

## REVIEW ARTICLES

### **Wild Coast: shipwreck and captivity narratives from the Eastern Cape**

NIGEL PENN

*University of Cape Town*

*The Caliban Shore: The Fate of the Grosvenor Castaways.* By STEPHEN TAYLOR. London: Faber & Faber, 2004. xvi + 297 pp. ISBN 0-571-22330-3 and *Guillaume Chenu De Chalezac, The 'French Boy': The Narrative of his Experiences as a Huguenot Refugee, as a Castaway among the Xhosa, his Rescue with the Stavenisse Survivors by the Centaurus, his Service at the Cape and Return to Europe, 1686-9.* Edited by RANDOLPH VIGNE. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, Second Series No. 22, 1993 for 1991. xxvi + 174 pp. ISBN 0-630-17524-9.

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In the early hours of the morning of 4 August 1782 the East Indiaman *Grosvenor* ran aground on the Pondoland coast. Ninety-one seamen and thirty-four passengers (whose numbers included women and children) made it, through pounding surf, to the shore alive. One hundred and eighteen days later, after a 400 mile walk, six survivors reached the safety of Dutch settlement in the vicinity of Algoa Bay. Eventually, out of the 140 men, women and children who had sailed with the *Grosvenor* from Trincomalee, a mere thirteen ever reached home.

Shipwrecks were fairly common events on the south-east African coastline, thanks to navigational difficulties in calculating longitude, rough seas and foul weather. In 1755, for instance, the East Indiaman *Dodington* struck Bird Island in Algoa Bay with the loss of 247 lives, whilst in 1815 the Indiaman *Arniston* ran aground near Cape Agulhas drowning 366 of the 372 aboard. What made the *Grosvenor* disaster so significant, however, and arguably the most famous shipwreck to take place in southern African waters, was the knowledge that amongst the castaways there were white women who neither perished in the wreck nor returned to Britain. They were, instead, absorbed within the African societies of the Wild Coast, a fate which seemed, to English commentators at the time, worse than death. One of the first English newspapers to report on the wreck of the *Grosvenor*, *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, expressed its concerns thus:

The situation of the female passengers who were on board the *Grosvenor* Indiaman, must be the most dreadful that imagination can form, or humanity feel for. The ship was lost upon the coast of the Caffres, a country inhabited by the most barbarous and mon-

strous of the human species. By these Hottentots, they were dragged up into the interior parts of the country, for the purpose of the vilest brutish prostitution, and had the misfortune to see those friends, who were their fellow passengers, sacrificed in their defence.<sup>1</sup>

Three days later the same newspaper announced that ‘a female correspondent, not being able to support the idea of the fate, which it is said, befell the unhappy ladies of the *Grosvenor*, would esteem it benevolent, if anyone in possession of authentic information would give it to the world through the channel of the *Morning Chronicle*.’<sup>2</sup>

It was not only the British public which took the liveliest interest in the story of the *Grosvenor*’s female castaways. The Dutch government at the Cape mounted a number of expeditions to rescue the English women, despite being at war with Britain at the time. The misfortunes of the *Grosvenor* women, real or imagined, also reached a wider European audience, thanks largely to the work of the French traveler, Francois le Vaillant, who wrote in his travels that: ‘The idea of these miserable people haunted me everywhere; and I could not help reflecting on the melancholy situation of the poor women, condemned to drag out their existence amidst the torment and horror of despair.’<sup>3</sup>

Le Vaillant’s *Travels*, translated into English in 1790, preceded, by one year, the publication of George Carter’s *A Narrative of the Loss of the Grosvenor East Indiaman*. This latter volume was an account based on the story of a survivor of the wreck, John Hynes. The two volumes were published together in 1802 by a Glasgow publisher<sup>4</sup> – an indication that the British public’s interest in what was, by then, a new British possession, was closely linked to the *Grosvenor* disaster. A spate of literary and artistic works inspired by the wreck followed le Vaillant’s and Carter’s narratives. Paintings by Robert Smirke (1784), George Morland (1790) and Carter himself (1791) envisaged the helpless survivors struggling through raging surf to the waiting blacks on the shore. Concerts and theatrical productions gave London audiences the chance to see dramatic representations of the plight of the *Grosvenor* castaways on stage. Literary works, ranging from Charles Dibdin’s *Hannah Hewit; or the Female Crusoe* (1792), to Charles Dickens’s essay *The Long Voyage* (1853) tapped into the *Grosvenor* story and it is not too much to state, as Ian Glenn does in an important article, that ‘South African literature in English begins with the wreck of the *Grosvenor*.’<sup>5</sup> In support of this contention he lists a number of nineteenth century novels about South Africa (including *The Mission*, by Captain Marryat) which ‘used as a premise a ship-wreck, with or without female captivity’ and discusses the extraordinary verse drama version of W.C. Scully, *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (1886), which

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1. S. Taylor, *The Caliban Shore* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), 181.

2. *Ibid.*, 182.

3. *Ibid.*, 212.

4. I.E. Glenn, ‘The Wreck of the *Grosvenor* and the Making of South African Literature’, *English in Africa*, vol. 22 (2), 1995, 1.

5. *Ibid.* Glenn was unaware of the Eliza Fraser literature at the time he wrote his article and Taylor seems to have been unaware of both Eliza Fraser and Glenn.

is replete with echoes of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The *Grosvenor* was causing literary ripples in the South African novel as late as the second half of the twentieth century where, in Sheila Fugard's *The Castaways* (1972), a white woman has to decide whether to make her home in Africa, amongst Africans, or return to Europe.

If the fate of the *Grosvenor* castaways was capable of exciting so much interest that it launched a national literature, it is somewhat surprising that the events in question have not received more modern scrutiny than they have. This is not to dismiss the heroic salvage efforts of Percival R. Kirby who, as a retired professor of music, devoted his autumnal years to publishing and editing journals and reports concerning the wreck, and who synthesized the labours of his research into his *The True Story of the Grosvenor* in 1960.<sup>6</sup> All who write about the *Grosvenor* are indebted to Kirby but, since his death in 1970, there has, until now, been very little scholarly, analytical or creative work on the subject by South African academics, writers or artists.

We may contrast this with the attention which a similar shipwreck has received from Australian and international observers. In 1836 the *Stirling Castle* was wrecked off the coast of Queensland and some of the crew, together with the captain's wife, Eliza Fraser, were castaway on the Great Sandy Island (later renamed Fraser Island) and held 'captive' by Aboriginal people. As was the case with the *Grosvenor* shipwreck, early reports of the disaster sensationalized the fate of a white woman at the mercy of 'savages'. Mrs. Fraser survived her ordeal and was returned to civilization where her story quickly attracted public attention in the *Sydney Gazette* in 1836, the *London Times* in 1837 and an illustrated book, *The Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, written by John Curtis, in 1838. The latter work, Rod Macneil has remarked, is one of the best examples we have of a narrative that allegorizes the colonial experience in the New World, and modern commentators have been both creative and energetic in interpreting Eliza Fraser's shipwreck in this light.<sup>7</sup>

The first substantial modern history of the event was Michael Alexander's *Mrs Fraser on the Fatal Shore* (1971). Alexander, an historian interested in captivity narratives and reports of cannibalism, admits that his appetite for the story was whetted by the Australian artist Sidney Nolan's 'Mrs Fraser' paintings, a series executed between 1947 and 1977. The Nolan paintings also inspired Patrick White's novel, *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) and South African novelist André Brink's *An Instant in the Wind* (1976). Eliza Fraser's story is the source of Canadian Michael Ondaatje's long poem, *The Man With Seven Toes* (1969) and London playwright Gabriel Josipovici's play *Dreams of Mrs Fraser* (first performed in 1972). A musical libretto, 'Eliza Fraser Sings', was composed by Barbara Blackman and Peter Sculthorpe in 1978 and the film *Eliza Fraser* (star-

