

in modern Britain. In order to do this, Allan explores the distinction between primary and secondary kin and the notion of 'structured choice' to highlight the balances between freedom and constraint that continue to exist where kinship is concerned. A strong sense of the time dimension and the processual nature of kinship ties and practices is conveyed also. Rather than attempting to deal with all the British studies in detail, Allan wisely concentrates on the still relevant earlier studies of Firth and his associated and Rosser and Harris as well as the more recent work of Finch and Mason. There is some, although probably not enough, recognition of ethnic diversity in the use and significance of kinship.

In the friendship chapters, Allan seeks to demonstrate that this is not purely a personal tie. Friendship is seen in the context of an 'immediate social environment' a useful term pointing to the space between individual practices and wider structures. As with the author's earlier work on the topic, emphasis is given to differences in terms of social class as well as debates about gender distinctions in the meaning and practice of friendship. In these chapters, even more so than in the kinship chapters, Allan highlights the many gaps that exist in our knowledge of the working of friendship in a modern society.

The book concludes with a helpful discussion of the uses and limitations of network analysis. While network analysis does have some ambiguous features, it serves as a useful alternative framework to the idea of 'community' which presents even more difficulties, especially in the light of its recent influence on political discourse. Used with care, network analysis may help us to map and assess the degree and character of social participation in friendship and kinship and, indeed, in other informal relationships.

To some extent this text is a survey of the continuing gaps in our knowledge. Some of these may have been rectified by recent work from the ESRCs Population and Household Change Research Programme and clearly any future text on this subject will have to take these studies in account. However, this present text provides a useful guide to some of the key literature and debates and contains concise guides to further reading and some exercises for the students. My only real complaint is that I did find the print rather small. This obviously kept the volume down to pocket-book size but was not, to this reader at least, particularly friendly.

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*Globalisation and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*

Ankie Hoogvelt, Macmillan, 1997, £40.00, paper £12.99, 291 pp.

It is at times difficult to tell whether this book is designed as a teaching text or as a forum for the author to advance sometimes contentious arguments concerning changes in the international political economy. My guess is probably both. For this reason, and because of the broad theoretical and geographical coverage, Hoogvelt's book is one thing above all else – ambitious. In the preface she actually calls the book's scope 'audacious' (p. xv). There are worse things to be, of course, and Hoogvelt's analytical consistency and strength as a writer allow her to carry off – sometimes with eloquence – what in lesser hands would likely have resulted in an unenlightening melange of familiar facts and banal commentary.

Even if people don't use terms like left and right anymore, it is clear that Hoogvelt is writing from a position which might be termed 'modified Marxian'. But, to her credit, she is eclectic. This lack of dogmatism allows the reader to absorb her fluent and competent exposition of theory and narrative. Each of the book's three main sections – on Historical Structures, Globalisation and the Postcolonial World – takes its cue from a 'radical' theoretical tradition. The first is built around Robert Cox's approach to understanding the sources of stability and change in the world system. It focuses on Cox's concept of historical structure, which she describes as 'a particular configuration between ideas, institutions and material forces' (p. 11). Hoogvelt's aim is to portray the stages of capitalism's evolution as historical structures – that is, as periods in which there was a robust 'fit' between ideas, institutions and material conditions. This is a sound idea, and it works reasonably well as a device for structuring the empirical material in the subsequent chapters. But whether it reveals anything qualitatively new is another question. By the final chapter in the section, on 'The New International Division of Labour', its relevance seemed in serious doubt.

Section two of the book – on Globalisation – attempts to use ideas drawn from the Regulation School to further Hoogvelt's own arguments about the transformation of the core-periphery relationship. Her main point is that capitalism is deepening rather than becoming more extensive, and that north-south relations can best be characterised as moving from 'structural exploitation to structural irrelevance' (p. 84). Capitalism no longer needs to penetrate the four corners of the earth, according to Hoogvelt (by way of some partial,

though clever, readings of Regulationist theorising). It is an interesting argument, but before she has a chance to make the case fully, she is on to the book's third section. The need constantly to press forward is in the nature of a book of such wide-ranging scope, but for the readers it can be extremely frustrating.

