Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine, Geographies of Development in the 21st Century: An Introduction to the Global South

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Book reviews

Recovering Resources – Recycling Citizenship: Urban Poverty Reduction in Latin America *Jutta Gutberlet.* Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington, 2008, 164 pages (ISBN: 978-07-5467-219-7) (hbk).

In *Recovering Resources – Recycling Citizenship: Urban Poverty Reduction in Latin America*, Jutta Gutberlet demonstrates the necessity of reconceptualizing waste as a resource and the implications of such a reconceptualization for our understandings of urban development in poor metropolitan areas of Brazil. She is particularly sensitive to the contributions of the numerous waste scavengers to the economies of such areas and the detrimental public and environmental health effects of current waste management practices, particularly in the informal settlements where many of the scavengers live. By valuing waste as a resource, Gutberlet argues, we can both revalue the people who make their livelihoods through informally collecting it and reform waste management to be more efficient and environmentally responsible.

The central concepts of the book are introduced in the first chapter where Gutberlet proposes a framework for understanding the complex issues associated with waste management and scavenging in the so-called global south. Here, she proposes that we think about the problem in terms of first, the social and solidarity economy, and second, resource management and governance in order to produce 'inclusive waste management' (p. 11). By the social and solidarity economy, Gutberlet means to include non-market forms of exchanging value that enhance community cohesiveness and social development. Engaging in such economies, she argues, helps us to learn new ways to create and sustain participatory democracy that, in turn, should be a key part of any form of resource management. Such meaningful participation can be encouraged through certain forms of governance, based in part on participatory budgeting practices that have become popular in Brazil.

Chapter 2 describes the extent of, and problems associated with, urban growth, consumption and the increase in solid waste in the global south. Gutberlet makes the case that this constellation of issues should be a key concern for anyone interested in contemporary urban life. Cities, she argues, are now spaces of consumption and the concomitant production of waste. Thus, responsible waste management is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for improving urban environmental conditions and human security around the world.

Chapter 3 discusses the conditions of daily life in the community of Pedra sobre Pedra, a neighbourhood in the watershed area south of São Paulo, Brazil. The chapter begins with a more general discussion of the ideas of sustainable development, social exclusion and territorial justice. In this section Gutberlet makes the case that scavengers are stigmatized, marginalized and ultimately excluded from citizenship. In the second part of the chapter we are taken through a vivid account of how this exclusion manifests in the conditions of daily life among a squatter community in Pedra sobre Pedra. In Chapter 4 Gutberlet expands on the idea of human security and argues that grassroots resource recovery efforts are essential to it. Here we also learn about a grassroots movement aimed at organizing informal waste collection. Chapter 5 follows up on the issue of informal waste recycling by focusing on the occupational health risks that come with scavenging. In order to address these issues and to improve urban environments,

Gutberlet concludes, we need a paradigm shift that allows us to understand the informal recycling performed by scavengers as an environmental service.

Chapter 6 proposes that recycling cooperatives provide a model for integrated solid waste management based on the concepts of governance, social and solidarity economy, and participatory resource management that were discussed in Chapter 1. Here Gutberlet argues that organized recycling groups must participate in waste management projects in order to improve them. The second part of this chapter is a discussion of two case studies: first, a recycling cooperative in Ribeirão Pires and second, a policy initiative in Diadema. The chapter concludes with six lessons garnered from the two case studies, including the need for government involvement, the effectiveness of watershed planning, and the public responsibility for recovering the dignity and citizenship of informal recyclers among others. Given these conclusions, in Chapter 7 Gutberlet suggests the following policy changes: (i) inclusion of organized recycling groups in the process; (ii) equity of pay and social benefits for the service of resource recovery; (iii) addressing all levels of eco-health; (iv) introducing eco-efficiency to ensure source minimization and resource recovery; and (v) sustainability over the long term.

