There must be, in her view, an understanding of the aesthetic which is not totally buried in sociological reductionism or ideological critique. Sociology, in addressing art, has an aesthetic of its own which needs to be explicated. The search for this aesthetic leads Wolff to seek and argue for the "specificity" of art.

Several meanings of "specificity" are reviewed by Wolff, but the fundamental assumption is that art is irreducible simply to economics, history, politics, etc. Although Wolff champions the specificity of art, she is unyielding in her critical analyses of theorists who have so far offered suggestions as to its nature and constitution. She states:

> to date the strongest contenders for this task are beset by serious weaknesses which make it difficult to see how their theoretical contributions can either solve the problem of the aesthetic or be incorporated into a sociological approach (108).

On this note, Wolfe leaves her readers to ponder and perhaps construct "solutions" of their own.

This is a useful book for students of the sociology of art in particular and for those interested in the project of cultural production generally. Wolff outlines the major positions of Foucault, Gadamer, Lacan, Lukacs, Marcuse and a host of others having lesser name recognition but no less stimulating ideas. The eight-page bibliography is a mine of relevant material. The only reservation this reviewer has is the price. Why should a book which could, theoretically, be photocopied for under $3.00 cost three times as much to buy?

University of Nebraska   Michael R. Hill

Jennie Keith, *Old People as People: Social and Cultural Influences on Aging and Old Age,* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982. 130 pp. $7.95 (paper).

As the title indicates, the major theme of this book is the commonality of social existence between old people and all other age groups. This is not to say that Keith argues the content of the experiences are the same, but rather that the manner of dealing with the human condition has great continuity across all ages. For example, she notes: "[o]ld people, by choosing other old people as friends are, of course, acting just like young people" (79).

Although not necessarily connotated in the title, *Old People as People* has a strong anthropological tenor. Much of the data set forth in the book are drawn from ethnographic studies of small "primitive" tribal societies. This anthropological flavor adds to the importance of the book on a number of levels. First, the wide variety of examples of various aging patterns can be used as a fairly good data resource for the undergraduate student interested in the aging phenomenon. Second, because of the broad variety of examples, the social nature of the aging experience is illustrated. Finally, although not a major focus of the book, Keith's anthropological eye notices many of the potentially biasing features of contemporary western research in aging, e.g.: (1) researchers may be ethnocentric, (2) there tends to be a male bias in gathering data, (3) she implies a potential for a middle-age bias by the researcher, and (4) the narrowness of focusing only on linearity in generational alignments as a limiting factor.

Keith covers a wide array of topics associated with the cultural approach to aging and some which might even be considered more tied to the social structure—social organization perspective. The book focuses on aspects of the (1) cognitive, (2) normative, (3) ideological/expectational, and (4) formal and informal association features of growing old in a social context.

With respect to the cognitive dimension of aging, Keith sets forth numerous factors related to the subjective creation of age grades/boundaries which help to highlight the psychosocial features of aging. In her discussion of the normative aspects of aging she points out that due to the vacancy of norm structures

for old people they are thrust into a position of creating their own. They are modern day pioneers in a manner which might compare to Melbin's (1978) notions. Four specific areas are cited wherein old people must work to formulate their own normative standards: (1) death, (2) sex, (3) equality, and (4) with regard to dealing with the weak and helpless members of their groups. Generational factors are dealt with to some degree. Yet, Keith shows how there remains a similarity between the adolescent and the old, based on their being in what she terms a liminal position (transitional/marginal status). The book concludes by setting forth an argument that modern societies lack complete rituals of transition to help old people define their social statuses and map this new and as of yet "uncharted territory."

In conclusion, although the book has a fairly traditional format and set of areas, it does contain the nucleus of a variety of critical insights which should aid the student in formulating a fuller awareness of the aging experience. From the very beginning of the book Keith challenges the reader and the researcher to reconceptualize the theories they use to explain old age as a social phenomenon.

This book could probably be used as a solid teaching resource. *Old People as People* is a fairly good survey of a limited area of gerontology and used in conjunction with other monographs in the Little, Brown series, could be used very effectively as part of a course text in social gerontology.

Carroll College   Richard H. Coon

REFERENCE

Melbin, M.
    1978   "Night as Frontier." American Sociological Review 43:3-22.

Elizabeth W. Fernea (ed.), *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of Change,* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. 356 pp. $24.50 (cloth).

During the last few years, women and change in the Middle East have attracted a number of scholars. The originality of the present work stems from the nature and diversity of materials it contains. Some of these materials are translated for the first time into English from Arabic, French and Persian sources. The book also contains a collection of poems, short stories, essays, interviews, novel excerpts, life histories and more. The topics and issues covered range from family, health and education, to work and politics. Geographically, the coverage is also diverse. Several countries from Iran to Morocco are represented. There is, however, a common theme that runs throughout the book: women and social change in the Middle East.

As such, the book aims at a wide audience. Both the well-informed Middle Easterner and the less-informed reader would find it highly informative. To the feminist student, eager to learn more about Middle Eastern women than the stereotype of secluded Arabian women reported in textbooks, the book offers more than just information. It offers an approach, a frame of mind and a call for understanding.

Organization of the Book
Starting with an enlightening poem, the book is organized into eight parts of varying lengths. Part I, the shortest, introduces the theme of the book. It raises the question of social change and women as they voice the need for change. Algerian women speak of women's place in society, in the family, and their right to work. Not only are they calling for change but they are also envisioning full and true emancipation of women as a vital necessity for their liberation. In this vision of true emancipation, education and work are seen as the two basic conditions for the social advancement of women.

Part II contains a rich selection of three short stories, two fairly systematic papers and one life history. Each contribution treats an aspect of the family and some of the changes affecting it. The most systematic and perhaps the most informative contribution is the article by Halim Barakat, "The Arab Family and