Clifford Geertz, are said to "function to synthesize a people's ethos" (28). Morris insists that it is wrong to think of culture as a "spatial or temporal intersection" (35) such as a demographic section of a population. It is more productive, he argues, to begin with an "identifiable ethos and worldview" than with "categories of people" (36). While his concern to avoid the reductions and stereotypes that accompany a simplistic linking of culture and identifiable social groups is admirable, his failure to draw any connections between the three cultures he analyses and actual social categories (classes, genders, status, ethnic, racial, residential, occupational, regional or, especially given the subject matter of the book, religious groups) means that there is no explaining the existence of these three different cultures or their changing relationship to each other. For example, it would seem that the rise of the heroist culture and its displacement (but not elimination) of the romanticist culture is partly explainable in terms of the rise of organized industrial capitalism and the relative demise of the older small-town artisan and small-holder farmer economy. There are logical connections that can be drawn in a non-totalizing or reductionist manner between certain cultural values and various class and status groups in these two different social formations.

Morris argues that these separate cultures continue to define many of the major conflicts in U.S. society. The religionist viewpoint is seen today in the Christian right and its moral puritanism; romanticism in the environmental movement with its goal of protecting natural processes and spaces from unnatural human interventions; and the heroist culture in the ongoing push to "develop" those very places and what it considers resources. Again, though, in the absence of any linkage between these cultures and social categories, one is left with no way of understanding why these differences in ethos and worldview exist.

Ultimately, this is a readable and thought-provoking description of three cultural orientations within U.S. culture. If there had been some effort to connect (not reduce) them to society, the analysis would be much richer.

Thomas Dunk *Lakehead University*

DIANE SINGERMAN and HOMA HOODFAR (eds.). *Development, Change and Gender in Cairo: A View from the Household.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. xi + 195 p.

Development, Change and Gender in Cairo is an important new contribution to understanding "the role the household plays in the political economy, social structure and political life of Egypt." This edited volume, whose six contributors represent a broad range of disciplinary perspectives (anthropology, political science, sociology, economics), goes beyond bringing a

neglected domain of investigation to the fore in arguing that, as a focal site of social and cultural change, the household is crucial to the understanding of a range of social processes concerning migration, literacy and education, food and resource allocation, unemployment, religious movements and so-called fundamentalism, the legitimacy of the state and its institutions, and the social constructs of gender. Readers familiar with such recent publications as Hansen's *Keeping House in Lusaka* or White's *Money Makes Us Relatives* will find here a similar attempt to integrate household dynamics and gender politics into a more comprehensive approach to "the agency of women in their social contexts," something long neglected in traditional studies which have excluded informal socioeconomic structures from their purview. One of the outstanding virtues of this collection is a sustained combination of theoretical innovation with accounts that are rigorous, empirically and ethnographically rich, and meticulously researched.

Diane Singerman and Homa Hoodfar set the stage for the volume in their Introduction, which discusses how the household acts as mediator in Cairo between individuals, local communities, markets and the state. The first essay by Homa Hoodfar then analyses the survival strategies of low-income households in Cairo through exploring the diverse social and economic rationales, whereas the subsequent essay by Arlene Macleod focusses on the trade-offs and choices women make at the intersection of household and workplace. Homa Hoodfar then presents a very interesting essay on the effect of Egyptian male labour migration on their families, especially their wives. The next essay by K.R. Kamphoefner discusses how the low-income women's decision to learn to read and write depends on their occupations. Nadia Khouri-Dagher then explores how the poor manage their daily food provisioning by reliance on social networks and reinterpretations of reality. The next essay by Nawal Mahmoud Hassan examines the housing needs of Cairo's inner city. Diane Singerman's concluding essay on family and community as politics demonstrates how research at the level of the household reveals a political universe that complements the traditional analyses of Egyptian politics, which rely heavily on elite interest group analyses.

Virtually all of the contributors to this volume respond to the general inattention within development and policy studies of Egyptians from the low-income group and lower middle class and the ways they cope with economic or political change. A common thread running through all seven chapters is the recognition that consequences of women's entry into the work force following the *infitah* ("Open Door" policy initiated under Sadat) and liberalization of the Egyptian economy have been at best ambiguous. Both Homa Hoodfar and Arlene Macleod, for example, underscore the paradox of female employment in which expanded participation in the market economy often serves to devalorize the nonmonetary contribution of female labour. Kamphoefner strikes a similar chord in noting that the positive effects of literacy programs for low-income women can be equivocal

for those having no opportunity to use their skills, and raises some provocative questions regarding the relation between literacy and the weakening of social ties.

An interest in the role of informal social, economic and political networks that permeate daily life, operating parallel to (and often more effectively than) official or formal networks, is shared by all the contributors of this volume, though not all make the case with equal effect. The challenge to an entrenched analytical distinction between a "political" public realm and "social" private realm is perhaps nowhere more cogent than in Diane Singerman's chapter, "The family and community as politics," and her discussion of the "infrapolitics" of informal institutions and networks, and the importance of the family as productive unit, merits broad scholarly interest.

It is curious to note a certain strain of economic rationalism—references to "individuals" and their "pursuit of self interest"—appearing in a volume which itself in many ways serves to put into critical question such notions, at least as they have been typically conceived and used by political economists. Indeed, in Nadia Khouri-Dagher's discussion of food and social order in Cairo there is more than a faint resonance of Scott's "moral economy." Hoodfar's qualification of "nonmonetary" yields, or Singerman's "familial ethos," and the general emphasis in this volume on the importance of informal exchange networks on the level of family and community, all argue eloquently for more encompassing and culturally specific understandings of "interest," "income" and social reproduction.

In sum, allowing for a certain unevenness in the range of description and theoretical scope among the chapters, this is a ground-breaking work in which, as Singerman suggests, situating the household as a particular kind of social and political universe should be seen not as a replacement to traditional political analyses but a necessary and neglected complement. It is to be hoped that similar studies on other cities of the region, providing a broader comparative context, will follow suit.

Michael A. Fahy *University of Michigan*
Fatma Muge Gocek *University of Michigan*

LESLIE PAUL THIELE, *Thinking Politics: Perspectives in Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Political Theory*. Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1997, xvii + 270 p.

This book is designed as an introduction for undergraduate students in political theory, and in political science more generally. It is ambitious in seeking to lay bare and justify the complexities of postmodern theory. Given the tendency of members of that school to write all-but-incomprehensible prose, it is a distinct pleasure to report that this book succeeds in