

Book Reviews

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A clever book

Lize Kriel, *The “Malaboch” Books: Kgalusi in the “Civilization of the Written Word”*

Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv 13, Studien der Berliner Gessellschaft für Missionsgeschichte, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2009
ISBN 978 3 515 09243 2

This is a clever book. Its central objective is to decipher two primary texts on the war between the Boers and the Hananwa in mid-1894. These are the “Malaboch books” in the title whose form of communication, the printed word, is carried by the sub-title. Lize Kriel sets out to write about the way these texts portray chief Mmalebôhô (Malaboch), but her book is really about writing history. The two books are *My Friend Malaboch* by Berlin missionary Christoph Sonntag, and *Malaboch* by Colin Rae, an Anglican minister who served as chaplain to the English-speaking troops on commando. Dr Kriel is less interested in the history of the war than in the way it is represented in these two texts and, more distantly, how these representations have changed over time and how they have come to influence orthodox views of the war. As such, her book is about the construction or assemblage of history rather than about the way we record or recall the past. It is about ways in which we write about the past rather than the past itself. It is also a very reflexive history in which the author places herself at the centre of the text and focuses the skills of a literary critic on the narrative structure (and public reception in time and space) of the two texts at the heart of her work. The actors in this drama are the sources of history, not the Boers or the Hananwa, nor, despite Kriel’s claim (p 345), chief Mmalebôho. This is a bold, experimental work about slippery realities and unfixed meanings. It will not find readers among those looking for a rip-roaring yarn (or even those wishing to uncover the hidden structures that drive behaviour and make history). But it should find an avid readership among those interested in the theory and methodology of history.

The book begins with a long chapter on the diary as a historical source. Almost immediately, the author raises the flag of deconstructionist history, with Hayden White’s name firmly imprinted on it. Her aim is “to deconstruct, comparatively, as pieces of historical writing, two diaries, compiled more or less at the same time, covering more or less the same events” (pp 13, 22). The next chapter provides a picture of the environment of the Blouberg and Soutpansberg before moving to the war itself, which is portrayed as part of the wider scramble for Africa. The remaining chapters introduce the reader to Rae and Sonntag and their “diaries”. Lize Kriel does not like Colin Rae. He is at once “a fool” (p 130) and “a city boy who had to play chaplain” (p 134). Later he exhibits “egotistical self-conceit” (p 199) and is “self-absorbed” (p 208). She disapproves of his drinking, which leads to his untimely demise, and she obviously prefers the steady habits of the German missionary, Christoph Sonntag.

Chapter five begins a very careful examination of the two texts. This shows the extent to which Rae depended on accounts published in *The Press* to fill his book (over sixty per cent). Sonntag's work, although "all his own", was translated and edited by his son Konrad in ways that, sometimes severely, changed the meaning of the original German text. Hence neither text provides an "authentic" account of the war. The next chapter moves from "who is doing the telling" to "who is being told", that is, the way in which readers influenced the production of the two accounts of the war. While Christoph Sonntag wrote his diary for personal reasons and in order to inform his Mission superintendent, his son, writing in the early 1980s, saw a new and modern readership as his target. Working in a new age of stridently revised moralities and political options, Konrad introduced passages and nuances that turned the Hananwa into victims of Boer aggression. This re-composition of the original text reflected new imperatives to create "racial reconciliation". It especially served to deflect criticism of the German missionary, under attack by a new generation of historians, by turning him into a friend of the natives. On the other hand Rae, at the end of the nineteenth century, wanted to produce a "diary" that was at once a saleable item and a means of portraying himself in the best possible light. Historians in the 1980s saw his text as a more objective work as it was not influenced by the meddling of a missionary interloper. Lize Kriel found this judgement unsatisfactory and her book is, in many ways, an attempt to salvage Sonntag's reputation.

Kriel underlines that the context in which the books by Rae and Sonntag were written had a strong influence on their composition and content. Colin Rae's book is that of an outsider, a "city boy" who aligned himself with the Boers. He blamed the war on the Hananwa whom he portrays as, alternately, the aggressors, and/or as the (often absent) Other. Sonntag, in contrast, had a feel for the land, believed the Boers responsible for the war, and saw the Hananwa and the Boers' "black helpers" as active players in the drama. The extrovert Rae is contrasted with the modest, more appealing Sonntag who serves as the Boers' "reluctant collaborator". Rae's "idle hours" are compared to Sonntag's "full schedule". The unfortunate Englishman is a monoglot while the brave Sonntag speaks German, Dutch and North Sotho. After all this, it is difficult not to feel there is a hierarchy of representation and that if only Konrad had not taken up the cudgels to defend his father's version of events from the criticism of modern historians, we would have a comprehensive, "objective" account of the war.

The strengths of this book lie in the field of methodology, and many historians will find it, or its individual chapters, very useful. Seminars on methodology will benefit greatly from Lize Kriel's examination of the narrative structure of texts, her concentration on the pitfalls of translation and editing, her remarks on diaries as a historical source, or the knowledge and experience brought by authors to their subjects. Other historians will want something more substantial about the war she is discussing and less about the comparative subjects she drifts into (from the Ijebu and Itsekiri to the Hehe and Ndebele, via Magritte and Simon Schama). Some will be critical of her own perspective when she describes the object of the 1886 Occupation Law as an attempt "to develop the [northern] district through the establishment of effective government control", or when she discusses how Boers "confiscated" cattle from the Hananwa; or when the latter are seen to engage in the "illegal weapons trade" or participate in "arms smuggling" (pp 260–61). Here she has unconsciously adopted the discourse of Boer authority found in her sources. Nor would many

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historians agree with the adjective “legendary” that she uses to describe both the battle of Majuba (p 67) and N.J. van Warmelo (p 215). The wide range of theory Kriel brings to this book sometimes gets muddled. The very Braudelian, structuralist approach to the environment in chapter two sits uneasily with the post-structuralist analysis of landscape in chapter nine. And the relationship between cultures and epistemes is overly static, whether talking about “the blacks of southern Africa” (p 218) or Foucault (p 246).