The arguments set forth would be clearer, however, if Gutberlet had focused on carrying the framework set up in Chapter 1 through the book more carefully. While the framework reappears in Chapter 6, we are constantly introduced to new concepts in each chapter. The idea of human security is one example. Of course, this is related to the framework for integrated waste management as described in the first chapter, but it takes on its own explanatory power in Chapters 3 and 4. It might have been useful and more coherent to limit the concepts introduced in Chapters 2–5 and to continue to refer instead to what was originally developed in Chapter 1 around the social/solidarity economy, participation and governance. On the other hand, these concepts are really only cursorily introduced in Chapter 1, because much of that chapter is dedicated to background information and theoretical concepts that might contribute to, but are ultimately not included, in the model. Readers who want a clearer notion of what this framework can really tell us about the issue at hand might want to follow Chapter 1 with Chapter 6.

There are also those who will be less sanguine than Gutberlet about 'community as an ideal unit for implementation' (p. 48). While Gutberlet is careful to say that no such thing actually exists, she settles on community as a scale of analysis and as an object through which reform can be implemented. However, the validity of this choice is somewhat belied by her own example. We are told several times that there were tensions within some of the neighbourhoods over the form of recycling co-ops, but Gutberlet eschews what might be a very interesting study of existing problems in favour of presenting grassroots organizations as an example for good urban governance.

Overall, *Recovering Resources – Recycling Citizenship* makes a passionate argument for the urgent need to address problems of solid waste management and urban growth. The participatory model that Gutberlet proposes also has merit. Additionally, the book makes a needed contribution to studies of the relationship between development, environmental conditions and informal economies in Latin America. This would be a useful book for scholars, planners and perhaps activists interested in urban development, waste management and informal waste collecting in the global south.

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Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya: Negotiating Urban Space in Malaysia *Ross King.* National University of Singapore Press, Singapore, 2008, 321 pages (ISBN: 978-87-7694-046-1) (pbk).

King's book focuses on three major arguments: first, that the Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Region is an urban space of contradictions, inconsistencies and resentments; second, that its fabric has been instrumental in masking interracial tension; and third, that it is in the collisions between variously real and imagined spaces (for example, of ethnicity, cyberspace, formal and informal economies, or ritual and the mundane) that, ultimately, a reconciliatory space can be produced in the Malaysian city. For King, the city is to be read as a text that should be interpreted through the constant tensions and syntheses of juxtaposition, intersection and superimposition.

Chapter 1 is organized around three 'transits' along which King acts as descriptive tour guide. We are introduced to the city 'on arrival' at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Next we wander through various spaces of the older sections of Kuala Lumpur and, finally, take a very brief look along the commuter train/Federal Highway corridor. It is the second transit, through the fluid centres of older Kuala Lumpur that best exemplify King's syntheses of juxtaposition, intersection, and superimposition. Here a reader is drawn along with King and his obvious passion for this city, what it means, and how it might be understood.

In Chapter 2 readers are taken into *The Contested City*. Here King begins with a rich and detailed rehearsal of Malaysia's racialized colonial and postcolonial political-economy and their dialectical relations with space. It is a paradoxical yet productive chapter. On one hand, readers with some familiarity with Malaysia's history will find little new in arguments linking race and space in the country. On the other hand, readers new to the Malaysian situation may find themselves wading through lengthy and dense details organized around a quasi-temporal narrative that is, until very late in the chapter, only tenuously connected to one of the book's larger arguments about the fabric of the city masking interracial tension.

The divergence between the assumptions of background knowledge evident in the first and second chapters raises the question of the intended readership of the book. At least two very different audiences are suggested: those with substantial background knowledge of the city and the nation versus those with little or none. Very few of the sites King discusses at length in the text are indicated on any of the included maps. Readers not already deeply familiar with Kuala Lumpur and its environs will have a real difficulty placing – and hence, following – some of King's very personal transits through the city. Some readers may be frustrated by the organization of the book (are we moving temporally, thematically, locationally, or in some combination thereof?). A more generous interpretation is that King has created an actual text much like that of the text of the city he is investigating – one characterized by narratives that are juxtaposed, intersecting and superimposed, rather than linear.

In *The Imagined City*, King pays significant attention to the rhetorical representation of Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) by politicians, charismatic architects, and international consultants and planners. Much of the existing literature has already examined how the discursive framing of these urban spaces has become materialized in the urban landscape, so there is not much new here. Much stronger and more enlightening is the chapter's extensive mapping of the political-economic networks linking government departments and politicians with the key business players responsible for the actual build-out of Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and the physical

infrastructure of the MSC. Names are named. Like Gomez and Jomo's (1997) classic work on the broader Malaysian political economy, King unveils the complex webs of government-linked corporations, ministers, and departments that, some would argue, collude largely for their own benefit and less for the broader public good.

