

Book Reviews*

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Boekresensies

An exemplar of scholarly finesse that also manages to tell a good story

Charles van Onselen, *Showdown at the Red Lion: The Life and Times of Jack McLoughlin, 1859-1910*

Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2015

515 pp

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R300.00

To put it simply, *Showdown at the Red Lion* is a very good read. It successfully navigates the very difficult line between telling the story of an individual, with the close attention to the fine detail this requires, and that of the broad history of the age in which he lived. In less capable hands, a biography may present a detailed and fascinating picture of the individual without providing sufficient historical context of the world in which the particular individual lived and operated. A good biography should, therefore, provide a comprehensive and insightful picture of the individual in ways that also illuminate the history of the age in which he lived. This book does both extremely well.

At the individual level, the book is a life history of one Jack McLoughlin, a one-armed career criminal who was born in Manchester, England, in 1859 and who died at the gallows in South Africa in 1910 after a life of constant brushes with the law. These resulted in several terms of imprisonment in South Africa and Australia, and finally, in his execution for a double murder committed in Johannesburg at the turn of the twentieth century. It is the story of a complex and conflicted individual who was very much a product of his time. His character was shaped by the world he was born into: one characterised by poverty and squalor as a member of the working class in Manchester's industrial setting, where gambling, binge drinking and public brawls were the order of the day and clashes with the law were common. This was also a world in which young men routinely participated in a gang culture, with its peculiar penchant for celebrating and upholding masculinity and loyalty to the group and in which young migrant Irishmen easily took to a life of crime.

Following brushes with the law, McLoughlin joined the great British out-migration at the time by enlisting for the navy and thus gained a free passage to Australia where he soon deserted and took up a life of crime. From there, he headed for South Africa where, after a spell in the military, he resumed his chosen path and was soon "revered by many in the underworld circles" as a tough man and a natural gang leader (p 2). Working with varied members of what came to be known as the Irish Brigade, this anti-hero committed many crimes and was convicted to many

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prison terms in Johannesburg and its environs. It was while trying to escape from a prison in Rustenburg that prison guards shot him and shattered his arm, resulting in him losing the arm and becoming literally, a one-armed bandit.

Apart from a brief period with a live-in girlfriend, McLoughlin did not care much for women and preferred male company. He grew particularly close to one young lad, George Stevenson, known among his peers as “Stevo”, who became his partner in crime for a while. After successfully blowing open a safe and relieving it of its contents in Johannesburg, the gang which he led fled to Pretoria where they lay low for a while. With the police hot on his heels for this crime, McLoughlin was forced to flee the country to Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia before becoming something of a consultant to a Vhenda chief who was resisting encroaching Boer domination. On discovering that his beloved Stevo had turned informer against him and other members of the gang that had participated in the safe-busting crime that had forced him to temporarily flee into exile, McLoughlin felt betrayed and resolved to execute the traitor. He proceeded to shoot Stevo down in a downtown hotel and shortly thereafter, inadvertently shot a young Muslim man – thus becoming a wanted man for committing a double murder.

With the law once again on his heels, he escaped to Delagoa Bay and made his way Down Under where for the next decade and a half, he continued his life of crime, operating between Australia and New Zealand. Finally, he was arrested in Australia after committing yet another crime and was sentenced to imprisonment. After serving time for this crime, he was extradited to South Africa to face trial for the two murders he had committed earlier. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. While this is clearly a story of one unconventional man’s life as a rebel and a bandit, living on the margins of society which he was intent on subverting, the author rightly cautions us against regarding him as “peculiar” or “mad” or even unique, because

if we focus on his exceptionality and the deeds that came to cost his life, we will forfeit the fuller understanding that comes from the realisation that there were thousands of other men who, in most respects, were more alike than they were not (p 3).

Moreover, McLoughlin’s life story provides a window through which we can trace the momentous historical developments that helped to shape our world while the globalisation process steadily unfolded and technological innovations increased the inter-connectedness of peoples around the globe. While globalisation has often been linked to the recent IT revolution and the matching innovative developments in communication and travel, van Onselen reminds us that globalisation was long under way before then. The global nature of the world in which McLoughlin lived and operated was evident in a number of ways. These included the international crime network that enabled him to hook up with fellow Irish criminals in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Most of the Irish Brigade had their roots in the Lancastrian industrial world and shared a common anti-English resentment arising out of a shared memory of the abuse of the Irish by the English over the years. These

Irishmen had all found their way into the far-flung corners of the British Empire as part of another global phenomenon, namely the Great Migration of the second half of the nineteenth century, which saw people of British stock emigrating from their country of origin into Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, among other countries. This out-migration did not only involve Irish criminals but also large numbers of other groups, including women and children, because “after 1850, more than 200 000 migrants left Britain each year” (p 10). While there were clearly push factors driving this out-migration, there were also pull factors that promised hope of a better life in the colonies, especially given the discovery of precious minerals, such as gold in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1880s, respectively and also of diamonds in South Africa in the 1860s (p 6).

This massive out-migration was made possible by revolutionary changes in international communication facilities and sea and land transportation through the development of the telegraph and railway and sea-transport technology, respectively. As van Onselen put it, “the Age of the Great Migrations in the latter half of the nineteenth century was predicated on the extraordinary advances made in the development and intercontinental spread of the railways networks, steamship passages and telegraphic networks” (p 6). Because of these technological revolutions, the world was becoming a smaller place, enabling what van Onselen calls the “imperial gaze” or the imperial eye to see more clearly what was going on in the far corners of the British Empire. The improved communication networks provided by the telegraph and by the growing number of newspapers throughout the empire meant that it was becoming relatively easier for officials in the various colonies to share news about crimes and other issues of common interest to the wellbeing of the empire. It was this improved ability to track developments in various parts of the empire and to communicate with distant countries which enabled the South African police to share the information with their Australian counterparts that led to the arrest of McLoughlin and then to his extradition to face trial in Johannesburg.

Showdown at the Red Lion also offers us useful and interesting insights into the history of South Africa in general terms and in particular, the history of Johannesburg at the time. McLoughlin was living and operating in South Africa during a period of rapid political change in the country, a time when the Boer Republic of the Transvaal came under increasing pressure from British imperialism and the country underwent a bitter war before emerging into relative peace with the establishment of the Union of South Africa. In a way, it was these political complications that allowed McLoughlin to literally get away with murder for so long, because preoccupations with local political developments distracted the South African authorities’ attention from this fugitive from the law. Furthermore, van Onselen’s descriptions of the residential and population geography of the frontier society that was Johannesburg at the turn of the twentieth century provide glimpses of the racial order taking root and prevailing in South Africa that was to become increasingly crystallised and rigidly formalised by the mid-twentieth century. Van Onselen navigates the complicated challenge of telling the story of an individual in a masterful fashion without sacrificing attention to the international and local socio-economic and political context in which that individual

lived. This takes great skill in terms of both scholarly finesse and the ability to tell a story –which is the mark of good history.

Showdown at the Red Lion is based on solid research. Van Onselen consulted an impressive range of sources from many repositories in several countries around the world. While the main body of historical evidence came from the “recorded and type-written proceedings of the case of Rex vs Jack McLoughlin, as heard in the Johannesburg High Court in 1909 and preserved in the South African National Archives”, searches in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa provided information on McLoughlin’s “court appearances, deportation, extradition and imprisonment” in these countries (pp 486–487). He also carried out research in the United Kingdom where he examined census records for the period and made use of resources in the Archives and Local Studies section of Manchester’s Central Library. Finally, the author perused newspapers from the various countries where McLoughlin lived and operated. Out of these many and disparate sources a very coherent, analytical and insightful account emerges of this interesting and complex man whose individual life tells a rich story about his times and the historical factors that shaped his world. Also impressive is van Onselen’s mastery of the histories of other parts of the world, apart from South Africa, enabling him to write confidently about early Irish history and to give examples from the United States and other parts of the globe with relative ease.

Regarding the author’s story-telling ability, there is no doubt that van Onselen can spin a yarn with the best of them. The biography reads like a good novel and is so well presented that one is compelled to read on to find out what happened next. It is presented in very accessible language and subtly weaves analysis into the narrative in the best historical tradition. It draws logical deductions on the basis of a careful reading of the historical record in the context of other forms of evidence against which the record is tested and cross checked to produce meaningful explanations of the past. *Showdown at the Red Lion* is recommended to all who enjoy a good read and who appreciate good history as narrated by one of the best historians of our time.

