figures exploding on screen as "an alternative to the Nehruvian secular matrix, the traditional-cultural narratives tend to 'counter' secularism and its universalizing tendencies. This tralatitious/mythic/traditional order … [exposes] the fragility of the modern secular scientific discourse, whereas the consistent and systematic inscription of the mythical order onto the Hindi horror genre narratives points to its pervasiveness" (p. 75). Perhaps more audaciously, Mubarki also suggests that a vast swath of films—from texts that span the late 1960s into the new millennium—form a "subalternist resistance to the hegemonic formulations of the Nehruvian era, representing an underworld whose ideas about gender, society and social relations had been largely ignored or overturned in the interest of a modern, secular, postcolonial modern Indian Identity" (p. 76). Ambitious in scope and seeking to include films as disparate as *Jadu Tona* (Nagaich, 1967) and *Phoonk* (Varma, 2008), this chapter simultaneously foregrounds Mubarki's contribution and points to the limits of ideological critique. No doubt, the dozens of films invoked in passing or subject to detailed analysis here affirm the "traditional/mythic" order in some manner, but what this discourse implies shifts over time; moreover, what counts as "hegemonic" or "resistant" remains historically pliant and mutative. Relatedly, industrial transformations and the alterations in media ecology exert considerable force on the ideological scaffolding of films and genres; while Mubarki outlines some of these breaks in this chapter, his analyses of specific films do not make enough room for them. Precisely because this chapter includes such a massive assortment of films, a discussion of style and form would have also helped to tease out the distinctions between a Ramsay film and a *Raaz* (Bhatt, 2002), a *Mangalsutra* (Vijay, 1981), and a *Darling* (Varma, 2007). It will be difficult for readers who are unfamiliar with the titles in question to know that these films do not, in fact, look anything alike. Despite a robust theoretical framework, the overwhelming focus on ideological readings to the exclusion of other frames of engagement threatens to flatten out important distinctions between films, filmmakers, and historical or industrial contexts in this otherwise fascinating chapter.

The fifth and final chapter focuses on the rise of Hindutva-inflected horror since the 1980s and makes a persuasive case for the hardening of religious discourses and a concomitant jettisoning of older forms of "folksiness" in the genre.

As a whole, Mubarki's book makes an important contribution to the field of Indian cinema studies and will be of interest to anyone interested in non-Western traditions of horror. It will also be useful as a teaching tool in upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses in colleges and universities.

Meheli Sen
Rutgers University
ms1716@amesall.rutgers.edu

Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature. By Jairam Ramesh. New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2017. ix, 437 pp. ISBN: 9788193355244 (cloth, also available in paper and as e-book).
doi:10.1017/S0021911818001341

In 1972, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi gained global attention with a speech she gave at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. The presentation was, in a way, an early treatise on global environmental history.

Although her pithy statement that "poverty is the worst form of pollution" grabbed the headlines, it was her critique of the hypocrisy of what were then referred to as the "developed" nations that has had the greatest impact. Gandhi noted how so much of the industrialized world, which had made its wealth (and pollution) through the pillage of its colonies, now insisted that those newly independent nations be held equally responsible for cleaning up the world. Her argument that the smaller wealthy nations use far more resources than the larger, poorer ones, is, as the events surrounding the Paris Climate Accord show, as relevant as ever.

It is of course a truism to point out that Indira Gandhi remains a controversial figure. Depending on which accounts one reads, she was a savior, a tyrant, a ruthless opportunist, or a strong woman maligned unfairly. One fact seems indisputable, however: while she may have been a flawed environmentalist, she was a devout naturalist. This is the argument that Jairam Ramesh makes in his new biography, and it is a persuasive one.

Ramesh has the credentials to take on this subject. A Congress MP from Andhra Pradesh, he held several ministerial posts in Manmohan Singh's government, most notably that of Environment and Forests. He lays out Gandhi's development as a naturalist chronologically, beginning with the influence of her father, and continuing with her school years in Switzerland and subsequent role as advisor to her father. Naturally enough, he devotes the most attention to her years as prime minister. We see her love of the wild blossom, particularly her fondness for birds, forests, mountains, and tigers. During her period as prime minister, she was responsible for numerous wildlife sanctuaries and preserves, and, to an extent, forest preservation. Given the challenges she faced for much of her life, these were admirable achievements in conservation.

