

Donna Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880–1955*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009, pp. ix–252.

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This finely researched and clearly argued book is the latest from a prominent historian of modern Argentina. Donna Guy builds here on her previous insights and methodologies, characteristically taking on a neglected subject—her *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* was one of the first studies of the history of prostitution in Latin America—and deeply embedding it in the main themes of Argentine history.

The subject of *Women Build the Welfare State* is the hordes of poor abandoned children and, importantly, the women from various walks of life who mobilized to provide for them, and who in the process influenced the contours of government reform in the twentieth century. Chapters recount changes in the legal code and early reform attempts by nineteenth-century feminists and socialists (care for abandoned children was left almost exclusively to women until the after the Peronist era); the history of the first child welfare institutions run by the state; the patchwork attempts by public and private concerns, especially the patrician ladies' charity, the *Sociedad de Beneficencia*, as well as immigrant mutual aid societies; the differences in ideology and strategy among groups of Catholic, feminist, and philanthropic women; debates over juvenile delinquents and street children, who were an embarrassment to city and national government; the rise of professional (mostly female) social workers in the wake of the Great Depression; and the slow process of Peronist welfare reform.

The book brings women to the forefront of a subject considered until quite recently to be dominated by male actors, such as government officials. In doing so, Guy argues for a correction to the perception among scholars of a “masculine-defined welfare state that has persisted regardless of political ideology” (p. 193). The book also pays attention to the large numbers of destitute women, and their children, whose growing numbers made a highly visible case for systemic welfare reform. Finally, Guy makes a persuasive case against an old saw of Argentine history—that Eva Perón vengefully abolished the elite ladies' charity after they snubbed the populist first lady—and ascribes this change to government decisions in the 1940s.

*Women Build the Welfare State* is rich in historical detail, but the narrative is firmly scaffolded by theory. Guy speaks not just with gender history theorists but also with the interdisciplinary and comparative literature on the rise of the modern welfare state. Moreover, Guy's topic is framed in terms of the history of children and youth, a growing area of interest. However, the youth story is contextualized by larger questions of gender and politics. The text includes photos of philanthropists, feminists, and children in orphanages and homes, but I expected more data, maybe a few appendices, to give a sense

of the change in numbers of institutionalized children, especially given Guy's smart and balanced use of statistics in the narrative. The book is appropriate for teaching in specialized courses in a variety of fields and will interest historians of Argentina, comparative women's historians, as well as comparativists researching the rise of modern welfare systems.

———Julia Rodriguez, University of New Hampshire

Stuart Kirsch, *Reverse Anthropology: Indigenous Analysis of Social and Environmental Relations in New Guinea*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

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In his book, anthropologist Stuart Kirsch immerses us in the worlds of Yonggom enchanted landscapes, exchange rituals, male initiation rites, and sorcery. The sensibilities these practices engender reveal how the Yonggom materialize, give meaning to, and make sense of the human and nonhuman worlds around them. With intimate care, *Reverse Anthropology* renders visible the embodied possibilities available beyond a modernist ethos and points to the constraints of non-modernist forms of being and knowing.

The Yonggom live in the central lowland rain forest of New Guinea along the lower Ok Tedi and Fly rivers near the border with West Papua, Indonesia. Location matters, since the region has been the site of mining interest and political instability in recent decades. In 1984, Broken Hills Proprietary, Ltd. (BHP, now BHP Billiton), one of Australia's largest mining concerns, began extracting gold from the Ok Tedi mine upriver from the Yonggom. This gold and copper mine has had devastating consequences: sediment from the tailings and waste rock have caused the Ok Tedi and Fly rivers to flood, drowning two thousand square miles of forests and gardens and killing river life. Kirsch seeks to understand how the Yonggom's grasp of reality as constituted through and constitutive of relations helped them interpret and respond to these challenges.

Based on two years of fieldwork and extensive visits between 1986 and 2005, *Reverse Anthropology* is, at the core, a story of ontological emergences and anguishes. It is an exegesis of Yonggom thought processes, forms of engaged construction, and practiced analytics. Drawing on the rich ethnography of Melanesia, *Reverse Anthropology* demonstrates how systems of engagement and exchange serve as a form of social analysis. We learn, for example, about enchanted realms in which the manipulation of magic objects (*komon komon*) transform one's appearance in the eyes of another; once appearing to have assumed the form of a certain animal, one becomes endowed with that animal's powers. Similarly, we learn how exchange is crucial to the making of humans. Whether enacted through pig feasts, bridewealth, or mortuary rituals,