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The British Empire through its cities

Tristram Hunt, *Cities of Empire: The British Colonies and the Creation of the Urban World*

Metropolitan Books, New York, 2014

544 pp

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\$25.37

Tristram Hunt's lively and readable *Cities of Empire: The British Colonies and the Creation of the Urban World* is a history of British imperialism told through its urban centres. Largely based on secondary sources, Hunt's individual chapters will not reveal anything new to the specialist. The contribution, rather, is in the connections and contrasts the author draws between each imperial site. As if in a relay race, each chapter illuminates a new imperial dynamic before passing the torch of empire to somewhere new.

Boston and Bridgetown (Barbados), the subjects of the opening chapters, trace Britain's early modern expansion into the Atlantic slave and sugar trades. Later chapters chart the shift from mercantilism under the East India Company in Calcutta to the free trade imperialism that fuelled the Opium Wars and the colonisation of Hong Kong. Hunt goes on to juxtapose the thriving industrial and multicultural metropolis of Bombay with the sterile and segregated capital of New Delhi. The Indic features of Bombay Gothic architecture gave way to the neoclassical design of by Edwin Lutyens in New Delhi and Herbert Baker's Secretariat Buildings (modelled after Pretoria's Union Buildings) while the British sought, literally and metaphorically, to find distance from the Indian people and environment, removing themselves to gated bungalow communities. The ossifying hierarchy and facile ritual of New Delhi embodied a shift away from more cosmopolitan visions of empire and reflected the deep-seated imperial anxieties prevalent in the interwar period. New Delhi would be the "finest ruin of them all" according to the snide although prescient remark of the French president, Georges Clemenceau.

South African readers will find the imperial port of Cape Town, circa 1800, nestled strategically in Hunt's narrative as the pivot between the "First British Empire" in the Atlantic and the "Second British Empire" in India. In Hunt's account, British dominion in the Cape was the brainchild of Pitt the Younger's underrated War Secretary, Henry Dundas, who in the 1790s hoped to transition from an American model of settler colonialism (wounds inflicted by rebellious Bostonians were still fresh) to a commercial empire in the East. In Britain's quest for mercantile expansion and the military power to back it up, victualling stations like Cape Town proved indispensable. Hunt turns to the social history of Cape Town when he argues that British abolitionist rhetoric against Dutch slavery helped re-conceive the British Empire as a bastion of liberty (even though slavery in Cape Town differed greatly from the harsher plantation slavery of Bridgetown). Nonetheless, Cape Town's primary contribution to the narrative is as the "first fortress" of India (to quote the

future Indian governor-general, Richard Wellesley who sojourned at Cape Castle and reappears in the Calcutta chapter). In the early 1800s, Cape Town “hardly touches” the African interior, Hunt argues, and readers have to wait until a later chapter on Melbourne to learn of the new wave of settler colonialism in the white dominions of the “Third British Empire” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Hunt gestures toward a politic even-handedness in his study of empire: the author himself inhabits both the “ivory tower” (as history lecturer at Queen Mary, University of London) and the House of Commons (as the Labour Party’s shadow secretary of state for Education). Recognition (perhaps not enough?) of imperial violence and exploitation can be found in Hunt’s vivid description of the “cage” in the centre of Bridgetown that brutally detained slaves found roaming after curfew. At other times, Hunt evokes a wistful sense of nostalgia – an appeal, perhaps, to the popular audience he targets – for a “loyal and royal” Boston (before it rebelled) or a stately and cosmopolitan Calcutta with “fluid ethnic boundaries” (before it was “cleaned up” as a backlash against notorious corruption scandals). Hunt casts his analysis as a balancing act between the neo-conservative Niall Ferguson and his more strident left-wing critics (a fruitless exercise, perhaps, and one that only revives a stale debate). For Hunt, however, the freshest moments of analysis seem to be those that excavate empire as the venue for cross-cultural interchange. The diversity of Cape Town, for example, forced the British to commit to religious and multicultural toleration overseas long before similar postures were assumed back in London. What Hunt achieves in a sweeping fast-paced narrative, he sometimes lacks in forthright analysis, however, and such insights, made in passing, could sometimes benefit from further exploration.

Hunt spans vast geographic spaces in his manageable text. Missing from his account, however, are colonised people themselves. The reader will learn much about Anglo-Indian picnics and the opulent lifestyles of Dublin’s “Protestant Ascendancy”, but the absence of “ordinary” working people is perhaps surprising given the author’s background in Labour politics. The omission is not absolute – the liberated slave Olaudah Equiano and the Bridgetown brothel-keeper Rachel Pringle make notable appearances – but the relative absence of subalterns is regrettable. Consideration of Dublin’s Catholic poor and the transnational networks of Indian Nationalists; or textile workers in Bombay and their counterparts in the environs of Liverpool; or Muslim lascars and Chinese stevedores, might have opened additional avenues to explore the sinews that stitch each city into a larger imperial history. Viceroy and field marshals were not the only agents of global connection.

Whatever its shortcomings, Hunt has achieved an impressive synthesis, one that at times is reminiscent of Linda Colley’s writings in its narrative strength. What emerges is more than the sum of its parts, because Hunt reminds us of the empire’s diversity and its many transformations through time. The book is a useful tool to expose upper-year undergraduates to the broad contours of British imperialism, and the author’s unique position as both historian and politician will no doubt open instructive discussion. Is, for example, Hunt’s sanguine suggestion that China will

inherit the imperial mantle from Britain a considered intellectual prediction or a political ploy to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Liverpool (the subject of a final chapter on imperial decline) and the nearby constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, which Hunt represents in parliament?

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Every history can only present a partial reconstruction of the past

Major the Hon. Gerald French, *Lord Chelmsford and the Zulu War*

Pen & Sword Publications, Barnsley, 2014

347 pp

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£25.00

The Anglo-Zulu War was a controversial war. British forces invaded Zululand in January 1879 in an ill-disguised rush for territorial aggrandisement. Three columns converged on Ulundi, the capital of Zulu king, Cetshwayo ka Mpande. All seemed to be going well as the columns, comprising imperial and colonial units, crossed the Thukela River. The central column halted at Isandlwana, while a reconnaissance-in-force went ahead to reconnoitre and locate the main Zulu army. However, executing a masterly outflanking manoeuvre and maximising strategic surprise, a Zulu impi of 24 000 warriors under the dual command of iNkosi Ntshingwayo ka Mahole Khoza and iNkosi Mavumengwana ka Ndlela Ntuli, struck the British camp beneath Isandlwana hill on 22 January.¹ Surprised and caught in the open, the British camp was overrun and the troops given no quarter. The battle, a shattering blow to British arms and imperial pride, was one of few reverses suffered by British forces in the that century and the most severe experienced at the hands of a technologically inferior African force equipped chiefly with the short stabbing assegai.

Recrimination followed immediately and as colonial Natal in panic braced itself for a general Zulu invasion, journalists and politicians in Pietermaritzburg and back in London sought the cause of the disaster and clamoured for a scapegoat. Attention turned immediately to the military commander, Lieutenant General Lord Chelmsford. Born Frederic Thesiger in 1827, Chelmsford was the son of a jurist-turned-politician who was raised to the peerage in 1858. Thesiger's family connections were colourful, but not impeccable. A great uncle was naval aide-de-camp to Nelson during the Battle of Copenhagen (1801); a brother-in-law commanded the British forces during the Siege of Lucknow (1857), and his father served briefly in Derby's cabinet as Lord Chancellor. His family connections meant the young Thesiger was accepted into Eton, but did not immediately secure him the much sought-after breastplate in the Grenadier Guards. He purchased a commission in the

¹ J. Laband, *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2014), pp 228–231.

Rifle Brigade and, transferring to the Guards, a long career in the military followed. He served in Ireland, first as aide-de-camp to the Lord Lieutenant and then to the command-in-chief, then in the Crimea, and then India, where he experienced the Lucknow Rebellion and most importantly, met Sir Bartle Frere, who was then the governor of Bombay. Thesiger was part of the expedition to Abyssinia in 1868 and after a term as adjutant general in the East Indies, he returned to Britain in 1874 and three years later was appointed, at the request of the high commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, to the command of Imperial forces in South Africa. A lieutenant general now, Thesiger brought the Ninth Cape-Xhosa War (1878) to a conclusion and commanded the British forces at the beginning of the Anglo-Zulu campaign (1879), a war contrived by Frere, his patron and mentor.