In *The Forgotten City*, King offers a provocative analysis of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya as each other's alter ego. In contrast to the much more mixed influences evident in Kuala Lumpur's architecture, King asks of Putrajaya: why the turn to the Middle East for symbolic inspiration and what are the consequences of such a turn? King argues that the 'backward glance to an originary Islam and the sideways glance to Western modernism' (p. 202) is a result of desires for escape from the space of the kampung as well as the yoke of colonialism and neocolonialism. It is also a form of retreat from the potential cosmopolitanisms of the real and imagined Kuala Lumpur. As a consequence, King argues, what is deliberately forgotten in this glance are opportunities to remember a distinctively syncretic past that could offer a shared communal source of national identity for Malaysians and which could progressively transcend exlusionary communalisms.

The book's final chapter, *The Metamorphic City*, turns to a consideration of possible futures. King sees inevitable rupture, though not necessarily violence, in spite of apparent interracial mixing. Taking as his evidence what he sees as various destabilizing events, King points to the ascent of religious and civilian policing of the city's increasingly intercommunal spaces of youth and dissent, the departure of Prime Minister Mahathir, and the fracturing of Malaysia's relations with the Muslim ummah after 11 September 2001. Within these lines of fracture, King also sees signs of hope: emerging spaces of reconciliation opening through the creative arts, a burgeoning middle class that is holding government power to account through the communicative spaces of the Internet, and the emergence of civil society movements like the Sufist-inspired yet intercommunal Rufaqa'. For King, Malaysia's future is in Kuala Lumpur, whereas Putrajaya risks an atavistic, communalist cul-de-sac for the nation.

Overall, King's book is a source of intellectual inspiration, but also frustration. His deep passion for the Malaysian city is obvious. His descriptions of the city's textures, its sights, smells and sounds will draw readers in, allowing those who know it well to experience the urban fabric anew and inspiring those who do not with a vicarious journey of imagination and insight. At the same time, King's book draws heavily on American and Eurocentric theories of urban space. Thus, the book begins from the premise of Southeast Asian urban space as Other and misses an opportunity to provincialize the usual taken-for-granted centres of analysis. Though King's reading is eclectic in the sense that it draws on multiple sources of inspiration, we remain well within the familiar terrain of critical theory's pantheon of usual suspects (the inclusion of Farish Noor being an important exception). Unfortunately, the text rarely does much of depth with critical theorists' arguments. Do we really need to rely on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, for example, to support the claim that 'space is always and constantly contested' (p. 219)?

King is at his best when reading Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya off one another. Such a reading offers genuinely new insights: Putrajaya, despite its Middle Eastern turn, materializes a fascinating link with Chinese imperial space in the formality of the city's axis along its grand boulevard. Thus, in King's interpretation, at the heart of this uber-Malay nationalist space is a spatial tradition Other to Malay nationalist discourses and one of their deepest sources of tension. In contrast to Putrajaya, King argues, Kuala Lumpur offers the prospect of creative cosmopolitanisms. Here, in the jumble of Kuala

Lumpur and its interstices, a genuine and progressive Malaysian national identity might be forming.

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Geographies of Development in the 21st Century: An Introduction to the Global South *Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham and Northampton, 2009, xiii + 364 pages (ISBN 978-1-84720-966-5) (pbk).

Geographies of Development in the 21st Century does not perhaps sit comfortably in any traditional teaching category, but is all the better for that. In terms of audience, authors Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine state that it is aimed at undergraduates, and also advanced (British) A-level students. Given recent changes in the A-level Geography curriculum and the introduction of a new UK A-level in World Development (offered by the Joint Welsh Examinations Committee), it would be very interesting to track whether this book can achieve such a crossover. I have no doubt that teachers and school students would find individual chapters extremely valuable, and this might encourage the enthusiastic and able to take on the whole book. This should not put off undergraduates – the book will make a very useful contribution to first and second year reading lists – although here again it breaks traditional barriers and should not be simply categorized as a 'development' course book. Chant and McIlwaine seek to transcend the 'Big D/little d' of development. While it certainly takes on the 'intentional' realm of 'Development' theory and practice, notably in its chapters on development indicators and measurement techniques, ideologies and institutions, it is mostly concerned with the immanent realm of its subtitle, 'an introduction to the global south'. Chapters on demographic shifts, urbanization, industrialization, and families and households, for example, provide valuable introductory discussions around what others have called the 'everyday geographies of the global south'. This helps remind us of our continued (if improving) disciplinary myopia in relation to the 'Development' lens, but it is also a challenge to those lecturing on a variety of first and second year courses to include the book on their reading lists. Students being introduced to a range of subjects – development, of course; but also health, gender, demography, urbanization and shelter – will all gain from the thoughtful and informed discussions. Short exercises and guided further reading contribute to the book's undergraduate-friendly style.