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6. P.R. Kirby, ed., *A Source Book on the Wreck of The Grosvenor East Indiaman* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1953); P.R. Kirby, ed., *Jacob Van Reenen and the Grosvenor Expedition of 1790-91* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1958) and P.R. Kirby, *The True Story of the Grosvenor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

7. R. Macneil, "'Our fair narrator' down under: Mrs Fraser's body and the preservation of the Empire', in I.J. McNiven, L.Russell and K. Schaffer, eds., *Constructions of Colonialism: Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 63.

ring Susannah York) by Tim Burstall and David Williamson was first screened in 1976. All of these, and other, creative works inspired by Eliza Fraser are incisively discussed by Kay Schaffer in her *In The Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories*.<sup>8</sup> A recent collection of essays, edited by McNiven, Russell and Schaffer, brings fresh perspectives to the event and its representations and seeks to allow the Aboriginal side of events to emerge in contributions ranging from studies on the archaeology of Fraser Island, to the oral traditions of the Butchulla clans on the Island, to the Aboriginal artist Fiona Foley, some of whose work has been inspired by the Eliza Fraser shipwreck.<sup>9</sup>

The range and richness of the above works on the wreck of the *Stirling Castle* and its female passenger should alert us to the fact that, comparatively speaking, the wreck of the *Grosvenor* has yet to yield its bounty to modern scholarship. Where Australian academics have scrutinized the Eliza Fraser stories for evidence of race, class and gender attitudes in the era of first contact, their South African colleagues have, very largely, ignored the wealth of material buried in the *Grosvenor* narratives. It is, perhaps, indicative of the priorities of our own society that twentieth century South Africans were largely interested in the material cargo of the *Grosvenor* and that even Kirby, as Taylor remarks, ‘devoted a third of his book to the hunt for the wholly mythical *Grosvenor* treasure – with the aim of discrediting once and for all the syndicate fraudsters who preyed on investors for much of the twentieth century.’<sup>10</sup> How far does Taylor’s book go towards revitalizing intellectual interest in the *Grosvenor*?

*The Caliban Shore* is, above all, a very readable, well structured narrative of the wreck, its causes and its consequences. Taylor is a skillful writer who has enriched his account of events with sympathetic detail. He has done a great deal of research in the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library as well as in various South African library collections. He also walked the route which the *Grosvenor* survivors took down the Wild Coast and went in search of oral traditions about white castaways in Pondoland. The end result is a book that is a delight to read and which contributes greatly to our knowledge of the *Grosvenor* and its ill-starred crew. It is sensitive to the beauties, and perils, of the Pondoland coastline as well as to the culture of its inhabitants. Taylor never loses track of the fact that he is narrating a gripping tale of survival and he traces the adventures of his dwindling band of survivors, some of whom stand out as complex individual characters, with storytelling mastery.<sup>11</sup>

A most interesting and original feature of Taylor’s account is the information he has gathered about the *Grosvenor*’s connection to the world of India and the English East India Company. The *Grosvenor* was, after all, an East Indiaman and its crew and passengers were creatures of the Anglo-Indian trading world first and only secondly (in some cases, finally) castaways in Africa. It is ironic

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8. K. Schaffer, *In The Wake Of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

9. McNiven et al, *Constructions of Colonialism*.

10. Taylor, *Caliban Shore*, 263-4.

11. The theme of vanishing whites in Africa is obviously close to Taylor’s heart for it forms the subject for a previous book of his, *Livingstone’s Tribe: A Journey from Zanzibar to the Cape* (London: Harper Collins, 1999).

that the governor of Madras at this time, who spitefully and fatally delayed the departure of the *Grosvenor* so that the ship missed the fair sailing weather season, was later to be the Cape's first British governor – Lord Macartney. On board the *Grosvenor* was a lawyer, Charles Newman, who had been appointed by the English East India Company to investigate charges of corruption against its officials in Madras. Macartney refused to co-operate with Newman's investigations and the latter was returning to England to charge the Governor with non-co-operation. Luckily for Macartney, Newman never got home. The most high-ranking of the *Grosvenor*'s passengers was William Hosea, ex-Resident at the Durbar of Bengal. Taylor reveals how this immensely wealthy man was leaving India in a great hurry. He paid the enormous sum of £2 000 (approximately £240 000 in today's value) for a passage on the *Grosvenor* for himself, his wife Mary and their eighteen month-old daughter Frances. There is good reason to suppose that, caught up in the treacherous politics and corrupt finances of the English East India Company, he was fleeing an impending scandal. Before departure he managed to convert some of his assets into £7 300 in rough diamonds and £1 700 in gold and silver, items which came with him on the *Grosvenor*.

Taylor's research has also revealed correspondence and papers relating to the anxious relatives and friends of those on the *Grosvenor*. Such people were to be found in both England and India. One such person was Richard Blechynden of Calcutta, brother of Lydia Logie and keeper of a seventy-three volume diary in which he recorded his distress about his sister's fate. Lydia was married to the *Grosvenor*'s first mate, Alexander Logie. She is the *Grosvenor*'s Eliza Fraser. Flame-haired, twenty-three years old and pregnant, it was she who was reported to have been forced to live 'with one of the black Princes by whom she had several children'. Blechynden was reminded of this horrific possibility by an article in the *Calcutta Gazette* nine years after the wreck, a fact which attests to the abiding interest in the *Grosvenor* and its women amongst the British in India.

Taylor saves his discussion of the fate of the *Grosvenor* women until last – a piece of titillation in keeping with the best traditions of contemporary sensationalist literature. But of equal, and more general interest, is the nature of the encounter between the castaway Europeans as a whole and the African inhabitants of the Wild Coast. Greg Denning has written most poetically about the beach as a meeting place of different cultures: 'for human beings beaches divide the world between here and there, us and them, good and bad, familiar and strange ... And things come across the beach partially, without their fuller meaning ...'<sup>12</sup> For the storm-tossed survivors who staggered through the surf up a Pondoland beach near Lambasi Bay, the first inkling they had that they were in a very different world arrived with the first appearance of people. As survivor William Habberley recorded in his journal:

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12. G. Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880* (Chicago: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 32-33.

By this time [a] great number of the natives assembled together on the rocks. We hailed them as well as we were able in different languages, but could not make them understand us. Some, however, answered in their way by hallooing and shouting, but did not pay us the least assistance, but actively employed themselves in getting the iron from off the different things that had driven on shore.<sup>13</sup>

The unsympathetic indifference of the Pondo at the wreck to the plight of the castaways, contrasting with the avidity with which they appropriated metal objects, did not create a comforting impression. Ignoring this inconvenient evidence, however, the artist George Morland was inspired by the *Grosvenor* shipwreck to paint an oil entitled *African Hospitality* in 1790. It depicts the disheveled Hosea family being offered comfort by an assortment of ‘noble savages’, an extraordinary triumph of sentimental romanticism over reality. The painting’s companion piece, *The Slave Trade*, shows white seamen brutalizing an African family. Though some of the *Grosvenor* survivors would later be recipients of African hospitality, ‘the paradoxical representation of beastliness in Europeans and humanity among Africans,’ whilst successful in London, was not an accurate reflection of events on the Wild Coast in 1782.<sup>14</sup> In future encounters between the survivors and the indigenous inhabitants indifference was often replaced by hostile acquisitiveness as the Europeans were stripped of their clothes and whatever other objects they had managed to salvage. It would seem, from the behaviour of the Pondo, that this was not the first time that they had acquired metal from the windfall of a shipwreck. It would also seem that they had little inclination to show kindness to the whites cast up by the sea. Why?

