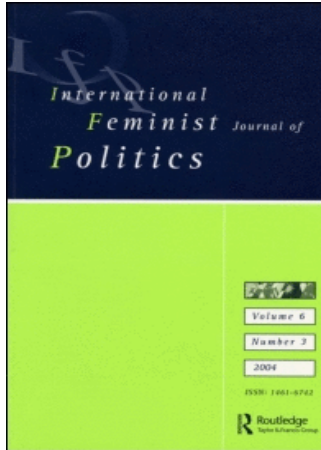


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The books reviewed in this section explore feminist politics in a global frame. In keeping with the theme of this Special Issue of the journal the featured reviews focus on issues broadly relating to gender and water. More generally, we aim not just to include writings in feminist international relations, but also to feature multi-disciplinary scholarship pertaining to global gender relations. The section is usually made up of a combination of several distinct elements: Rethinking the Canon, Feminist Classics/Many Voices, review essays and book reviews. 'Rethinking the Canon' gives space for an individual to reflect on one text that they feel ought to be essential reading for feminists working on global issues, but which is likely to be marginalized by existing disciplinary boundaries: they are invited to bring the text to our attention and to explain why it is essential reading. 'Feminist Classics/Many Voices', by contrast, includes several short appraisals of a book already widely considered a classic for feminists working on global issues. Reviewers draw on their distinct disciplinary, geographical and personal locations to offer diverse readings of the classic text. Review essays survey several texts on a single theme, aiming either to explore a recent debate that has generated a range of new publications or to survey the best of the literature covering a more established area of research. The book reviews provide brief introductions to, and evaluations of, as broad a range of new publications as space allows. Anyone with suggestions for texts to be reviewed, or requests to contribute to the section, is encouraged to contact the Reviews Editor, Juanita Elias, Juanita.elias@adelaide.edu.au, School of Politics and History, Napier Building, The University of Adelaide, SA 5005, Australia.

Review Essay

GETTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN WATER RIGHT: PERCEPTIONS, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Kuntala Lahiri Dutt (ed.). *Fluid Bonds: Views on Gender and Water*. Kolkata: Stree, 2006. ISBN 81-85604-70-3.

Anne Coles and Tina Wallace (eds). *Gender, Water and Development*. Oxford: Berg, 2005. ISBN 184520125-6.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, water is a marker of diverse perspectives, policies and practices that impact livelihoods, the environment and people – women, men and children. In more political terms, water is a marker of competing development paradigms, characterized by the age-old debate between those supporting large dams and mega-river-linking projects and those subscribing to community-managed alternatives such as water harvesting (in the form of small ‘check dams’ on shallow rivers, or roof rain-water collection tanks). As water moves from being seen as a public or social good to an increasingly priced, privatized and scarce commodity, it is becoming an economic marker of how we *value* our common resources. Historically, water has been a marker of great civilizations (the Indus Valley, Egypt and the Nile) but while different cultures and faiths revere water as the source of life, sustaining and nurturing humankind, water is also a cultural marker of purity and pollution. Such symbolic associations underpin relations of power in determining who has access to *which* water. Finally, water is a social marker of change, as new discourses on water governance have the potential to transform unequal relations of gender and power by giving voice in decision-making processes to traditionally excluded groups.

These three books are a collective gathering of more than fifty authors – women and men, academics, development practitioners, activists and policy-makers – who seek to address different aspects of mainstreaming gender in water, including women’s participation in community water management institutions, feminist perspectives on water-related technology, the material and symbolic ‘production’ of water and gender and organizational practice. Together, they ‘capture the big picture of gender and water’ to borrow the title of the gender and water seminar organized by the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) and partners during the Stockholm Water Week 2006 (see GWA n.d.). The seminar sought to understand why, despite all the evidence we have on the positive impacts of gender mainstreaming in water, we are not seeing change on a larger scale. What are the key drivers for change and the challenges and opportunities for up-scaling gender equitable water management?