This book is not bedside reading. It is a serious investigation of how texts are read (the civilisation of the written word), how they produce meaning, and how that meaning changes over time and in space. Many historians will view with scepticism the way this book crosses the frontiers of literary criticism, cultural studies and History; and will want a stronger narrative and more African initiative. I hope their students will be more open to the lessons it holds.

Patrick Harries
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A long-awaited exploration of military medicine

J.C. (Kay) de Villiers, *Healers, Helpers and Hospitals: A History of Military Medicine in the Anglo-Boer War, 2 Volumes*

Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2008

707 pp and 325 pp

Volume I: ISBN 978-1-86919-183-2

Volume II: ISBN: 978-1-86919-230-3

Slipcase: ISBN: 978-1-86919-277-8

R600.00

At last, from the celebrated authority on the topic, the book (in two volumes) that historians and laymen interested in the Anglo-Boer War have been waiting for is on the bookshelves. Kay de Villiers, emeritus professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Cape Town, has been interested in the medical services and medical issues of this important South African war for more than half a century; he has been researching this topic since 1965. I became aware of this as early as 1976 through my senior colleague at Unisa at the time, Professor Johan Barnard, to whom De Villiers owes so much in terms of encouragement. And the result has been well worth the wait.

The Anglo-Boer War was a watershed in military medicine and in the way armies take care of their wounded and sick soldiers in times of war. In what we can term “medical adequacy”, surgical anatomy was more advanced than physiology and knowledge about the body’s reaction to injury. This was due to developments in aseptic surgery and the fairly safe use of inhalant anaesthesia (chloroform and ether). Diagnostic bacteriology and immunology were well established, and the discovery of X-rays by Röntgen in 1895 had facilitated physical diagnosis.

More knowledge also came to the fore about bullet wounds. The small calibre, oval-shaped, nickel-jacketed bullet, which was propelled at high velocity by a smokeless propellant (nitro-cellulose), replaced the large, soft, leaden bullet of previous wars. This

revised the established techniques on the treatment of war wounds. Due to the relatively benign wounds caused by hard, non-expanding bullets fired from a long range, many observers at the beginning of the war argued that the wounds inflicted were less severe than was the case in previous wars. However, it became evident in this war that the distance from which a bullet was fired was important in the way the particular wound had to be treated; each wound had to be treated on its own merits.

De Villiers's two volumes (46 chapters in Volume I and 13 chapters in Volume II) cover a vast field. Volume I explains the difficulties of physical geography and transport, and recounts the origins and the evolution of Red Cross organisations in both Britain and the Boer Republics. Transgressions of the Geneva Convention are discussed, such as the misuse of the Red Cross flag, ambulance personnel carrying arms, and firing on enemy ambulances. There are exciting chapters on the British military medical organisation in South Africa; colonial medical services with the British Army; the Royal Army Medical Corps; British nurses; and British field hospitals with the army as it made its ponderous progress towards the Boer capitals. We learn how the Boer medical services functioned in the various operational areas before the fall of Pretoria, and we are informed of foreign medical aid for the republics, which included the various foreign ambulances (fourteen in all), *inter alia* the two Dutch Red Cross Ambulances, the Dutch East Indian, German, Russian, Swiss, and Irish-American Ambulances. The Irish-American Ambulance under Capt P. O'Connor caused general embarrassment when it arrived in Pretoria, because 47 of the 60 men promptly took up arms with the Boer forces. Volume I ends with a chapter on patterns of Boer and British medical care during the guerrilla phase of the war, when the foreign ambulances had left South Africa.

Volume II is predominantly concerned with the clinical aspects of military medical care referred to earlier in this review – the new kind of wounds, bacteriology, radiology, diseases, typhoid treatment, functional and psychiatric disorders, and traditional remedies used by the burghers on commando. Very useful is the inclusion of 70 pages of short biographies of important or interesting personalities, such as Bension Aaron, Dr W.B. Bidekap, Sir William W. Cheyne, Dr Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Kendall Franks, the two Lingbeek brothers who were both medical doctors, Sir Frederick Treves, and Dr Karl von Rennenkampf.

More than 150 photographs in Volume I and 44 in Volume II are welcome additions to this labour of love. It is a great pity, however, that the author could not find the space, time and energy to cover the medical issues in the concentration camps. But that is admittedly a different story that needs to be told.

The lasting impression is that this work is a major contribution to our knowledge of the Anglo-Boer War. It is overwhelming and authoritative, supremely authoritative. And the research done on both archival as well as secondary sources is impressive, very impressive. This is a great set to own, to read and to consult. It is simultaneously a wonderful read and an excellent reference work.

Fransjohan Pretorius
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An evocation of the everyday life and personality of a community

John Seakalala Mojapelo, *The Corner People of Lady Selborne*

Hidden Histories Series, Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2009

272 pp

ISBN 9781-86888-560-2

R332.00

John Seakalala Mojapelo's *The Corner People of Lady Selborne* is a fundamentally well-intentioned book. It is certainly a necessary one, providing a vivid account of the social and political life of a close-knit community. The distinct atmosphere and sense of community identity that Mojapelo's book evokes for Lady Selborne is heartening to encounter today, in a time when the self-identity and cohesion of many South African communities seem to be growing weaker by the day.

Like Sophiatown, Lady Selborne, formerly situated only nine kilometres from Pretoria's city centre, was razed to the ground as part of the apartheid government's forced removals programme in the 1960s. Its residents were relocated to Ga-Rankuwa, Soshanguve, Eerstrust and Laudium. The removals disintegrated what had been a close-knit community with a distinct identity; a community that had been in existence since 1905. A "white" suburb, Suiderberg, was established on the site. Only in 2002 was Lady Selborne "resurrected" (as Mojapelo puts it) as the Pretoria suburb of Lady Selborne Extension One.