The perception exists that the ‘natural’ response of the Nguni to shipwrecked Europeans was one of kindness. This perception is, to some extent, one derived from a selective reading of sources, such as the records of the *Stavenisse* survivors from the 1680s (see below). In reality, the reception offered to European castaways differed according to specific circumstances and the nature of the groups and individuals involved. But violence was never very far away. ‘Violence is the ultimate social control, and in circumstances where cultural divisions are so great that no other controls are possible, the use of violence is likely.’<sup>15</sup> The official report of the East India Company into the *Grosvenor* disaster, written up by Alexander Dalrymple, noted with perception that:

In great part their calamities seem to have arisen from want of management with the natives; I cannot therefore in my own mind doubt, that many lives may yet be preserved amongst the natives, as they treated the individuals that fell singly amongst them, rather with

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13. William Habberley, or Hubberley’s journal is reproduced in Kirby, *Source Book*, 63. Taylor writes that the original of the journal was in the Durban Museum but is now missing.

14. Taylor, *Caliban Shore*, 80.

15. Denning, *Islands and Beaches*, 4.

kindness than brutality, although it was natural that so large a body of Europeans would raise apprehensions; and fear always produces hostility.<sup>16</sup>

All moments of first contact between different societies are fraught with the possibility of dangerous misunderstandings or cultural misreadings. Even long familiarity with another's culture is no guarantee that a fatal mistake might not be made. But history, as well as culture, determines the ways in which people interact with each other. We must assume that the hundred years of history between the *Stavenisse* and the *Grosvenor* had done little to predispose the Nguni inhabitants of south-east Africa to spontaneous acts of kindness towards Europeans, but it had taught them that Europeans often had valuable metal objects about them. The Pondo at the wreck site could choose how to respond to the disaster that had befallen the *Grosvenor* castaways and they decided to exploit the survivors rather than assist them.

A group of 125 strangers was, perhaps, too large to expect hospitality and their vulnerability was too evident to deter predation. Their helplessness was largely due to the fact that no gunpowder had been salvaged from the wreck, thus rendering their firearms useless. Even so, a united display of determination to defend the group, backed up by cutlasses and improvised weapons, might have saved more of the survivors. Unfortunately the group's cohesion was compromised by weak leadership, internal dissension and an understandable reluctance to antagonize the surrounding Africans. In retrospect, of course, it was easy to say what should have been done. At the time, however, it was not that easy for the castaways to demonstrate British superiority to the locals and the bedraggled survivors of the wreck were faced with a number of difficult decisions.

Their commander, Captain Coxon, had already revealed his negligence by allowing the *Grosvenor* to be shipwrecked. On shore his authority steadily diminished as he failed to take measures to protect the group from the Pondo's pillaging. Shipboard discipline swiftly unraveled. The officer most likely to have commanded respect, chief mate Alexander Logie, had become severely ill on the voyage and was too weak to stand. There were a number of badly injured men, five children and seven women, one of whom, Lydia Logie, was in an advanced state of pregnancy. The only way the group, as a whole, could survive would be if the stronger helped the weaker. This did not happen. The options were to stay put and try to build a boat from the wreckage in order to sail to the Cape Colony. Alternatively, some of the fittest members could walk either northwards to Delagoa Bay to get assistance from the Portuguese or southwards to the Cape to fetch help from the Dutch. The rest should have constructed defensible positions and waited for rescue whilst bartering food from the Pondo or scavenging for mollusks and fish.

In the end, the worst possible decision was made – the entire group would

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16. Kirby, *Source Book*, 31.

march south. It was a shorter and, possibly, easier route to Delagoa Bay in the north, but the miscalculating Coxon did not know this, believing himself to be 250 instead of 400 miles from the nearest Dutch settlement.<sup>17</sup> As the motley group struggled southwards hundreds of Pondo threw stones at them, threatened them with assegais or beat them with sticks, stripping them of everything they had. The group soon began to fragment, the stronger loath to become encumbered with the sick and the slow. A mere two days after starting out the first man was abandoned.

Shortly after this, on the 8th of August, the castaways had an interesting encounter with a runaway slave from the colony, a Javanese man called Trout (most likely 'Traut' in Dutch) who had made a new life for himself amongst the Pondo. Trout warned the group that they had no chance of reaching the colony because of the many hardships which lay ahead. He declined all entreaties to act as a guide and hurried off to plunder the wreck. He returned the next day – after the castaways had endured another attack by the Pondo – bizarrely clothed in one of Coxon's nightgowns. He once again declined to render any assistance and advised the survivors to offer no resistance to the Pondo. Soon after Trout's departure the group was once again roughly and thoroughly pillaged by a number of Pondo warriors leaving the Europeans with the impression that: 'The Malay was a rogue as he shewed the natives where [our] pockets were.' One need not be surprised that an escaped slave would rejoice in the reversal of customary colonial relationships and contribute to the Europeans' misfortune. This is made quite explicit in W.C. Scully's verse drama, *The Wreck of the Grosvenor*, where Trout is presented as a vengeful Caliban who berates the whites for their cruelty whilst asserting his own independence:

My name not matters, and my state is free.  
Once, as a slave, I bore the chain and lash,  
A human beast of burthen I was born,  
A thinking chattel. Now I wander free  
Amid these savages to me more kind  
Than your curs'd race.<sup>18</sup>

Taylor does not seem to have been aware of Scully's drama, nor of Glenn's remarks on it. This is unfortunate, for not only is Scully's casting of Trout as a Caliban figure a characterization that resonates with the title and themes of Taylor's book, but the escaped slave (especially a slave in appropriated garments) is also a figure who, taken symbolically, acts as an intermediary between savagery and civilization. This is a point made by André Brink when he came

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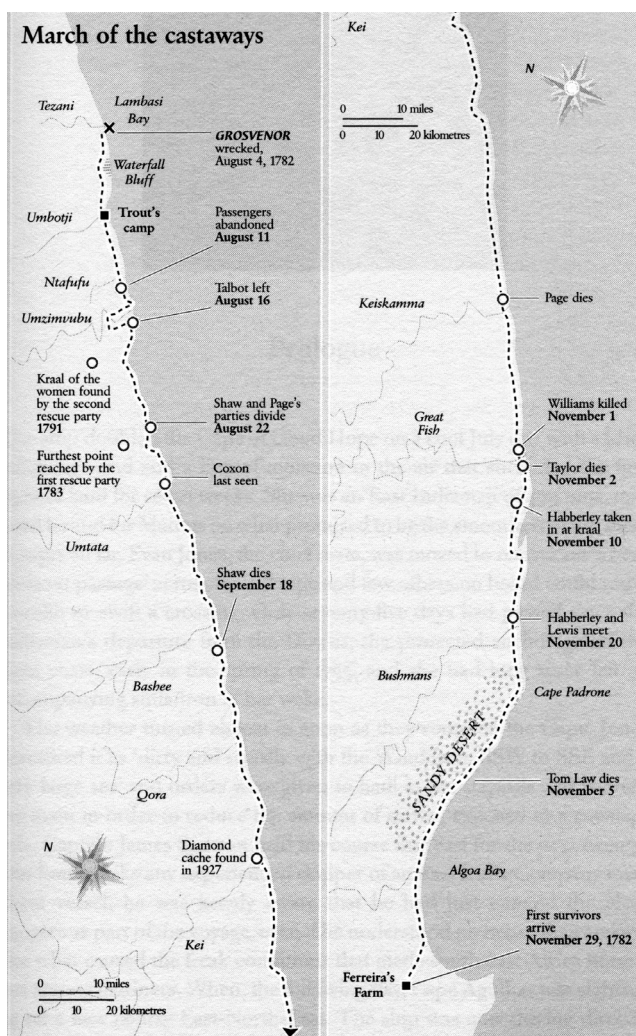
17. Taylor is perhaps wrong in thinking that the route to Delagoa Bay would have been easier. He is certainly guilty of an error when he states: 'In 1552 a Portuguese galleon, the *Sao Joao*, went down about fifty miles further north. Of 500 or so survivors most reached Delagoa' (106). In fact, of 500 survivors only eight Portuguese and fourteen slaves reached Delagoa. See E. Axelson, *Portuguese in South-East Africa 1488-1600* (Cape Town: Struik, 1973), 202-207. The story is related in the compendium of Portuguese sea voyages known as *The Tragic History of the Sea*. See C.D. Ley, ed., *Portuguese Voyages, 1498-1663* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 239-259 for a translation.

