

and the institutions of the state and in providing a tantalizing glimpse into what a strong women's movement could be in South Africa" (253).

In the posttransition period, the South Africa's women's movement operates at three levels: national policy advocacy, networks and coalitions, and community-based women's groups. Hassim warns us that while engaging the state has been a successful strategy at some levels, it runs the risk of leaving gender issues to a new elite of academics and technocrats who, in the end, may neglect South Africa's black working-class women and perpetuate gender inequality.

*Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa* recounts a fascinating and in many ways inspiring story in a compelling and informative manner. In writing this book, Hassim has done a service to feminists and nationalists everywhere. She has drawn upon a vast body of theoretical literature and practical experience from across the globe. Most important, she has contributed the insights and lessons from women's organizations in South Africa and their valiant struggles and gains and losses over the last quarter-century.

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**Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, eds. *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*.** London: Zed Books, 2003. ix + 239 pp.

Notes. References. Index. \$31.95. Paper.

Goetz and Hassim provide a significant contribution to theorizing about women and political parties in Africa, and they offer useful guidance to feminist activists by combining analytical analysis with clear case studies of what has worked and what has failed. They place their work within the current move in feminist scholarship from analyzing women's activism in democratic transitions to examining women's capacity to push a gender equity agenda once they are in office. They specifically reject the "antipolitical" focus of much policy research, which concentrates on bureaucratic gender machinery as the significant mechanism for advancing feminist goals. As they argue, gender machinery can easily become an underfunded dead end for activists, who find themselves far from the centers of party and parliamentary power. Goetz and Hassim, along with the other authors in this book, seek instead to look at the politics in parties and parliaments and local councils, hoping to promote more analysis of how women "can enter and make an impact in the key institutions of representative democracy" (12).

The book focuses on Uganda and South Africa, current "trailblazers" in bringing greater numbers of women into formal politics, but it goes well beyond the specifics of those countries. Introductory chapters by the edi-

tors provide analytical overviews, and succeeding pairs of chapters on Uganda and South Africa provide case studies of attempts to advance gender equity in national and local government. The overview chapters succinctly synthesize current scholarship on women's activism in "new democracies," and provide a sophisticated and nuanced analytical frame for future comparative work on possibilities "for the entry of *feminists* into politics" (8; authors' emphasis). They distinguish "descriptive" representation (counting women) from "substantive" representation (a significant presence of active feminists), considering the former necessary but insufficient. They examine issues of access, influence, "voice," and accountability, and they evaluate the different mechanisms to guarantee women significant power and influence. On the basis of original empirical work and reference to existing scholarship, the authors identify four key variables for the success of gender equity agendas: formal party commitment to gender equity, strong left parties, the organization of women's structures within parties, and the continuing presence of a strong women's movement outside parties—which requires a political space for civil society organizations outside the control of a dominant party. But even when all four factors are present, they argue, gender equity is still advanced only through protracted struggle. Formal commitment to social equality and democracy is no guarantee of support of gender equity legislation, but it can provide an opening for feminist politicians (men as well as women), and parties may choose to "demonstrate" their commitment to social equality by pursuing gender equity goals (especially when, as currently in South Africa, political parties are criticized for pursuing a neoliberal economic agenda).

Sheila Meintjes's chapter on domestic violence legislation in South Africa demonstrates the importance of an autonomous women's movement; by contrast, Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi and Irene Ovonji-Odida show how attempts to include women's property rights in the 1998 Land Act in Uganda were derailed by President Museveni. Josephine Ahikire (writing on Uganda) and Likhapha Mbatha (on South Africa) detail how conservative "traditional authorities" in rural areas can impede the efforts of women in local government, even when formal mechanisms assure significant levels of representation. By providing specific case studies, such chapters challenge the received wisdom in the United States that local politics provides the easiest access for women and for feminists.

This is an important book, at two levels. Addressing theory, it marks a shift in feminist analysis toward feminist successes and failures once women are in political office. Addressing practice, it is useful both for those trying to understand these processes, and for activists (inside as well as outside government) who seek to transform democratic politics, policy, and society. Its lucid writing and its combination of analysis and clear case studies make it appropriate as a teaching resource for undergraduate as well as graduate courses, both in African studies and in comparative courses, since it frames

the discussion of women's politics in Africa with comparisons to Europe and the United States. For teachers looking for that "one book" on African women and contemporary politics, this would be an excellent choice.

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**Jean Davison. *The Ostrich Wakes: Struggles for Change in Highland Kenya*.**

Austin, Tex.: Kirinyaga Press, 2006. ii + 213 pp. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Notes. Glossary. \$14.95. Paper.

Jean Davison's experience of Africa goes back more than thirty years and is recorded in several volumes that focus on gender issues, with particular emphasis on the economic forces that underlie and shape women's lives. Her edited volume, *Agriculture, Women and Land: the African Experience* (Westview Press, 1988) includes her own chapter on land ownership in Mutira and Chwele locations of central and western Kenya, respectively: "Who Owns What? Land Registration and Tensions in Gender Relations of Production in Kenya." In it, she explores the imbalance between women's major role in the production of both food and cash crops, and their weak position as holders of title to land. A broader picture of women's lives emerges from *Voices from Mutira* (Lynn Rienner, 1996), in which Davison presents the personal narratives of seven women born between 1910 and 1950 in Mutira division of Kirinyaga District on the southern slopes of Mount Kenya. Davison first visited Kenya in 1977, and the bulk of her fieldwork with her seven informants was conducted in the early 1980s; the first edition was published in 1989, but after several subsequent trips an updated edition appeared in 1996. *The Ostrich Wakes* was written following her return to Kenya and to Mutira at the very end of 2002, after a nearly nine-year absence.

Davison's long contact with the people of Mutira allows her to present a detailed longitudinal study, in which events in individual women's lives throw light on the history of this part of Kenya from precolonial times to the present day. The narratives of the oldest women, born between 1910 and the 1930s, are used to present an image of "traditional" Kikuyu society, highlighting childhood, adolescence, and marriage. *Voices from Mutira* also provides information about the Emergency, the transition to independence in 1963, and more recent political events. The seven personal narratives are set in context with useful introductory and concluding chapters, adding up to an effective introductory ethnography of the Kikuyu.

Apart from the historical and anthropological scholarship which informs Davison's chapters, these books are infused with a sense of friendship and companionship stemming from her respect for her informants and their points of view. Davison is realistic about the problems of trans-