The Corner People is clearly a labour of love for Mojapelo, himself a resident of Lady Selborne from his birth until the late 1960s. The book deals with Lady Selborne's life from its establishment on the farm Zandfontein in 1905 to the last forced removals, taking in – in almost exhaustive detail – the moves made by its residents to consolidate their rights to the area and the apartheid government's countermeasures. The bulk of *The Corner People*, traces the community's fight against being legislated out of existence and the simultaneous growth of political activism among its residents. In this respect, *The Corner People* is an invaluable record of the grassroots growth of anti-apartheid feeling and political awareness in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the last portion of Mojapelo's book follows the community's displaced residents, and closes with the "resurrection" of Lady Selborne as a suburb and community in the post-apartheid era. The final chapters deal with the land-restitution claims made by former residents in the late 1990s, the difficulties claimants encountered in dealing with residents of the suburb of Suiderberg, and their growing impatience with officialdom's lethargy in improving facilities and service delivery in the early 2000s. Unfortunately, the ambient circumstances in the former Lady Selborne have not improved.

While the portions of the book dealing with Lady Selborne's political life are undoubtedly valuable in their particularity, the real strength of *The Corner People* lies in its evocation of the everyday life and personality of a community. Indeed it could be said that the political history of Lady Selborne is, though inarguably tragic, not particularly unusual: hundreds of communities across South Africa suffered a similar fate under the apartheid regime, and are currently encountering much the same problems in reclaiming their heritages. What sets Lady Selborne apart is *The Corner People's* constant reiteration of the fact that this community was not merely inhabited

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by people of different groups and races, but that they were in every sense of the word neighbours, and that the forced removals destroyed not only a multi-racial settlement but also a neighbourhood possessing a vital, much-loved life of its own. Mojapelo's personal experience of the vanished community is a major factor in this evocation; it is the author's personal depth of feeling for Lady Selborne and his sense of hurt and outrage at what became of it, that stands out most clearly from the pages of *The Corner People*, and may well be what sets it apart from more "academic" histories of communities destroyed by forced removals.

That said, *The Corner People* is by no means the best-produced book in its field. Mojapelo's enthusiasm for his topic gives the text a much-appreciated vibrancy, but the book as a whole is repetitive and at times indifferently edited. These shortfalls are, it is true, more of a nuts-and-bolts issue than anything else, and do not detract from the book's strength as a record of Lady Selborne. However, they are something of an irritation to the reader, and could have been solved by a simple proofread. At times too, Mojapelo's personal investment in the history of Lady Selborne lends his image of the community a rosy glow that is probably as far from the reality as was the apartheid regime's description of the township.

Essentially, though, John Seakalala Mojapelo's *The Corner People of Lady Selborne* is an accessible, heartfelt and solidly detailed history of the politics and inner life of a community. Any student of forced removals and the long-term effects they have on the residents of demolished communities will appreciate *The Corner People* for its detail, enthusiasm and breadth of scope.

Kylie van Zyl
Grahamstown

A refreshing exploration of the musical make-up of apartheid

Grant Olwago (ed), *Composing Apartheid: Music for and against Apartheid*

Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008

336 pp

ISBN 9781-86814-456-3

R220.00

Christine Lucia concludes “Back to the Future”, the first essay in *Composing Apartheid*, with a quotation by Jacques Attali: “music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it and changes when it does. It does not evolve in a linear fashion but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of history.”

Composing Apartheid is a collection of thirteen essays by a variety of scholars from a diversity of music domains and academic disciplines that are united through their investigation of the relationship/s that existed between South African musical endeavour and apartheid-dominated society; the ramifications of which still resonate today. As the editor puts it, “primarily, the book explores facets of the musical make-up of apartheid, but simultaneously, and more broadly, it reveals how, through this cultural composition, apartheid was variously made.” This dual perspective stimulates

a discourse that is inter-disciplinary. In addition to essays by renowned music scholars, the book has contributions from historians, sociologists and anthropologists. This illustrates a refreshing tendency towards a possibly uncharacteristic inclusivity in (ethno) musicological scholarship; much that is contained within the book is written in language that is accessible to non-musical scholars and some of the contents have the potential to arouse the interest of the more general reader.

The scope of the book is expansive with respect not only to the diversity of music that is covered but also the variety of contextual issues that are raised. Black choral music receives ample attention by way of the first three essays; were it not for the contrasting perspectives of the different authors, this could be construed as an imbalance. An essay by Gary Baines aligns South African popular music with “whiteness studies”; this articulates with Michael Drewett’s essay, “Packaging Desires”, which explores how “race, ethnicity, sex and gender were often integrally presented on album covers in a manner which reinforced a racist, ethnocentric, sexist and heterosexist view of South African society.”

The divergent musical domains of jazz and the Afrikaans “serious” music establishment receive due critical examination and the phenomenon of performers-in-exile is documented by Shirli Gilbert by way of an essay on ANC cultural groups (Mayibuye and Amandla) that functioned as a component of the international anti-apartheid struggle.

Carol Muller also, albeit indirectly, tackles the theme of musical exile in her paper on South African jazz entitled “Musical Echoes”. Given that I am a jazz musician and educator, I have a bias towards South African jazz and I was in accord with her challenge to the hegemony of American historiography. She aptly echoes Attali’s opinion when she contends that “we cannot simply keep writing a linearly conceived narrative of regional or even comparative and global pasts in jazz: one that starts in one place and that travels in a progressively circumscribed area.” She encourages us to “similarly reflect on the place of South African jazz history in conversation with the narrative of jazz history disseminated from and about the United States and to reflect on the stories about jazz as a truly global phenomenon in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.”

Whether by accident or design, *Composing Apartheid* succeeds in finding unexpected areas of common ground within a variety of contrasting viewpoints. In the concluding essay – “Arnold van Wyk’s Hands” – Stephanus Muller expresses a wish for “narratives about apartheid that recognize both our need to tell, and our humble and honest recognition that we can never tell it all.” This was an unexpected turn in an essay that was coloured by his exasperation with the theme of the 2004 conference that gave rise to this book (he chose not to participate in the conference); he describes “apartheid-framed skirmishes and debates directed at audiences gathered together by a global English speaking consensus mentality” as being “indifferent if not antagonistic to [his] own research interests.”