18. Quoted in Glenn, 'The Wreck of the *Grosvenor*', 11-12.



to rework the Eliza Fraser story in an eastern Cape setting. In *An Instant in the Wind* a white woman is rescued from oblivion by an escaped slave who appears in her dead husband's clothing. The historical Eliza Fraser was rescued from her captivity by an Irish convict called John Graham who had spent six years living with the Aborigines of Wide Bay. Graham managed to convince them that Eliza was the ghost of his Aboriginal wife and that she should therefore be surrendered to his care. These literary and historical comparisons do not attract Taylor's eye and he never once alludes to, nor cites, any of the literature on the Eliza Fraser shipwreck. This is a pity for it is more than likely that Carter's *Narrative of the Loss of the Grosvenor* was a model for Curtis's *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle* and the connections between the two shipwrecks and their associated literatures cry out for investigation.

Instead, Taylor keeps his attention resolutely focused on the ordeal of the



**Figure 2:** Route march of the Grosvenor castaways.  
Map in Taylor, p. xi.

*Grosvenor* survivors. A decisive moment of schism came on the 11th of August, just after the Ntafufu River had been forded. At moments of disaster it was not uncommon, on the peripheries of European expansion, for fractures to occur along class lines. At first glance the division of the *Grosvenor* survivors into two groups seems to confirm this. The slower moving group consisted of Captain Coxon, most of the passengers and people of rank, their servants and those of the ship's crew (like petty officers, the purser, and the surgeon) who had some loyalty to the chain of command. They numbered forty-seven in all. The rest – mostly seamen and the lascars (Indian Muslim sailors of whom there were initially twenty-five on the *Grosvenor*) – followed second mate William Shaw, a man of ability who had been excluded from the Captain's clique on board. The justification for the split was, according to Habberley, that: 'Every person was desirous of making the best of their way, saying it was of little use to stay and perish with those they could not give any assistance to. By this we were completely separated, and never after together again.'<sup>19</sup> Shaw's group included most of the young and the strong, but it was joined by some elderly gentlemen, like the nabobs George Taylor and John Williams, who realized that they had a better chance of survival with Shaw than with Coxon.

The southwards march of Shaw's group is an epic tale, well told by Stephen Taylor, of survival for the few and extinction for the many. The major source of information on this group is the account of one of its survivors, William Habberley. Modern day hikers of the coast will know that progress depends on fording a succession of rivers and climbing one wooded hillside after another. One may add to this the uncertain reception – then as now – likely to be extended to wayfaring strangers by the local inhabitants. Shaw and his men never knew whether to expect a gift of food or violent death. As ill luck would have it, 'the *Grosvenor* had not only been wrecked along the most inhospitable stretch of the coast, but also at the leanest season of the year.'<sup>20</sup> The Africans, as a whole, did not have food to spare. Shaw's group soon split into two, one section under Shaw going inland to see whether there might be more food there. The other section, a group of twenty-four under the leadership of Thomas Page, the ship's carpenter, decided to continue on down the coast. Shaw's section soon found there was even less food to be found in the interior and returned to the beach where shellfish, dead whale meat and snake flesh provided some sustenance. The group was steadily diminished by malnourishment, exhaustion, drownings and beatings – the latter administered at the hands of the Rharabe Xhosa, a society which had recently been at war with the colonists in what would retrospectively be called the First Frontier War. Shaw died of exhaustion on the 18th of September. By the time that Williams and Taylor were stoned and beaten to death on the 31st of October, near the mouth of the Fish River, only Habberley remained of the original twenty-one.

Page's party, which had stuck to the coastline, kept breaking up and

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19. Taylor, *Caliban Shore*, 122.

20. *Ibid.*, 132.

reforming as groups of men decided to set their own pace rather than walk together. At their greatest moment of unity they numbered thirty-four, having been joined by ten men, non-swimmers who had been left behind at the fording of the Umtata River. Between the Bashee and the Fish River, however, cohesion vanished. As Kirby put it: ‘The evidence of the survivors at this stage of the journey is so conflicting that one can hardly say more than that the whole coastline from the Bashee southwards must have been dotted with small parties of men, separated from each other by several miles, and making their way slowly in the direction of Algoa Bay while struggling desperately to find sufficient food to keep body and soul together.’<sup>21</sup>

One of the individuals amongst these struggling bands was a seven-year old Anglo-Indian boy named Tom Law, or ‘Master Law’. Tom’s father, also named Thomas, was a twenty-two year old gentleman of quality in Bengal who had taken an Indian woman as his lover. The unfortunate Master Law had been voyaging to school in England when the *Grosvenor* ran aground. Whilst the other shipwrecked children (there were six in all) had been left behind on the 11th of August, Tom clung to the man who had befriended him on the voyage, the steward, Henry Lillburne. Lillburne and his companions vowed to carry the boy with them, and they did so until the 5th of November when, in the sandy, desert dunes between Cape Padrone and Algoa Bay, Master Law expired. George Carter, who described the scene in his narrative and illustrated it in a sentimental painting, had most affecting material to deal with. Charles Dickens, himself a connoisseur of death-bed scenes involving children, was inspired by Carter’s description to pay his own tribute to Lillburne in his essay ‘The Long Voyage’:

God knows all he does for the poor baby; how he cheerfully carries him in his arms when he himself is weak and ill; how he feeds him when he himself is gripped with want; how he folds his jacket round him, lays his little worn face with a woman’s tenderness upon his sunburnt breast, soothes him in his sufferings, sings to him as he limps along, unmindful of his own parched and bleeding feet ... [He] shall be reunited in his immortal spirit – who can doubt it – with the child, where he and the poor carpenter shall be raised up with the words, ‘inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.’<sup>22</sup>

We may note that neither in Carter’s painting nor Dickens’s essay is young Tom portrayed as an Anglo-Indian. He becomes, instead, the ‘sacred charge’ (Dickens’s words), whose innocent purity ennobles those who sacrifice themselves in his defence. British readers may have been critical of those men who left unprotected white women behind. There was, however, posthumous redemption for the selfless protector of Master Law in Dickens’s prose. With the passing

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21. Kirby, *True Story*, 87.

22. Quoted by Taylor, *Caliban Shore*, 153.

of Tom, Lillburne lost the will to live and the next day, on the 6th of November, three months since the wreck and after two days without any food or water, the steward fell down in the dunes and died.

The remainder of Lillburne's group, a mere three in number, were reduced to drinking their own urine and the contemplation of cannibalism. At this crucial moment they were joined by another small party of four stragglers who had found a spring of fresh water nearby. Thus fortified the men marched on until, on the 29th of November 1782, the surviving six encountered a servant of the farmer Christiaan Ferreira at Algoa Bay. One hundred and eighteen days after being wrecked and after having walked nearly 400 miles, the first of the *Grosvenor* castaways has reached safety.

Early in the new year a search party found three more survivors – one of whom was Habberley – enjoying hospitality at a Xhosa kraal near the mouth of the Bushman's River. It would seem that some Xhosa, at least, were willing to assist white men once they were obviously harmless and manageable. Habberley had earlier been expelled from another friendly Xhosa kraal when he inadvertently committed an unpardonable cultural transgression – he eased his troubled bowels in the cattle kraal. After this incident, however, he met with nothing but kindness from the Xhosa, an experience shared by the two other *Grosvenor* sailors at his host's kraal, the Venetian 'Bianco' Feancon and the Irishman Thomas Lewis. Soon after the Europeans were rescued eight lascars and two Indian women – the maids, or ayahs of Mary Hosea and Lydia Logie – were brought in. Nobody thought it worthwhile to record the stories of these, the last survivors of the *Grosvenor*, although Habberley did question the ayahs whilst recuperating in Swellendam. Unfortunately five of the lascars and one of the ayahs were to drown on their return voyage to India when, in a cruel twist of fate, the ship they were traveling in, the *Nicobar*, sank east of Cape Agulhas. Not one of the Europeans who made it home was over thirty. Only the youngest and fittest had survived.