A feature of the book is the way in which Chant and McIlwaine have drawn upon personal experiences not only as academic researchers, but also through their work with and for various so-called global organizations such as United Nations agencies and the World Bank, as well as various civil society and campaigning organizations in the UK and the global south. Informed by this first-hand knowledge of the messy world of 'Development' practice, and also by the lives, struggles and victories of individuals and communities around the world, their book is characterized by attention to both hope and despair, and improvement and ongoing marginalization. They state that its aim is to

'explore the immense social, cultural, political and economic variations among countries and different places in the so-called Global South . . . to highlight how patterns of development differ' (p. 2). Drawing on personal experience in this way has clearly contributed to the empathetic and engaging tone of many of the examples, and it allows both authors to pack sophistication and insight into otherwise necessarily short and introductory discussions. Chant and McIlwaine therefore make a good case for focussing on those areas where they have had extensive teaching, researching and/or policy involvement. Inevitably, this means that some issues are missed, or only fleetingly covered, notably rural and environmental issues. Given that the impacts of climate change are likely to intensify risks and vulnerabilities in the twentieth-first century and fall especially heavily on poorer people across the world, these rural and environmental issues should perhaps have been included. The other area that Chant and McIlwaine are by no means the only writers to neglect, is the rise of China, and more widely the so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) or Asian Drivers, or however else one wants to designate the countries that are leading the growing shift in the geographies of power and development. Whether in terms of trade, resource prices or domestic industrialization strategies, or even challenges to hegemonic development ideologies, China and other non-western countries are going to become an increasingly visible force in the global south – for better and worse, for different poor people in different places, around the world. 'Development Geography' must reorient itself to these changing terrains.

Chant and McIlwaine's book is an extremely good introduction to 'Development' as well as 'development' in the global south. For that reason, students taking other first-year human geography courses would also benefit from this accessible text.

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Khmer Women on the Move: Exploring Work and Life in Urban Cambodia *Annuska Derks*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, Hawai'I, 2008, ix + 258 pages (ISBN 978-08248327040) (pbk).

Khmer Women on the Move presents an ethnography of rural Cambodian women who migrate to Phnom Penh, going on to work in factories, brothels and as street traders. This study explores the changing and often contradictory perceptions of, and disjunctures between, rural and urban moralities, ideals, aspirations and desires. These exist in complex interplays, continuously being renegotiated as rural women experience both mobility and modernity.

Derks' stated aims are broadly to study the mobility of young, poorly educated women in Cambodia, rather than specifically focusing on forced migration, or sex work, both commonly the subject of attention from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the media. Her portrayal of these women is in contrast to dominant views that render them relatively powerless, and under the control of external forces such as global capitalism or the constraints of a traditional culture.

Three groups are considered: street traders, garment factory workers and sex workers. Derks asserts that 'it does not make sense to study the migration of these women separately' as 'the processes and conditions are similar for all of the women' (p. 202). The obvious pitfall of this approach is the lack of depth in any particular subject matter. At some points she may have understated the differences in the experiences of each group.

Following the introduction, Chapters 2 and 3 provide background to the descriptive analysis of each of the three groups, which follows in Chapters 4–6, with the final three chapters drawing on these analyses. The background analysis in Chapter 2 draws primarily on existing literature dealing with Cambodia's rural–urban interaction. Derks usefully demonstrates the interconnectedness of Cambodia's urban and rural populations and, in doing so, challenges another dominant view – that of the vast separation between these two worlds.