It is possible that the finished product represents some degree of amelioration for Muller. The editor’s introduction provides an incisive framework that assiduously unites the diverse contributions that constitute *Composing Apartheid* and concludes with an “inconclusive conclusion”, namely that “the end of apartheid is of course not

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the end of the apartheid story” and “in an exploration of the past, the realities of the present cannot, and should not, be ignored.”

John Edwards
Port Elizabeth

A well-rounded book

Francois du Bois and Antje du Bois-Pedain (eds), *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa*

Cambridge Studies in Law and Society, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009

334 pp

ISBN 9780-52188-205-7

£55.00

This collection, in one sense, is a rather conventional one, dealing with the major themes in South Africa's post-apartheid period. It nevertheless manages to carry itself beyond other works available on the topic. The most obvious way in which it sets itself apart is through its presentation of the post-apartheid period as one which is already closed, an idea "already somewhat dated" (p 2). Arising from this premise, it deals with the transition period as one of which we can fully take stock. As a result, this collection goes further than any other that I have found in addressing all aspects of the transition from apartheid to the democratic model of governance.

Chapter one, by Christodoulidis and Veitch and chapter two, by Gobodo-Madikizela, deal specifically with reconciliation. Chapter two, Gobodo-Madikizela's "Radical Forgiveness: Transforming Traumatic Memory beyond Hannah Arendt", stands out in its ability to convey the emotionally charged work of the TRC, showing it as personally affecting and more than an abstract political strategy, without drowning its content in emotion as does Krog's *Country of My Skull*. Gobodo-Madikizela's argument that no act can be treated as morally beyond forgiveness is convincing and seems as relevant today as it was at the peak of political and social transformation and the TRC. Forgiveness, often portrayed as "leading" (almost directly) to reconciliation in South Africa, is presented as more subtly, and many would say more realistically, leading to the acknowledgement that "at some stage in the future" reconciliation may take place.

These opening chapters lay the foundation for the book's central theme, namely restorative justice (something evident even in the title), without "turning it into an academic fad" (p 153). In fact, restorative justice is only mentioned a few times in the entire collection and it appears that the authors and editors avoid using this as a defining term. By doing so they bring the collection to clearly address the transition period specifically, as opposed to simple concepts of justice. It places the emphasis on South Africa's transition and its dealing with justice and reconciliation.

The discussions on the merits of the TRC and its foundations, found in chapters three through five, are largely in line with papers found elsewhere on the topic by presenting the TRC as a fundamental part of the transition to democracy,

somewhat flawed but still not without its achievements. Through taking stock of the successes and failures of the TRC under the broad themes of responsibility (Du Bois-Pedain, “Communicating Criminal and Political Responsibility”); criminal justice (Nerlich, “The Contribution of Criminal Justice”); and reparations (Du Bois, “Reparation and the Forms of Justice”), the book manages to avoid rehashing previous works available on the TRC. Chapter six, Theunis Roux’s “Land Restitution and Reconciliation in South Africa”, broadens discussions away from the TRC into the wider issues of transformation in South African society. This chapter’s argument that the separation of the human rights (TRC) and land issues acted to the detriment of resolving both issues gives one possible explanation for the limited success of the mission of reconciliation, and shows the compromise inherent in the official process of dismantling the apartheid political system.

Of particular interest, Barnard-Naude’s “For Justice and Reconciliation to Come: The TRC Archive, Big Business and the Demand for Material Reparations”, deals with the economic inequalities of apartheid, the role of “big business” in maintaining the apartheid system, and its role in resistance to transformation. Here again, the compromise necessary for a smooth transition to the democratic model becomes apparent. By dealing with this sorely under-researched topic, *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa* already sets itself apart from most books available on the transition period.

Clarkson’s “Drawing the Line: Justice and the Art of Reconciliation”, is a fascinating read. It addresses the role of art and artistic expression in the context of post-apartheid South Africa and brilliantly shows the reversal of power dynamic necessary for a “healthy” transition to majority rule in the South African context. Here the dynamics of empowerment and disempowerment are expressed clearly, not only on racial issues, but on all fronts of South African society. By drawing mainly on the art of Willem Boshoff, and the work of Jacques Derrida, Clarkson provides thought-provoking insight into the art of the post-apartheid period and its attempts to come to terms with the redefined power dynamics of this period. Clarkson’s central argument can be understood in the words:

My discussion is gradually bringing about a convergence of two lines of force: the force of law and the force of art. I do not wish to make a crude claim that law and art operate in exactly the same way, but the movement of convergence is towards this point: both the force of law and the force of art reach out for the *creation* of a new semantic articulation (p 274).

It is only chapter nine, (Gibson, “The Evolving Legitimacy of the South African Constitutional Court”) which I feel does not live up to expectations. Gibson’s quantitative sociological research, while not without its merits, is dragged out, resulting in a rather tedious read. This social science research paper, surrounded by theoretical discussions, did not combine well with the tone of the rest of the work.

One thing which struck me about this collection is its ability to stand alone as a thought out, “well rounded”, book. It does not come across as a collection of essays thrown together to address individual themes; rather, it comes across as a book which stands in its own right, each chapter building on the last to create a sense of closure when the book is completed. Opening with Christodoulidis and Veitch’s “Reconciliation and Surrender: Configurations of Responsibility and Memory” and

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closing with Du Bois and Du Bois-Pedain's "Post-conflict Justice and the Reconciliatory Paradigm: The South African Experience", the editors manage to give the reader a sense of having come the "full circle". The chapters are skilfully placed, and the editors deserve special mention for this.

Craig Paterson
Kenton on Sea

Worthy suggestions, doomed to be stillborn

Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*

The Bodley Head, London, 2009

255 pp

ISBN 9781847920225

£26.99

Although we live in a globalised world, it is a world of two halves, the haves and the have nots. Indeed, the have nots constitute the greater part of the world and their plight constitutes a threat to the stability of societies across the world. The gap between rich and poor is also growing. Paul Collier, an eminent development economist and a professor of economics at Oxford University, in his new book *Wars, Guns and Votes*, attempts to slice through the many ills which affect what he terms, the “bottom billion”, those societies and peoples at the foot of the social pyramid. He is an activist academic, suggesting solutions which will bridge this growing dichotomy between the rich nations and the bottom billion, so creating a more equal and stable world.