Drawing on the insights, analyses and lessons emerging from the diversity of experiential writing in these three rich books, let me sketch out why the ‘gender gap’ persists in the water sector – taken here to include water for domestic and productive purposes, sanitation and nature and the environment.

The first problem is the diverse, and often limited, understandings of gender that are deployed. According to Wallace and Coles in their introductory essay, '[g]ender is often equated with "women" in the water sector. Where attempts are made to go beyond this, gender is increasingly conceptualized simply as "women and men"' (p. 8), although including men is not a sufficient response to theorizations of gender as a relational concept. Moving beyond gender, even the relationship between gender and water is not always apparent. Many of us working in the water sector can well recall how bemused people look when you tell them what you are working on: 'Why gender and water?' they ask, 'what is the linkage?'

Gender defines the socially constructed identities, roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the relationship between them. Gender relations are built on universally similar biological differences which constitute us as 'male' or 'female', but our roles and responsibilities as women or men are shaped by a process of socialization embedded in specific historical, social, economic and political contexts. As Lahiri-Dutt argues in the introduction to *Fluid Bonds*, gender relations are dynamic or 'fluid' (p. xiv) like water, characterized by both conflict and co-operation and intersecting with other axes of social stratification including caste, class, race, age, marital status, physical and mental ability.

In most cultures, men and women have different roles, rights and responsibilities in the use and management of water and, therefore, different priorities for the development of water resources. However, these are not always oppositional or fixed in time and space. For example, poor rural and urban women in most societies are primarily equated with domestic water needs given the primacy of their role as water collectors, captured in countless images of women trekking across arid landscapes or up hills, precariously balancing full and heavy pots of water, sometimes with a child tagging on, typically a daughter, who may have missed school to help her mother. Or images of rows of women with pots patiently waiting for water from community hand pumps and stand posts. Yet, many poor women are also farmers and irrigators or engaged in other water-based livelihood activities, for example, fishing in farm ponds or running small businesses and services that depend on water such as road-side restaurants. National water policies and international commitments from the 1992 Dublin-Rio principles to the Millennium Development Goals overlook the complex inter-connections between water for productive and domestic purposes as well as the entirety of women's intimate relationship with water through her life-cycle, her work and her values (see Dávila-Poblete and Rico in the volume by Bennett *et al.*). And the current discourse on integrated water resource management (IWRM), while an important step in addressing water and land management holistically, is hardly gendered or clear about what to integrate, at what level of governance and how.

Page's chapter in the Coles and Wallace volume demonstrates how the 'production' (p. 58) of water is a historical and geographical process that weaves together physical change (e.g. the technological 'lifting' of water), social relations and cultural ideology. Tracing the cultural appropriation of water, nature and women in the Stour Valley, Dorset (England), Strang (also in Coles and Wallace) argues that the early Celtic tribes, the Dunotriges (meaning water dwellers), believed in gender complementarity and that water, as in most cultures, was associated by them with the feminine principle. However, the Roman invasion, from 55 BC, marked the beginning of male engineering and technological control over water with the development of aqueducts, baths and spas. With the advent of Christianity, male and female roles were soon reframed: though the primacy of women as water carriers was recognized, water was seen as the 'product' of male creation. Wells, traditionally associated with the feminine, were appropriated by saints who used their staffs to 'find' water through divine intervention. Thus, modernization meant not only the reframing of water as a product or commodity, but also undermined ideas about social responsibility and differential access.

In Anglophone Cameroon, as in several other colonized nations, the colonial powers sold the idea of the 'production' of water as 'measures for the improvement of the condition of women' (Page in Coles and Wallace p. 61) thus, ideologically justifying the appropriation of water. While access to safe water and sanitation are important for good health, quality of life and education, the colonial understanding of 'dirt' and 'cleanliness' overlooked (and often condemned) cultural perceptions of a sanitary environment or sanitary practices.