The sources used in both these background chapters tend to be quite dated – most having been published in the 1960s and 1970s prior to Cambodia's civil war, or during the 1990s following the United Nations intervention. The analysis could have benefited from more recent insights into social change in Cambodia, some of which mirror and expand on similar ideas to those put forth in this book (e.g. Clayton, 2006; Harris, 2006; Ollier & Winter, 2006; Hughes & Kiernan, 2007; Winter, 2007).

The chapter on factory work offers a broad understanding of the Cambodian garment industry and the experience of the workers within it. The personal experiences are centred on one woman – with stories of her and her associates. The chapters on sex work and street trading are similarly centred around small parts of a much larger group. In the case of sex workers, the most substantial analysis comes from brothel-based sex work. However, this is just a part of Cambodia's sex industry, which includes, as Derks notes, various other forms of direct and indirect sex work. While falling short of covering the spectrum of roles implied by the chapter's title 'Sex Work', Derks succeeds in presenting a constructive depiction of one type of sex work that is contrary to the portrayal of Cambodian sex workers in western media and NGO reports as 'tricked into a life of debt and virtual slavery' (p. 89). Given Derks' previous experience in an organization with strong ties to Cambodian NGOs, I would have liked to see some discussion of the influence of NGO activities, particularly for garment factory workers and sex workers, as both groups are afforded significant attention by NGOs.

I found the most insightful analysis in the later chapters, which inform us of the disjunctures between perceptions and reality in the move to urban work. Here Derks explores the complex interplay of traditional ideals and modern aspirations – roles held concurrently, in spite of obvious incompatibilities. Derks details the women's imaginings of urban life based on the glorified images that they have experienced through television and the stories of those who have returned.

Derks draws on Appadurai (1996) and his framework for the analysis of modernity in terms of flows of people and images, and the imagination. While this theory is certainly apt for the subject at hand, as a theoretical base it feels a bit thin. The analysis could have benefited from Appadurai's more recent works and those of his colleagues at the Center for Transcultural Studies that have further developed concepts of 'multiple modernities' and social imaginaries (e.g. Gaonkar, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Appadurai, 2001; Ching, 2001; Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2004).

Derks' approach offers an insightful alternative to the view of these women as exploited victims of economic globalization. However, she does little to explore the cultural aspects of globalization, which are deeply significant in the flows of images shaping imaginings of modernity and urban life amongst these women. Personal interplays of tradition and modernity occur under the watchful eye of older generations, worried about the loss of tradition amidst rapid social change. Derks explores the balancing of the two roles, termed 'Dutiful Daughters, Broken Women' (p. 170) in managing traditional familial ideals with desires to participate in modern life.

In the later chapters a number of Khmer terms are explored, though Derks' level of competence in Khmer language is unclear. Definitions generally rely on an older Khmer-English dictionary (Headley *et al*., 1977), rather than the seemingly more appropriate *Modern Cambodian–English Dictionary* (Headley, 1997). And the use of Khmer language throughout the book seems a bit haphazard, with some words used where they appear to offer nothing over the English equivalent.

Overall, *Khmer Women on the Move* is a unique and insightful contribution to our understanding of contemporary Cambodia. While there are some weaknesses in the methods and findings, Derks has successfully challenged the generalized perceptions of the exploitation of the women in the sex, factory and street trades. For this reason, this book should be of interest to development specialists, whose ideas it challenges, as well as to all scholars with an interest in the social aspects of contemporary Cambodia. Derks clearly shows that 'Cambodian women assess their migration and urban employment in the context of personal experiences and economic benefits' (p. 203) amongst a complex interplay of ideals and expectations.

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Spatialising Politics: Culture and Geography in Postcolonial Sri Lanka *Catherine Brun and Tariq Jazeel (eds)*. Sage, London, Los Angeles & Singapore, 2009, xi + 238 pages (ISBN 978-81-7829-929-7) (hbk).