Thesiger, who inherited his father's title in October 1878, was in many ways a typical imperial soldier with reasonable colonial campaigning behind him. But crucially, he lacked command experience. Furthermore, he was haughty and arrogant and disparaged the fighting capabilities of the Xhosa, who had resorted to a guerrilla campaign during the Ninth Cape Frontier War. He also thought very little of other African armies, recklessly underestimating the strategic acumen, tactical nous and fighting ability of the Zulu. Perhaps as many as 30 000 shoulder arms were imported between 1875 and 1879, but these were not used in the conflict of 1879. The Zulu king, fearing the inevitable impact of technological change, at first resisted the introduction of European weaponry and he and other Zulu traditionalists continued to favour the old, trusted, short stabbing assegai and the tactics of frontal assault that would bring the *impis* close enough to their opponents to use rapid, shock action. The asymmetry of the coming battles, which would again array a traditional African military system against the armed forces of an industrialised European state, imbued confidence and encouraged complacency, despite the warnings Chelmsford received from General Sir John Michel and others who had real colonial campaigning experience in southern Africa (ch 1).

This book, written so "that justice may *at last* be done to Lord Chelmsford's memory" (p x, emphasis original), predictably places Chelmsford at the centre of the story. The book commences with a chapter that sketches Chelmsford's background and family connections and his previous military service. This provides the necessary stage for the succeeding chapters that address the battles of the Anglo-Zulu War in painstaking detail. These chapters take the reader chronologically from London and Cape Town in late 1878, to Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and then, with the three columns of Chelmsford's invasion force, across the Tugela River on 11 January 1879 and on to the defeat of the central column at Isandlwana on 22 January and the investment of the southern column at Eshowe. Colonial commanders, often hamstrung by poor intelligence, tended to underestimate or exaggerate enemy strengths and the problems of terrain. Almost invariably, colonial campaigns began with a small reverse while colonial forces adapted to local circumstances and, with improving intelligence, adjusted strategy and tactics and brought the weight of

technology to bear.² The British Army suffered several reverses but generally excelled at colonial warfare. The scale of the disaster at Isandlwana and the hysteria in Natal and war-mongering in Britain placed the disaster at Isandlwana at another level (chapter 10).

London reacted quickly. Sir Garnet Wolseley, with large reinforcements, left for Natal to take command of the operations and bring the war to a speedy and successful conclusion. Chelmsford, while reorganising his forces in Natal for a second invasion, was immediately placed in the dock and his actions and conduct during the campaign were investigated and publicly criticised. Politicians and pressmen sought the existence of “a fatal conjunction of circumstances; a devil’s brew of incompetence, unpreparedness, mistaken and inappropriate tactics, a brash understanding of the enemy, a difficult terrain, raw recruits, treacherous opponents, diplomatic hindrance and bone-headed leadership”.³ In the meantime, following the action at Rorke’s Drift which was used to salvage some British honour, Chelmsford received news that he was to be replaced by Wolseley, a veteran colonial campaigner. Chelmsford immediately ordered a general advance into Zululand and before Wolseley reached the battlefield, the main encounter had been fought at Ulundi and the war had effectively ended. Chelmsford then left for England to face growing criticism of his leadership and command in a war conducted against the wishes of London and largely without its knowledge. Queen Victoria remained a stout supporter of Chelmsford, who was awarded a GCB in August 1879. A succession of other honours and posts followed at her behest. Chelmsford died in 1905 at the age of 81.

The bitter disagreement between Chelmsford’s adherents and those against them did not subside. It culminated in 1938 with a very critical book produced by two journalists. The following year, as a riposte and to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the war, Major Gerald French produced this defence of Chelmsford.⁴ The men associated with it were all connected to Chelmsford and keen to save his reputation. General Sir Bindon Blood (1842–1940), who had served in India under Chelmsford and was “a friend and a devoted admirer of Lord Chelmsford”, wrote the foreword. Blood endorsed it as a “full account ... of the occurrences in regard to which he was unjustly accused” (p vii). French, in turn, had seen service during the Zulu Rebellion of 1906 and was the son of another much-criticised general, Field Marshal Lord French, the first commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France during the first part of the First World War. Gerald French meticulously collected letters and maps and personal accounts, investigated them and used these to show “that Lord Chelmsford was not really to be blamed in any way” (p viii). As a result, the book at times takes the form of a source publication.

² See, for example, H. Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (Routledge, London and New York, 1993), pp 76–88.

³ D. Judd, *Someone has Blundered; Calamities of the British Army in the Victorian Age* (Arthur Barker, London, 1973), p xx.

⁴ Major the Hon. Gerald French, *Lord Chelmsford and the Zulu War* (The Bodley Head, London, 1939).

Book Reviews

This is a fascinating story dealing with a controversial “foreign campaign” and postwar reputations, and Pen & Sword are commended for making this rare book available once again. It is finely reproduced and makes a handsome volume. However, it must be said that the book would have benefited greatly from a sound introduction presenting the historiography, and particularly the excellent work published recently by John Laband, and placing this book in its historical context. Notwithstanding, it makes a worthy addition to the bookshelf, although one is reminded yet again that “every history can only present a partial reconstruction of the past”.⁵

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⁵ P. Safi, “An Interview with Prof Georg G. Iggers: Every History can only Present a Partial Reconstruction of the Past”, *Kilavuz*, 52, December 2014, pp 36–49.

Dít was, inderwaarheid, ons almal se oorlog ...

Klaas Steytler, *Ons Oorlog: 'n Familieroman uit die Anglo-Boereoorlog*

Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 2014

264 pp

ISBN 978-0-624-06848-8

R200.00

Klaas Steytler se familieroman, *Ons Oorlog*, handel oor sy familie se wedervaringe tydens die Tweede Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902), en is 'n wesenlike toevoeging tot die immer groeiende versameling Afrikaanse literatuur rakende die impak van dié oorlog op die Afrikaanse samelewing. Die eerste uitgawe van *Ons Oorlog* verskyn het in 2000 verskyn, waarna 'n tweede uitgawe in 2014 uitgegee is. Deur middel van familie-oorvertellings, en die gebruikmaking van familiegeskiedenis en geskiedenisboeke, neem Steytler die leser deur 'n boeiende, tog troebelagtige, deel van Suid-Afrika se geskiedenis.

Die Havenga-Steytler-Sanders-Visser families se aktiewe deelname aan die oorlog, sowel as hul verskeie wedervaringe gedurende die typerk, vorm die kern van die boek. As sodanig raak mens gou bemoeid met die lot van dié klompie Vrystaters, insluitende Jan Visser en sy gesin van die plaas Tweefontein naby Fauresmith; Magdalena Sanders en haar dogters van Fauresmith; Klasië Havenga van die plaas Uitdraai naby Koffiefontein; asook die jonge Maxie Sanders wat as sekretaresse in Bloemfontein werk. Deur middel van die bogenoemde hoofkarakters, word 'n mens mettertyd bekend gestel aan die sekondêre karakters wat 'n uiters belangrike, dog subtiële, rol in die boek vervul. Hulle sluit, onder andere, weerlose Boervroue en -kinders in konsentrasiekampe, Boere-generaals en krygers, hendsoppers en joiners, verraaiers, Kaapse rebelle en Britse offisiere in. Die mees noemenswaardige onder dié heet: genl. J.B.M. Hertzog, kmdt. S.G. Vilonel en maj. Sir H.J. Goold-Adams. Tog wonder 'n mens menigmaal oor die gouedraad wat al hierdie karakters bymekaar uitbring. Hierdie draad is rondom die kern – dié oorlog – verweef uit die uiteenlopende ervaringe van die karakters. Die absolute brutaliteit van oorlogvoering, en dié se impak op alle fasette van die samelewing, word geboekstaaf in *Ons Oorlog*. Die genialiteit van Steytler se skryfstyl is dat hy ondermeer humor, angs, hartseer en woede laat saam vloei in 'n teks wat die leser van begin tot einde boei.

Die skrywer maak melding van 'n wye verskeidenheid bronne wat hy geraadpleeg het, insluitende die volgende geskiedskrywinge rakende die Tweede Anglo-Boereoorlog: F.A. Steytler se optekeninge in die Hertzog-annale van Desember 1957; C.R. de Wet se *De Stryd Tussen Boer en Brit* (1902); P.H. Kritzinger se *In the Shadow of Death* (1904); A.M. Grundlingh se *Die "Hendsoppers" en "Joiners"* (1979); en die boek *Steytler: 'n Beperkte Genealogie* (1985). Elsa Joubert, Klaas Steytler se weduwee, het wel aan 'n Netwerk24-joernalis, Willem de Vries, verduidelik dat die skrywer telkemale meer vlees aan sy karkaters moes bou as wat daar noodwendig in

die familie se oorlewering was.¹ Die skrywer se vermoë om die geskiedskrywing en familie-oorvertellings aan te vul met sy eie verbeelding en skrywersvernuf, verdien vermelding. Dus word byvoorbeeld die karakter van Jan Visser, wat werklik berou gehad het oor die eerste keer dat hy 'n jong Engelse soldaat moes skiet, verromantiseer in dié van 'n heldhaftige boerekryger wat nie skroom om sy familie te beskerm teen buitensporige Britse militêre aggressie nie. Die karakters in *Ons Oorlog* word weliswaar lewendig in dié teks, soveel so dat die leser af en toe onwillekeurig meegesleur word in 'n warrelwind van emosies. Dit is opmerklik hoe Steytler, deur sy skryfstyl in dié familieroman, homself doelbewus as skrywer in die agtergrond laat verdwyn, en dan die oorspronklikheid en geloofwaardigheid van elke karakter gebruik om inderwaarheid hul eie rol in *Ons Oorlog* te vertel. Dit is egter primêr die noukeurige navorsing oor elke karakter wat Steytler se werk 'n ekstra diepte gee.