The subject is potentially rather dry and of little interest to most people in the developed world. Much of the academic research on which this book is based is also buried in journal articles, only read by a few diehards. This is the trouble with much academic writing: do ordinary people bother to read it? Indeed could they understand it if they read it? There is a tendency within the academe to conduct a closed dialogue among a few specialists. Collier has, therefore, consciously written a very accessible book which cleanly dissects some rather obtuse debates. He writes colloquially, perhaps at times too colloquially for what is still an academic text. But his writing is clear and will appeal to the non-specialist. The evidence for this is that the book has been selling well in local bookshops. It is to be hoped that those in power will take time from their busy schedules to read *Wars, Guns and Votes*, and hopefully, to learn from it as well.

Wars, Guns and Votes ostensibly covers the global range of the bottom billion but the weight of the book falls on sub-Saharan Africa, which is Collier’s area of specialty. However, Collier does not define what he means by the bottom billion, and this could confuse the reader who is unfamiliar with his previous book, *The Bottom Billion*. In the appendix he lists the nations that form the bottom billion, although this appears to have some notable omissions: Swaziland, Sao Tome and Principe, Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic are some of the nations that spring to mind. Indeed, I find the list somewhat arbitrary and I would like to know the criteria which

determine inclusion in the bottom billion. At any rate, by far the majority of nations in the bottom billion, according to Collier, are in sub-Saharan Africa.

The culture of the gun bedevils the world's poorest societies, brutalising and impoverishing the people. There are many examples around the world and we have plenty of cases in Africa. Collier maintains that it is the bottom billion which settle their disputes through violence. To a large extent this is true but one must not ignore the military help provided by the rich nations. During the Cold War the United States and the Soviet Union did not directly clash but they fought their wars through proxies, supplying arms, advisers and, in many cases, troops. In the post-Cold War world only Western nations and realistically only the United States have been able to use force against other nations and there have been invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan and interventions in Somalia and Bosnia.

As Collier shows, much of the cost of an international war accrues after the war is over because governments continue to spend heavily on armaments so as to boost their positions. And this further impoverishes poor nations. International aid also tends to seep into military budgets and Collier has calculated that this seepage could be as high as 11 per cent (p 111). But high military spending also increases the risk of greater conflict and hence greater instability. It is a vicious cycle. With the collapse of the Soviet empire, high calibre weapons became much easier to obtain, often at good prices. The international arms industry is a by-word for corruption and this slots in with Collier's point that the nations of the bottom billion are inherently corrupt. This is true, but corruption is a double edged sword and if the arms industry was above board in all its deals then there would be no room for corruption. The same applies to any other industry; one might cite the oil industry as a prime example. Because it nets billions of petrodollars the industry seethes with corruption and little of this wealth filters down to ordinary people.¹ The contestation over oil has also led to violence, as in the Niger Delta.²

In Africa, easy access to weapons has impoverished a host of nations. Somalia is a failed state with a skeletal government unable to control the capital, Mogadishu, which is awash with rebels and weapons. The American experience in Mogadishu was seminal in discouraging active Western military intervention in Somalia. The Somalian coast is also a haven for pirates who operate brazenly in the belief that they are invincible. The Sudan is another region of bloody turmoil; Southern Sudan will hold a referendum in 2011 to decide whether it should secede from Sudan. But one must ask whether this option will be viable. For as Collier reminds us, the leadership of Southern Sudan live in Kenya, flying into the area when necessary. So the people, forgotten in the conflict, remain to scratch a living from barren ground. Completing this bleak picture is the genocide which has occurred in Darfur, a festering sore not yet healed.

Sudanese president, Omar al-Bashir was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in March 2009 and the onus now rests on all signatories to the Convention on Human Rights to arrest him should he enter their territories. However, the African Union panel on Darfur, headed by former South

1. *The Star*, 29 September 2009.

2. John Ghazvinian, *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil* (Harcourt, New York, 2007), chapter 1.

African president, Thabo Mbeki, has reported with alternative solutions which it is hoped will bypass the ICC's indictment. The panel's report, for instance, suggests a revamped judiciary to try those guilty of atrocities and it recommends the establishment of a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission which would begin the process of national healing.³

Before the Rwandan genocide, the Hutu regime of Juvenal Habyarimana was stockpiling weapons, and despite the fact that there were ominous signals that violence was brewing, weapons were easily obtainable.⁴ There is a flip side of course: rebels also have easy access to weapons. Paul Kagame was able to equip and lead a very efficient guerrilla movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which overthrew the evil Hutu regime in Rwanda. However Kagame has since become one of Africa's strongmen because being a guerrilla leader has conferred upon him the birthright to rule. Another guerrilla leader who seems to have become president for life is Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. Museveni's case is an interesting one because he did not have access to large quantities of arms, nor to significant numbers of soldiers. His campaign against Ugandan president, Milton Obote was launched in February 1981 with an attack on the Kabamba military barracks outside Kampala. Museveni led 34 guerrillas, 27 of whom were armed.⁵

In one of the few factual errors in this book, Collier states that Museveni overthrew Idi Amin, whereas in fact it was Milton Obote. When Uganda became independent from Britain, Obote became its first president but he led the country into a morass of corruption and decay which paved the way for Amin's coup in January 1971. The rivers of blood which flowed through Amin's Uganda are well documented. "Dangerous countries make for dangerous regions", writes Collier (p 116). It was Tanzania which acted to overthrow Amin and restore Obote to power hoping that this would stabilise the region. One would have thought that Obote would have learnt some lessons from his earlier unpropitious time in office but old habits die hard and his second term in power was no better than his first.