The cultural appropriation of women is also visible in the imaginary discourse on rivers, particularly in the sub-Continent. The celebration of the 'feminine' in the representation and reverence of rivers in India, such as the Ganga or the Narmada, overlooks the social construction of women's lived relationship with water, as Lahiri-Dutt points out in her essay in *Fluid Bonds* on rural communities in the Bengal Delta. Imagining and worshipping rivers as the feminine divine, or 'controlling' them through technology (large dams), is not only symbolic of patriarchal power, but masks fears about female sexuality, the unknown.

Moreover, Pandey and Moffat's chapter in Coles and Wallace demonstrates how the complex social hierarchy of caste defines who has access to which water in India and Nepal. According to the Vedas (the sacred Hindu texts), water has both intrinsic purity as well as the capacity to absorb pollution and carry it away (see also the chapter by Joshi and Fawcett in the same volume). But water can also be made temporarily impure by its association with things or people considered impure in the rigid caste hierarchy – for example, those at the lowest rung of the caste order, the Sudras, who are considered to be permanently defiled as a result of their work (cleaning toilets, scavenging, dealing with the dead, etc.). Lower-caste communities have

separate wells, often further away, and are not allowed to draw water from the village 'common' well or hand pump. During periods of scarcity when there is no water in the common well, the upper castes can 'claim' the well of the lower castes through ritually purifying acts – as water itself is considered intrinsically pure.

Caste hierarchies intersect with gender to control women's mobility and social conduct and exclude them from certain water sources when they are considered to be 'polluting' – typically during menstruation or after childbirth. Thus, lower-caste women face the triple burden of caste, gender and poverty – stories of the sexual harassment of *dalit* (scheduled castes) women when they are forced to walk further to collect water during drought are not uncommon, as they are left alone without the support of their men who have migrated in search of work (Ahmed 2005).

Discursive representations of 'women' and the feminine, particularly in traditional, indigenous or folk/tribal worldviews, are often used to highlight reciprocity and mutual support between the two sexes and to justify allocations to households (e.g. water for irrigation), which inevitably means empowering men as heads of households and landowners, rather than encouraging the questioning of asymmetries of power in terms of accessing these rights.

GENDER, THE RIGHT TO WATER AND WATER RIGHTS

'The concept of water rights is often conflated with the right to water' (Sangameswaran 2007: 15). While the right to water as defined by the UN Economic and Social Council (2002) is seen as a basic human right, stemming from notions of dignity and encompassing the capacity to access adequate, affordable, safe and sustainable water and sanitation facilities, it is complex, contentious and not yet universally accepted. There is no consensus on how much water is adequate to meet basic human and domestic needs – estimates vary from 20 to 50 litres per capita per day – or whether this needs to take into account differences in culture, climate or technology (see WaterAid *et al.* n.d.). Some argue that the scope of a right to water also needs to include water for productive purposes (involving a minimum livelihood assurance) and water for nature, given that irrigation is the largest consumer of water and that we need to think more fundamentally about the inter-relationships between ecosystems and people (see Trade Observatory n.d.).

The discussion on water rights, in contrast, is predominantly located in the context of access – legally or socially recognized claims or entitlements – to water for irrigation and other productive needs. 'A water right gives the right-holder authorization to subtract water from a particular source and includes the particular social privileges and obligations that are associated with the right' (Zwarteveen and Boelen in Lahiri-Dutt p. 6). But it is the articulation of rights – whether it is the right to water for personal or domestic needs or

assured water rights in terms of food security – that are critical from a gender and equity perspective.

Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann (in Lahiri-Dutt p. 109) distinguish between ‘categorical’ and ‘concretized’ rights – the former (also known as ‘reference rights’ – see Zwarteveen and Boelens in Lahiri-Dutt p. 7) defines the socio-legal status of the right and right-holder (for example, only landholders can inherit the right to water in a given system), while the latter describes the social process through which rights are actualized (what Zwarteveen and Boelens label ‘activated’ and ‘materialized’ rights, p. 7). This involves looking at both the technical dimension – the infrastructure, technology and skills required to access and use water from a particular source – and the organizational dimension underlying operation and maintenance of the system and decision making on water allocation, pricing and conflict resolution.

