal exploded in the national consciousness, there were increasing numbers of protests and increasing networks among them. The partial meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania the following year (28 March) and the subsequent massive protests and media attention contributed to this trend. Further, the protests were characterized by “exceptional demographic diversity,” seeming to cut across all groups and sub-groups. Informal networking soon led to a formal network. Lois Gibbs, the leader of the Love Canal Homeowners' Association and a former apolitical housewife, founded the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW) in 1981, “the first and still most important of these formalizations.” Other national networks later formed and the more established environmental organizations began to address the hazardous waste issue as well.

By 1986, CCHW engaged in issue expansion: "A community can face threat from a host of other sources [besides industrial hazardous waste]---the smokestack emissions of a local factory, unsafe disposal of infectious hospital wastes, toxins stored at a nearby military base." Two years later, as Szasz explains, CCHW literature mentioned global issues for the first time, and in 1989, it resolved to 'broaden [the] movement [to] include all environmental hazards.' The movement shifted from a focus on "hazardous wastes" to "a much more broadly defined 'toxics' movement." And, as Szasz demonstrates, this "process of issue expansion is continuing." Moreover, issue expansion "was accompanied by an increasingly comprehensive, totalizing critique of modern economic production and forms of political power." The movement had developed from NIMBY-ism ("not in my backyard") to what Szasz calls radical environmental populism ("not in anyone's backyard"). In its progressive populism, the movement draws on the best of American history and its democratic ideals: "a struggle of the small people against big government and big business... 'the people' against the privilege and power of dominant, exploiting, selfish, and uncaring elites." As Szasz clearly explains, the phrase radical environmental populism "situates the movement in a larger history of American radicalism while it distinguishes the movement both from earlier forms of populism and from other tendencies in contemporary environmentalism." Although the movement does not employ the phrases, the substance of radical environmental populism is a form of "socialist ecology" (Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest*, 1990) or "ecosocialism" (Stephen Croall and William Rankin, *Ecology for Beginners*, 1981). In both phrases, the term can be translated to justice, not in the legal sense, but in the stronger sense of fairness.

It is in discussing radical environmental populism that Szasz is at his best. Szasz, a sociology professor at U.C. Santa Cruz, is clearly sympathetic to the cause and its actors. Szasz describes and analyzes the history of the protest movement against toxics with great confidence, while he theorizes about the present and future with obvious hope and anticipation. Szasz views the protest movement as necessary for changes in governmental policy and corporate practice. Szasz argues that

the hazardous waste movement is responsible for the progress toward waste reduction, but not in the simple and direct sense... Rather, the movement is responsible because it created something like a "scissor" effect: at the centers of formal political action, the movement caused regulations to be strengthened. Locally, the movement threw a wrench into the siting process, making it nearly impossible to build new disposal and treatment capacity. The combined impact...is...the principal historical fact behind...[the] industry's "voluntary" move toward waste reduction.

As one often hears in movement circles, "direct action gets the goods." In this sense, though, the structures of governmental policy and corporate practice are dialectically related to the collective agency of the protest movement; structure and agency presuppose each other. Indeed, an EPA lawyer admitted (at a private law school lecture that I attended on 9 September 1992) that a hazardous waste siting decision ("perceived risk") is based on a formula of "probability risk" (dose or level of exposure times the toxicity) in addition to a community's "outrage" (based on "fairness," "voluntariness," and "benefits").

However, Szasz concedes that, so far, “implementation has not been good enough really to protect public health and the environment.” Yet, commenting on the “average citizens’ immediate concerns,” Szasz characterizes their assessment of the results of regulation as superficial. In contrast, Szasz cites as “real accomplishments” such academic concerns as “the development of ‘issue infrastructure’” (“that complex of knowledge, technology, and institutions that makes it possible for society to understand and cope with any issue”) and “society’s knowledge” (which is “much, much better than it was fifteen years ago”). It is here that Szasz is at his weakest. With his implicit dismissal of a populist conception of reality and its sense of importance for actual environmental achievements, Szasz imposes from above an over-intellectualized value system divorced from the realities on the ground. While analyzing and championing a populist movement, Szasz falls back into the narrow confines of his armchair and ivory tower. Szasz should re-read the inspiring history of ordinary people struggling for survival that he himself chronicles. The hazardous waste movement began in order to achieve a safe and healthy environment, not to increase “issue infrastructure” or “society’s knowledge.” Regardless of how useful such phenomena are to intellectuals, they are not worth much to most of the people who pay the price of toxic waste with their lives. Knowledge is only a tool, albeit an important one. The task for radical environmental populists, we must recall, is to attain a safe and healthy environment for everyone to enjoy. To paraphrase Marx: the intellectuals have only studied the environment; the point, however, is to protect it and make it better. One must always distinguish between means and ends, for when the former become the latter, one has been co-opted.