So Obote laid the groundwork for Museveni and became one of Africa's forgotten and unlamented dictators. Museveni is also one of Africa's strongmen and he has made it clear that Africa is not yet ready for two-party democracy,⁶ an idea which ties in with Collier's own thinking. Certainly Uganda has prospered, under Museveni and it is stable with a large measure of freedom; the major blip being the brutal terrorism of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).⁷

Collier notes that ethnic diversity in the bottom billion hampers the smooth functioning of electoral politics. He demonstrates that voters will inevitably opt for their own ethnic grouping and he argues that this type of identity politics gives rise to extremism which is particularly costly for poor countries. But Collier's argument is

3. *The Star*, 29 October 2009.

4. L.R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (Zed Books, London, 2000), chapter 3.

5. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda* (Macmillan, London, 1997), chapter 10.

6. Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, chapter 14.

7. On the fascinating history of the LRA, see Heike Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda 198-97* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999).

contradictory. He seems to suggest that democracy is not a panacea for the ills of the bottom billion. But, on the other hand, democracy is necessary to break the grip of ethnicity. His research shows that ethnic diversity impedes economic growth by as much as 2 per cent in poor countries (p 61) and an autocratic leader will seek to promote his own ethnic group at the expense of others. As Collier puts it, “the cocktail that had produced Africa’s dysfunctional social choices” was caused by high ethnic diversity and severe political repression (p 64).

Political manipulation is, however, the stock in trade of most political actors, whether from Africa, the bottom billion or from the rich democracies. It could take the form of religious extremism, ethnic rivalry, class division or an appeal to nationalism. One needs to be cautious in signalling out ethnic diversity. In Rwanda, for instance, the division between Tutsi and Hutu is one of class, not ethnicity. The Tutsi was the ruling elite for centuries until the colonial powers inverted this for their own ends. This upset the structure of Rwandan society.⁸ Politics is about power and the lust to control the destinies of people: the use of the ethnic label is a means to power; in the same way former president of the United States, George W. Bush exploited the war on terror and people’s fears of the “other” to create a war psychosis, thus consolidating his own power. Afghanistan is an ethnically diverse society but the vicious conflict there today is not an ethnic one but a religious one.

In Kenya a disputed election led to the most egregious bloodletting. The trouble with Kenya, however, is not so much its ethnic diversity, as Collier suggests, but its modern history; it is a society ill at ease with itself. The Mau Mau war was fought between Kenyans and against the British. It was a very brutal affair and, contrary to popular mythology which sees the Mau Mau as the root of all evil, atrocities were committed by both sides. When Jomo Kenyatta became Kenya’s first president in May 1963 he closed the door on the memory of the Mau Mau and he suppressed all public comment about the sufferings that had taken place; but beneath the surface of Kenyan society the Mau Mau was openly talked about. What was needed was reconciliation and a general recognition that people had endured terrible suffering.⁹ What Kenya needs even today is a truth and reconciliation commission which would allow the country to mourn openly.

One of the key propositions in *Wars, Guns and Votes* is the usefulness of the coup in replacing corrupt and inefficient governments. But as Collier argues, this presupposes that the coup is carried out with noble intentions. However, most of the evidence does not support this. Initially, intentions might be noble but the strong taste of power has a hypnotic effect which often leads to a worse situation. And as Collier shows, the coup leaves a bleak political legacy: military spending escalates, corruption continues unabated and the risk of another coup or even civil war, greatly increases. In most cases the guard simply changes from a civilian elite inebriated with power to a military elite who will go down the same road. Nigeria aptly illustrates this point, although in recent years, civilian rule and democracy appear to have been consolidated in one of Africa’s most important countries.

8. Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (Hurst, London, 1998), chapter 1.

9. David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of the Empire* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2005), chapter 8.

Zimbabwe offers a different perspective on the coup. Its president, Robert Mugabe has used horrendous violence to consolidate his power and he shows no sign of moving on. Zimbabwe has no tradition of military intervention in government so is unlikely to undergo a coup, but the military's closeness to the ruling party and the fact that the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has so many skeletons in its cupboard¹⁰ will ensure that the civilian-military complex in Zimbabwe remains tight-knit. And the attempt at a unity government now appears to be floundering, frustrated by the political machinations and bad faith of the mandarins in ZANU-PF;¹¹ although in Zimbabwe events have been moving swiftly and it is possible that the unity government will be back on track before too long.¹²

Nor has the Southern African Development Community (SADC) shown much grit in dealing with the Zimbabwean imbroglio. The only country which wields real clout in the community is South Africa and the chemistry which existed between Mugabe and former president Thabo Mbeki meant that little concerted action against Zimbabwe would be taken. And yet in the end it was Mbeki who brokered the power sharing deal which led to the unity government. But this raises interesting issues about contemporary Africa which we need to consider in the light of Collier's view that there are too many unviable states in Africa. Collier argues for a compression of the number of states to a suggested figure of seven. His argument might be laudable but it is impractical and in the present circumstances, unworkable. There are too many political egos at stake and few political leaders who would put the concerns of the continent above their own.

South Africa is mentioned a handful of times in this book and Thabo Mbeki once. This raises a concern despite the fact that this book deals with the world's bottom billion. South Africa is in Africa but not of Africa. This attitude has deep roots both within South Africa and outside.¹³ For instance, Collier notes that "Kenya has long been considered the most advanced country of Africa" (p 202). Really? Is Kenya more advanced than South Africa? He also refers to Botswana as "Africa's most successful economy" (p 142). Indeed it is true that Botswana is a well managed nation but its economy is fairly basic, based as it is on diamonds, beef and tourism and it needs a lot more diversification. South Africa, on the other hand, has a complex economy which is by far the biggest in Africa; Johannesburg is in fact the third biggest economy in Africa.

Mbeki must be credited for his tireless efforts in promoting Africa internationally. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was largely his initiative and he pushed for the reconstituted African Union. These initiatives, however, have been disappointing and Mbeki is largely responsible for this. Good governance is a principle which underpins NEPAD but Mugabe's Zimbabwe, protected by Mbeki for so long, was the antithesis of good governance. And whilst the

10. See, for instance, *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980–1988*, repr. (Jacana Media, Johannesburg, 2007).

