

Emerging Class in Papua New Guinea: The Telling of Difference, by Deborah B Gewertz and Frederick K Errington. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. ISBN cloth, 0-521-65212-x; paper, 0-521-65567-6; x + 179 pages, map, photographs, notes, references, index. Cloth, US\$54.95; paper, US\$19.95.

Papua New Guinea left behind the indignities of colonial rule only in the 1970s. Yet, as Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington show in this ground-breaking ethnography, some of this new nation's citizens are now inflicting similar indignities on their fellows and busily building the ideologies and institutions of a kind of inequality unknown in Papua New Guinea prior to the colonial era. To produce their fine-grained picture of "the social and cultural work of creating new forms of distinction," Gewertz and Errington drew on their ties with the "grass roots," as the poor majority of Papua New Guineans are known. They also entered what remains the "last unknown" for many anthropologists working in Papua New Guinea, the private precincts of the emerging Papua New Guinean middle class. Gewertz and Errington show members of this new elite building a self-conscious community and assuring each other that they deserve their privileges. They also show the middle class giving the grass roots "a sentimental education in self-blame" and the pain and anger of grassroots Papua New Guineans who find their efforts to cross class boundaries or

make traditional social claims on members of the middle class coldly repelled.

Gewertz and Errington are sharply critical of these developments. In fact, their book is unabashedly polemical. A strong statement on class is completely in order, and this one rests on solid ethnography. As I made my way through this book, however, two related points began to nag at me. First, the authors frequently compare the cruelties of class with indigenous social forms. They generally portray the latter sympathetically. This could easily lead a naive reader to romanticize indigenous Papua New Guinean society and take a one-dimensional view of the motives of those who wish to distance themselves from it. As the authors point out, a "strenuous egalitarianism" characterized much indigenous Papua New Guinean life. But so, too, did strenuous domination of men over women (of which the authors take note) and of old over young. Also, the indigenous systems of enduring reciprocal obligations among relative equals the authors describe were often fraught with contradictory demands and steeped in fear of sorcery or supernatural sanctions for failing to fulfill others' expectations. Of such things, Gewertz and Errington make only fleeting mention. This is consistent with their picture of the motives behind middle-class efforts to attenuate obligations to "their kin and coculturalists," which focuses exclusively on the desire to shelter resources in order to enjoy affluence. Fully acknowledging the dark side of life

in indigenous communities, however, one can conceive of more mixed or varied motives. One can conceive of Papua New Guineans, for example, seeking affluence in order to attenuate traditional obligations as well as the reverse.

Second, Gewertz and Errington tend to treat every nonindigenous social and cultural form or impulse (such as a preference for freely chosen rather than kin-based social relations or a rationalist attitude toward traditional customs) only in terms of its contribution to class formation. It is important to show how such taken-for-granted western values as choice or rationalism can have class content. But is this so always and everywhere or is it a matter of historical context? I imagine that Gewertz and Errington are thinking of how these values function under the particular historical circumstances they found in Papua New Guinea, but they do not make this clear. If a reader assumed that they intended a blanket, nonhistorical criticism, it would reinforce a romantic view of indigenous society and an oversimplified view of the issues facing Papua New Guinea.

Only in their penultimate chapter do the authors present an explicitly more complex picture. In this chapter they analyze the case of a young woman who objected to being pressured into marriage as part of an interclan homicide compensation. The courts decided that the woman's unwilling participation in the compensation agreement would violate her constitutional rights. Gewertz and Errington argue that this decision represented the perspective of the middle class and strengthened its claim to the

right to "review and judge those leading traditional lives." Yet they take pains to point out that they do not think that "morality would have been better served" if the court had decided against the young woman. They continue, "because [the young woman's] circumstance could be easily phrased in terms of universal morality, rationality and human rights, the modern could be made readily to look morally good. If, in contrast, her circumstance were viewed from a less universalist and more evidently class-based perspective, the modern would probably look more suspect."

