

oughly analysed as a contested political construct. In addition, the book's attempt to realise an exhaustive coverage favours variety over depth, with the result of obscuring the intense politicisation of several areas of waste practice. For example, little is said about the politics of conservancy workers, and the political aspects of technology are rapidly glossed over. The authors' willingness to latch on to optimistic stories, especially in the last chapters, produces a stimulating account that is justly aware of the sector's dire need for fresh energy, role models and replicable examples. But interrogating darker spots, and considering the intricate ways in which waste is hijacked for all manner of political agendas may also bring its share of valuable lessons on the path toward sounder waste management. *Waste of a Nation* nevertheless gains a place of choice in the waste literature and deserves the attention of academics, practitioners and anyone else interested in the pressing environmental challenges faced by India today.

Olivia Calleja

MALVIKA MAHESHWARI, *Art Attacks. Violence and Offence-Taking in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019. 376 pages, \$60.00. ISBN 978-0-1994-8884-1

When the “incendiary” film “Fire” – a story of same-sex love directed by Deepa Mehta – hit India's cinemas in 1998, I happened to watch it in the conservative holy city and pilgrimage centre of Varanasi. I was told I was lucky that I did not understand the local slang that accompanied the screening as background noise. Fortunately, that was all I experienced. Elsewhere, as Malvika Maheshwari discusses in her new book *Art Attacks. Violence and Offence-Taking in India*, the movie “Fire” had triggered destruction at the hand of Hindu right-wing groups in several cities in the country. However, attacks against art are highly contingent on many factors and hence do not automatically translate into uniform reactions to the same cultural product throughout India. In fact, there might be no attack at all.

The events such as those surrounding the film “Fire” are at the heart of *Art Attacks*. In this book, Maheshwari argues that, since the end of the 1980s, artists have been routinely attacked, artworks damaged and exhibitions disrupted by self-styled groups hailing from across the political spectrum. Disruption of public spaces, destruction of property and assaults on artists have yielded visibility, glory and success to the attackers while at the same time providing publicity for the very art whose circulation they aimed to halt.

Maheshwari weaves a powerful thread across well-known attacks against figures and organisations such as Safdar Hashmi, Sahmat, Salman Rushdie, Anand Patwardhan and M.F. Husain. The author retells these cases with the aid of multiple interviews with assailants (a heterogeneous sample, including artists at times), victims, art world professionals and journalists, among many others. This approach allows her to push for an inquiry into the nature of this particular violence and its perpetrators. Maheshwari asks where, in the landscape of violence in India, should we place such attacks on art and artists: are they akin to riots or other forms of violence? Equally important, the author contends that violence perpetrated by an array of groups of different political and religious persuasion signals a *modus operandi* intrinsic to democracy, rather than its “negation”. Attacks on artists point to violence as the very condition of Indian democracy – a condition that is moulded and constrained by its very mechanisms, a situation the author says prevents a free-for-all rampage.

Art Attacks is a very well-researched book and the author displays a sophisticated knowledge of the political and of the significant shifts experienced in the world of politics, state institutions and their actors over recent decades. By the 1980s and 1990s, Maheshwari notes, the state had gradually begun ceding power to groups who sought to exercise the state’s prerogative to repress citizens and whose claims of “hurt sentiments” became the reasoning to justify their oppressive means. The author completes this picture by including the crucial trends of the criminalisation of politics and the liberalisation of the Indian economy as well as the novel media landscapes that enable the assailants’ desire for “performance”. Whether the above high-profile attacks are symptoms of the involution of democracy or its actual and fatal consequences is uncertain. But that is not all: Maheshwari constructs these shifts through a conceptualisation of the ultimate object of the book, free speech, starting with the debates in the Constituent Assembly of India. The resulting narrative illustrates the fate of the interaction of elite cultural producers with a composite collection of art forms ranging from the visual arts, cinema and literature to theatre. Choosing diverse art forms is a strategy the author deploys to let the assailants designate something as “art” as the focus of their attack. On the other hand, while Maheshwari persuasively argues that the Hindu Right (or others) turn into self-appointed censors, these art forms are differently regulated, if at all. For example, while films are subject to the Central Board of Film Certification regulations, there exists no formal body that vets art exhibitions. Thus, the conditions for the release and circulation of art in India are rather different, and for example, many visual artists in India today continue to produce and show challenging works in ways in which free speech would seem to be regularly upheld.

Importantly, Maheshwari argues that attacks against artists are a new and unique practice and differ from existing modalities of demonstration and from forms of extreme violence such as riots and genocide. Towards the end of the book, the author contends that “artists are an embodiment of both the magnificence and the violence of the times they live in” (p. 339). The book discusses attacks that have targeted the artistic production of the elites, whose status has shaped both the attacks and their outcomes (these range from murder to banning but also to the granting of the right to screen a film). However, what takes place outside the realm of Indian society’s upper echelons? While the book sheds light on the unknown and often unidentified assailants, the relation between free speech and those lesser-known artists residing in smaller cities, who have been attacked without generating any momentum, as the author mentions, have not found space in the book’s analysis. Thinking comparatively, it is certainly true that elite artists (and other high-profile members of the cultural world) are subject to a climate of intimidation and potential censorship and violence – and the book demonstrates this very effectively; however, the routine and lethal violence experienced by minorities, Dalits and indigenous persons, as well as the gender violence that occurs as a matter of fact, actually point to the overall freedom of expression of elite cultural producers and their ability to fight cases in court.

Art Attacks deserves to be read widely as it offers much food for thought on the shifting texture of Indian society, the limits of democracy, but also the role of “containment” by those who consider themselves arbiters not only of visual and material worlds but of the very nature of culture.

Manuela Ciotti

CORINNA R. UNGER, *Entwicklungspfade in Indien. Eine internationale Geschichte 1947–1980*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015. 319 pages, €34.90. ISBN 978-3-8353-1754-3

In her book, Corinna R. Unger, Professor of Global and Colonial History at the European University Institute in Florence, gives a profound and detailed overview of the different developmental approaches in postcolonial India. While outlining the different theories underlying development policy in India, she ties the actual development work to the international conditions at the time. This overview not only conveys the circumstances affecting Indian international politics in general but also illustrates how strongly global development work rests upon strategic and political calculations that go beyond altruistic and social motives. The book demonstrates through many examples that