There are several essays in all three books that look at how the process of articulating water rights and how the social field underlying such rights (decision making, authority, legitimacy) is deeply gendered. Given that water is a fluid or fugitive resource it is difficult to define a specific right, that is, how much water does each individual have the right to access? This is not as easy to measure as how much land a person is entitled to hold. Hence, water rights are defined as relational with respect to other users – how much water is everybody in a given system entitled to, when, at what price, etc.? Perhaps the biggest gender constraint in framing water rights for women, particularly farmers, is that in most countries access to water for agriculture is tied to landownership, which in turn defines membership in water user associations (WUAs) and in principle excludes women. But even where women are members of WUAs (as leaders of female-headed households, or as single women), social and cultural barriers about appropriate female behaviour in the public domain constrain their participation as much as the timing and location of community meetings (see Bastidas in *Opposing Currents*). However, not all women share the same concerns about water use and management – participation varies with household composition, number of dependants (children, elderly family members) and women’s self-perception as farmers and irrigators whose participation would be critical to decide the timing and delivery of water. For most women, irrigating at night is difficult and often unsafe (making them more vulnerable to sexual harassment), unless they have the support of male family members.

In terms of well irrigation, as Buechler argues in her chapter in *Opposing Currents* on smallholder women farmers in the Bajío region of Mexico (which has one of the highest male migration rates to the USA and Canada), women are somewhat better able to negotiate their claims to water. Well user groups are generally small, compared to those around surface water, and women are able to ‘control’ the timing of water deliveries – often through hiring a male irrigator who is in a better position to negotiate with the well-owner and other water users. At one level this can be seen as a

conscious strategy by some women farmers who may have the resources (from cultivating strawberries or from remittances) to pay a male irrigator, but their narratives illustrate that they are compelled to do this as their fields are far away and irrigation at night is still difficult, albeit less so than in a canal system.

Apart from the timing and delivery of water, women's participation in WUAs can also help raise other gender priorities, for example, the need to design canals to accommodate women's personal and domestic needs for bathing or washing clothes (see Chancellor in Coles and Wallace and Shah in Lahiri-Dutt). In their study of smallholder irrigation schemes amongst the Pedi ethnic groups in north-east South Africa, Koppen *et al.* (in Lahiri-Dutt) argue that despite land titles being mostly in the name of men, a lot of farm decisions (though on what it is not clear) are taken by women who have been managing land for years as a result of the gendered migrant labour system underlying the previous apartheid economy. Extension workers and rural banks are gradually recognizing the role of women as 'farm decision-makers' (p. 339) and more importantly, the National Water Act (1998) has effectively de-linked membership of WUAs from land titles 'by vesting water rights and membership in the water user' (p. 347).

Quota systems can also create legal space for women's participation – for example, in India one-third representation of women in the executive committee of WUAs is mandatory, but this only gives women nominal membership and few decision-making roles or little voting power (Kulkarni 2005). However, such political spaces need to be supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society actors who have a significant role to play in capacity building and creating gender awareness both among the communities that they work with and in their organizational context.

ENGENDERING PARTICIPATION

The political and social economy of participation is integral to most of the contributions in all three books. Participation is not a panacea, an 'add-on' or a 'quick fix' in terms of simply enlisting women members on water committees or ticking off male/female attendees at a village meeting. Indeed participation is about power; about the ability to raise one's 'voice', whether in formal (institutional) or informal contexts (such as a women's group meeting around a village water source); and about being accountable, honest and transparent. In short, effective and empowered participation of both women and men, particularly from marginalized groups, is the foundation of good water governance.

The role of development organizations, NGOs, government and quasi-government water agencies is central in facilitating this deeper understanding of participation as transformative change. Apart from capacity building for communities and leaders, challenging gender relations *within* organizations is

equally important and organizational leadership in this respect is critical. In a comparative analysis of three rural water supply programmes in Nepal – one by an NGO, the other bilateral and the third run by the Government – Regmi (in Coles and Wallace) argues that at the initial design stage of ostensibly gender-neutral projects, commitments made to support communities, users and beneficiaries mask inequalities rooted in gender and other social hierarchies between and among women and men. Personnel policies and a supportive environment that recognize the different needs of female and male staff (by providing, for example, maternity/paternity leave, childcare, travel to the field) not only vary within organizations, but also determine female retention rates.