What of the group who had been left behind at the Ntafufu River with Coxon? Our evidence on their fate is based on Habberley's account of his meeting with the ayahs at Swellendam after their rescue and with one of the lascars who had stayed on with Coxon for a while. According to Habberley, Coxon and most of the crew had abandoned the Hoseas and Logies, as well as Colonel and Mrs Sophia James 'and others who were unable to get forward on the same day as we had done.' This was not exemplary conduct. Those left behind included the Hosea's toddler Frances, as well as a three year old girl, Eleanor Dennis and two seven year olds, Robert Saunders and Mary Wilmot, who had been shipped off to school in England. What befell them all is uncertain. Alexander Logie was already on the point of death and his wife Lydia was heavily pregnant. The last descriptions of the Hoseas and Jameses are of people utterly dependent on their servants for their survival. It was not long, however, before their servants too abandoned them, the ayahs Betty and Hoakim eventually reaching the safety of Swellendam in the company of the lascars. None of Coxon's party made it back alive and their most likely fate was to have died of exhaustion – or to have been murdered – around the Umtata River.

As soon as news of the *Grosvenor* disaster reached the Cape, England and India, rumours began to circulate that there were some survivors, including women, who were being held as captives amongst the Africans. Lydia Logie, in particular, was named as the woman who had been abducted. The Dutch mounted a rescue party in December 1782 under the command of Heligert Muller.<sup>23</sup> It was a massive undertaking, consisting of 109 Europeans and at least 170 Khoikhoi with 47 wagons and 216 horses. Coming as it did, soon after the First Frontier War, it would not be a distortion of the evidence to see this commando as a provocative demonstration of colonial strength – an armed reconnaissance into hostile territory. Schaffer makes the point that in Australia and America reports of missing white women frequently provided an excuse to mount rescue expeditions which were, in fact, little more than aggressive colonial excursions.<sup>24</sup> The Muller commando was certainly not subtle. It did succeed in finding Habberley and his companions, but it turned back in February 1783, some fifty miles short of the wreck, convinced by local Africans that there were no more survivors.

Rumours and reports of castaways continued to reach officials at Cape Town. In October 1785 Lord Macartney, returning to Britain from Madras, called in at the Cape and discussed the *Grosvenor* affair with the commander of the Cape garrison, Robert Gordon. Gordon told Macartney that he believed that there was one *Grosvenor* lady still alive. In December Gordon was ordered on an expedition up the east coast and took the opportunity to question some Xhosa in the vicinity of the Fish River about the *Grosvenor*. He reported his findings to another visitor to the Cape in 1788 – Lieutenant William Bligh of *H.M.S. Bounty*, en route to the Pacific. Bligh recounted that: ‘He said that in his travels to the Caffre country he had met with a native who described to him that there was a white woman among his countrymen, who had a child, and that she frequently embraced the child, and cried most violently.’ Eighteen months later Bligh again called at the Cape, on his way back to England after the mutiny that made the *Bounty* famous. He again asked for news of the *Grosvenor* survivors and was told that a farmer had heard ‘from some Kaffers that at a kraal or village in their country there were white women.’<sup>25</sup>

The farmer in question was, in fact, Jan Andries Holtshausen, ex-Heemraad of Swellendam, and a member of Muller’s 1782-3 expedition. He and Muller had become convinced that they had turned back too soon in 1783 and that there were indeed *Grosvenor* survivors to be found. Apart from persistent rumours, there were material objects to lend support to this idea. Two silver buttons, engraved with the initials C.N., and identified as belonging to Charles Newman, had been obtained from some frontier Africans and passed firstly to the Cape governor, and secondly to the Governor-General of India. The upshot of this evidence was that Holtshausen and Muller organized, at their own expense, another search party. It is a measure of British interest in the quest that

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23. The report of Heligert Muller and Jan Andries Holtshausen is included in Kirby, *Source Book*.

24. Schaffer, *In The Wake of First Contact*, 50.

25. Taylor, *Caliban Shore*, 213-214.

a copy of a journal kept by one of its members, Jacob van Reenen, was translated and published in England in 1792 by Edward Riou. The search party numbered a mere twelve men, motivated, so they said, ‘solely in order, if possible, to discover whether any of the English women of the English ship, the *Grosvenor* ... were still alive, as we had heard, so that we might take these people out of their misery.’ Despite these noble protestations the group spent a great deal of time hunting for ivory (one of their number, Lodewijk Prins, was killed by an enraged elephant) and probably reckoned that the expedition could be made profitable. In the end they were rewarded by the discovery of three white women in a kraal of ‘bastards’ on the Umgazana River, just south of the Umgazi River, about fifty miles from the wreck site. The diarist of the expedition, Jacob van Reenen, reported that they found the so-called ‘bastards’ to be:

A nation descended from whites, [and] also a few from yellow slaves and Bengalese. We also found there the three old women, who said they were sisters, wrecked there and saved; but [they] could not say of what nation they were, as they were too young at the time when the misfortune occurred to them. We offered to take the old women and their children back with us on our return, which, so it seemed to us, they were very willing for us to do.<sup>26</sup>

As it happened, the three white women never did return with the rescue expedition, despite being ‘deeply moved, when we arrived, to see people of their race, and likewise when we left them.’ The women insisted that they would only leave if they could take their entire progeny with them, ‘which amounted to fully four hundred’. This the travellers ‘prudently refused’.<sup>27</sup>

In later years, as the colony expanded and missionaries collected African oral traditions from the region, more became known about this extraordinary tribe of castaways. They were known as the amaTshomane. Their chief was called Sango and his wife, the matriarch of the clan, was named Gquma, meaning ‘Roar of the Sea’. Her original name was Bess. She was probably English and had been cast up from a shipwreck, aged about seven, around 1750. She was one of the ‘old women’ encountered by the Holtshausen party, but as to who her ‘sisters’ were – apart from the fact that neither of them was Lydia Logie – little definite can be said. Taylor speculates that Lydia Logie may well have been taken in by the amaTshomane, but that she may have died before the arrival of the rescue mission over eight years later. There is also a good chance that Lydia’s child (unborn at the time of the shipwreck) and the other children, including the girls Mary Wilmot and Eleanor Dennis, would have been absorbed by the amaTshomane. As acculturated adolescents they would have preferred staying with their new families – they might also have been hidden – rather than going off with a strange group of frontier Boers. The grounds for such speculations are

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26. Kirby, *Jacob van Reenen*, 101.

various traditions, amongst descendants of the amaTshomane, that whites ‘came out of the ship as if a whole nation’. That some were murdered, but that ‘the female, as well as some female children were spared’. Ultimately, however, as Taylor is forced to conclude, ‘the story of the *Grosvenor* women is beyond the test of history. It has acquired the quality of legend.’<sup>28</sup>

This chimerical quality is wholly in keeping with the genre of captivity narratives. As Jim Davidson explains, in a discussion of the White Woman of Gippsland (another Australian example of a shipwrecked white woman held ‘captive’ by Aborigines), white women – and to some extent white children – represented not only the finest and purest aspects of colonial civilization, they also represented its most vulnerable aspect: ‘the Achilles’ heel of colonialism’:

hostages to fortune, to the success of the whole enterprise. The idealized woman ... presented the sharpest contrast to the so-called savagery colonial menfolk were intent on subduing. So the elusive White Woman was always presented as a captive (never as somebody rescued), subject to a fate worse than death – doubly inflaming to men who were themselves often far from the comforts of wives and girlfriends.<sup>29</sup>

The determination of colonial men to rescue white women frequently took an aggressive turn. (At least fifty Aborigines were killed in the futile search for the White Woman of Gippsland). But this aggression should not mask the fact that, fundamentally, captivity narratives spoke to barely suppressed anxieties close to the heart of the imperial project.