Szasz exhibits other flaws, both formal and substantive, in his study. In form, his most significant faux pas is repetition. There are, unfortunately, several quotes that are duplicated in various parts of the text. Especially in a book which is not voluminous (it would be somewhat more tolerable in Winston Churchill’s eight volume biography), the reproduction of quotes is frustrating and disappointing, in spite of the value of the quotes themselves. Substantively, Szasz is guilty of omission more than commission. For example, Szasz neglects to make any international comparisons (e.g., How did Canada--its government and people--react to Love Canal? How did Love Canal scenarios play out in other countries?) or to mention the international dimensions of hazardous waste (e.g., its trade and transport, what I have elsewhere called “toxic trade”).

Some examples of topics missing from Szasz’s analytic scope include the maquiladora industry along the U.S.-Mexico border where many “Love Canals” are currently wreaking havoc and both the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT] have the potential to harmonize standards and regulations down to their lowest common denominator. Another disturbing example of omission is a proposal made by Lawrence Summers (former Chief Economist for the World Bank and presently in the U.S. Treasury Department) to ship toxic waste to the Third World. Summers reasons that underdeveloped countries are also “under-polluted” countries (“Let Them Eat Pollution,” *The Economist*, 8 February 1992). Szasz could have also assessed the European Greens, especially in Germany and Sweden, who have made some significant advances. Although the toxics debate and movement have been globalized, Szasz’s analysis, unfortunately, has not been. Such comparative analysis would have strengthened *EcoPopulism*.

Although I am largely sympathetic to Szasz’s position, he can also be criticized for being anthropocentric. Szasz does not seem to consider the environment for its own sake or the multitudinous effects of toxics on non-humans; Szasz never asks, for example,

“should trees have standing?” (Christopher Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?* 1988/1972). Nevertheless, within the universe of people, Szasz does a commendable job of linking the issues of class, race, and gender to that of the environment. These crucial issues are all too often either ignored, downplayed, or whitewashed. Szasz, instead, compellingly argues that toxic victims are usually poor or working class and that “[t]heir environmental problems are inseparable from their economic condition.” Moreover, and with tremendous overlap, the geography of toxics production and disposal disproportionately coincides with that of communities of color. Although he discusses the topic of “environmental racism” (Ben Chavis, 1987), Szasz does not enter the debate over whether toxic waste is targeted against people of color per se or against people of color and others who are members of the lower and working classes. Referring to Love Canal, Szasz describes the residents as working class, but does not mention the community's racial demographics. The community was predominantly white, working class, and Catholic.

Sexism and patriarchy also play a role in the search for “environmental justice” because toxics movement protests have revolved around women's traditional spheres: family, the home, health, and community. In no small part due to this, the “vast majority” of members and leaders of these movement organizations are women. Therefore, environmental justice has marched alongside environmental democracy. According to a CCHW publication cited by Szasz, from which the title of this review is taken, “[e]nvironmental justice is a people-oriented way of addressing ‘environmentalism’ that adds a vital social, economic and political element...When we fight for environmental justice, we fight for our homes and families and struggle to end economic, social and political domination by the strong and greedy.” To this end, the toxics movement has reached out to all other progressive social movements and, according to Szasz, may even become the vanguard of a broad populist movement for social justice.

Finally, Szasz employs an interesting methodology which he calls “issue history.” It requires the eclectic and non-dogmatic use of theory, history, sociology, political science, and semiotics in a synthetic, transdisciplinary manner. To this end, Szasz makes good use of government documents, reports, and hearings, news stories and articles in the mass media, public opinion surveys, movement publications, speeches, and interviews, in addition to theories of political economy and postmodernism, in an attempt to analyze the various interrelated facets of the issue of toxic waste. Szasz remarks, for example, that “things become conceptionally interesting exactly when action transcends the boundaries of any one zone.” He continues by stating that “the task, both intellectually and politically, is not just to understand what happens in each zone of activity, but more to understand the conditions under which issues jump from zone to zone, creating complex, dynamic interactions among them.”

It is precisely due to the transdisciplinarity of both the toxics movement and Szasz's study of it that the book is appropriate for so many people. *EcoPopulism* is recommended not only for those concerned with the environment and social movements, but would also be relevant and worthwhile for those interested in media analysis and current events, as well as public policy and political economy. Even with its flaws, *EcoPopulism* provides a fascinating account of a powerful grassroots movement still in progress. If Szasz is correct, the third wave of environmentalism may be swelling into a tidal wave that we won't want---and can't afford---to miss.

Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relations and an Analysis of Indian Culture. By Murray Milner, Jr. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. xiii, 336 pp.

Reviewed by Karen Leonard, Professor of Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine CA 92717-5100.