In fact, assumptions that NGOs are more flexible and responsive to the needs of their women employees are not always accurate. Gender organizational audits – such as the one undertaken by NEWAH (Nepal Water for Health) can go a long way in understanding gender task stereotypes and decision-making roles, and in facilitating an organizational culture that is supportive of change (see Pandey and Moffat in Coles and Wallace). Although the Gender and Poverty (GAP) Approach, adopted by NEWAH in 1999 and supported by resource allocations from donors (a necessary ingredient along with political will), has led to considerable institutional and programmatic changes, there are still a number of constraints, rooted primarily in patriarchal families and cultures, which are simply beyond the organizational ambit.

Building organizational sensitivity to the complex social construction of gender and power in communities is essential to participatory processes that are equitable, sustainable and empowering, as Aguilar points out in her case study of a community water development project in Costa Rica in Bennett *et al.* In addition, such sensitivity can help develop a better understanding of the social organization of technology transfer, particularly by (male) engineers, and the appropriateness of different technologies for women, men, children and those with special needs (access to toilets or water sources by the elderly and physically challenged, for example). But many of the top-down technological responses to water problems – such as arsenic contamination of tubewells in Bangladesh – do not address the multifarious and diverse needs of poor women and men who generally have fewer resources to cope with such adversities and less of a voice in policy and institutional processes in a largely patriarchal social context (see Sultana in Lahiri-Dutt).

As Bennett argues in the introduction to *Opposing Currents*, participation needs to be seen as a dynamic process and not just an instrumentalist means or end in itself, mandated by decree to achieve project and donor objectives. Beyond cultural, social and organizational constraints, women (and men) need access to information (literacy is often a constraint) and to the time and space to reflect on the conditions that support their participation and on what this means for them as citizens. Time and again, as a gender specialist I am asked, by both men and women: ‘Doesn’t participation only increase women’s workload? Now you are expecting her to collect water or irrigate and also manage the system? What are the men doing?’

For myself, and I think for many others in this field, participation is not simply about representation on committees or attending meetings, though these are necessary first steps, but about a process of articulating in our own voices our decisions on how we want our water resources to be managed, for whom and by whom. If women and men did not come out in the streets of Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1999–2000 to protest the concessions given to Aguas del Tunari consortium (a Bolivian subsidiary of the infamous multinational, Bechtel), or to the Agua del Aconquija in Tucumán (a subsidiary of the French Générale des Eaux), Argentina, then water privatization in the name of sector reforms worldwide would continue to override and marginalize the rights of poor water users.

No doubt several public water systems need reform, but such processes need to be transparent and accountable to users through tri-partite contractual agreements, which include them as equal partners with clear rights and responsibilities. Such agreements can involve: (1) the State, as setting the terms of the legislative and regulatory framework for partnerships and equitable water allocations that take into account domestic and livelihood needs; (2) private or public sector water companies providing more efficient, culturally and technologically appropriate water and sanitation services; and (3) water users, with women, and both women and men from marginalized communities, equally represented in any collective decision on how best to manage, pay for and sustain water services. Examples, of such partnerships are slowly emerging – though not necessarily involving all three actors. For example, the Water and Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO), a quasi-government body with special powers, works with NGOs and engineers from the Gujarat Water Supply Board to facilitate village water and sanitation committees in the context of decentralized water management programmes in India (see WASMO 2006). In South Africa, too, the State is working with private water companies to ensure that poor people in the numerous informal settlements that dot the landscape have access to their basic water and sanitation rights, though issues about financial and technical sustainability and management capacity of politicized local committees persist. Meanwhile, UN-Habitat is collaborating with local government bodies, private water providers, NGOs and networks such as the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) to strengthen gender mainstreaming in its Water for Cities initiative currently underway in Africa and Asia.

