female and the domestic and public spheres; the effects on personal development of an enforced – though often welcome – independence during adolescence; intense and difficult relationships with mothers who represented models of the gender equality of the time but who were not around to care for their children. Participating in street drama troupes, leaving home to go on revolutionary 'long marches' alongside millions of other teenagers, or organizing experimental agricultural techniques in the cold north-east – through these different recollections, the contributors create a powerful sense of the autonomy they acquired as children and teenagers that informed their personal and professional choices in adult life. These are extraordinary women, who whatever our 'outsiders' interpretations of their revolutionary pasts, have moulded their experiences of growing up during an extraordinary time into their feminist takes on their own presents. All acknowledge the enriching insights into their pasts that their positions of detachment as academics in the US offer. Detachment across time and place may also explain the nostalgic tones of many of these accounts. But as the editors of *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* note, experience and memory are 'sites of struggle for historical representations and experiences.' The issue is not to acknowledge experience as 'historical truth', but to recognize their historicity, and therefore importance in contributing, alongside others, to a comprehensive analysis of historical processes.

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Behind closed doors: domestic violence in India

Rinki Bhattacharya (editor); Sage Publications, New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London, 2004, 234p; ISBN 0-7619-3239-9 £14.99 (Pbk); ISBN 0-7619-3238-0 £29.99 (Hbk)

Domestic violence is the most serious violation of all basic rights that a woman suffers in her own home at the hands of members within her own family. The manifold problems associated with domestic violence have been systematically exposed by data and in-depth work has been undertaken by several people in the women's movement. The few studies available indicate that physical abuse of Indian women is quite high, ranging from 22 to 60 per cent of women surveyed (Mahajan, 1990; Rao, 1997). Most of the available information consists of qualitative studies of very small sample size. The only large-scale indicator of violence against women is the data relating to crimes against women published by the National Crimes Record Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The records of the bureau reveal a shocking 71.5 per cent increase in cases of torture and dowry deaths during the period from 1991 to 1995 and may reflect increased reporting of violence.

This collection of essays on domestic violence in India is enriched by contributions from eminent academicians and activists who have contributed to the women's movement in India in various ways. The editor, Rinki Bhattacharya is a writer and freelance journalist, having reported on women's issues in India and abroad for over two-and-a-half decades and is presently the Director of Bimal Roy Memorial and Film Society, Mumbai. In the introductory chapter, Rinki discusses the status of women in general and violence against women in particular. She describes various practices that are discriminatory towards women, ranging from forced marriages to 'honour killings' in India to Chinese custom of foot binding. The facts and figures she gives are mostly Western-centric and at best, of the Indian diaspora in the US, although there is plenty of data available on violence against women in India (for example see ICRW and CDPA Report, 2000).

In Chapter 1, Anwesha Arya elaborates the dichotomy within the Hindu religion of being 'worshipped, on the one hand, as the ultimate creative principle, and controlled on the other as threats to that very creation'. Anwesha traces through historical and archaeological evidence within the Hindu religion to understand the role of goddesses in forming the present status of women in Indian society. Anwesha ends her chapter with the analysis that 'if Indian women are able to find a route for being defined outside the sphere of marriage as individuals, not wives or mothers or daughters or sisters, there is hope'.

In the chapter on the State response to domestic violence, Sobha V Ghosh gives a detailed analysis of the changes in law around 'cruelty to wives'. Sobha details the provisions of the Domestic Violence Bill, which is presently before the Indian parliament and describes the women's movement's engagement with the State on issues of violence against women. The manipulation of the Bill, which was initially drafted by the women's movement to a form that was not acceptable by the movement and the struggles thereafter have been aptly discussed. Sobha then discusses the role of the family members, male as well as females, in perpetuating domestic violence on women. Referring to Agnes (1995), she states: 'The politics of the household cannot be seen simply as a struggle between oppressing men and victimized women...women themselves may be inserted into a hierarchy based on age, marital status and maternal status'.

Police attitude towards women is discussed in Kalindi Mazumdar's chapter, which elaborates from the experiences of student placements in police stations in a residential area in Mumbai. From the placement experiences, the chapter describes the attitudes of police towards women, what comprises a *good woman* and what comprises a *bad woman*.

The bulk of the book (pp. 67–190) comprises of narratives of 17 women interviewed by the editor during a span of seven years from 1984 to 1991. It is these narratives, which provide the richness to this book, describing various ways in which women are controlled and abused by their husband. These women from

various different geographical locations, belonging to different castes, religions and from varied class and educational backgrounds, are similar in what they experience *behind closed doors* – violence. This collection of women's lives and their struggles from the abuser is an eye-opening account in their own words.

A useful part of the book is a glossary of terms that have been used in the book, which includes some terms that are used in common parlance in India and will be useful for a non-Indian reader.

Kaveri Sharma

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Women who live evil lives: gender, religion, and the politics of power in colonial Guatemala

Martha Few; University of Texas Press, Austin, 2002, 208p, ISBN 0-2927-2549-3 £15.50 (Pbk); ISBN 0-2927-2543-4 £39.00 (Hbk)

Few situates her book as a contribution to important themes in the historiography of colonial Latin America: understanding both colonialism and community formation as dynamic and contested processes, and specifically analyzing how women exercised authority and power within these. The majority of her source material comes from Inquisition trials, supplemented by other ecclesiastical and secular lawsuits, correspondence of colonial officials, city council records and religious tracts. While acknowledging the ways in which official Catholic doctrines and colonial power relations shaped testimonies taken by the Inquisition, she found that the lack of 'rigid lines of questioning' (p. 8) produced rich sources on local beliefs about the supernatural and revealed both the formation of social networks and conflicts within communities.

Few's specific case study is for the city and hinterland of the colonial capital of Santiago de Guatemala between 1650 and 1750, with the bulk of the Inquisition cases falling in the middle of this period. Chapter 2 introduces this particular