11. *Mail & Guardian*, 30 October – 5 November, 2009.

12. Eyewitness News, Radio 702, 2 November 2009.

13. See, for example, Dennis Winchester-Gould and Cyril Wright (eds), *Young Giant of the Western World* (Giant Publications, Johannesburg, nd [1982]). This glossy and expensively produced publicity publication covers the entire range of South African achievements.

African Union took a hard stance against coups, many of its political leaders were not democratically elected.

Indeed, the current chairman of the African Union, Muamar Gaddafi, is one of Africa's longest serving leaders, having come to power in a coup in September 1969 and ruled by the gun ever since. Gaddafi has pushed the idea of African union, no doubt with himself as Brother Leader no longer simply of Libya but of the vast continent of Africa. Such bloated egos cannot be taken seriously and will in fact undermine any idea of closer union. Would any South African be happy to be ruled by an eccentric tyrant from Libya?

So we cannot take Collier's argument at all seriously. He further makes the invidious comparison with the United States. But the point here is that the federation of American states could come about because the people were generally homogenous and they shared similar ideals and language. Even so the Americans fought a bitter civil war and in the twentieth century race continued to scar the American nation. A more fitting comparison, however, would be to compare the continent of America with the continent of Africa. It seems unlikely that Venezuela under the leadership of an increasingly autocratic and socialist Hugo Chavez would be prepared to throw in its lot with the United States.

The federation of American states certainly achieved the pooling of resources, as Collier notes. And this provided efficiencies of scale, accountability and security all necessary for development. African countries often shy away from co-operation because of mistrust and fear. This is ingrained and does impede growth but it is unclear how it will be overcome. Infrastructure spending is a major casualty in this atmosphere of hostility and affects tourism, trade and therefore economic development. Africa has superb tourist destinations and the potential for a boom in this sphere is absolutely enormous. How many people have visited Ethiopia's rock-hewn churches and marvelled at their unique icons? The paranoia of some states (Libya is an example) further hinders the development of a tourist market. Africa needs to diversify its economic activities and the tourist market needs to be developed. This would particularly boost the bottom billion; but in order to achieve this goal it is essential that tourists be provided with reasonable services.

Let us briefly consider one tourist market from the bottom billion. The island of Zanzibar draws most of its Gross Domestic Product from tourism. It offers deep sea diving, a rich history underpinned by the slave trade, well managed museums, good local tours and efficient tour companies. Old Town, with its narrow streets and chunky Arabic architecture has an air of romantic decadence. Zanzibar also offers the visitor superb restaurants and some good hotels. To stand in the large meeting place in the Africa Hotel and to see the sun slipping and splashing into the gold-washed ocean at the end of the day makes one's trip to this magical corner of Africa worthwhile. Sadly there is a negative side to visiting Zanzibar. The airport is bureaucratic, inefficient and plagued by petty theft. There are only two types of hotel: expensive and very basic. Infrastructure is extremely rudimentary. It would be unadvisable to need medical attention whilst there. And electricity is erratic and can be off for days at a time but in general there is power for at most six hours a day. The major hotels and restaurants all have their own generators.

Book Reviews

It is no wonder that South Africa, with its sound infrastructure and services and its open society, is the continent's leading tourist destination. And yet even in South Africa there is the capacity for a tourist boom which could well happen if the soccer world cup is a success. And although the Afro pessimists have constantly belittled South Africa's ability to host the world's biggest sporting event, there is every indication that this country will produce a spectacular World Cup; the only question really is whether the national soccer team will get beyond the first round.

Collier is not an Afro pessimist but nevertheless he believes that the West needs to intervene if need be to rescue Africa from self destructing. He notes that the only countries able to intervene are Britain, France and the United States. Yes, but intervention by these states has been mixed. France did send troops to Rwanda but failed to prevent the genocide there; on the other hand she intervened with relative success in Cote d'Ivoire. Britain also intervened successfully in Sierra Leone. However, Collier does not devote any attention to indigenous initiatives. And there have been a number which need to be noted. The AU has sent peacekeepers to Somalia and Darfur. To boost its potential in transporting heavy equipment South Africa entered a partnership with a number of European countries to build an Airbus transport plane, the A400M project.¹⁴ There have also been successful peace initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and also in Burundi.¹⁵

Africa, in a real sense, is on its own. It might receive outside aid but it will have to police its own borders. There are too many other international hot spots which will use the resources of Western nations: just to subdue Afghanistan will take generations. If history is anything to go by then the battle will not be won. Pakistan's battle with Taliban insurgents is another major battlefield. And so we could go on. Collier has perceptively identified many of the shortcomings in Africa; but his solutions, too centred on the West, need to be re-thought because they are largely impractical. "There are too many lions and foxes in the political world, but not enough people of compassion."¹⁶ And this is why Collier's worthy suggestions will be stillborn.

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A tapestry of insights and analyses

Alan Jeeves and Greg Cuthbertson (eds), *Fragile Freedom: South African Democracy 1994–2004*

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Emerging from a series of conferences during 2004, this collection of articles provides a diverse, incisive and insightful series of papers on issues relating to South Africa's

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14. *The Sunday Independent*, 25 October 2009.
 15. See Kristina A. Bentley and Roger Southall, *An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi* (HSRC Press, Pretoria 2005), chapters 13 and 14.
 16. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (Macmillan, London, 1977), p xv.

efforts to realise the dreams and aspirations of 1994. It is a complex and dense volume of diverse and inspiring scholarship.

Each of the fifteen chapters stands independently, but collectively they form a rich collage of historiography, social analysis and critical debate. Given the diversity of issues dealt with, a review of this nature cannot do justice to the work as a whole, but rather demands a reflection on the parts that make up the significant sum.

Roger Southall's article "Political Change and the Black Middle Class in Democratic South Africa" provides an illuminating analysis of the black middle class. The chapter ends with an invitation for greater neo-Marxism and neo-Weberian debate in making sense of the significant class shifts taking place in South Africa and their likely trajectories. It is to be hoped that other scholars will respond to this call.