Here are complicated dilemmas, not just a contrast between the good old days and the bad new days. Can Papua New Guineans surmount the cruelties and injustices of indigenous society without creating new cruelties and injustices? Can they disentangle universalist values from a capitalist class context? These are daunting challenges for concerned Papua New Guineans and, for academic observers, questions without simple answers. Nonetheless, developing their analysis of such dilemmas further would have strengthened the authors' polemic. As it is, they leave readers all worked up with no place to go.

One point in Gewertz and Errington's reporting requires correction. They state that the World Bank, in connection with its structural adjustment loan to Papua New Guinea in the 1990s, pushed a program to privatize "traditionally owned land." Despite widespread belief to the contrary, the Land Mobilization Program did not aim to privatize land. Clumsy handling of the program (on the part of the Papua New Guinea Govern-

ment as well as the bank), the bank's reputation, and, perhaps, internal Papua New Guinea politics apparently fueled perceptions and accusations that it was a privatization initiative.

In sum, however, this is a valuable book of immediate relevance. It has important things to say about and to the people of Papua New Guinea and a message about the larger question of class. I hope it inspires vigorous discussion and additional research on this vital issue.

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Much has been written about inequality in Papua New Guinea. Its impact on politics has been visible as local leaders look to capitalist entrepreneurs and the educated elite to satisfy desires for greater material consumption among their more "traditional" supporters, and national leaders walk a tightrope between satisfying competing local constituencies and supporting policies that promote the economic development of the country. Its impact on social relations has been evident as young men of means contribute to higher brideprices and exchange payments resulting in bachelorhood for many men from less developed areas, greater incentives for urban migration, and participation in development schemes that promise high incomes but ultimately result in environmental destruction and the loss of subsistence; in the negative shifts in the conjugal relations of women "paid for" with exorbitant brideprices; and in the unequal relations of family members

who must work for more prosperous siblings or children who have taken charge of family lands and destinies through their success in the new economy. Now, in their excellent ethnography on class in Papua New Guinea, anthropologists Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington show the often denied but inevitable consequences of long-term economic and educational inequality in a free society: class and its ugly stratification of individuals as "upper," "middle," or "lower."

Gewertz and Errington's book draws on their many years of field research in different locations in Papua New Guinea. Its ethnographic focus is on Wewak, however, one of Papua New Guinea's larger towns, and the lifestyle of those middle-class civil servants, politicians, professionals, and business persons who frequent Wewak's elite clubs and organizations. The authors immersed themselves in this exclusive world in 1996. They spent a year doing participant observation as members of the Wewak golf and yacht clubs and the more exclusive Wewak Rotary Club. They attended local churches, formally interviewed 88 of the more affluent of Wewak's middle class (56 men and 32 women), and worked in other contexts such as Wewak's International School, where they volunteered as English-language reading tutors and interviewed many of the children and their parents. They also lived in a middle-class home complete with chain-link fencing and other security measures, none of which prevented them from being robbed and gaining yet another insider's perspective.

Armed with such insider knowledge of the workings of social class, Gew-

ertz and Errington show the ways in which differences of status are being created, experienced, and justified among the new elite. They also convincingly demonstrate the felt injuries of class exclusivity among the new lower class, who are more and more on the outside looking in rather than being part of “the party.” In chapter 1, “The middle class—the (new) Melanesian way,” the authors describe the workings of the Wewak Rotary Club and how its members incorporate the ideology and organizational practices of Rotary International. Members support one another in practicing a diffuse *noblesse oblige* toward the larger community and *wantoks*, dedicating themselves to “self and service,” assuming the role of “chiefs” in the new society, dispensing select charities and service to the grassroots while educating demanding *wantoks* of their (the new elite’s) special consumption needs and priorities. A shared concern among the Rotary Club members and others in the new middle class is the fear of being brought down to the grassroots level by exorbitant demands for “reciprocity” and economic investments in their circle of *wantoks*.