Die titel van die boek laat die leser telkemale wonder of dié oorlog dan net die Havenga-Steytler-Sanders-Visser families s'n was. Tog kom dit gou na vore dat *Ons Oorlog* die Tweede Anglo-Boereoorlog op vele meer vlakke aanspreek as bloot 'n familiegeskiedenis. 'n Mens besef opnuut in *Ons Oorlog* dat die impak van dié oorlog groot dele van die Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking beïnvloed het. Steytler bring die geweldige impak wat die Tweede Anglo-Boereoorlog op die Afrikaner-samelewing gehad het tuis, en 'n mens skroom nie om met tye te wonder oor jou eie familie se lot gedurende dié oorlog nie. Na oorlewering het elke Afrikaner familie êrens 'n staaltjie rakende hul betrokkenheid in die oorlog, familieleden op kommando, vrouens en kinders in konsentrasiekampe, plase wat verwoes is en hendsoppers en joiners te vertel. Steytler kry dit reg dat die lot van die Havenga-Steytler-Sanders-Visser families meteens álmal se lot word. Alhoewel die meeste van die karakters in Steytler se boek wit, Afrikaanssprekende mense is, spreek *Ons Oorlog* ook, tot 'n mindere mate, die rol van anderskleuriges in die oorlog aan. Die leser wonder straks oor die lot van 'n aantal van die anderskleuriges wat in *Ons Oorlog* na vore kom: die weerlose doofstom huishulp van Margaret Sanders wat agterlaat word in Fauresmith as die familie konsentrasiekamp toe gestuur word, die twee Griekwa-soldate wat Oom Ben van Vuuren se huis help plunder en afbrand, asook die menigte families wat geen heenkome meer gehad het na die Britse owerhede hul "verskroeiende beleid" begin toegepas. 'n Mens herontdek dan dat oorlog nie noodwendig kleur raaksien nie, en dat die Tweede Anglo-Boereoorlog 'n groot aantal Suid-Afrikaners uit verskillende kulturele agtergronde, se lewens beïnvloed het.

Ten spyte daarvan dat die skrywer heelwat deeglike navorsing gedoen het rakende die Tweede Anglo-Boereoorlog, het *Ons Oorlog* hier en daar 'n geskiedkundige haakplek of twee. In 'n onlangse resensie van die boek spreek Fransjohan Pretorius 'n paar van die mees opvallende geskiedkundige foute aan, naamlik: genl. C.R. de Wet was nooit by die slag van Magersfontein betrokke nie; en kampskele was eers vanaf Februarie 1901 gestig in die Britse konsentrasiekampe.

¹ W. de Vries, "Ons Oorlog": Steytler se Laaste Roman 'was vir hom 'n Odussee', Netwerk24, 12 Junie 2014.

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Ten spyte van hierdie kritiek stem die meerderheid van Steytler se feite ooreen met die werklikheid, en word *Ons Oorlog* dus meer as net 'n blote familieroman.²

Klaas Steytler se boek, gekenmerk deur 'n vloeiende skryfstyl en goeie navorsing, is voorwaar 'n uitmuntende Anglo-Boereoorlog familieroman wat belowe om iedere leser op 'n reis deur ons nasie se geskiedenis neem. Die boek lewer 'n goeie bydrae tot die immer groeiende historiografie rondom die Anglo-Boereoorlog, en dus word die 2014 heruitgawe van *Ons Oorlog* verwelkom. Steytler se boek word hoog aanbeveel vir alle belangstellendes in die impak wat die Anglo-Boereoorlog op die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing gehad het.

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² F. Pretorius, "Steytler se Oorlog 'ons almal' s'n", *Rapport*, 26 Julie 2014.

A call for Africa to turn away from sea blindness

Francois Vreÿ and Thomas Mandrup (eds), *Towards Good Order at Sea: African Experiences*

Sun Press, Stellenbosch, 2015

281 pp

ISBN 978-1-920689-58-2; 978-1-920689-59-9 (e-book)

R325.00

Since the time centuries ago when ships were first used to transport merchandise from one place to another, pirates also arrived on the scene to prey on merchant (and in due course also other) ships. Although piracy is usually associated with the tales of swashbuckling buccaneers from especially the eighteenth century, the phenomenon has never really disappeared, albeit that for most of the twentieth century it was under control. However, the beginning of the third millennium has seen an upsurge in pirate and related activities. According to the influential London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), maritime security is a matter of global concern, with an increase in the number of pirate attacks, the geographical escalation of the problem, as well as ongoing maritime disputes. (See, for example the IISS's 2013 edition of their flagship publication, *The Military Balance*, as well as "The 2013 Chart of Conflict" included in the 2013 edition.) Most incidents of piracy take place off the Horn of Africa, in the Gulf of Guinea, and off the Philippines, but they have also taken place in the Caribbean, off South America's west and east coasts, on India's west coast, as well as in the Bay of Bengal, and near Singapore and Indonesia.

For quite some time there was pressure on the South African government to participate actively in anti-piracy operations, but it was only when pirates moved southwards along Africa's east coast, threatening shipping in the Mozambique Channel, that the South African Navy was ordered to conduct counter-piracy patrols in the latter area. Under Operation Copper, at least one navy vessel (either a frigate, gunboat or combat support ship) has been doing patrol duty in the Mozambique Channel since the beginning of 2011, assisted by aircraft from the South African Air Force. Thanks to this operation, piracy in this particular area has been brought under control, just as other anti-piracy operations, such as Operation Atalanta (in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean) have also been successful.

It is against this background that *Towards Good Order at Sea: African Experiences* should be evaluated. The editors correctly point out that: "Historically, Africa has been continental in its strategic outlook and orientation. As a result, Africa has a tradition of neglect of its oceans, maritime resources and related affairs, resulting in a general perception of maritime insecurity on its seas." Together with Africa's growing economic, strategic and political importance, the continent has to take ownership of its seas. "The strategic reality is that the general neglect of the oceans by African leadership has resulted in a general maritime deficit and resultant lack of capacity to extend and if necessary enforce jurisdiction over its littoral waters"

(p 5). Consequently, it is the purpose of the book “to raise the stature of the maritime domain in the African security discourse” (p 6).

The editors have been able to solicit twelve chapters written by scholars from across the globe and experts in their respective fields on a variety of interrelated topics. In many instances, the topics are – for obvious reasons – discussed in their historical context, albeit that in several instances more historical perspectives could have been provided. In Part One of the study (“The Anti-piracy Experience”), Geoffrey Till (King’s College, London) inter alia points out that the concept of security has expanded and now includes non-traditional threats as well as traditional ones (ch 2). In chapter three, Christian Bueger (Cardiff University) focuses on piracy off the coast of Somalia; while in chapter four, Pieter Brits and Michelle Nel (both from Stellenbosch University) provide perspectives on the lessons that have thus far been learnt from piracy. Paul Musili Wambua (University of Nairobi) proposes a theoretical framework for drawing inter-linkages between the lack of good order at sea and the challenges facing landlocked countries (ch 5).

In Part Two of the book (“From Anti-piracy to Good Order at Sea off Africa: Selected Debates”) Johan Potgieter and Timothy Walker (both from South Africa’s Institute for Security Studies) discuss the African Integrated Maritime Security (AIMS) strategy (ch 6); while John Paul Dunne (University of Cape Town) highlights the key economic argument that landlocked countries in Africa can be at a marked disadvantage concerning economic development (ch 7). In chapter eight, Huruma Luhivilo Sigalla (University of Dar es Salaam) addresses the opportunities and challenges of coastal development with the advent of globalisation in Tanzania, and places these issues in historical perspective. Another scholar from the University of Dar es Salaam, Paul Onyango, asks to what extent piracy is a threat to fisheries (ch 9). In chapter ten, Thomas Mandrup and Johannes Nordby (both from the Royal Danish Defence College) discuss frameworks for cooperation off East Africa. “Perspectives on Regional Contributions to Good Order at Sea off Africa” forms the umbrella theme for Part Three of the book, with Francois Vreÿ addressing good order at sea off West Africa (ch 11); while Mark Blaine (Stellenbosch University) and Joe Sinovich (South African Navy) endeavour to ascertain how SADC maritime interest can be assured through good order at sea (ch 12). In Part Three’s excellent final chapter, Thean Potgieter (Stellenbosch University) indicates how crucial leadership and political will are for marine security in East Africa (ch 13).