Murray Milner, Jr., has undertaken an ambitious project on many counts. His book is about social theory and also about the Indian caste system and Hinduism; it is about the false dichotomy between “interpretive” and “scientific” methodologies and also about the need to transform society. For the sake of the earth's ecology, Milner argues that status, by which he means social worth and value, must be less closely tied to economic and political power. He analyzes India because he feels “the culture of premodern India ... has been relatively successful over a long period of time in insulating status from economic and political power (p. 16).”

A serious and commendable attempt to understand Indian society and make it more accessible to non-specialists on India, Milner's analysis is successful on some levels. He has drawn upon many excellent scholarly works on Indian society and religion with skill and sensitivity, and his development of theoretical concepts to explain the Indian material is rigorous and logical. I expect that many readers will be well introduced to the complexities of India through this book. The complexities are such that he cannot explain it all, of course, and many of one's criticisms are anticipated and dealt with in caveats and discussions of the limits of the analysis. But the fundamental problem is one of historical emphasis.

Milner has been captivated by Brahmanical tradition, Hindu India, the Sanskritic “Great Tradition.” From his exposition, one would hardly know that equally rich Mughal and British Indian traditions succeeded the early Hindu ones and indeed have dominated the subcontinent, in succession, for the last five hundred years. Both of these traditions are at present controversial. The Mughal and other Muslim rulers are being dramatically misinterpreted and their many positive contributions in danger of being erased from Indian history, and the British rulers are being condemned not only for economic and political subversions but for an Orientalist construction/strengthening of the very Brahmanical culture Milner sees as his object of study. Neither controversy finds discussion here. Instead, an unproblematic “traditional India (p. 120)” is presented to illustrate the applicability of Milner's theory of resource structuralism.

Confusion about historical change shows up most strongly in his concluding chapter 16, where he talks of limitations due to the lack of historical data but maintains that his study of “traditional India” presents characteristics present “in most time periods that we know about (p. 228).” Admitting that he pays little attention to contemporary urban India, he sees his contribution as a sound, albeit “ahistorical,” analysis of the “traditional” social structure; then he defends himself against the “ahistorical” charge by saying that an explanation of a system's *current* (my emphasis) rules and operations is still valid. He also recognizes here that he deals “almost exclusively” with Hindu India (p. 229).

Milner is convinced of the ideological centrality and historical continuity of Brahmanical notions of ritual purity and caste status, “the relative stability of Indian social structure at the village level,” and “the Brahmans' prominent and often dominant position as cultural and religious leaders over a long period (p. 56).” Historical studies of castes in Mughal or British administrative settings and studies of popular religion where Brahmanical notions are unknown or do not fit have not been used. One can hardly fault him, however, for a poor command of the literature, and scholars whose work fits in with his views and development of theory have been used well. His discussion of sacredness and status in Hinduism, chapters 12-15, is generally very well done, based on excellent recent work, and brief contrasts with Christianity add a comparative dimension. In his writing, salvation or moksha is analyzed as the ultimate form of social mobility or status transformation, but the quoted poetry from various bhakti (devotional) movements should introduce many to some of the special delights of Hindu doctrine and practice. Even here, however, his notion of Brahman dominance sometimes leads him astray. He says that in Europe the priesthood was in principle always open to those of low status origins, “which certainly has never been the case in Hinduism (p. 217),” apparently forgetting that in recent centuries secular Brahmans have always ranked above priestly Brahmans, and that persons of any status or gender can become sanyasis (world renouncers) and sanyasis are often gurus or religious preceptors for lay Hindus.

I do not mean to underestimate Milner's achievement. The book is the product of much hard work and hard thinking, and his prose is clear and forceful (but the editor did not catch some instances of lack of agreement between subject and verb or modifier.) Milner has mastered an extensive and difficult body of material, understood it through social science theory, and used it to suggest further advances in that theory. It may be that this study will lead to real advances, particularly in the moving of the “unique” case of Indian society into the mainstream of sociological analysis.

Women in Pain: Gender and Morbidity in Mexico. By Kaja Finkler. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994 xviii, 238 pp.

Linda M. Whiteford, Ph.D., MPH Professor and Director of Graduate Programs in Applied Anthropology, University of South Florida.

This is an ambitious book. In her book, *Women in Pain: Gender and Morbidity in Mexico*, Finkler sets out to explain the differential morbidity patterns experienced by men and women in Mexico. The author has been conducting research and observing Mexican life for 20 years, during which time she has lived with families, trained as a Spiritual healer and studied biomedical practices in one of the largest hospitals in Mexico City. The author's knowledge of the population she addresses is evident on every page and in every description, as is her grasp of the complexity of issues surrounding the women whose pain she describes.