Formed at the second World Water Forum (The Hague, 2000), the GWA has a growing membership of more than 600 individuals – women and men – and organizations from 90 countries. It illustrates the importance of building strategic alliances for mainstreaming gender at multiple levels (from local to global) through a process that embraces intersectionality, inclusion and inter-disciplinary collaborations between water development and gender professionals, practitioners and policy makers:

Making the water world more habitable for women requires changes at many different levels and in many different arenas. It requires changing divisions of labour that allocate water responsibilities to women without granting them the associated rights, and it requires changing existing routines of public decision-making to allow women to participate. It requires changes in laws, infrastructures and organizations. It also requires changing the terms of water policy discussions, because reducing the gender gap in control over water is not just a direct struggle over the resource water but is also and importantly, a struggle over the ways in which water needs are defined.

(Zwarteveen and Bennett in Bennett *et al.* p. 29)

No doubt this is a difficult, long and painful process, but not making an attempt to change our water practices and the socio-political relationships undermining equitable, gender just water allocations, will only lead to water poverty, deprivation and a more unsustainable water future for our children. In a world where competition and conflicts over water are compounded by growing climate variability and water-induced disasters, multi-stakeholder partnerships that support knowledge development, shared learning and innovative actions by women and men are critical for ensuring human security.

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Reviews

Marnie Leybourne and Andrea Gaynor (eds). *Water: Histories, Cultures and Ecologies*. Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2006. ISBN 9781920694807.

Society ascribes its values to water, as much as water – its abundance, its scarcity, its degradation – can shape our own culture, institutions and practices. This edited volume is a fine contribution to the growing body of work on the social dimensions of water, joining other significant collections on water history (Tvedt and Jakobsson 2006) and political ecology (Donahue and Johnston 1998). The book, an outcome of an inter-disciplinary research symposium hosted by the University of Western Australia, brings together diverse perspectives on the history of water, cultural and religious aspects of water and water ecologies. While many edited volumes of conference papers suffer from the problems of being too disparate in style and theme, and lacking an overall message, this volume largely avoids these problems. This may be due to the theme itself being so common and elemental to us all. However, the careful editing and strong introductory sections no doubt have helped realize such a well-structured and accessible book. The themes of scarcity, competition and diversity form important threads drawing together the case studies from Western and Eastern Australia, South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, England and Northern and Southern America.

Many of the critical concepts that have helped shape contemporary approaches to water management are explored, including: the social implications of catchment-based planning; allocation for ecological water needs; pluralism in decision making; and community-based management and justice.

Notable environmental historian Worster begins the book by taking the reader on a journey through American historical relations to water via a portrait of John Wesley Powell; a champion of the concept of 'watershed democracy'. Powell passionately argued for living within environmental limits, rather than resisting them, a theme taken up elsewhere in the book. The contribution by Beyth, however, on the water crisis in Israel, contradicts this message by instead outlining various technical strategies that aim to resist rather than adapt to water scarcity. While there is a strong water

conservation ethic in Israel, the critical re-reading of the role of water in the Australian goldfields, by Gaynor and Davis, identifies ways in which the political economic interests served by a water pipeline undermine the emergence of an ethic of water conservancy. Policies that constrain adaptive behaviour are also highlighted by Leybourne in her historical study of the pastoral nomadism of the Bedouin in Syria.

In the rather 'wet' case study of the Vietnamese Mekong Delta, an agricultural region dense with waterways, Taylor stresses the agency of individuals in the face of wider political economic forces that shape their landscape. He outlines how roads financed through international aid are now displacing waterways as the primary transport and communication link between people. Water, he argues, none the less remains as the social glue connecting people and underpinning important cultural traditions. Strang writes eloquently of the deep-seated cultural and symbolic meanings water has across different cultures. Her comparative study of an Aboriginal community in Queensland and a community in southern England highlights water as a common bond between people. This is not just an interesting point, but rather, Strang argues that these common meanings of water across cultures form an important basis for conflict resolution. She writes:

if water is to be owned and managed equitably, if patterns of usage are to be made more sustainable, and if conflicts over water resources are to be resolved, it is vital to bring into the debates an understanding of the meanings of water.
(p. 80)

