explores ritual as communication among the Afro-Indian Siddis; Dominique-Sila Khan examines the legal dimensions of ''liminality'' among the Satpanthis; Mariam Abou-Zahab unravels the party political struggles that underlie Shia/Sunni conflict in Jhang (Pakistan). An historical essay by Mohammad Ishaq Khan discusses the contribution of the Rishis to the construction of Kashmiriyat, concluding that ''[t]he so-called syncretic tradition of the Rishis was a necessary concomitant of the process of Islamization rather than its culmination'' (p. 80), a position which arguably lays out precisely the kind of teleology that Gottschalk critiques in the first chapter. Other essays explore less familiar territory. Aparna Rao looks at the use of the internet in ''reconciling moral loyalty to this global [Muslim] community with cultural loyalty to the Kashmiri nation'' (p. 103). Sudhindra Sharma provides an overview of the Muslim communities of Nepal and their negotiation with the legal apparatus of an officially Hindu kingdom and the ideological pressures of new globalized constructions of Hinduism. Dennis B. McGilvray looks at tensions between the sacred space of an isolated Muslim shrine in Sri Lanka and state-sponsored Buddhist formulations of the national landscape.

In all, this is a useful collection of essays which will provide those new to the field with an overview of current research on South Asian Islam in its lived expression, both in terms of the vigorous condition of individual ethnography and the ailing state of composite theory.

Nile Green

DAVID ARNOLD and STUART BLACKBURN (eds):
Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History.
x, 323 pp. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004. $24.95. ISBN 0 253 21727 X.

Life stories or histories articulated through words and silences come in various forms and magnitudes, be it in Yeats' poems, Keats' letters or the carefully crafted *Confessions* of Rousseau. *Telling Lives in India* presents a collection of essays that examine life histories from South Asia. The book resulted from a ''Life Histories'' project under the aegis of the South Asia Centre at SOAS: the essays are selected from the main workshop held in 2000. In the acknowledgements the editors have noted the ''very different disciplines and perspectives of the scholars''. Also noteworthy is the socio-historical expanse that the essays traverse, from Tamil tales and legends (Stuart Blackburn), to the eighteenth-century Sanskrit biography of the Tamil politician Ananda Ranga Pillai (David Shulman), Brahmo Sibnath Sastri's nineteenth-century Bengali autobiography *Atmacarit* (Sudipta Kaviraj), and the oral narratives documented by Jonathan P. Parry and Kirin Narayan in the 1980s and 90s.

The authors have chosen to term their chosen auto/biographical texts life stories or life histories, and according to their disciplinary preference have brought into the discussion the emerging modernity in colonial and post-colonial India, the traditional forms of life writing that continue to co-exist with the ''modern'' forms, and the more fluid oral narratives that negotiate silence and speech within a less structured format. Part I, ''Confronting modernity'', consists of three essays, by David Arnold, Francesca Orsini and Sudipta Kaviraj, examining: prison narratives of M. K.Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and C. Rajagoplachari among others; the writings of Mahadevi Varma;

and the autobiography of Sibnath Sastri respectively. Part II, ''Translating tradition'', comprises essays on Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya's *Aap Biitii* (Barbara D. Metcalf), *Hamara Dauri-i Hayat* by Dr Zakira Ghouse (Sylvia Vatuk), the biography of Ananda Ranga Pillai (David Shulman) and Tamil tales and legends (Stuart Blackburn). Part III, ''Spoken lives'', focuses on oral narratives of women in Kangra (Kirin Narayan), the life history of a Dalit woman Viramma in a Pondicherry village (Josiane and Jean-Luc Racine) and the marital history of an illiterate Dalit man Somvaru who lives on the edge of the steel township of Bhilai (Jonathan P. Parry).

This volume is an important addition to the studies on South Asian life histories that have become prominent in the last two decades. Pioneering efforts by scholars such as Malavika Karlekar have been bolstered in recent years by works like Tanika Sarkar's critical commentary on Rassundori Devi's *Amar Kotha*, exploration of personal partition narratives by Urvashi Butalia, Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon and others, and Partha Chatterjee's examination of the story of the Prince of Bhawal. *Telling Lives* reveals the numerous forms that South Asian life stories can take and, by the juxtaposition of forms and narrative styles, shows convergences and differences. The corpus of these written and oral texts also underlines the perceived importance, as Georges Gusdorf put it in ''Conditions et limites de l'autobiographie'' (1956), of the ''private life'' of the ordinary individual. In his essay Parry writes about the silencing of ''small'' people by ideology and ''technology of the intellect'' (Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) while Narayan writes how ''stories could be silenced on account of their sheer mundane predictability''. However, the presence of so many life stories, like the initiative shown by two low-caste women in Kangra who approach the researcher with their ''*apni stori*'', illustrates the resistance to silencing even by the illiterate and socially marginalized.