The third and final section aims to connect the ideas introduced in the two preceding sections to an analysis of current trends in 'The Postcolonial World'. Hoogvelt's theory muses in this section are analysts of postmodernity, such as Frederic Jameson, but she also, wisely, engages with critics of postmodern theorising, such as Ellen Meiksins Wood. Here is a typical example of Hoogvelt's reasonable even-handedness: 'One does not have to buy into the whole of the postcolonial discourse to appreciate that the concept has merits in helping us get a handle on the diversity of development and underdevelopment trajectories in these global times' (p. 159). And while she generally lives up to this promising statement of anti-dogmatism in the chapters which follow, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether all of the high-flown theorising – even when she treats it sensitively and in a straightforward way – is really required in order to produce the generally sensible conclusions at which she ultimately arrives.

Indeed the chapters on the post-colonial world's individual regions produce some of the book's least edifying passages. Each region/cultural zone gets a pithy epigram – Africa: Exclusion and the Containment of Anarchy; Islamic Revolt; The Developmental States of East Asia; Democracy, Civil Society and Postdevelopment in Latin America. These are far too tidy. While authors unfortunate enough to have sent chapters, articles, or books on east Asian development into press during late 1996 or early 1997 (ie, before the onset of financial crisis) should be treated with some compassion, Hoogvelt's approach to Africa is fair game for criticism. The disembodied agency of world capitalism is held responsible for an array of outcomes, many of which are themselves highly debatable – for instance, that the debt crisis of the 1980s served the 'function' of allowing 'core countries' to 'more effectively extract an economic surplus' from countries of 'the periphery' (p. 163), particularly in Africa. But if sub-Saharan Africa has been largely 'excluded' from the increasing interconnectedness which characterises today's world, and if it has been the starkest exemplar of the move towards 'structural irrelevance', then the notion of increasingly efficient surplus extraction seems, at best, logically inconsistent, and at worst, plain silly. Similar inconsistencies mar the chapters on the Islamic world

(a perhaps unhelpful construct to begin with) and on Latin America. The latter, the author's protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, seems to have swallowed the self-important romanticism of those Latin American intellectuals who have theorised social movements to death.

On the whole, this is a worthwhile book, though its ambition is not without costs. An example of its strength is the way Hoogvelt makes her case for seeing the world not as a pyramidal structure which reflects the power of the world's states, but in terms of concentric circles representing three categories of the world's people: the elite 20% who are 'bankable', those who 'labour in insecure forms of employment', and those who are 'effectively excluded from the global system' (p. 240). The book's weaknesses are to be found chiefly in the author's tendency to derive unwarranted 'lessons' – for instance, that 'developmentalism is dead', and that 'containment and exclusion rule' (p. 240). This is an intelligent analyst and forceful author in need of an equally talented and assertive editor.

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*Media, Culture and the Environment*

Alison Anderson, UCL Press, London, £12.95, x + 236pp.

Suppose you teach a course in the sociology of the environment and you want to do a session or two on environmental news. Are you going to rummage through that dust-gathering shelf of books from your undergraduate days – the Curran, the Morley, the Burns, the Gurevitch et al, the Glasgow Media Group? Are you going to spend a couple of weeks working out your own connections between news stories and the environment? Or are you more likely to hunt down a nice text book that reminds you of what all those debates were about and gives you a selection of examples with which to pad out your lectures? In these days of the overloaded academic I suspect the latter strategy will prove more popular than the former and so your luck is in! Alison Anderson's book is a sociology of journalism that looks at the production of environmental news. It is a kind of 'media sociology from before the age of poststructuralism. Not for Anderson the intricate and mind-bending debates about deconstructive inter-textuality, nor the queering of the differend, nor the trope of sexualised and racialised post-colonial embodiment in a globalised age of the fragmented imaginary. Instead, a straightforward sociology of journalism: a defence of the media sociology