Chapter 2, “How the grass roots became the poor,” is chilling. Here Sepik Women in Trade (SWIT) is introduced, a private organization begun by middle-class women in Wewak in 1996. The avowed aim of SWIT is to assist impoverished women living primarily in Wewak’s squatter settlements to market their handicrafts in order to help them earn money to help satisfy their families’ basic subsistence needs and school fees. This seems an admirable goal, but one is quickly disenchanted on learning that the leaders

of SWIT convince the poorer members that the way to improve their economic chances is to save their earnings in order to attend an international trade fair in Jayapura, Indonesia. The expense of this “opportunity” in relation to the relative meagerness of many of the women’s earnings and the pressing needs of their families is obscene. Nonetheless, most of the women are convinced of the “future benefits” that can be gained from their attendance at the trade fair, and when many fall short of the needed fare, they internalize their “own failure” in the capitalist market. Part of the obscenity, of course, is that the trade fair is presented in the way of a “cargo dream,” promising more than is likely to come out of such a venture, and blaming those who don’t go or who come away empty-handed for not having enough faith in the new system to be successful in it.

In chapter 3, “The realization of class exclusion,” and Chapter 4, “The hidden injuries of class,” class is viewed through the eyes of two of the authors’ long-term informants—Michael Kamban and Godfried Kolly. According to the authors, it was at the Wewak Golf and Country Club where they found a clear constellation of “processes constituting middle class life worldwide: commodity consumption by individuals within nuclear . . . families” (60). Around the margins of this context of sociality they found the constellation to be clearly, if unsuccessfully, challenged. One challenger was Michael Kamban, waiting doggedly on the margins for his parliamentary representative to come to the course, hoping to be repaid for the time and support he and other villagers

had given during the representative's reelection campaign. More than money, however, Kamban had wanted an ongoing and reciprocal sociality that was being denied him. Without such social recognition, and made to wait outside near the club parking lot where poorer townspeople sat hoping to earn money as caddies or to sell snacks to the members, Kamban felt "rubbished" and increasingly angry. In like fashion, town dweller Godfried Kolly's hopes were dashed when the sports jerseys and special brand sports whistles he so arduously acquired from overseas (with the help of the authors) in order to sell them to fellow referees in the largely middle-class East Sepik Referees Association did not result in greater respect and acceptance.

The remaining chapters focus on "The problem(s) of the poor" and "Class and the definition of reasonability." Chapter 5 describes how middle-class fears and expectations of grassroots resentment and violence against them are expressed in a rhetoric in which crime and class are conjoined and how it is up to "reasonable" people—primarily middle class—to act in order to insure social order. The relationship between class and what the middle class considers "reasonable" is further explored in chapter 6. Moving beyond Wewak, the authors relate the story—given wide coverage in the *Post Courier* and even *The New York Times*—of how a young highlands girl was included as part of a death compensation given to the relatives of one of two men shot dead by police. The case of the "compo girl" provided the middle class in Wewak (and throughout Papua New Guinea) with a startling

difference between the values they were assuming and the values they felt they were leaving behind. Living "modern," relatively individualistic lives in which women have the same constitutional rights to self-determination as men, the middle class felt itself more separated than ever from those who were living more traditional, more collectively oriented, lives.

In their conclusion, the authors recall what many in Papua New Guinea's middle class dread "On dark nights of the soul": that Papua New Guinea's place in the global economy is shaky and that their hold on this new lifestyle can be wrenched from them in a flash, leaving their children unprepared for life in a village or among the urban poor. Throughout the book, the authors are careful to suggest that crime and domestic violence are not foreign to the middle class. They do such a good job, however, of presenting an insider's perspective that violence and unreasonableness are largely on the outside trying to get in, that readers wanting to use this book for teaching middle and upper class children wherever they live would do well to balance its familiar perspectives with more general or grassroots ones. The Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea series on domestic violence, for example, suggests a high level of domestic violence among the urban elite in contrast to much lower levels among the urban poor. And articles written for this journal by Sinclair Dinnen and Michael Goddard report both lower and middle class participation in rascalism and the fears of the goodly urban poor trying to create crime-free havens for themselves and their families. Robin Anderson's and

Bob Connolly's video, *Joe Leahy's Neighbors* (1989), would make an excellent complement to this informative book, providing both middle-class and villagers' perspectives on inequality and middle-class lifestyles in another part of Papua New Guinea.