Although not primarily a (naval) history book, *Towards Good Order at Sea: African Experiences* is an excellent publication of which those interested in naval history should take note. It addresses maritime security issues in an insightful and articulated way. It is indeed a timely and important book on the debate on how to create good governance at sea in general, but more particularly in the Western Indian Ocean, that is along Africa’s lengthy east coast. As Francois Vreÿ correctly points out in the book’s concluding chapter, good order at sea “is dependent upon leadership, political leadership in particular: firstly, leadership reinforced by political will, and secondly, political leadership that privileges and extends credible attention and resources to the much-neglected African maritime landscape” (p 273). The South

African Navy should play a much larger role in counter-piracy operations, but – as this reviewer has indicated in several of his own publications on South African military, and in particular naval history, just as many others have said in other contexts – our Navy needs more ships, and consequently more financial and other resources. And then there is the land-lubber mentality prevalent amongst many people of Africa, as well as the issue of sea blindness (i.e. the inability to connect with maritime issues, either at an individual or on a political level). Addressing these matters is a prerequisite for good order at sea. And, of course, much more work needs to be done with regard to Africa's neglected naval history.

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Victims' voices in their own words

Janice Warman, *Class of '79: The Story of Three Fellow Students who Risked their Lives to Destroy Apartheid*

Jacanda Media, Auckland Park, 2014
159 pp
ISBN 978-1-4314-1086-6
R230.00

The role of journalism in the recording and interpretation of history is a source of much interesting discussion. Notable, for example, is the involvement of Antjie Krog during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, resulting in her much acclaimed work *Country of My Skull*. According to Warman, in setting out the rationale for her own book, "*Class of '79*, began ten years earlier in 1999, when I opened my new copy of Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*, her excoriating, illuminating, incandescent tale of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (p xiii). While both historians and journalists concern themselves with narratives of past events, there is a distinct methodology and set of dynamics to the fruits each bear. It should be noted that sterling contributions are made by journalists every day towards documenting events of historical significance, and despite the different tone that their books often carry, these publications continue to be of historiographical interest and value.

Warman's *Class of '79* documents the stories of Marion Sparg, Guy Berger and Zubedia Jaffer, and as it takes *Country of My Skull* as its departure point, the text flows in much the same vein as that of Krog's. Apart from sharing an involvement in the struggle against apartheid, what links the three individuals is that all three studied journalism at Rhodes University in 1979. The tales are a vivid and painful reminder of South Africa's divided past and the sacrifices made by individuals for political emancipation. The first to be explored is the story of Marion Sparg, who is said to be "only the third white South African woman ever convicted of treason, and the very first convicted of terrorist acts" (p 31). Throughout the book, Warman explores the psychology behind the three convicts and what motivated their involvement in the struggle. Apart from interviews with the three subjects, the author also consulted with relatives of the three former students, incorporating these perspectives into the text.

Despite the very grim nature of these stories, *Class of '79* is in many ways a celebration of the endurance of the human spirit. The book is divided into three "parts", with each of the three subjects assigned one. All three of the subjects were detained for their involvement in politics in the 1980s, and the text explores many of the harrowing details of their activities. "The whole system", notes Zubedia Jaffer, "is there to break you down. What they didn't realise is that at that stage of the struggle, any such action would only bolster your resolve to fight the system. It made people more determined..." (p 135). *Class of '79* does not stick solely to the subject of apartheid brutality. Again, building on the model of *Country of My Skull*, Warman incorporates herself and her own experiences and insecurities openly in the text. These are however kept to the minimum and do not interrupt the historiographical feel of the text. Another feature of the book is interpreting the painful legacy of these stories against current developments in South African politics. While a critical approach is taken in this regard by the subjects, there does not appear to be a consensus. According to Guy Berger "South Africa is still boiling, it's still bubbling, but the steam can escape. The water remains in the pot, it's not going to burst out" (p 98). Zubedia Jaffer however comments that "If you ask the average person, they will say that they were better off under apartheid" (p 140).

Oral history forms the most important part of this publication's research methodology, effectively giving voice to the subjects in their own words frequently during the course of the narrative. Although a set of endnotes accompany the work, these cannot be said to add any academic credibility to the work. Of the 84 endnotes provided, 66 are explanatory footnotes, much of which is information which might be considered as general knowledge by some, but which will most certainly assist a reader unfamiliar with South African cultures and history. The remaining 18 endnotes refer the reader to newspaper articles, books and internet sites, amongst which is included the dreaded Wikipedia. Apart from the endnotes, the reader is also provided with a set of photographs that accompany the text. These include records produced on toilet tissue by Zubedia Jaffer during her detention. These photographs provide the text with greater accountability given the lack of referencing.

The subject matter of *Class of '79* makes it a noteworthy contribution. Many precious records from this period have been lost, and this publication is valuable in securing some of these stories for posterity. Rich sources of oral history abound in our communities and it is important for practitioners in the history and heritage related fields to try and capture as much of these as possible, while it is still possible. Warman can be commended for succeeding in doing so. Although *Class of '79* cannot be said to be a conventional history book, because its tone is more reminiscent of popular magazine articles, the work's greatest attribute is that it gives voice to these victims of apartheid in their own words.

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Providing eye care on the periphery

Gertrud Stiehle, *Erika Sutter: Seen with Other Eyes – Memories of a Swiss Eye Doctor in Rural South Africa*

Basler AfrikaBibliographien, Basel, 2013

124 pp

ISBN 978-3-905758-33-4

CHF15.00

This book uses a biographical lens to trace the life story of a Swiss-born woman, Erika Sutter. Born and raised in Basel, in the early 1950s she decided to leave Switzerland to work in South Africa, at first as a laboratory technician at Elim Mission Hospital in the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province), and later, after obtaining medical school training, as a doctor at this same hospital.

Chronologically organised, this book begins by discussing Sutter's early life in Switzerland, including her family, education, initial work activities, and her motivations to leave for South Africa in 1952 as a member of the Swiss Mission Society. The middle part of the book then considers her first four years working in the laboratory at Elim; her decision and efforts to train as a medical doctor from age 40 at the University of the Witwatersrand; her further specialist training in Ophthalmology in Basel and London; and her return to work from the mid-1960s as the head of the Ophthalmology Department at Elim Mission Hospital. There she provided, for almost 20 years until her retirement in 1984, much needed "eye doctor" services, which restored or improved the sight of countless African patients.

An important part of this book, chapter seven, entitled "The Most Meaningful Years in Erika's Life: The Care Groups", moves beyond an analysis of Sutter's curative, hospital-based work, to consider her primary health care activities. Written by a different author – the only one of its kind in this book – it discusses her preventive and community-oriented eye health outreach work that was started in the last eight years of her working life in South Africa. The author, Frances Lund, who was a lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Natal (today, the University of KwaZulu-Natal) when she first met Sutter, was the person who actually convinced Sutter to write this book as a way to address questions regularly asked about her by Lund's students who read material penned by Sutter in one of her courses (p viii).

Lund's chapter, which I found the most critically-engaged of all the chapters, traces Sutter's eye health "care groups" activity, which she began with the assistance of Selina Maphorogo; a South African-born colleague and interpreter, upon whose community insights, knowledge, and language skills Sutter depended. From the mid-1970s, this self-help programme sought to train local women living in poor, under-resourced Bantustan villages around Elim Hospital to become health educators tasked with disseminating information about practices to encourage good eye health. This was done with the aim of preventing common eye diseases, but also, importantly, to try to reduce the high rate of preventable blindness that debilitated

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many people living within these communities. In a more balanced manner than most of the other chapters in this book, Lund focuses on the successes of Sutter's programme, which continued even after she left South Africa, and which is now a movement with approximately 2 000 members in over 200 villages, but also considers a number of problems and difficulties faced by these community-oriented programmes.