This is the central argument of Linda Colley’s fascinating book, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850*.<sup>30</sup> Colley’s is the only comparative work on captivity narratives which Taylor cites and he quotes with approval her pithy aphorism: ‘Briton’s *could* be slaves – and were.’ Colley reminds us that, at its margins, the British Empire was far from being all-powerful. In reality, Britain was a small island with a small population and finite resources stretched to breaking point in the pursuit of global, maritime trading supremacy. Tens of thousands of men, women and children were taken captive by foreign societies and, as vulnerable individuals, they suddenly came to exemplify the limits of imperial power whilst, at the same time, personifying the very idea of ‘Britishness’. The narratives produced by, or about, such victims and their ordeals were the best sellers of their day. Quite apart from the exotic adventures recounted within them, they raised issues close to the heart of the national, or imperial project. At what moment did the individual lose his or her cultural identity as a civilized, Christian, Briton and become a barbarized ‘other’? At what point was the individual Briton lost to Britain? It is hardly coincidental that

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27. *Ibid.*, 123-4.

28. Taylor, *Caliban Shore*, 217-229.

29. J. Davidson, ‘No woman is an island: the Eliza Fraser variations’ in McNiven et al, *Constructions of Colonialism*, 118.

30. L. Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).

many of these captivity narratives, obsessed as they are with questions of identity, should today be considered the ur-texts of various colonial/national identities. We have already seen how central the Eliza Fraser story is to issues of Australian national identity. In North America too captivity narratives are regarded as the first American literary form and, as such, one of the foundation stones of the American character. Richard Slotkin declares them to be ‘the starting point of an American mythology.’<sup>31</sup>

It is significant that American captivity narratives are also a genre dominated by women’s experiences.<sup>32</sup> Captivity narratives involving women were assured of an avid readership as they combined titillation with terror. Interest in the *Grosvenor* story was primarily fueled by speculation about the unspeakable degradations thought to have been inflicted upon British women – nubile, flame-haired Lydia in particular. Taylor states that what made the *Grosvenor* story remarkable is that for the first time gentlewomen were visible as victims of an unmistakably ‘other’ sexual predator. Given the great numbers of captives taken this may be a rather bold statement.<sup>33</sup> But he is doubtless correct when he quotes an unnamed, unsourced writer as saying that the genre pandered to ‘that White male desire at once to relish and deplore, vicariously share and publicly condemn, the rape of White female innocence.’

There was, however, more than a sexual frisson involved in the prospect of female innocence imperiled. Like Eliza Fraser, Lydia Logie came to represent, in the narratives constructed about her, the civilized virtues of the Empire itself. In the words of her bereaved brother, she was ‘a delicate young female, tenderly brought up & of such exquisite sensibility that she might be said to be alive at every pore.’ If she could be shown to have kept her civility, her morality, then Western civilization itself could be shown to have triumphed over savagery. Mrs Fraser did survive and accounts of her captivity were obliged to stress the ways in which she somehow managed to preserve her identity despite being beset by barbarism. Thus it was reported that she had kept her loins covered with vines (Patrick White’s *Fringe of Leaves*) in whose foliage she also concealed – symbol of conjugal fidelity – her wedding ring. But Mrs Logie did not survive and it became important to imagine an early, unsullied grave for her or to construct posthumous evidence of her virtues. Brother Blechynden tried to console himself with the thought that ‘where a woman is big with child she cannot have been forced’, and that she could not have lived for long with the accumulated evils which surrounded her. Agonizingly he knew, however, that he could not be sure.

Once it became known that there were indeed descendants of white women living on the Wild Coast, it became necessary to invest them with superior qualities. The first Wesleyan missionaries in Butterworth, on hearing that ‘there is now residing a Caffre with a numerous family who is descended from

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31. R. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 97.

32. See K. Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives* (London: Penguin, 1998).

33. In New England alone, between 1675 and 1763 approximately 1,641 New Englanders were taken as hostages. *Ibid.*, xv.



one of the unhappy sufferers of the *Grosvenor* East Indiaman wrecked about 50 years ago', made haste to accede to the man's request to send him a missionary, seeing this as confirmation of a divine purpose to propagate the gospel. The group in question was Gquma's kraal and, in the end, they proved, disappointingly, to be no more receptive to Christianity than any other Nguni. Kirby did, however, record a tradition that female descendants of Gquma were still being sought out as chiefly brides in 1881 on the grounds that they were 'regarded as wise and friendly to the white people'.

All of this attention to white women detracts from the fact that there were also some white men who survived the *Grosvenor* disaster and who were absorbed into Pondo society. After encountering Gquma's kraal in 1790 the rescue party continued on its way to the wreck site at Lambasi. Before reaching the bay, however, they were informed by the Africans that there was an Englishman from the *Grosvenor* who was still alive and living in the vicinity. The Dutch searchers found this individual, on the banks of the Umzimvubu River, on the 8th of November. For some reason, Taylor does not refer to this interesting encounter. The Englishman (whom Van Reenen calls 'the so-called Englishman') spoke Dutch and claimed to be a freeman who had sailed with the English from Mallaca. He offered to take the rescue party to the wreck and told them that all of the English were dead, some having been killed by the Africans and the others having starved. In the event, the so-called Englishman slipped away and did not take the group to the wreck. He did, however, divulge to Van Reenen's 'Bastaard-Hottentot' servant, Moses, that he knew Van Reenen's father in the Cape and that he himself had a wife and children in the colony. From this, Van Reenen concluded that the 'Englishman' was a runaway slave and from this, Graham Botha, who edited Van Reenen's journal in 1927 concluded, reasonably, that he must have been none other than Trout, the unhelpful Caliban who the *Grosvenor* castaways had met near the same spot in 1780.<sup>34</sup> Why Taylor does not mention the reappearance of Trout is a mystery for the probable Malay and bogus Englishman is an important figure in the *Grosvenor* story, one who links the world of runaways to the world of castaways and draws attention to the porous nature of the colonial frontier. There is also the intriguing mention, in Habberley's journal, that Mrs. Logie's maid, Betty, 'had been living with a Malay who had left the Dutch, and all of the Lascars were found residing with such kind of people, who supported themselves on shell-fish, the natives not suffering them to reside near them.'<sup>35</sup> Taylor does not seem to have spotted this detail but it contains the answer as to why the Lascars had a much better survival rate than the Europeans. We can be sure that if anyone knew the fate of Mrs. Logie it would have been Trout and it is an interesting question as to why he was posing as an Englishman at all.

The Dutch rescuers rode on to the wreck site. Just before reaching it, on the 15th of November, Holtshausen had the misfortune to fall into an elephant trap and was wounded in the left hand by a sharpened stake. He died of the

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34. C. Graham Botha, ed., *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1927), 162-4.

35. Kirby, *Source Book*, 126.

infection on the 23rd of November.<sup>36</sup> His companions decided that there were no survivors to be found around the wreck, but had they been more diligent in their investigations they might have learnt that a soldier named John Bryan and a sailor named Joshua Glover had managed to find acceptance amongst the Pondo as a blacksmith and carpenter respectively. These two men had decided soon after being shipwrecked that they had a better chance of survival amongst the blacks than amongst their own countrymen (who, it seems, regarded Glover as a lunatic to begin with). They found ways to make themselves useful to their new protectors and ended their days amongst them as members of the society. Bryan assumed the name Umbethi, married a Pondo woman, and had two children with her. They were remembered in African oral traditions and Bryan's story was eventually related to the early Natal settler, Henry Fynn, by Bryan's son. These details should remind us of the obvious fact that far more white men than white women were cast up on the south-east coast of Africa and that their experiences are also of great interest.