The final section of the volume addresses possible pathways to more sustainable water futures, stressing the importance of public participation, science and diverse knowledge, and appropriate management at different levels. Addressing past injustices and historical claims to water are central themes in the studies of Australian indigenous relations with water (see the chapters by Gaynor and Davis, Strang, Collard and Storey and Trayler), themes that resonate strongly throughout the volume and reinforce the need for more pluralistic approaches to water management. Yet, Ahmed raises serious questions about the limitations of 'participatory' approaches to water that subsume gender-differentiated interests within aggregated stakeholder groupings, such as: 'community', 'the disadvantaged' and household. Ahmed's chapter on India is one of only two chapters in the volume that explicitly addresses gender and water (the other being by Gaynor and Davis). Ahmed argues that sustainable water management cannot be realized without also addressing wider inequalities within society, whether based on gender, ethnicity, caste or class (see also the review essay by Ahmed in this issue).

The multiple perspectives on water offered in Leybourne and Gaynor's book are likely to be of interest to a wide audience concerned with understanding

society's changing relations with the environment. Water histories reflect the negotiation of society's diverse environmental values, and can provide important signposts through challenging water futures.

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Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke. *Blue Gold: The Battle Against Corporate Theft of the World's Water*. London: Earthscan Publications, 2002. ISBN 1-85383-937-X.

Blue Gold is about the use and commodification of water in a globalizing society. In the first of three sections, the authors describe how water resources are becoming rapidly polluted, depleted and unavailable for human use. The authors believe that overuse of water, world-wide use of chemicals and damage to ecosystems place the world's water resources in peril. The second section explores how political and financial institutions have been set up to facilitate privatization of services on a global scale. Through an impressive number of examples, the authors demonstrate that privatization of water resources has had some particularly disastrous consequences. To conclude the book, the authors discuss ways in which people 'fightback' (p. 183) against globalization. They describe other solutions for water management that, in their opinion, sustainably and equitably address human and ecosystem needs.

For those who are already convinced of globalization's flaws, the book offers a detailed account of globalization's more spectacular failures. Gathering these details from multiple sources can be time consuming; thus, the authors' comprehensive account may be helpful for those who wish to incorporate this information into their courses. However, readers should note that this is an activist book with an activist slant; the language is forceful and unabashed, and tends toward overstatement while omitting clear references. Unable to verify these statements, the reader is left wondering whether the state of the world is really as terrible as the book claims. If read with a critical eye, this book may provide a useful teaching tool for classroom discussions of how language is used to frame environmental and social debates.

The authors raise several critically important points on globalization: the global wealth disparity; the increasing power of free trade agreements to interfere with local and national governance; experience of other governments with water privatization; and alternative futures that include sustainable and equitable water use. The details given on key transnational water corporations and their connections to the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization are startling, and the authors' research into the details of transnational water corporations' dealings is impressive. There is certainly a case to be made for a revised second edition of this book, as the debates on globalization and trade agreements have changed since it was published in 2002.

The book frequently sets economic needs and activity in direct opposition to democracy and environmental sustainability, which is an unnecessary dichotomy. The authors emphasize their views of shared ownership and management of water resources while criticizing corporations' profit motive. Unfortunately, the authors do not explore the theoretical foundations of private property, how societies are shaped by capitalism or theories of government that might provide a more academic approach to their arguments. Similarly, they address gender issues only tangentially, through discussions of population growth, global disparities of wealth and coalitions of environmental, labor and other social justice groups, but without significantly exploring women's issues as they relate to water. This oversight is unfortunate. The relationships between poverty, education, population growth and women's rights spring to mind as clearly relevant to the discussion of water management, and perhaps these topics could be explored in a future volume.