The penultimate chapter of the book examines Sutter's retirement years back in Switzerland after 1984, including her speaking engagements and teaching undertakings at the International Centre for Eye Health in London and the Swiss Tropical Institute in Basel. It was also in these years, with more time on her hands, that she was able to write more extensively (including books), about her medical and community health care work in rural South Africa. The final chapter, entitled "A Final Look Back and Forward: A Conversation between Erika Sutter and Gertrude Stiehle", provides a conclusion to the book, in which Sutter reflects on key issues and aspects of her long life.

When considering the potential audience for this book, in my opinion it is well suited for a popular audience. Had this publication been geared towards an academic audience I would have liked to see a more in-depth analysis of broader historical context issues, such as the changing history of Elim Mission Hospital; the effects of repressive apartheid policies on her own life as well as the lives of her co-workers and patients; more extensive endnotes and bibliography sections that list a larger number of references beyond Sutter's own publications; and a more detailed and more critical engagement with the sources used.

Indeed, there is very little critical engagement with the sources used in this book. In an introduction-type chapter entitled "In Lieu of an Introduction: Immersing Myself in the Life of Erika Sutter", the author Gertrude Stiehle notes how she used "dozens of audio recordings, letters, other documents and information from people who know Erika and her story" (p 1). Yet, none of these additional sources, so essential to producing a more rounded and corroborated account of the biographical subject's life, makes it into the text, or even into the endnotes or bibliography section. As a result, the reader is not able to weigh up the value of these other documents and recordings.

Furthermore, while we as readers are told on the back cover that "For the creation of this biography, Erika Sutter spent many hours with the author, her friend Gertrude Stiehle, telling the story of her long life ...", Stiehle provides little discussion of pertinent issues related to oral history methodology that affected the writing of this book. Stiehle includes many long quotations, which are meant to stand as the authentic "voice" of Sutter. In addition, in Stiehle's prose sections, it is often difficult to gauge where Stiehle and Sutter's thoughts and opinions converge. As a trained anthropologist, one would have expected Stiehle to reflect more critically on the collaborative nature of this biographical enterprise, particularly on some of the strengths but also challenges of using oral testimony as the primary source base.

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Shifting power dynamics in the interviewer (and friend)-interviewee relationship, personal biases and motivations, as well as significant omissions that affected the construction of this account, are not analysed. Without this methodological engagement, the book comes across in a non-critical, hagiographical manner in a similar vein as many other books written about missionary medical heroes.

To end on a positive note, this book's easy to follow story line (which includes many directional sub-headings), its clear prose (which includes a good translation from German to English), and many photographs, does bring to life the story of a remarkable woman medical doctor, which should be enjoyed by popular audiences. Published in the Basler Afrika Bibliographien series entitled "Lives, Legacies, Legends", it falls perfectly within the mandate of this series to publish "personal narratives and written histories related to life in southern Africa", including "biographies ... on the topic of the 'Swiss in Africa'".¹ For both European and southern African popular audiences who read this book, I think that it will encourage greater understanding about some of the historical opportunities and difficulties faced by a person who lived an accomplished and interesting life, and who managed to move between the usually separate worlds of Switzerland and South Africa.

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¹ See <https://baslerafrika.ch/en/publishing-house/publications-shop/series/>

A welcome addition to South Africa's rural and regional historiography

Teresa Connor, *Conserved Spaces, Ancestral Places: Conservation, History and Identity among Farm Labourers in the Sundays River Valley, South Africa*

University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2014

232 pp

ISBN 978-1-86914-285-8

R255.00

This book is a welcome addition to South Africa's rural and regional historiography. The author, however, is not an historian, but an anthropologist with wide interests and an active engagement with the issues she writes about in *Conserved Spaces*. Teresa Connor is senior researcher at the Fort Hare Institute for Social and Economic Research and she holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from Rhodes. While she lists some of her publications in the source references, she does not list her doctoral thesis and it is not clear whether the contents of *Conserved Spaces* is based on her research for that degree, or whether it is the consequence, and perhaps amalgamation, of the three items she has authored about the Sundays River Valley. In 2001 as a consultant she wrote the *Social and Environmental Impact Assessment for the Greater Addo Elephant National Park*; in 2007/2008 (with D. Zimmerman) she was involved in the *Socio-Economic Survey of the Addo Elephant National Park and Surrounds* for SANParks;¹ and in 2011 she published an article on "The Frontier Revisited: Displacement, Land and Identity among Farm Labourers in the Sundays River Valley".² On page 28 of *Conserved Spaces*, Connor outlines the numerous research initiatives in the area in which she has played an active role. Her long familiarity with, and expertise in, the locality is thus evident, but she has also investigated other contested rural areas in South Africa. Her M.A. dissertation (Rand Afrikaans University) in 1998 dealt with a settlement in Sekhukhuneland and she is also familiar with a border zone in Pafuri, in the Gaza Province of Mozambique.³

As Connor points out, contestation over the Sundays River Valley has been ongoing for centuries. In pre-colonial times it was utilised by different Xhosa communities; an open and then a closed frontier and active conflict zone with the arrival of white settlers; a modernising space with the irrigation scheme and farmlands of the 1920s; and further complicated by the intrusion in the 1930s of one of South Africa's smaller national parks, the Addo Elephant National Park – state-owned land that as a protected area had an unusual conception – a story told here as well as elsewhere.⁴

¹ See M.C. Rose, "A Critical Analysis of the Socioeconomic Impact Assessments of the Addo Elephant National Park", M. Comm., Rhodes University, 2010.

² *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 30, 2, 2011, pp 181–203.

³ *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21, 1, 2003, pp 93–120.

⁴ M.T. Hoffman, "Major P.J. Pretorius and the Decimation of the Addo Elephant Herd in 1919–1920: Important Reassessments", *Koedoe*, 36, 2, 1993, pp 23–44.

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Connor's narrative deals with the present legacies of the extremely complex relationships of many communities in this largely agricultural region of South Africa. Her research interest was sparked by the proposed expansion of the Addo Elephant National Park after 1994, a formal initiative with international funding that had as its aim the revitalisation of the farming sector in what had become a depressed region of the Eastern Cape by capitalising on the rise of eco-tourism in the service industry. Part of the rationale behind the scheme to enlarge the national park, which aimed to be an inclusive type of protected area, was the promotion of appropriate regional development plans and, because of the unusual biome in which the national park was situated, enabling South Africa to meet its international conservation obligations under, for example, the Convention on Biological Diversity that it signed in 1995.

However, as Connor explains so well in this book, land and landscape is not only "space" to be traded: it is "place". Place is space that is imbued with meaning, with memory – often tied to identity and to symbolism as much as it is to work and economic welfare. People love the land and feel for it, particularly the places they call home (however construed) and do not regard it as a commodity easily traded. Very seldom, no matter who they are – whatever community, whatever period – do people merely inhabit it or move lightly across it. The land claims process in South Africa bears ample testimony to this. The chapters in *Conserved Spaces* chart these various emotions and meanings among the farm labourers in the Sundays River Valley. There have been many removals in the area that add to the complex tapestry of meaning. Of these apartheid was of course, the most major. In this regard, Connor treats the example of Kirkwood in some detail. Despite apartheid, farm workers were sometimes able to remain on the land they occupied, but they were then subjected to the personal vagaries of land-owners. The current economic hardship at a time when the agricultural sector continues to shrink as a percentage of GDP has exacerbated long established and deeply held tensions, while the fate of farm-workers in particular (an understudied community in South Africa as Connor notes) has not been resolved through normalising the countryside through land reform (as opposed to land restitution) as was the intention in 1994. The grand plan of the expanded national park – a further intervention by the state in people's lives – adds but a new dimension to what Connor charts as an intractable contest for land and livelihood.

Chapter one provides an introduction to the topic, while chapter two introduces the reader to the issues related to the expansion of the Addo Elephant National Park. Chapter 3 reverses the timeframe to locate the Sundays River Valley in the context of the Zuurveld frontier and the many wars of the nineteenth century. Working as an anthropologist, Connor has relied heavily on interviews and these form the basis of chapters four and five. While she does not provide a list of interviewees (informants), many of their personal stories are provided in the text. How wages are determined and paid, how much stock a farm worker and his/her family might own and range on their employer's property, the importance of particular work and skills (termed "work ethics" here), even the stratification between workers, are all fascinating and important windows into the lives and concerns of farm workers.