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Written by two established academic anthropologists with lengthy publishing records, this book is "our telling of the ways that class inequalities in contemporary Papua New Guinea have been convincingly, and with telling effect, told" (1). In other words, it is an account of what might once have been termed class formation and consciousness, now class happenings and class tellings.

Most of the research for the book was conducted in the country's fifth largest town, Wewak, with a population of about fifty thousand people. For nearly three decades, most recently during 1996, the authors have visited the town for research. For this book, "88 of the more affluent of Wewak's middle-class nationals: 56 men and 32 women" were interviewed (19). Gewertz and Errington also "plunged into . . . middle-class life in a variety of contexts" (20). These included Rotary, golf and yacht clubs, churches, law-and-order political rallies, Chamber of Commerce, plus volunteer tutoring at the local, private, English-speaking International School. They also examined the activities of Sepik Women in Trade (SWIT), a small traders' organization.

In five of the six descriptive chapters that draw on this research, the

authors claim to provide an account of how class as inequalities, as "distinctions of incommensurability," is "becoming lived" (20). Thus, chapter 1 introduces "a template of sociality embraced by Wewak's affluent as they engage with each other in such (largely) imported contexts as Rotary International" (21). The next four chapters in turn examine how "the grass roots became the poor," "the realization of class exclusions," "the hidden injuries of class," and "the problem(s) of the poor." Chapter 6 leaves Wewak behind, in an attempt to show how class awareness is becoming widespread in the country.

A driving force behind the account is disgust, at the emergence of a supposed "new Melanesian way," where class transgresses against a prior egalitarianism. The "new" condition is made more offensive because "nationals" are allowing, even propelling, the happening. *Emerging Class* becomes, by the authors' reckoning, "a book which many Papua New Guineans had hoped could never be written" (2).

If class "is emerging" in Wewak and the wider country, how should this be understood? Here the study of class is first considered by way of selective citations of significant works—works that provide signposts, not understanding. Gewertz and Errington's use of the Marxist historian E P Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* is particularly instructive, although similar points could be made about their use of others, including Max Weber.

The authors commence by noting with approval Thompson's proposition that class is a relationship. However they then feel no need to be constrained (informed?) by the Marxist

character of the proposition. For Thompson, as for Marx, “class experience is largely determined by the *productive relations into which men are born—or enter involuntarily*” (1964, 10; emphasis mine). Productive relations as the basis of class determination do not guide this study, and the superficiality of the reference to Thompson soon becomes apparent.

For Thompson’s Marxism to be of any real assistance, Gewertz and Errington would have had to form some understanding of how capital and labor, the two fundamental classes of capitalism, defined the space in which their supposed “middle class” operated. (Not one of the debates that have proliferated over the last three decades about the so-called middle class, whether “old” or “new,” middle or a class, makes an appearance here either.)

That the authors could not “find” capitalism’s central classes is largely due to their adoption of dependency theory, which still is influential in understanding “third-world” countries, including Papua New Guinea. The country is, in the words of Mark Turner, cited approvingly by Gewertz and Errington, as “the most dependent independent country in the world” (3). Means of production are foreign and governmentally owned, therefore there are allegedly no local owners, capitalists. There is no class of labor, since landownership is still widespread (11). Indeed, prior to the postindependence emergence of the middle class, there was no polarization since the late colonial “elite” and “a grass roots” still shared significant overlapping interests (11).

But for earlier dependency intellec-

tuals, against whom the anti-Marxist Turner largely wrote, even as he concurred with their central premise of Papua New Guinea’s peripheral position in the world, precolonial differentiation as well as the late colonial and early independence advance of the local “wealthy,” separate from the mass of the population, was precisely what had to be explained. This was done with all the confusion that dependency thinking made necessary. Hence there was a “new elite,” “big peasants,” “rich peasants,” “middle peasants,” “(educated) petty bourgeois,” “national bourgeoisie,” “rural capitalists” and “rich rural classes.” Each and all of these were joined by one common feature—they were compradors, aiding and abetting the advance of international capital against the interests of the “people,” however described. In order to proclaim the originality of their own finding of some twenty years later, Gewertz and Errington ignore the awareness on which earlier dependency thought was constructed.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, many of the dependency propositions were subjected to detailed scrutiny and rebuttal. The takeover by local, mainly indigenous capital, of plantations, agricultural export trading companies, retail and wholesale trade, fishing, manufacturing, and some areas of mining produced a political economy and political sociology that required better explanation than was provided by dependency thinking. Gewertz and Errington have not understood either the rapid growth of local capital or the academic treatment of this major shift in the country’s political economy.