This is the subject of Randolph Vigne's book, *Guillaume Chenu De Chalezac, 'The French Boy'*. The title is actually somewhat of a misnomer for although the centrepiece of the book consists of the annotated memoirs of Chenu, Vigne offers his readers a lot more. He has collected together and edited various contemporary narratives and journals pertaining to an assortment of ill-fated voyages that spewed up castaways on the south-east African coast in the 1680s. The voyages in question were those of the English ships *Good Hope* (ran aground in the Bay of Natal in May 1685), *Bonaventure* (lost in St. Lucia Bay in December 1686) and *Bauden* (from which Chenu was separated in February 1687) and the Dutch ship *Stavenisse* (wrecked about seventy-five kilometres south-west of the Bay of Natal in February 1686). Some of the survivors of these shipwrecks linked up with each other and constructed a sea-worthy vessel, the *Centaurus*, from the remains of the *Good Hope*. This vessel was sailed, successfully, to the Cape in March 1687 with twenty survivors on board. The Cape authorities quickly bought the *Centaurus* from its crew and dispatched it back up the coast to try to rescue those Europeans who had been left behind. The *Centaurus* managed to pick up a further sixteen of the stranded sailors, one of whom was Chenu, and returned to the Cape in February 1688. Eight months later a galliot, the *Noord*, was sent out by the Dutch to survey the coast to Delagoa Bay and to attempt to find more of the *Stavenisse* survivors. Chenu was amongst the crew. A handful of Europeans were rescued. A further trip by the *Noord* to the Bay of Natal in 1689-90 succeeded in finding more *Stavenisse* survivors, but the return voyage was disastrous. The galliot ran aground east of Cape St. Francis. Eighteen men reached the shore but only four survived the walk back to the Cape.

The significance of all of these voyages, as far as most historians of southern Africa are concerned, is that the testimonies of the survivors contained

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36. Taylor believes it was Holtshausen's son who died, (*Caliban Shore*, 217), but Van Reenen's journal refers quite specifically to 'Old Holtshausen' (see Botha, *Wreck of the Grosvenor*, 170).

the first detailed descriptions of Nguni societies to reach the Dutch. Earlier reports, collected by the Portuguese from rescued Portuguese castaways, were untranslated and unavailable to the Dutch until their publication in 1729-31 as the *Historia-Tragico Maritima*. Grevenbroek, secretary to the Council of Policy at the Cape, recorded the survivors' testimonies and entered their observations about the Nguni into his *Gentis Hottentotten Nuncupatae Descriptio*, a work which lay unpublished until 1886 but which was certainly read before that date. The influential *Caput Bonae Spei Hodierum* (1719) by Peter Kolb borrows from Grevenbroek's findings and we may assume that Kolb was not the only one with access to this knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

The *Good Hope* and *Stavenisse* survivors – and Chenu as well – had been obliged to live for many months in close proximity with the Nguni before their rescue, a circumstance which gave them ample opportunity to observe their society. On the whole the impressions formed of the Nguni by the European sailors were very favourable. Many individuals were treated with great kindness by the Nguni and Chenu's host shed tears to see him leave. Those sailors who stayed together as a group, in order to build the *Centaurus* and to benefit from each other's company, were also well treated by the Africans. The contrast with the fate of the *Grosvenor* castaways is dramatic. It helped that the crew of the *Good Hope* were equipped with trading beads and copper, enabling them to purchase food and labour from the Africans. It also helped that they were well armed and less likely, therefore, to display 'want of management with the natives'. But it may also be, as Vigne suggests, that by the time of the *Grosvenor* shipwreck the attitude of blacks towards whites had become adversely influenced by the experience of colonial expansion and frontier fighting.

Whatever the reasons for these favourable impressions were, one should remember that non-survivors might have had a very different story. Of the sixty *Stavenisse* survivors who reached shore, only thirty-four returned to the Cape. Those Europeans who, like the *Grosvenor* castaways, attempted to walk to the Cape, suffered the most. Chenu tried twice, before being driven back to his Xhosa hosts by hardship. Other walkers were less fortunate, either dying at the hands of hostile Africans or perishing from hunger, exhaustion and exposure. It is worth noting that Chenu came ashore in a boat launched by the *Bauden* with seven companions. All save Chenu were beaten to death by the Xhosa in an orgy of violence caused by one of those fatal instances of cultural misreading. The Xhosa thought that the sailors wanted to take an earthenware pot. The sailors tried to indicate that they wanted to pay for the pot. By the time Chenu regained consciousness his friends were 'dead, and almost unrecognizable from the effects of the blows they had sustained'. He was probably only spared because he was a boy, fourteen years old and able to inspire compassion.

Chenu's boyish charm had come to his assistance before. He was a

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37. Vigne, *The French Boy*, xix.

Huguenot refugee from France who had joined the *Bauden* at Madeira when the captain signed him on as cabin boy after being 'moved by his pleas'. The captain, John Cribb, soon treated him 'with special favour among the cabin boys'. This happy relationship came to an end when Captain Cribb was killed, bravely defending his ship against a pirate attack off the Cape Verde Islands. The *Bauden* made its way round the Cape under the command of Richard Salway who, being unsure of the ship's position, sent a boat ashore with Chanu and his companions to ascertain where they were. Contrary winds sprang up and the eight sailors never saw the *Bauden* again. After his friends' murder Chenu was taken by some friendlier Xhosa to some Dutch castaways and together they attempted to walk to the Cape. After only five days their group was attacked by a large number of Africans. One of the Dutch was killed, all were soundly beaten and robbed, and the rest returned to their hosts. Not long after this Chenu and eleven others tried to walk away again, this time following an inland route. Starvation killed half of them before the rest returned. Chenu resigned himself to living with a cousin of the chief, Sotope, who, he said, 'loved me like a son'. The French boy lived thus until his rescue a year later. He eventually returned to Europe and, at the age of eighteen, wrote an account of his adventures. It was published in German in 1748, in French in 1921 and now, for the first time, in English.

Chenu's narrative is a lively, fresh, *Boy's Own* adventure from start to finish. His observations on Xhosa customs and society will, however, be familiar to those students of South African history who have read versions of the Grevenbroek-*Stavenisse* accounts. Those who have not can now read the raw material in Vigne's book. Some of the texts he has assembled have been published before in collections such as Theal's *Records of south-eastern Africa* and Moodie's *The Record*. But Vigne has performed an invaluable service in collecting all of the sources between one set of covers. His scholarship is meticulous and exhaustive. He has consulted archives, libraries and collections in America, Germany, France, Britain, the Netherlands and South Africa, a labour requiring both linguistic skills and perseverance. The material is fascinating though it has to be said that it is very difficult to navigate through the contents of the book. The introduction does not really explain how the different sections of the book relate to each other, nor does it construct a chronological, narrative overview of the interconnecting events. Most of Vigne's prodigious knowledge is contained within the footnotes and it would have been better if some of it had been more sparsely displayed in bridging commentary between the various sections. One is forced to make connections by cross-referencing information in one footnote with details in another and, at times, it is like reading a randomly shuffled sheaf of card-index notes.

