that it is worth persisting. In this well-referenced book, Daniluk synthesizes the work of a broad range of past and current authors. Daniluk is not the first author to challenge the primacy of penile–vaginal intercourse as the one true measure of an individual’s sexual expression; however, she does give conviction to the message: “Despite the range of possible activities that could be construed as sexual, penile vaginal penetration is the one activity that has come to define a woman’s sexual status in our culture” (p. 11).

In this book, Daniluk weaves theories, anecdotes, and research evidence into a comprehensive treatise on female sexuality. In so doing, she provides a rich texture to women’s sexual lives that is based on all our experiences. Although it might well be derived from a feminist philosophy, the way it is presented is not as hostile as some other authors’ is. Daniluk does not resile from confronting the issues that preoccupy feminist authors. She does, however, show women as dynamic participants in their socialization, rather than passive victims.

Daniluk presents a systematic argument and posits some interesting questions through anecdotes from a wide range of women. The author derives information from her own sources and those of others, thus widening the demographics although, as Daniluk points out, there is a bias toward white, European, and American women.

Set out in four parts, with parts two to four taking the reader through the life stages of women, Daniluk presents her summary in the opening chapter: “It is the contention of this book that many problems experienced by women related to their sexuality occur in attempting to accommodate and make sense of the physical, personal and interpersonal changes in their lives” (p. 19). Nevertheless, she constantly brings the reader back to the view that women can and do “resist the impositions of definitions and meanings that would serve to quell and repress women’s erotic life force” (p. 357).

The first section, “Opening Pandora’s Box,” provides an overview of the evolution of the sexual self through the complex interaction with one’s environment. Although the metaphor of Pandora’s box is a cliché, the reader should reflect upon its meaning. In Greek mythology, Pandora was the first woman, who Zeus sent to earth with a box full of evils. This was designed to counteract the blessings brought through Prometheus’ gift of fire. When Pandora opened the box, all the evils flew out, leaving only Hope within the box. Does Daniluk’s reference to Pandora imply that through exploring women’s sexuality we are disposing of evil or exposing it? Should Hope be left in the box or should that also be released? Daniluk exposes many of the myths and messages girls and women receive that lead them to have conflicting feelings and attitudes toward their body and their sexuality.

Historically, women’s sexuality has been described as fundamentally evil and something which is likely to lure men into wrongdoing. Aristotle’s notion that the female fetus is conceived through sperm from the left testicle led to the word sinister
(from the Latin *sinistra*, meaning left) being used to imply evil which originates in woman. Many of the world’s major religions tend to reinforce this view. These antecedents provide an explanation for ambiguities in current attitudes; however, it does not explain the origins of misogyny: “When a man marries it is no more than a sign that the feminine talent for persuasion and intimidation . . . has forced him into a more or less abhorrent compromise with his own honest inclinations and best interests” (Mencken, 1989).

In this book, Daniluk exposes these attitudes and the influence they have on a woman’s sense of self. She considers the impact of these matters at each stage of a woman’s life. The critical socialization period during infancy and early childhood, the impact of menarche, pregnancy, motherhood, and menopause are explored with an emphasis on the dynamic interaction between the influences of biology, psychology, and society. In the penultimate section, in 11 of the 15 chapters, the author details “problematic meanings” in which she emphasizes those conflicting attitudes which may lead women to simultaneous feelings of bodily discomfort and pleasure. In 10 chapters, Daniluk ends on a positive note, providing practical suggestions for creating new meanings. It is the structure of its chapters that makes this book so readable.

Daniluk is a little harsh in her criticism of Masters and Johnson in saying they have made no mention of sexual desire. Their work was intended only to examine the physiological responses to direct sexual stimulation and, in spite of recent criticism, it cannot be denied that their research represents a watershed in the study of human sexuality, as Daniluk herself acknowledges. Daniluk also criticizes sexologists in general for their phallocentricity; however, she is hoisted on her own petard when describing the excitement phase of the female sexual response cycle as “being analogous to penile erection” (p. 162) and also by mentioning the vagina on several occasions when vulva would have been more appropriate.

I wonder how Daniluk defines “sexologist,” as the authors she cites in support of her argument are all scholars of human sexuality. Her criticisms may well have had some validity in the 1970s; fortunately, sexology as a multidisciplinary enterprise has continued to develop and one might well include Daniluk among its authors. In so doing, one might criticize her for returning to some of the old terminology, such as “frigid,” and some of the myths that today’s young adults would reject. For example on page 214 Daniluk lists 13 comparative statements, such as “Men are sexually aggressive, women are passive” and “Men never say ‘no’ to sex; when women say ‘no,’ they really mean ‘yes’.” Very few, other than a minority of judges, rapists, and their defence lawyers accept that old chestnut these days (Fischer and Good, 1998). Although it is not in Daniluk’s brief, it is worthy of mention here that some of these myths continue to be problematic for men who have not come to terms with modern women (Fischer and Good, 1998). Daniluk is, however, correct about the different levels of sexual guilt experienced by women vis-à-vis men.