A thread that runs through the majority of Connor's interviews is the transitory nature of farm work under these circumstances, the insecurity of employment and tenure (and thus a house), and the loss of the sense of place. This, Connor equates with the ongoing emphasis on custom and ritual that she describes in detail in chapter six. Not all of these accounts, in fact, only a very few of them, tie up with the ideas described in the previous chapters. There is a long and passionately expressed section on water rituals, rainmaking and circumcision rites which Connor herself witnessed. The explanation for this return to tradition – although not directly stated by Connor – may be the desire of rural South Africans to reposition themselves within the growing political power of traditional leadership, as well as the search for identity or to retain alive the memory of better times. There is little here about the impact of Christianity on the people interviewed or the conflicts between modernity and tradition that are so evident in other areas of South Africa. In this regard, the work of Natasha Erlank, among others, is important.⁵ An appendix lists some 18 land claims registered in Port Elizabeth in 2000: it is highly likely that this number has increased considerably in the many years since then.

Although this book has much to offer as a micro-history and social anthropology of a part of the Eastern Cape, the author does not make it clear exactly how this book takes us further. For this reason, it is a pity that it does not resonate with the fast-growing literature on biocultural conservation. Strongly linked to the nexus between biological diversity and cultural diversity and the focus of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, this is a fascinating and burgeoning field. The international community has realised that biodiversity conservation will not occur unless cultural diversity and vitality are interrelated with it. I would suggest that initiatives such as *Conserved Spaces* would speak strongly to this field of study and policy direction.⁶

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⁵ For example, Natasha Erlank's paper entitled "Well, Coming Straight to Business, Immediate Marriage is Absolutely Impossible: Love, Sex and Consequence in the Eastern Cape, c. 1930", WiSER seminar, 15 September 2014.

⁶ See, for example, L. Maffi, and E. Woodley, *Biocultural Diversity Conservation: A Global Sourcebook* (Earthscan, London and Washington: DC, 2008); or G. Pungetti, G. Oviedo and D. Hooke (eds), *Sacred Species and Sites: Advances in Biocultural Conservation* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012).

Filling a glaring historiographical gap in Mozambique's history

Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development, Cahora Bassa and its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965-2007*

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Comprising seven chapters, this work focuses on the period from the 1960s, when the Portuguese began to plan construction of the Cahora Bassa dam, to 2007, when Mozambique's post-colonial government finally gained majority ownership of the dam. In the opening chapter, the reader is introduced to the broader scholarship on the subject of dam projects, particularly in the developing world. The authors argue that by focusing on the developmental implications, the scholarship has neglected the environmental and social effects on surrounding and displaced communities. It further argues that by relying on official documents, scholars have tended to ignore the voices of local communities, whose livelihoods have oftentimes been adversely affected by these projects.

In chapter two, the authors document Portuguese efforts, dating back to the sixteenth century, to conquer and domesticate the Zambezi River and its hinterland for human benefit. Chapter three discusses the process of constructing the Cahora Bassa dam, including technical challenges, labour recruitment and control. Salient features of the chapter include the highly racialised and regimented organisation of work and the contrasting experiences of the European and African employees. Chapter four explores how more than 30 000 peasants were displaced from their ancestral lands to pave the way for the massive dam. The social and ecological impact of this project on communities in the lower Zambezi Valley are examined in chapter five. Among issues explored are changes in the river flow and how the unpredictable discharge from the dam affected thousands of peasants whose livelihoods were dependent on the river before the construction of the dam. Chapter six documents Cahora Bassa's unique role as the largest dam in the world constructed primarily to produce energy for export, a role it continued to play even after the end of Portuguese colonial rule. The final chapter reviews the impact of the dam on riverine communities and the biosphere, focusing on the period after the end of the civil war. This chapter also questions the likely impact of a second dam, Mphanda Nkuwa, planned for construction some sixty kilometres from the Cahora Bassa dam.

Isaacman and Isaacman's work coherently shows the interplay between science, economics, politics and security considerations. When Portugal decided to construct the dam in 1965, officials envisioned that numerous benefits would accrue from the US\$515 million project. These included stimulating agriculture, mining and industrial production; increasing European settlement; reducing flooding, as well as

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improved communication and transportation throughout the Zambezi Valley. There were also plans to generate income by exporting electricity to South Africa. For the engineers and hydrologists, the dam signified technical complexity which reinforced the view that nature could be conquered for the benefit of humankind (p 3). On another hand, built at a time when the rest of Africa was decolonising, construction of the dam was a signal that Portugal was not ready to grant independence to Mozambique. And with mounting military confrontation from Frelimo, the Portuguese believed that the 500 kilometre long dam would pose a formidable barrier for Frelimo forces intending to enter Mozambique from their military bases in Tanzania and Zambia.

This book captures African memories of hardships and catastrophes which were experienced by former workers and peasants who were displaced to pave way for the dam. As the authors note, "Absent from public discourse were the experiences, conversations and ideas of peasants who lived with the consequences of its existence" (p 16). With African voices taking precedence in the text, the contrasts between colonial and postcolonial discourses surrounding the dam are illuminated; the latter maintained silence on Cahora Bassa, authorising only official voices in public discussions about the dam. Those who are now given a platform to speak reveal that coercion and exploitation of Africans were central to the process of establishing this mega dam. Despite the abolition of *chibalo* decades earlier, Africans were conscripted for gruelling work on the dam site. One of the author's informants summarised life during the dam's construction as follows: "You work, eat and sleep. It's a never ending cycle with little variation" (p 77). Yet, in a racialised work regime, Africans were among the most poorly remunerated, receiving the lowest wages with the poorest housing and substandard rations.

Furthermore, people were forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands to make room for the dam. This began with the displacement of communities from the Songo highlands to make way for the establishment of a segregated town for white workers, many of whom were recruited from abroad. The authors go on to chronicle the various tactics of the forced removals and the hardships encountered by more than 30 000 Africans who were forcefully evicted and forced into *aldeamentos*, protected villages. These *aldeamentos* were modelled on counter-insurgency initiatives developed in Malaysia and Vietnam and were designed to block peasants from having contact with Frelimo guerrillas. The book further demonstrates how those who were relocated were traumatised by the nature of the resettlements, because communities lost control of their physical space and their access to economic and cultural resources.

Critically, the authors also differentiate the African victims because the degree of victimhood varied. Some Africans employed during the dam's construction, such as foremen, master technicians and long distance truck drivers, were better salaried, housed and received superior rations. Yet the rest were not passive victims because some protested by resorting to desertions, work slowdowns, striking and looting of food, forcing the employer to increase rations and to offer "a modest pay rise" (pp

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88–89). Equally remarkable, some *aldeamentos* had better social and recreation facilities than others while at the same time societal and marital status, gender and age also determined one's access to better land and other resources in the new settlements. Interestingly, militarising the *aldeamentos* at the peak of war had the opposite effect as some disgruntled young men actually escaped the villages to join Frelimo.

The book also provides a lucid chronicle of the social, economic and ecological impact of the dam on peasant communities inhabiting the lower Zambezi valley. Instead of the seasonal water flow to which the communities were adapted, the water flow became irregular because South Africa's electricity needs "dictated the magnitude, timing, duration, and frequency of water released from the dam, regardless of the possible effects on agriculture, fisheries, and wildlife downstream" (p 123). Among the several negative effects of interfering with the natural river flow was that it disturbed the natural ecosystem. The irregular floods caused erosion, washed away crops, drowned livestock, interfered with fish breeding patterns, and affected birds that fed on fish from the Zambezi River. In other words, the Cahora Bassa dam also fundamentally transformed the livelihood patterns of the people inhabiting the lower Zambezi valley.

Remarkably, the book is also about the limits of the post-colonial state, evidenced by the fact that fifty years after independence, the citizens of Mozambique did not derive any significant benefits from the dam. Until 2007 Portugal continued to own the dam, selling a large percentage of electricity to South Africa below the market price. Consequently, Cahora Bassa remained a living symbol of a violent and oppressive past and a constant reminder that the nation was still not free from the yoke of colonialism. Ironically, when South Africa attained majority rule in 1994, the ANC government continued to uphold the colonial electricity supply contract. Indeed there was more continuity than change because "South Africa received the energy, Portugal received the income and Zambezi valley residents paid the price" (p 150). Plainly, the dam remained a commentary on the challenges and failures of a post-colonial state.

The greatest strength of this book is that it brings to the surface what the master narrative of Mozambique's colonial and post-colonial actors have suppressed (p 7). By interviewing more than 300 Africans – former workers and peasants who were affected by the dam – it clearly captures the voices of the marginalised, which are silent in the official records. Crucially, therefore, it fills a glaring historiographical gap of colonial and post-colonial Mozambican history. The book also brings to the fore the nexus between societies, the environment and science, making it unquestionably useful to historians, environmental activists and policy makers.