Finkler writes that her goal in writing this book is to “deepen our grasp of human sickness...and to do so I focus on what I call life's lesions.... Contemporary biomedicine has unquestionably made dazzling advances and has succeeded in treating complex medical impairments. At the same time, biomedicine often fails to alleviate patients'

routinely experienced symptoms because of the limitations of the biomedical script, a script that fails to comprehend life's lesions" (p. xv).

Life's lesions, a concept that Finkler introduces, is an intriguing symbol of how the wounds inflicted on people (in this case, women) during their lives become expressed in physical manifestations of ill health. An important aspect that Finkler incorporates in the concept of life's lesions is the reflection of a sense of loss of control, or of one's life being out of control. Her description of Mexican gender role expectations makes clear why women who have little control over their lives would express chronic and unexplained physical pain. Lest readers would assume that all Mexican women are trapped in the same gender roles and experience the types of life's lesions that Finkler describes here, she cautions against being able to generalize the entire population of Mexican women. The women described in her book are, however, a particular set of women. They were drawn as a subset from a sample of 205 women Finkler interviewed initially at the hospital, of whom 161 were interviewed later in their homes. The 10 case studies included in the book are drawn from the 161 women interviewed both in the hospital and in their homes.

The book is divided into three parts: the first part reviews the literature on the nature of sickness, the nature of gender, and the intersection between gender and sickness. The second part lays out a good review of gender roles in Mexico, historical relations between men and women, and the place of Spiritualist or Evangelical movements in the lives of poor men and women. In addition, Finkler includes an overview profile of women in her population. The longest section of the book is reserved for the case studies of women, their life's lesions and their descriptions of their pain. In the case studies the reader meets Juana, Susana, Carlotta, Maria and five other women whose lives and whose pain are detailed.

Maria, for instance, is 33 years old, married and has two children. She lives in a newly developing neighborhood in Mexico City, and like other women in the book has seen a variety of physicians and healers without surcease for her pains. She has been diagnosed as having "a spastic colon, parasitic colitis, and diverticulitis" (p. 190). In addition, her condition has been diagnosed as "ovarian problems," "chronic nervous colitis" and one doctor told her that her problems were caused by "animals in her stomach" (p. 192). She said that she has experienced a fright (*susto*) that caused her to become very nervous. Unable to find relief from her continual pain, Maria sought out a homeopath, but to no avail. When the Social Security doctors were unable to treat her and became exasperated, they referred Maria to a psychiatrist with whom she spoke about her refusal to have sexual relations with her husband since he has been sexually active with another woman.

According to Maria, she and the psychiatrist "just talked" (p. 192). "He asked me questions about my sexual relations with my husband and how I treated my children. The psychiatrist told me that I should change, but if my husband who has made me so [sick] does not change, and he does see the psychiatrist, then what difference will it make? It is just talk. What for, I will be the one who will change but my husband will not. I told the psychiatrist that I didn't like being with my husband and that he was seeing other women, and he told me that we [Maria and her husband] needed to talk: that we should be calm about it, and when he said, "well, maybe it wasn't true [that her husband had another woman], I didn't return" (p. 192).

Finkler notes that the medical profession provided little help to Maria. Indeed, the psychiatrist failed to recognize her suffering, and in general, medicine failed to treat Maria as a whole person expressing a life of misery and injustice. Maria's life's lesions reflect her perceived lack of control over her own life; her inability to acquire a primary school

education because she was forced to care for her 10 brothers and sisters, and her inability to control her husband's sexual relations with other women. Poverty and traditional gender roles conspire to limit Maria's perception of choices open to her, and result in the physical manifestation of shifting and continual pain.

Finkler's women are real: they will be recognizable to anyone who has worked in Mexico. I knew women like them when I worked in both southern and northern Mexico. Mexican women are not the only women whose stories resonate in these case studies; they are women whose lives have been continually constrained until the women themselves see no possible good future in store. As I wrote at the beginning of this review, this is an ambitious book; a book that succeeds better at some levels than at others. The concept of life's lesions is a significant contribution, allowing us to comprehend the cumulative effect of life's assaults on a person. Finkler also succeeds with the chapters on the nature of sickness, gender and history. Life's lesions cannot be understood without the presentation of that larger context. Putting the case studies together with the literature on gender, sickness and history is less successful until the reader reaches the conclusion where Finkler brings it all together.

I would have liked to see more complex analysis of each case study, even if that meant fewer case studies could be presented. I also wanted to know more about the medical/health care systems in which these women were enmeshed. In some ways this book can be read as an indictment of the medical care the women received, but we don't know enough about the system to draw our own conclusions and Finkler does not directly address the subject. The author acknowledges that the book is intended to be "more an intermediary stage than an endpoint" (p. xvii). Using those words as a guide, perhaps the next stage will include a greater reliance on the political economy of the situation. Until then, we can appreciate this book for its many insights and valuable contribution of life's lesions in understanding health and illness.