If this seems unreasonable criticism, when Gewertz and Errington may be thought to be interested primarily in the ethnography of “emerging class” and not Papua New Guinea’s political economy or political sociology, consider as well how insignificant are the wealthy they describe in comparison to the country’s most substantial accumulators. Possibly the wealthiest South Pacific Islander is a former prime minister of Papua New Guinea, whose personal fortune reputedly extends into the hundreds of millions of US dollars. Many other Papua New Guineans, some but by no means all of whom hold or have held political office, are not just devalued kina millionaires, but own assets priced at tens of millions of US dollars. Some of these are from the Sepik, although whether that region is the center of their commercial activities is another matter altogether. One of these, former prime minister Michael Somare, appears in the book simply in order to lend his political weight to efforts to establish a new golf course in Wewak. Not one of the country’s “really wealthy” makes an appearance as an accumulator in *Emerging Class in Papua New Guinea*. Instead only the small fish appear, bank branch manager and assistant manager, schoolteachers, small shop owners, government officers. The most substantial figures commercially are probably a couple engaged in the multiplex practices of owning a restaurant, a guest house, a trade store, and a plantation of unspecified size.

In choosing Wewak, one of the least important commercial centers in the country, Gewertz and Errington can be said to have predetermined that

their account would locate inconsequential expressions of accumulation and of the most important “class happening” in contemporary Papua New Guinea. Wewak is located at the margins of the national political economy and geography: there have never been substantial plantations in the Sepik, nor mines, nor any form of manufacturing industry. For most of the twentieth century, the region has been a labor reserve, with its previous largest export, male workers, no longer in great demand due to the collapse of plantations and other places of employment elsewhere in the country. This marginality only emerges from hiding in the last substantial chapter, 6, “Class and the definition of reasonability,” where the town disappears altogether from the account.

As well, instead of presenting the material relations between the classes of capital and labor in terms rich with the dynamic of exploitation and struggle, these important matters are described in particularly anodyne terms, including “incommensurate differences.” This terminological vacuousness is especially pronounced where a class of labor is concerned. For all the distinct forms of labor taken in the country, Gewertz and Errington use the popular cartoon characterization “grass roots,” a characterization that was and remains as much about long-term unemployment, nonlabor, as it was and is about wage work, cash-crop-producing smallholders, and the like.

Yet, once again, there is an extensive literature on labor in Papua New Guinea, and none of it appears here. There is no reference to the debates that have informed the descriptions of

rural households, plantation and mine workers, urban manufacturing and trading employees. This literature has grappled, not least, with how to describe a class, many of the members of which have not been separated from land, and how to understand the politics that follows from such conditions. Are households best described as a semiproletariat, subjected to capital as a form of productive labor through the state? Or are they non-capitalist producers, peasants, engaged in petty commodity production? Are full-time, urban-dwelling workers a proletariat when they still have some attachment to rural smallholdings? What of the unemployed, whose numbers have exploded over the last three decades in both towns and rural areas? Are these a reserve army of labor or a relative surplus population, awaiting another international upturn to be drawn into the capitalist economy as wage workers? Or are the unemployed permanently so, and thus a threat to the order required for accumulation, a ragged lumpen-proletariat set to explode into anarchy as they might be considered to have done elsewhere in the country, including on Bougainville?

In a perverse manner, chapter 6 is the most indicative of the book's lack of substance. Here the account shifts to a supposed national level where the intermediate strata, preoccupied with status and with only slight connections to accumulation or productive labor, "had become committed to changing the nature of distinction" (121). A court case about compensation in the Highlands and a film about marital relations involving Mount Hagen and Port Moresby "couples" are used to discuss how the intermedi-

ate stratum understands and defines appropriateness. Such an ending, full of petty squabbling, is especially appropriate for an account that tells so little of consequence about capitalism or class in Papua New Guinea.