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An elegantly written treatise on Botswana's economic history

David Magang, *Delusions of Grandeur: Paradoxies and Ambivalences in Botswana's Macroeconomic Firmament, Volume 1*

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David Magang is a former cabinet minister and one of the most successful indigenous entrepreneurs in Botswana. His extensively researched and elegantly written treatise on the economy of Botswana since independence from British colonial rule in 1966 can be described as macroeconomics made simple for the general reader. Just as he does in his voluminous autobiography, *The Magic of Perseverance* (2008), in this new publication the fearless Magang does not mince his words. Even though he is a lawyer by profession and not a trained economist, he demonstrates erudite understanding of both the Botswana economy and the global economy. He provides helpful historical background on political developments in Botswana and on key local and international financial institutions that feature in the book.

Magang acknowledges that Botswana has made huge strides in economic development since 1966 when it was rated as the second poorest country in the world. He attributes this to the leadership qualities of the country's first president, Seretse Khama (1966–1980), who followed sound economic and democratic principles instead of the populist programmes that have ruined many other African economies. Some economic commentators have described Botswana as the "African miracle", but Magang strongly questions this label. "Developmental state" and "indigenous developmental state" are concepts that have been employed by some scholars to describe Botswana's development trajectory, but Magang himself subscribes to Ellen Hillbom's (2012) description of Botswana as a "development-oriented gate-keeping state". Magang points out that this phenomenon is "signified by limited state ambitions; natural resource dependence; dual society (that is, one of extreme inequalities); limited social development; the state sector dominating the economy; and the state being controlled by economically and politically strong elites" (p 96). In his review of the literature Magang queries the use of gross national product (GDP) as a measure of a country's economic development. For Magang, and others, GDP distorts the economic reality on the ground. He gives the examples of Dubai, South Africa and Singapore which have far more remarkable and robust economies, yet for decades their GDPs have been less impressive than that of Botswana.

The author argues that Botswana may not have experienced the mineral "resource curse" experienced by many other African states blessed with mineral wealth, but the country's overdependence on non-renewable diamonds, and its failure to diversify the economy meaningfully, has led to what he terms the

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“diamantine curse”. He gives examples of Australia and Chile as mineral-dependent states that have managed to diversify their economies substantially. He also strongly argues against the sentiment that Botswana is a prosperous society, and quotes a recent international study which reported that the Batswana are among the unhappiest people in the world. To Magang this unhappiness is the result of the country’s high unemployment (17.5%) and poverty levels, huge economic disparities – said to be among the worst in the world – and the excessive domination of Botswana’s economy by foreigners. He writes that for the impoverished indigenous Batswana, the “‘African Miracle’ that is their country is actually the African Mirage” (p 13).

Magang is not only critical of the country’s economic shortcomings, but also provides thoughtful solutions employed by hugely successful economies such as Malaysia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, all of which attained independence at about the same time as Botswana. The author is particularly scornful of De Beers which he accuses of being responsible for “arrested development” in Botswana, having deliberately prevented diamond beneficiation for decades, and thus preventing grassroots economic progress and employment creation (p 133). He observes that beneficiation would have generated significant wealth and employment through downstream activities which have more value than merely exporting rough stones. He goes on to maintain that as a member of parliament from 1979 he ploughed a lone furrow campaigning for diamond beneficiation because he received no support on this from the country’s leadership.

Whereas he acknowledges the importance of the welfarist role of government, he argues that the portion of the national budget (more than 10%) devoted to welfare is far too high and unsustainable. He opines that “Even the very paragons of welfarism [Western countries], with their apparently seamless material might, are now feeling the weight of the social services albatross” (p 121). He suggests that the resources the government of Botswana directs to welfare should instead be used to create gainful and sustainable employment. Magang states that efforts by the Botswana Export Development Agency (BEDIA) and the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in attracting the desperately needed foreign direct investment (FDI) was nothing to write home about in comparison to their far more successful counterparts in the Kwazulu-Natal Province of South Africa and Mauritius:

The IFSC has now been merged with BEDIA under a new umbrella called the Botswana International Trade Centre. One hopes that this is not a merger simply of two white elephants to form an even bigger white elephant but a high-impact step with unambiguous, demonstrable synergies (p 173).

Nor is he impressed by government’s attempt to drive economic development through SMMEs financed by the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) due to the extremely inadequate seed capital it lends.

With the forecast that the country’s diamonds will be depleted by 2030 the country’s hope is said to be on its coal reserves which, however, would yield far less

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revenue than diamonds. Magang blames the government's notoriously slow pace for the country's missed opportunities, and notes that the same could happen with coal exploitation. He demonstrates how government finally became firm on De Beers leading to the two entities signing the landmark Debswana Sales Agreement (DSA) in January 2011, which demanded that the De Beers-owned Diamond Trading Company International (DTCI) entirely relocate its sights and sales operations from London to Gaborone by the end of 2013. "It is small wonder some analysts have described the relocation of DTCI to Gaborone as the biggest transfer of assets from the developed world to the developing world", celebrates Magang (p 206). He reckons that had government heeded his advice more than 30 years ago it is possible that Botswana would today be more like Singapore. However, he decries the very limited participation of indigenous Batswana in the new diamond dispensation which he blames on the government.

Magang laments the fact that the government is going against current global trends by rejecting a parliamentary motion calling for a law on beneficiation on the grounds that it would scare investors away: "When I learnt of the rejection of the motion, I wondered where the allegiance of the political leadership lay – whether it was with its own people or their cronies within the transnational fabric" (p 212). While championing the intensification of diamond beneficiation in the country he is acutely aware of the factors that work against the movement. He cites these as the Batswana's "awful" work ethic, a worryingly slow and unreliable Internet which hampers business, an acute shortage of water and prolonged electricity outages.

The author mocks Botswana's belated citizen economic empowerment (CEE) policy saying it is shambolic and falls far too short of its South African and Malaysian counterparts. He praises Zimbabwe's controversial indigenisation and economic programme as exemplary. However, he acknowledges that these citizen economic empowerment programmes are almost everywhere hijacked by already better-off citizens conniving with the ruling elites. He acknowledges the role of the Botswana Stock Exchange in the country's economic development, but worries that it is dominated by institutional investors. The almost inconsequential participation by individual citizens in a society where a saving and investment culture is limited, concerns Magang. He explains that a small internal market of just two million people, a difficult regime of issuing resident and work permits to expatriates, and a lack of a sense of urgency among Batswana, all work against attracting FDI. Perhaps he should have noted that these very factors also hindered BEDIA and IFSC in attracting FDI. He refers to government bureaucratic inertia as "Kafkaesque Bureaucracy" (p 385). Magang cautions that this Kafkaesque Bureaucracy and harassment of street vendors by bye-law officials could be a time bomb waiting to explode, particularly in the light of the fact that the country's struggling street vendors face similar circumstances to those that triggered the Arab Spring revolution in North Africa (pp 389–390).

Magang argues that the location of the country's capital – Gaborone – on the south-eastern edge of the country as opposed to the middle of the country has led to major economic developments being concentrated in the poorly planned city.

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Consequently, large parts of the country are overwhelmingly undeveloped, particularly the far western portion. There is an established tradition that government departments lack implementation capacity and Magang sees this as a result of government's practice of deficit-reduction. In just the 2012/13 financial year, a whopping four billion pula was returned to government by various ministries. "Imagine what that P4 billion would have done to the economy had it actually been spent. How many jobs would have been created or maintained as a result?" quips Magang (p 447) to whom this equates to economic sabotage by cabinet ministers.

Whereas Botswana is routinely described by Transparency International, the global anti-corruption civil society organisation, as the least corrupt country in Africa, similar to a growing number of its citizens, Magang is worried about massive corruption that is regularly reported in government with the perpetrators not being held to account, particularly when they are people of economic muscle or political influence. In decrying a lack of government support to businesses of indigenous Batswana, which includes his Phakalane empire, Magang should also have noted government's frustration with some local companies' notoriety for failure to deliver on government projects. Surprisingly, in this wide-ranging book, he does not dissect Botswana's tourism sector which could help significantly to diversify the economy and boost employment creation.

Hopefully, in the second volume of the title, Magang will take into account the impact of a dominant-party system (one political party has ruled Botswana since 1966) and the attendant presidentialism in entrenching personal and sectarian interests over national interests, leading to corruption and economic stagnation or decline. He concludes that several African countries, including genocide-scarred Rwanda, have now surpassed the "African miracle".

Magang is not an economic alarmist, but a deeply concerned patriot demanding of his country meaningful prosperity for all the citizens and future generations. His publication may not excite the country's rulers and economic policy makers whom he says have been afflicted by delusions of grandeur. Nevertheless, it will be of immense value to the next generation of political leadership and policy makers.

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