Less admirable were her environmental politics; in the final analysis Gandhi was unable to live up to her stirring speech in Stockholm. While Ramesh is strong on detailing what he sees as positive accomplishments, he is less so on critical analysis. He is particularly dismissive or defensive on issues of social ecology. This is especially true in his coverage of the last ten years of Gandhi's life. So, for instance, on the ruthless suppression of the railway strike shortly before the Emergency, Ramesh absolves Gandhi by claiming that she had no choice because compromise had been so "vitiated" by "the most strident" of her opponents to make any "calm or composed settlements possible" (p. 180). While he does briefly address the controversy of forced sterilization near the end of the volume, nowhere does he discuss the impact of the urban beautification programs of the Emergency and the 1982 Asian Games, which destroyed huge swaths of *jhaggi* (slums), dispossessing thousands of the urban poor. More complex issues, such as the effects of hydroelectric dam projects on the natural environment and the displacement of people, or the consequences of industrial pollution, are given superficial coverage. The complexities of the Green Revolution are abbreviated to a "success … for which she herself had provided determined leadership" (p. 390).

Many of the weaknesses tend to be caused by the way the book is organized. While Ramesh's primary material is impressive, it is almost exclusively limited to letters to and from Gandhi. His secondary material is shallow. As a consequence, the reader is consumed by how Gandhi demonstrated her love for nature but is left wondering why her political actions at times seemed so little in tune with her beliefs. In general, the chapters begin with brief chronological introductions to the periods covered, which are followed by a barrage of letters interspersed with brief summaries of how these letters emphasize her concern for different species of birds, lions, tigers, sea turtles, water fowl, and so forth. The reader comes away with an appreciation for the depth of her conviction but is also left wondering what it all led to.

Ramesh has done an admirable job of chronicling Gandhi's special closeness to the natural world in *Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature*. The reader emerges with a vivid sense of a person who was in communication with her natural surroundings from an early age. Unfortunately, we get only a superficial sense of how she reconciled her passions with the chosen path of her life. We are left begging for a more inclusive perspective.

Christopher V. Hill
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
chill@uccs.edu

Text and Tradition in South India. By Velcheru Narayana Rao. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016. 494 pp. ISBN: 9788178244723 (cloth, also available in paper and as e-book).
doi:10.1017/S0021911818002875

Velcheru Narayana Rao (or VNR, as he is known) is the preeminent scholar of Telugu studies in the American academy. His works, composed singly and with a stable of collaborators, now form the small library of monographs and translations that practically constitutes the field's literature. What's more, in over thirty years he has produced a crop of insightful essays that bring the substantial body of Telugu traditions to bear on the broad questions of South Asian and literary studies. Among them are the fifteen pieces collected in *Text and Tradition in South India*.

Covering over 900 years of South Indian literary traditions, the essays' stand-out themes include "concepts of author, text, and the historicity of text cultures," as well as "orality and literacy" and "the quiet impact of colonial modernity on Indian text practices" (p. 11). This broad thematic and chronological compass is cut by VNR's attentiveness to the social and ideological dimensions of the texts. At the same time, he aims to oppose reductive analyses, holding literature to be fundamentally multivocal—susceptible to a variety of interpretations, possessing lives and afterlives, and thus distinct from and "unfettered by … overpowering authorial sermon" (p. 416).

General introductions to premodern Telugu literature come in chapters 1 ("Multiple Literary Cultures in Telugu: Court, Temple, and Public") and 4 ("Coconut and Honey: Sanskrit and Telugu in Medieval Andhra"). Chapter 1 definitively maps major modes and tensions in precolonial Telugu literary cultures rather than comprehensively cataloging authors and works. VNR heeds especially the traditions' narratives about their beginnings in the eleventh-century South Indian courts and subsequent moments when poets resisted or renovated these earlier paradigms. Chapter 4 highlights Telugu's relationship with Sanskrit. In particular, VNR traces the ways Telugu adopted Sanskrit poetry and grammar, and alludes to how it ultimately "acquired a status similar to that of Sanskrit in preceding centuries" (p. 166). This tension between Sanskritic paradigms and other modes in Telugu is a broader preoccupation in the collection.

Chapters 2 ("Notes on Political Thought in Medieval and Early Modern South India," co-authored with Sanjay Subrahmanyam) and 5 ("Multiple Lives of a Text: The *Sumati Śatakamu* in Colonial Andhra") demonstrate the contribution of Telugu materials to the study of South Indian political culture. Chapter 2 leverages the sizable corpus of poetry on *nīti* (pragmatic politics) and shows it to be a necessary archive for premodern political history. In chapter 5, VNR picks up the argument's modern threads. He asks how