The volume also illustrates the different approaches to the genre by the author/subjects, which in turn is contingent upon historical context, education, class and caste affiliation, religion and gender. High caste, educated, successful men like Ananda Ranga Pillai, Sibnath Sastri or Jawaharlal Nehru have a premeditated approach to the genre, which is used to construct their public image and establish their claim to positions of power. Life writing for these men is, as Gusdorf notes, ''a work of personal justification''. A work like Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya's *Aap Biitii* is also perceived to be edifying and instructive, and a pedagogical purpose is implicit in the narrative. Sudipta Kaviraj notes that in Sibnath Sastri's autobiography there is none of the confessional daring of the personal autobiography nor is there a tone of introspective intimacy. The same is true of the autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru, and the writings of Mahadevi Varma, Dr Zakira Ghouse and the high-caste women of Kangra. Factors such as reticence about opening up the private sphere for public scrutiny, the implications of other lives in the life stories as well as the issue of compromising family honour lead to silences and ellipses in the narratives of men in the public sphere and those of high-caste and middle-class women. Women from the low castes are more forthcoming in their personal narratives as they are keen to establish their ''personal honour'' thus making their stories more radical. However, generally in women's narratives attempts are made to situate their identities in the public space while also, as observed by Olney in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (1980), discovering, manufacturing and recording their selves.

Life histories, even while they focus on an individual ''subject'', offer what the editors term ''a unique perspective'' on the wider forces that impinge on

individual lives. *Telling Lives* reveals a kaleidoscope of life histories that individualizes individuals, maps the criss-crossing of social, political and economic forces and sets up an interesting dialogue between the texts themselves.

Sutanuka Ghosh

ANTONY COPLEY:
A Spiritual Bloomsbury: Hinduism and Homosexuality in the Lives and Writing of Edward Carpenter, E. M. Forster, and Christopher Isherwood.
xi, 397 pp. Lanham MD and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006.
$30.95. ISBN 978 0 7391 1465 0.

Antony Copley has made his name as a historian of modern Indian political and religious movements, and as a biographer of Gandhi and Rajagopalachari; but his cultural interests have always ranged very widely. His first book was a study of sexual moralities in France from the revolutionary period to the 1980s, and in this intriguing new study of the nexus between homosexuality, mysticism and Hinduism he again shows a willingness to enter territory that more strait-laced historians (especially in India) might choose to avoid. The question that his book immediately throws up is: is there such a nexus? You can be homosexual, mystically inclined and interested in Hinduism, but is there necessarily a connection between the three? By focusing on three highly individual figures, Copley shows that for them there was indeed a connection – one that partly derived from the pressures of being homosexual in an age when it was still against the law. Whether in the present age of civil partnerships the connections would be anything like so clear is open to question.

Of his three chosen figures, E. M. Forster is perhaps the easiest to analyse. Not only has his homosexual career in India been extensively and wittily covered by P. N. Furbank in his superb biography (1977), it has also long been apparent that the eccentric world of the Indian princely states offered Forster an escape from social conventions that he personally found so stifling. Copley's main contribution in his study is to show how Forster's direct contact with Vaishnavism – his experience in particular of the festival of Krishna's birth in Dewas that was the source of the "Temple" section of *A Passage to India* – opened up a world of male identification with the feminine, transvestism and saturnalian revelry that was deeply liberating for him. His humanism and agnosticism prevented him from going the whole way towards "annihilation of the self", but Copley acknowledges "the extraordinary degree to which Forster did open himself, emotionally and imaginatively, to the Krishna cult. The dictates of his sexuality took him a long way to experiencing its extraordinary vitality".

Christopher Isherwood, younger than Forster, able through the lifestyle he adopted – first in pre-war Berlin and later in California – to be more openly gay, and less repressed in his fiction than Forster (except in the privately circulated *Maurice*) felt able to be, made a more determined effort to embrace Hindu mysticism than Forster ever did. Indeed, Isherwood's interest in India was limited to his personal religious struggle: his adoption of Swami