In "Why the ANC's Social Contract is still an Empty Promise" (with an unfortunate misprint in the chapter headings), Carolyn Bassett outlines the role of NEDLAC as an illustration of shifting public policy-making since 1994. Key to the focus of the chapter is the processes of policy centralisation which took place during the Mbeki era – shifting power away from parliament (even cabinet) and NEDLAC into the Office of the President. Bassett highlights the tensions this created within civil society, especially unions, and argues that the political fragmentation developing in the second decade of democracy is a result of the Mbeki government's inability to turn the South African economy around and establish a public policy process that incorporates political allies.

Marlea Clarke's article, "Incorporating or Marginalizing Casual Workers? Ten Years of Labour Market Reforms under the ANC", provides a review of labour related legislation and its failure to address the disparities in employment conditions, wages and working environments of casual, informal and marginalised workers.

An analysis of the way in which women's narratives were dealt with during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is provided in Rosemary Jolly's article "Spectral Presences: Narrating Women in the Context of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission". Jolly highlights the necessity of a greater understanding of women's need for "subject status" through the creation of spaces of understanding in which the unspeakable can be spoken – a need that has continued unabated since the formal work of the TRC came to a close.

Another article dealing with the TRC is Rosemary Nagy's article entitled "After the TRC: Citizenship, Memory and Reconciliation". It comprises a conceptual mapping of the relationships between citizenship and the linking of memory and reconciliation encapsulated in understandings of transitional justice. In connecting unresolved issues from the past with emerging issues of xenophobia, Nagy argues for an integration of the rights-based and identity related aspects of citizenship with memory and reconciliation as the "linchpin". Unlike most other articles in this volume, Nagy moves beyond a retrospective or current analysis into articulating a possible framework for the future in this regard.

Cynthia Kros begins her chapter "Ethnic Narcissism and Big Brother: Culture, Identity and the State of the New Curriculum", with a reference to Heribert Adam's

concept of “ethnic narcissism” as a means of explaining understandings of group identities during the apartheid era, and the ways in which they became entrenched in South Africans’ understandings of self. By combining a historical overview of the relevance of the concept of ethnic narcissism with an analysis of school curricula post-1994, she highlights some shifts into more constructed understandings of identity as well as deep-seated tensions and legacies. There are many interesting ideas in the article, although it is a challenge to engage with the breadth of material in a paper of this length.

Thomas Blaser’s article “A New South African Imaginary: Nation-Building and Afrikaners in Post-Apartheid South Africa” explores issues relating to nationalism, ethnicity and nation-building, with particular reference to Afrikaners. Blaser explores the challenges faced by the state and Afrikaner people themselves in negotiating the relationship between apartheid-era policy redress and the place of ethnicity within the complex arena of current identities in South Africa. While the theoretical frameworks informing nation-building, nationalism and ethnicity are rigorously explored, the suggested prominence of Afrikaner identity in the title is insufficiently realised in the text. The tensions and debates in this sector of South African society have certainly sharpened since this chapter was written; it is regrettable that the article does not provide clearer formulations of these dynamics in the current context.

In “Land Restitution in South Africa: Rights, Development and the Restrained State”, Ruth Hall explores the paradoxical nature of the parallel legal frameworks within which the issue of land restitution is being addressed. Hall highlights the possible implications of government’s haste in completing land restitution processes without paying sufficient attention to the issue of redress and its possible contribution to rural transformation, including support for rural people’s land-based livelihoods.

Comparative case studies of two land restitution processes form the basis of Anna Bohlin’s article “A Price on the Past: Cash as Compensation in South African Land Restitution”. Her account and analysis of the reasons for two geographically separate communities choosing cash payouts rather than land restitution illuminate the complex intersectionalities of identity, belonging, poverty and displacement. They also provide helpful insights into the symbolic nature of land restitution processes and their problematic relationship with possibilities for reconciliation.

Thembele Kepe’s article “Land Restitution and Biodiversity Conservation in South Africa: The Case of Mkambati, Eastern Cape Province” provides the third land restitution case study in this volume. The Mkambati Nature Reserve is the context for an analysis of the issues emerging from land restitution processes in designated conservation areas. Kepe provides a useful framework of findings which could guide policy makers and practitioners in the future.

In the final chapter on land restitution, “‘We Are Consoled’: Reconstructing Cremin”, Cheryl Walker gives a heartening account of the remarkable story of resilience and redress of the Cremin community’s celebrated return to their land in Kwazulu-Natal.

There are two chapters on issues relating to HIV&AIDS, the first of which is Deborah Posel's "The AIDS Controversy in South Africa". The article contextualises the controversial AIDS denialism of the Mbeki era by tracing the influence on Mbeki of global readings of AIDS in Africa combined with the history of sexuality and disease in South Africa. Posel argues that the effect of Mbeki's views was inadvertently to reinforce essentialised understandings of the pandemic as well as obfuscate and delay meaningful public debate and action.

The development and influence of the Treatment Action Campaign in creating new political spaces, understandings of citizenship and possibilities for mobilisation in South Africa, is outlined in Steven Robins and Bettina Von Lieres's article "Remaking Citizenship, Unmaking Marginalization: The Treatment Action Campaign in Post-Apartheid South Africa".

The final article is Jonathan Hyslop's "Political Corruption: Before and after Apartheid". Hyslop argues that discussion about corruption tends to focus primarily on dealing with the perceived "problem" that it constitutes, rather than investigating how it actually operates and sustains itself. Hyslop concludes that the existing forms of corruption in South Africa comprise a combination of various forms of corruption used since the establishment of the Transvaal Republic in 1883, with new innovations that explain the ways in which corruption has "plagued" the post-1994 government.

Alan Jeeves and Greg Cuthbertson are to be congratulated on their efforts to compile and edit a volume of such range, depth and significance. This publication is a worthwhile addition to any personal bookshelf or public library.

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