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THE TELLING OF CLASS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

We begin *Emerging Class in Papua New Guinea* thus, "This book is our telling of the way that class inequalities in contemporary Papua New Guinea have been convincingly, and with telling effect, told. It is about the contexts and processes, both 'traditional' and 'modernist,' within which many relatively affluent Papua New Guineans were conveying to whole categories of their countrymen that the latter lacked viable and legitimate claims on significant resources" (1). We have tried, hence, to impart the ways that (culturally and socially positioned) Papua New Guineans have been talking to themselves and to others—including to us as anthropologists—about their lives, especially as they contend with new and changing definitions of worth and relationship.

To the extent that we have imparted these ways of telling about difference, we have told much—and in an experience-near manner—about a range of often conflicting Papua New Guinean views concerning the nature of their social world(s) and how it (they) should be dealt with. In our view, to repudiate these various tellings as trivial and inconsequential is to repudiate

the experiences and understandings of those whose tellings they are. To be deaf to such tellings would be a deafness to Papua New Guinean lives: It would be a deafness of sensibility—an impoverishment of empathy—regarding the way these lives are led, are contended about, prove satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Of these three reviews, two (Smith's and Zimmer-Tamako-shi's) are attuned to both the substance and nuance of Papua New Guinea experiences and understandings—are listening to tales told—and one (MacWilliam's) is not.

MacWilliam's deafness is troubling because it is consequential: Tellings of difference—of class happenings—matter, and not only to Papua New Guineans but to those of us living often better positioned lives elsewhere (and we stress throughout our book that “our” lives and “theirs” are connected systemically). The aspect of class that matters greatly to them and to us concerns fundamental moral issues pertaining to relative worth: whom one associates with and in what ways. That class concerns such issues is, in our view, a primary (though not exclusive) reason why class should be a matter of analytic concern (especially in a place like Papua New Guinea with a strong tradition of [male] egalitarian values). In other words, class matters in substantial measure because class injures and demeans and because class confuses—by insinuating and obscuring. What we sought to do in our book is to convey these class happenings with full subtlety. E P Thompson has been significant to us in this regard, not because he attributes class differences largely to productive relations (which we venture he would not

do if he were to confront the Papua New Guinean socioeconomic scene); rather, he has been significant to us because he thickly describes the social life of inequality.

Such an understanding of class as lived experience, importantly, enables us to understand what the links are, in particular places and at particular times, between differential access to resources (whether productive or other) and the ways that social life is conducted. After all, the manner in which inequalities are justified and understood constitutes an important aspect of how they are instantiated and perpetuated. In this regard, we find ourselves theoretically located between those who emphasize that capitalism has a global reach and those who stress that production, distribution, and consumption are variably shaped and interpreted in diverse cultural contexts. We insist, therefore, that in talking about class in Papua New Guinea (or elsewhere), one must attend not only to who has access to what resources and why; one must also attend to (far from fixed) cultural expectations—of worth, morality, and what life should offer—that constitute much of the significance of these resources.

Keeping in mind, as Thompson does, that class is not just “a ‘structure,’ nor even . . . a ‘category,’ but . . . something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships” (Thompson, as quoted by us on page 2), consider MacWilliam's criticism of what he calls “terminological vacuousness” in our characterization of “a class of labour.” He refers to literature that has grappled with “how to describe

a class, many of the members of which have not been separated from land, and how to understand the politics that follows from such conditions. Are households best described as a semiproletariat, subjected to capital as a form of productive labor through the state? Or are they non-capitalist producers, peasants, engaged in petty commodity production? Are full-time, urban-dwelling workers a proletariat when they still have some attachment to rural smallholdings? What of the unemployed, whose numbers have exploded over the last three decades in both towns and rural areas? Are these a reserve army of labor or a relative surplus population, awaiting another international upturn to be drawn into the capitalist economy as wage workers? Or are the unemployed permanently so, and thus a threat to the order required for accumulation, a ragged lumpen-proletariat set to explode into anarchy?" Aside from the reference to an explosion into anarchy, class happenings seem, for MacWilliam, largely drained of experiential components and, hence, substantially mechanical and reductionist.

