argument is grounded more in polemic than in fact. For instance, she claims that Israel has tried to encourage Palestinian women to reduce their birth rate by promoting abortion clinics and free contraception. Having written a PhD thesis on this exact topic, I can attest to the falsity of Abdo's claim. It is true that successive Israeli governments have resorted to a number of tactics to encourage Palestinian women to lower their fertility; however, according to my research and my interview with the Palestinian director of the Health Education Division of the Galilee Society for Health Research and Services, these have not included the promotion of either abortion or free contraceptives. This is just one example of how Abdo's proclivity towards polemic has affected her research abilities.

In short, this collection of essays, while not totally devoid of value, is plagued by a number of shortcomings. One cannot help but be left with the impression that had the editor paid a bit more attention to detail, the book's disjointed, uneven and, at times, debatable character might have been avoided.

OUR STRENGTH IS IN OUR FIELDS: AFRICAN FAMILIES IN CHANGE

Raija Warkentin. Dubusque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1994.

by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza

Anthropology enjoys a bad name among African intellectuals, for it is seen as a handmaiden of colonialism, responsible for creating some of the most pernicious myths about African peoples and societies. In those ignoble days anthropologists focused their self-righteous gaze on small, closed "tribal" societies, among whom the peoples of Africa, the imperialists' "Dark Continent," constituted the quintessential non-western, primitive other. Now anthropologists claim to know better, to have forsaken their structural-functionalist blinkers, ahistorical biases, and intellectual voyeurism. Some are even busy deconstructing the texts of their predecessors, and earnestly trying to reinvent their disciplinary mission, inspired by feminism and the various "posts" of contemporary avant-garde "post-something" western scholarship. But old habits die hard. This book shows why anthropology continues to be suspect in African intellectual circles.

It has all the hallmarks of a copious and ecstatic tourist's tale, punctuated by generalizations at appropriate moments, but unencumbered by the scholarly conventions of evidence. We cannot check any of the statements or interpretations made in the text, for the Fofu, Warkentin tells us, do not exist, or rather, she has invented the name, so that "if one looks for the term 'Fofu' in ethnic maps or lists of Africa, one will not find them." The reason? To protect their anonymity! This is a pathetic excuse even by the abysmal standards of colonial anthropology. One would have thought that the days when anthropologists invented their nice little "tribes" in Africa and then proceeded to painstakingly record their changeless "customs" was long gone. The places the author visits are similarly fictionalized, so that her travels are to and from "Africa," rather than specific locations in this huge continent that comprises over fifty states and nearly a quarter of the world's land area. This allows her to undergo a remarkable transformation from being "a lone Finn in Africa" into a typical "westerner" and to constitute Fofu customs as "African" and then contrast them with her "western" values and practices. And the names of the people she discusses are also fictionalized, yet their pictures liberally dot the text!

The book raises other troubling methodological and epistemological issues. The author claims an intimacy and fluency of conversation with her informants, whom she describes as personal friends, when she did not understand "Kikofu" as she admits at one point, and only studied Swahili for three months, and relies on interpreters, as she concedes several times. No wonder when she quotes the local people speaking, they simply sound silly. One example will suffice:

> "How are you doing with Suzana?" I dared to ask personal questions while driving back because the other men did not return with us.
>
> "Fine," he said, "She is a good wife, a good wife."
>
> "What makes a woman a good wife?" I inquired ignorantly.
>
> "She obeys me, obeys me."
>
> "Nothing else?" I persisted.
>
> "I have a quick temper but she soothes me and calms me down, calms me down...."

With such stilted, unreal conversations who needs pulp fiction? How believable are such accounts when made by a researcher who, as is so common among western Africanists, has no competence in the language and modes of understanding of the people she is studying?

Predictably, despite all the fulminations made at the beginning of the book about cultural relativism and the need to respect other cultures, the Fofu are depicted as an exotic, backward, and poverty-stricken people, easily bamboozled by the magic of simple technology, from "western packaging" to the "white man's toilet." They live in a typical society of anthropological folklore, a world of mud "huts," constant hunger, illness, and death, where marriages are arranged, witchcraft, misogynist violence, and tribal clashes terrorize everyday life, and worldly pleasures are confined to all-night dances and sexual orgies. This is a society of overworked, abused women and lazy oversexed men, who demand "sexual intercourse every night and many times a night," so that the women are almost in a perpetual state of pregnancy and the men's greatest ambition is to marry several wives. The image of the African woman is as eternal victim. Into this Hobbesian,

androcentric world comes the author as an angel of mercy dispensing advice and medicines, transporting patients to hospital and admonishing the men, and providing her best friends with gifts which the natives initially do not comprehend, for her "gift-giving followed an individualistic western pattern but Fofu thinking did not." Indeed, one of her friends to whom she gives a bottle of body lotion is divorced because her husband is suspicious of the lotion "and thought that Sofia was practicing witchcraft with it"! This would be a sick joke if it were not so serious.