It would be a great pity if this admirable collection were to be read only by people with a specialist interest in Sri Lanka, as its importance stretches far beyond that small troubled country. Picking up on Mbembe (2001), the book takes on board the task of demonstrating 'how colonial discourses and representations are imbued with material-

ity, and how they connect irreducibly to practice' (p. 4). This means that it transcends the fashionable, but sterile, schism in cultural geography between representation and performance in order to show how the two work together in mutual support. This is a collection grounded in Sri Lanka's long-term conflict between the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority, but it goes well beyond reportage and political empiricism to bring theoretical debate into this context of deadly seriousness. The editors say in their Epilogue:

> We realise that our academic discussions often appear to peer at the internally displaced, the war-dead, the government, the LTTE, or the question of peace, through theoretical goggles of scholarly abstraction. . . . So questions remain on how our academic discussions about Sri Lanka might have relevance to the people who are living their lives with conflict, people who are manoeuvring in the uncompromised spaces of which we speak, spaces where creativity is a main source of survival (p. 220).

There should be no such lingering diffidence; this collection admirably demonstrates, with remarkable consistency, the value of the theoretical, the representational and the performative in a precisely located cultural geography.

Catherine Brun and Tariq Jazeel's introductory 'Spatial politics and postcolonial Sri Lanka' is essential reading, plunging straight in with the acknowledgement that:

> Claims and contestations over the integrity of island space, the legitimacy of the spatiality of the nation state, and of 'homeland' and territory are at the centre of a dense cluster of disputes that swirl around the referent 'Sri Lanka'. . . . Clearly, geography matters in this contested context (p. 1).

It is apparent from the first page that, though territorial issues are at stake, it is space as the product of human relations that counts.

Put simply, the eight substantive papers in this volume examine colonial era and post-Independence production and maintenance of conflicting ethnic identities in Sri Lanka, and the progressive spatializing of the resulting nationalisms; 'Rather than taking [an] uncompromising version of the spatiality of the nation-state for granted, this volume sets out to disrupt those popular spatial stories' (p. 15).

The first two chapters lay down an historical background to contemporary cultural politics. Nira Wickramasinghe's chapter examines the role of imported manufactured goods in incorporating Ceylon into the British Empire, not just in terms of trade, but also in terms of an imaginary whereby elites cast their households into a continuum with Britain. This pairs well with James Duncan's chapter charting the growth and decline of coffee production for export to Europe. Duncan's interest is in the emergence of British coffee plantations as experiments in governmentality based around management of disease in people and plants. The planters' belief in the inherent sickliness of their imported Indian Tamil labourers underpinned the opinion that 'their labour should best be utilized efficiently before they sickened and died' (p. 61), resulting not only in the cynical use of child labour and calculation of acceptable death rates, but also in the dehumanization of that population.

Sharon Bell's chapter is remarkable for its skilful handling of the subjectivity of ethnographic research, focussing on the slipping between insider and outsider roles, the feelings of inclusion and exclusion, the 'shifting geopolitical affective and symbolic distance' (p. 74) when confronted with life and death conditions. Bell recognizes, 'My Sri Lankan experience is shaped by the legacy of colonialism and my own society's

positioning as a Western state', and she uses that positionality to reveal the emotional geography of guilt, responsibility, affection and exclusion.

The next pair of chapters move over into the realm of 'representation', offering ample evidence that it is still worthy of attention. Benedikt Korf employs the history of twentieth-century conflicts over the subject matter of maps and the cartographic representation of 'a Sinhala kind of geography' based on 'hydraulic imperialism' in order to expose hardening Sinhala/Tamil nationalisms. Jazeel's use of Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost* in counterpoint to a reading of Sinhala nationalist archaeology allows him to claim that 'Engaging critically with the novel's textual spaces exposes one of the modern Sri Lankan nation-state's most taken-for-granted structures and spaces – its landscape geographies – as a geographical production' (p. 141).

Chapters by Camilla Orjuela, Nihal Perera and Øivind Fuglerud consider contemporary political practicalities – the problematics of NGO inspired 'peace work'; the undermining of supposedly intractable oppositions in cooperative endeavours; and the internal schisms within the Tamil minority. Fuglerud concludes with the depressing observation that 'The sad fact of the Sri Lankan situation is that at present the two sides at war need each other and the violence they have in common in order to sustain their own, largely imaginary, states. They exist in a mutual relationship of life support'. This might well have served as the concluding sentence in the book.

As I write this review the defeat of the LTTE has been declared, but few who have seen the images of the fighting, the Tamil refugees and the containment camps can believe that the violence is over or that Sri Lanka is one nation.

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