With respect to this view, it might be noted that MacWilliam criticizes our use of the term "grass roots," apparently deaf to its dynamic and multiplex meanings. Although originally a cartoon character (as he states), it has become, at least since the early 1990s, an emic term of reference, both to self and to others, employed in a range of situationally dependent ways. On the one hand, it can be used to convey often wry self-deprecation or to assert moral and, sometimes, hard-nosed political claims; on the other, it can be used to convey disdain or to

acknowledge a (frequently) grudging responsibility toward those less fortunate (perhaps by virtue of "inadequate" initiative). Correspondingly, MacWilliam finds little value in our term "incommensurate difference." However, far from vacuous as he states, it is a serious (and, we think, reasonably successful) effort to capture, in a full, nonreductionist manner, a local sense that the grounds of worth have for some time been (perhaps irrevocably) shifting in ways that favor some rather than others.

These shifts are, without any doubt, thoroughly discernible in Wewak (to be sure, a *somewhat* economically and politically marginal town). They are, as well, discernible elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, which our last chapter (thought our best by Smith and without substance by MacWilliam) makes clear. We might also mention in this regard, that our current research, no longer at Wewak but elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, at the Ramu sugar plantation, very much confirms our picture of these class happenings: recently, for example, we overheard two "national" managers employed at the company agree that it was better, in part because cheaper, to travel to Indonesia for family vacations in Jayapura than back to their home villages where kin would drain them financially dry. (One might argue with respect to Wewak that, if the tellings of class have become so well instantiated at the periphery, how much more so at the center.)

Moreover, Wewak, as the focus of our study, was (as we made clear) amply justified on ethnographic grounds because we have long-term connections with the "grass roots"

there. (Other studies could, of course, be profitably done elsewhere in Papua New Guinea. We fully endorse Smith's call for "vigorous discussion and additional research on this vital issue": we would certainly welcome, for instance, a full revelation about Wingti's millions from MacWilliam or others.) Wewak was suited to our study, in other words, because it enabled us to provide the thickest record of both the habituations to, and the repudiations of, class happenings among a range of people whose lives intersected in many ways.

This brings up another consideration about both our mode of depiction and choice of focus: we wanted to do more than convey these class happenings in as truthful and as embedded a manner as we could manage. (This manner seems largely to convince Smith and Zimmer-Tamakoshi, who are both not only ethnographers but ethnographers of Papua New Guinea, a telling [disciplinary] difference between themselves and MacWilliam.) We also wished to convey these happenings to a variety of audiences, including the audience of Papua New Guineans. We wanted our renditions of these class happenings to be *recognizable* in their complexities, including that they be recognizable to the people—both the well- and the ill-favored—whose lives we were attempting to impart. In so doing, we sought to present, not the bureaucratization of academic categories calibrated into rigid typologies, but the subtlety of insinuation, of implication, of ambivalence as these happenings increasingly pervade and constitute daily Papua New Guinean life.

We do not think that everything

worth saying about class can be encompassed by attending to such tellings. Nor do we think that our rendition of such tellings is definitive—and we wish to thank both Smith and Zimmer-Tamakoshi for their corrections, emendations, and elaborations. We do, however, insist that not to attend to such tellings would be to ignore crucial questions about the workings of class in differently positioned lives.

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Getting Under the Skin: The Bougainville Copper Agreement and the Creation of the Panguna Mine, by Donald Denoon. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-522-84877-x, vii + 264 pages, tables, maps, figures, appendix, notes, references, index. A\$39.95.

Volumes like this slender book, with their meticulous research and carefully crafted text, make history a valuable tool for analysis of contemporary events. The war on Bougainville was one of the great Pacific tragedies of the twentieth century, and the Panguna copper mine the trigger for it. It is hard to underestimate the impact of the development of the Panguna mine on the region; as Denoon states, Panguna was "pivotal to Australian decolonisation, Papua New Guinea's independence, the minerals boom that was to transform much of Melanesia, and the erosion of relations between