As the text progresses the usual ethnographic binaries unfold in all their tarnished simplicities, contrasting a traditional, communal, animistic, polygamous Africa with a modern, individualistic, Christian, monogamous West, and on this scale of fixed dichotomies are measured the different conceptions of time, hygiene, and child-rearing among Africans and "westerners." And the Fofu themselves are neatly distinguished, besides the rigid divisions of gender, not along class lines, but by the spatial solitudes of city and country. The Fofu rural folk are examined in the first half of the book, and their urban-based kin in the second half. In this narrative the post-colonial city compares unfavourably with the rural villages: it is a cesspool of filth and decadence, banditry and theft, unemployment, and the ever-irresponsible men.

But lurking beneath this comparison is the valorization of rural life as authentically African and urbanization as a failed western imposition. "The foreigners who had lived in Bululu before independence," the author laments, "remembered the town as well kept and neat. When we moved there, it was run down." Even the women are said to remember "that during colonial times, the salaries of their husbands had been so good that the wives did not need to lower themselves to such dangerous and illegal activities" as liquor distilling. Which colonial times? During Leopold's Red Rubber Kingdom, or the heyday of labour migration to the mining graveyards? This is to suggest that in this book hearsay is taken for history, and as in many colonial ethnographic accounts local practices or events are not anchored into the regional, national, and international circuits of control and exploitation. Zaire's disastrous colonial heritage, reincarnated in Mobutu's ruthless, kleptocratic regime, is nothing more than a misty presence in this study.

Zaire has attracted its fair share of western intellectual diviners, from Joseph Conrad to V.S. Naipaul, all inspired by their peculiar anxieties and fantasies that had little to do with the country and its people. Warkerntin was motivated by boredom. "Frustrated by the confined and dull existence of a bush pilot's wife," she writes, "the author becomes curious about Zairian life. She starts to visit African life and then to study anthropology." Perhaps boredom and frustration are not enough for good scholarship.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SPEAK OUT

June Larkin. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994.

by Beverley Lynn Naveau

One of the ways in which we judge the merit of a work of non-fiction is to ask: "To what extent has the author accomplished what she/he set out to do?" June Larkin has written this book "to help educators, parents, and students understand and deal with the sexual harassment that goes on in schools." It is intended as a "resource for those who want to make schools healthier places for girls." Based solely on the number of professionals, non-professionals, students, and academics who have recommended the work to me in the time since its publication, she has indeed been very successful.

The book's popularity is also an indication of its accessibility. Based on a sound analysis of gender inequities in schools and on her own research, Larkin's style makes what could be a purely academic thesis an eminently readable report. In a clearly organized approach, she covers the meaning of the term "sexual harassment" in the context of a sexist society; a discussion of this neglected form of gender bias; the process by which young women in her project came to recognize its practice; the young women's accounts of sexual harassment; and some educational resources and strategies for dealing with the problem. The result is a "grim picture of high school life for female students"—one which Larkin believes must change.

A former elementary teacher, now a professor of Women's Studies at the University of Toronto and Co-ordinator for the Women's Sexual Harassment Caucus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Dr. Larkin conducted the study on which the book is based in four high schools in urban, rural, and small town Ontario. Over sixty students participated in the research, and twenty-five students were interviewed in depth. Part of the value in this work is in the inclusion of the voices of these young women describing their experiences, in their own words. Far too often we adults say we know what the children and youth think and know and experience; we too rarely listen to what they *really* have to say.

What they have to say is graphic, violent, and disturbing. They describe girls abandoning plans for careers in medicine because of sexist attitudes of science teachers, female students being stalked, threatened, flashed, and rated on appearance by the male students, and "gestures, jokes, grabbing, pinching, and stuff like that," happening so frequently that it is seen as "normal" behaviour. They relate incidents of verbal, physical, visual, homophobic, and racial harassment, and "the ultimate harassment"—date rape. And they describe their fear and feelings of hopelessness at trying to deal with these situations.