The authors emphasize the interdependence of global ecosystems and the global water cycle and repeatedly assert the right of *Nature* to water. While the anthropomorphizing of nature may be a bit much for some readers, the authors have done a detailed job of highlighting potential ecological disasters if the status quo of water use is maintained. However, the scientific discussion is unclear and misleading at times, and the authors are repeatedly content to let correlation substitute for causation without further explanation. Additionally, the text provides a list of sources by chapter, but few (if any) are from peer-reviewed journals. Without footnotes or clear references, the reader is left with no easy way to confirm the authors' claims.

Concerns about water management will only intensify as globalization (and privatization) continue, and these topics deserve thoughtful public debate. By raising important questions about the social and environmental implications of water privatization and offering creative, if radical, alternatives, the authors succeed in providing one perspective on water privatization for readers unfamiliar with the issues.

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Alice Fothergill. *Heads Above Water: Gender, Class, and Family in the Grand Forks Flood*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004. ISBN 0791461580.

Sociologist Alice Fothergill conducted ethnographic research among forty women in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and East Grand Forks, Minnesota, to capture their stories of survival and recovery from massive flooding in April 1997. She sought to make sense of the women's individual stories and to develop a more generalized understanding of how women re-create their daily lives in times of crisis. Focal themes in her work are solidly feminist and include the tension between commonalities and differences in individual women's experiences; the ways in which women negotiated private, public and communal social spheres during the crisis; the ways in which women coped with dependency and downward mobility in the context of a culture that values independence and achievement; and finally, how women's identities were altered or solidified based on their actions during the disaster.

The book begins with the story of one woman who prepared her home for flooding, participated in sandbagging for thirty hours, then evacuated her home and city with her family as the dikes breached. She remained homeless for two-and-a-half months, then devoted several months to gutting the house, cleaning the few salvageable items and disposing of the rest and rebuilding her life. Chapter 2 tells a more general story of the disaster, its impacts and its interpretation by study participants. Succeeding chapters examine different aspects of women's disaster experience: changing gender roles and expectations; the effects of sudden downward economic mobility; the stigma of accepting charity; impacts on women's physical, emotional and psychological health; impacts on family relations and spirituality; special impacts on battered women; and women's efforts to re-create the domestic culture that existed for themselves and their families before the flood.

This book makes a major contribution to the growing literature on gendered impacts of disaster, both at the scale of the individual/the body and at a larger community scale. Fothergill's focus is on how women's social roles and identities can shift or persist during extreme events, and how this can affect both the women themselves and their connection to others. While her work lacks an overarching theoretical framework, she carefully links her findings to those of other behavioral scientists and provides an excellent bibliography on women and disaster. She offers useful suggestions for future research examining how difference and vulnerability intersect in disasters, including how women's experiences in disaster are affected by their access to resources; the effect of disabilities, sexual orientation and age on women's disaster experiences; the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender in the disaster context; and changing patterns of domestic violence in the context of natural disasters. Since women's self-conceptions and social standing can improve in a disaster when they successfully juggle new and demanding roles, disaster studies

may also afford opportunities for the study of positive social changes. Likewise, since ideologies concerning the poor and public assistance can shift during disasters, disaster studies afford opportunities to examine processes that challenge the prevailing achievement ideology.

Heads Above Water, based on Fothergill's dissertation work at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado, concludes with valuable policy recommendations. First, domestic violence services should be increased during disasters and women's service providers should be included in community disaster planning. Second, agencies must include childcare issues in disaster response and recovery plans so that strategies and resources are in place when disaster strikes. Third, agencies should work with the private sector after disasters to create a supply of affordable homes. Fourth, public and private assistance should be available in ways that minimize personal discomfort and embarrassment; this will require sensitivity to disaster victims' ideologies concerning assistance, as well as to the special needs of the elderly and disabled. Finally, women's voices should be included at all levels of disaster planning and management. This will probably require active recruitment of women into emergency response planning organizations and their empowerment within these organizations.

This book makes for very compelling reading. Fothergill weaves together individual women's own stories with a deft hand. Her empirical observations and theoretical insights would be of value to feminist geographers, as well as to those interested in natural disasters and planning. Her book should also inspire further geographical analysis of the gendered impacts of disaster.

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