

## BOOK NOTES

## CURRENT EVENTS

***Power, Justice, and the Environment:******A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental******Justice Movement*, edited by David Naguib Pellow and Robert J. Brulle. MIT, November 2005. \$25 paper**

In the 1970s and '80s scholars and activists began to publicize correlations of exposure to environmental hazards with the geographies of disenfranchised populations. By the 1990s that publicity had made some effect upon mainstream environmentalism and federal policy, but since then the environmental justice movement (EJM) seems to have stalled. This collection of essays evaluates the EJM as it enters a new era, questioning the political purchase of its national strategy, anticipating its adaptations for the globalization of economy and risk, and debating the obstacles to the EJM's political effectiveness. Contributors include academics and activists, often paying useful attention to the role of their collaboration in the development of the EJM. The collection might have been still more useful had the editors invited more academic contributors from beyond the field of sociology. For a movement adapting civil rights and environmentalist rhetoric, perspectives from political science, geography, ethics, and religious studies would seem apt. Indeed, the activists' essays tend to range across disciplinary domains, concentrating into geographical proximity a diverse array of relevant topics. Yet that diversity contributes to just the problem the editors want to address: how the complexity of environmental justice frustrates coherent analysis, proliferates relevant researches, and diffuses community participation. Their response manages that complexity by proposing manageably simple sociological frames, and thus these essays may encourage wider discussion. As it stands, the collection will prove stimulating to students, activists, and researchers. Public policy advocates and analysts will appreciate its evaluations of discursive and political strategy, while activists

and teachers may applaud the inclusion of narrative conversations and cases.

—Willis Jenkins

***On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era*, edited by Fereshteh Nourale-Simone. Feminist Press, November 2005. \$18.95 paper**

Fourteen distinguished scholars discuss how the interconnected web of economic globalization, transnational networks in new information technology, and the revival of Islam have opened up new opportunities for, and have in turn been transformed by, Muslim women. An underlying common theme of the contributors is their challenge to the colonially rooted, monolithic representation of Muslim women as voiceless and invisible victims ("behind-the-veil") of the Islamic patriarchy in both traditional and modern eras.

Toward this end, the book competently shows how new global technologies have empowered Muslim women by providing novel channels through which to make themselves seen and heard, thereby to explore their identities as they remake the public sphere. This exploration takes place especially in negotiating the gender-neutral interpretation of their religion as well as in their struggle against patriarchy and struggle for full citizenship through greater participation in civil society. It is interesting to note that the authors take no pains to prove misogyny among Islamist movements and instead look at how Islamist women negotiate their gender identity within the movements they belong to, which in a sense facilitate public actualization of their agency. Along with calling attention to these avenues for empowerment, this anthology establishes how Muslim women already have had rich histories of activism and of resistance to subordination. Its authors confront both the traditional patriarchy in the Muslim lands—especially that of women's relationship with the holy text—and emancipatory Western feminism, particularly its teleological and Western-centric notions of modernity and secularity.

Added to its theoretical potency for emphasizing equally the empowering effects of structural forces and the priority of women's agency, *On Shifting Grounds* is a fresh addition to feminist studies not merely for its unique theoretical statement and rich case materials but for its challenge to the universalist presumptions of Western feminism.

—Halil Ibrahim Yenigun

## HISTORY

***Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830*, by J. H. Elliott. Yale, May 2006. \$35**

Sir John Elliott, the undisputed dean of Hispanic New World and Golden Age historians, brings his formidable knowledge to bear on this important topic. His access to documentation and his nuanced reading, subtle marshaling of the facts, and elegant prose come together in a book destined to be the standard reference in the field. Spain and Britain contested the Atlantic for centuries; their relationship ebbed and flowed, from deep mutual hatred and suspicion to accommodation and, at times, even trust. These nations created very different, yet intertwining, empires in the New World, colonizing different territories (“micro-worlds, each with its own geographical and climatic characteristics”) and creating structures that reflected the goals, foibles, and economic necessities of the Old World. Elliott compares the two styles—and the results—brilliantly, fusing two seemingly separate histories into one compelling and detailed story. By looking at family, race, religion, war, agriculture, trade, and the costs and consequences of the enterprise, Elliott enables us to see with impressive clarity how “a host of personal choices and the unpredictable consequences of unforeseen events” shaped the creation, development, and ultimate loss of two great empires.

—David T. Gies

***To Rescue My Native Land: The Civil War Letters of William T. Shepherd, First Illinois Light Artillery*, edited by Kurt H. Hackemer. Tennessee, April 2006. \$42**

The Voices of the Civil War series by the

University of Tennessee Press has presented a number of first-rate Union and Confederate accounts/memoirs, diaries and journals, and sets of letters. The William T. Shepherd letters constitute a valuable addition to this body of published primary material. A nineteen-year-old volunteer in 1861, Shepherd served first as an artilleryman and later as an ordnance officer. He participated in the battles and campaigns of Belmont, Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga before being mustered out of service in the summer of 1864.

A prolific and thoughtful correspondent, Shepherd commented usefully about, among other topics, his motivations and political views, logistics, and interactions between Union soldiers and Confederate civilians. He explained in the spring of 1861 why he, a devout Christian and loyal citizen, should don a blue uniform: “The cause is a good one, especially as a person who knows the love of God can be of service to his Heavenly Father as well as his country—I care not for military honors & glory.” The awful carnage of Shiloh in April 1862 confirmed Shepherd’s earlier suspicion that military service would bring him no sense of glorious achievement. Writing several weeks after the battle, he remarked that the “death groans of thousands of human beings rent the air in wild confusion . . . my heart sickens and longs for communion with the hallowed scenes of home and dear Friends.” Readers overwhelmed with the number of collections of published Civil War soldiers’ letters would do well to consider William Shepherd’s—which are better than most and almost certain to enhance anyone’s understanding of the conflict.

—Gary Gallagher

***Two Confederate Hospitals and Their Patients: Atlanta to Opelika*, by Jack D. Welsh. Mercer, March 2006. \$35**

This volume offers, in fewer than 200 pages, a wealth of material regarding Confederate hospitals that served the Army of Tennessee in the Civil War’s Western Theater. The author of standard reference works on the medical histories of all Union and Confederate generals, Welsh provides descriptive analysis and a great deal of aggregate data as