The stories contained in the sundry logbooks and journals deserve to rank amongst the greatest human adventures and contain some amazing feats of endurance.<sup>38</sup> They remain, very largely, an untapped source by narrative historians and it is to be hoped that someone with story-telling skills might do to Vigne's source book what Taylor did to Kirby's on the *Grosvenor*. Even Taylor's treatment of the *Grosvenor* story, however, is not the last word on the subject and

I remain of the opinion that there has been insufficient discussion concerning South African shipwreck stories. They are, after all, stories about the moment of first contact between Europeans and Africans in South Africa and are the place where myths and narratives about this event are first constructed. Why have South African scholars and writers lagged so far behind their Australian and American counterparts in addressing themselves to such stories?<sup>39</sup>

A clue to the answer might, perhaps, be provided by Andre Brink's interesting decision to retell the Eliza Fraser story as the basis for his novel, *An Instant in the Wind*, rather than the more obviously South African material of the wreck of the *Grosvenor* and Lydia Logie. Jim Davidson, who has interviewed Brink on this subject, suggests that Lydia might have been portrayed as a proto-1820 settler but 'the story would have lacked resonance, since the English have had difficulty indigenizing themselves in South Africa.'<sup>40</sup> Brink's heroine could become one with Africa by returning to the thoroughly colonized Dutch Cape.<sup>41</sup> Eliza Fraser returned to a robust British community, poised to over-run the Australian continent. But the English woman, Lydia Logie, simply disappeared. There was no colonizing wave of English settlers into Pondoland. Nor was there a wave of Dutch settlement. Europeans in general had difficulty in indigenizing themselves here. Pondoland was only annexed to the Cape in 1894. This stretch of coastline chewed up and spat out more Europeans than it absorbed. Since it was never properly colonized it did not nurture a South African colonial identity in the same way as the American wilderness made 'Americans' or the Australian wilderness made 'Australians'. A tiny percentage of Europeans shipwrecked here between 1680 and 1782 survived. An even smaller number were assimilated into Nguni society. The Wild Coast remained wild.

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38. Colley could not hope to find a more extraordinary captive story than that of Robert Everard, shipmate of Chenu on the *Bauden*. He was taken prisoner on the Island of Assada, of Madagascar, for nearly three years. During this time he was obliged to live naked, outdoors, surviving on turtles and plantains. He was then bought by Arab slavers and taken to Muscat. By the time his freedom was purchased by some English deserters from the *Bauden*, he had forgotten how to speak English. He eventually returned home, via Surat, Mauritius and the Cape seven years later. Vigne, *The French Boy*, 79-80.
  39. Mention should be made of another shipwreck in Australian waters that has attracted a great deal of scholarly and creative attention. The VOC ship *Batavia* ran aground off the west coast of Australia in 1628 and is seen as a possible source of the first white Australians. The 'Kirby' of this saga was Henrietta Drake-Brockman who collected and edited the relevant documentation in her wonderful book *Voyage To Disaster* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1995). Mike Dash has written an outstanding narrative history in his *Batavia's Graveyard* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002).
  40. Davidson, 'No woman', 122.
  41. The descendants of the Dutch were unlikely to believe that their identity was entwined with the fate of an English woman. Besides, once the Great Trek had occurred, the Afrikaners had a potent myth generating captivity narrative of their own – that of the Missing Voortrekker Children captured by the Ndebele. See P.J. van der Merwe, "Die Matebeles en die Voortrekkers", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Nege-ren Veertigste Jaargang – Deel II (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1986), 108-129.

## Melancholy history

SHANE MORAN

*University of KwaZulu-Natal*

*The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power, and the Political Imagination in South Africa.* By CLIFTON CRAIS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 297pp. ISBN 0-521-53393-7.

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The scholar cannot escape the obligation of criticism and evaluation. Some of his language must be direct.

In its various forms *apartheid* is a transfer of the responsibilities of the living world to a dream world of solved problems. It is the substitution of a wishful simplicity for a real complexity.

(G.W. de Kiewiet, *The Anatomy of South African Misery*, 1956)

Clifton Crais's book takes up the story of subaltern resistance where his dramatic *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (1992) left off. That book reached the conclusion that the teachings of evangelical Christianity never fully conformed to the realities of colonial oppression, and the ruling classes never successfully dominated Africans in ideological terms. *The Politics of Evil* opens with the death of Hope, a British magistrate, in 1880 at the hands of rebellious Mpondomise. It ends with an account of the 1960 Pondoland Rebellion and the activities of Poqo. The two events are seen to mirror each other, forming a tradition of bitter and all-too-often doomed subaltern resistance that testifies to the failure of the attempt to colonize the mind of the oppressed and the failure to oust the colonizer.

'Part 1: Cultures of Conquest' tracks this attempt through the policies and practices of classification and tabulation associated with the ethnographic thrust of the settler state and the rationalities of its rule. 'Part 2: States of Emergency' moves from the millenarian prophecies of Black nationhood to the consolidation of apartheid and the simmering rebellion it both provoked and sought to stem. Crais argues that 'South Africa, and especially the Eastern Cape, offers an exemplary, if sad, history of the politics of evil in the colonial and postcolonial world' (5), a subaltern knowledge synchronized with millennial Christian beliefs that cannot be reduced to peasant discourses centred around the restoration of lost worlds: "'Subaltern'" is used as a convenient shorthand, as long as we remember that the subaltern and their politics developed as part of an engagement with colonialism and, ultimately, with the problems of power and authority that transcended the colonial order itself' (11).

State formation in South Africa, at both local and national level, is seen as 'modernity gone mad' (9): 'Before the law the colonized was rendered fully cognizable, identified as subject to the state and entrapped in what Weber described

as the “iron cage” of bureaucratic rationality’ (86). From the 1920s onwards, South African state rationality became ‘increasingly instrumental. That is, the logic of administrative practice became untethered from ethical consideration’ (111). The very technical and seemingly neutral language of apartheid ‘demonstrates precisely Weber’s dread of the possible terrors of rationality’ (9). In the colonies Weber’s positive sense of the contribution of bureaucratic rationality that has destroyed structures of domination that had no rational character has no purchase. Events in the Eastern Cape and in South Africa as a whole, as well as colonialism *per se*, are fragments of the broader parable of the shadow of enlightenment; ‘the colonial realization of the fears evinced by scholars such as Weber who warned of the dark side of rationality’ (10).

I would like to pause to consider, in a preliminary fashion, three opening references to theoretical models – Weber, Adorno and Horkheimer, and Foucault – that inform the presuppositions of *The Politics of Evil*. Professional historians can better assess the detail of Crais’s historical narrative. I do this because I want to suggest that the problems thrown up by Crais’s conjunction of theorists point to some of the weaknesses of his book. The hastily collated theoretical armature is the support for the over-arching Manichean narrative of the Janus-face of modernity that is central to *The Politics of Evil*. It forms the coda to unravelling the often inchoate and disparate interactions and clashes that make up the trauma of South African colonialism and its wake. But, as we shall see, it leads to a failure to deliver on the promise of moving beyond the limitations of conventional historiography.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber argues that the material goods that should lie on the shoulders of the saint like a cloak that can be thrown aside at any moment have become an iron cage. Just as ‘the spirit of religious asceticism – whether finally, who knows? – has escaped from the cage’, so too has the victorious capitalism escaped the cage of ‘the highest spiritual and cultural values [...] the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all.’<sup>1</sup> The iron cage is not simply bureaucratic rationality, which is itself a form of liberation, albeit a tragic one that has taken a recognisable form in the fifty years before World War I.<sup>2</sup> Unless this dialectical interrelation of progress and retardation is kept in view, the process of rationalization is conflated with the evolution of history itself. As Walter Benjamin pointed out, the rationalization process is rather an ideal type, a fundamental form of societal structural dynamics, the

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1. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1978), 181-2.

2. It is on these grounds that Isaac Deutscher can claim that Weber was the greatest sociological apologist of the state who generalised the Prussian bureaucratic experience and projected it onto the stage of world history (I. Deutscher, ‘The Roots of Bureaucracy’ in I. Deutscher, ed., *Marxism in Our Time* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 184). The analysis Marx presents in ‘On the Jewish Question’ of the limitations of political freedom and the relation between religion and the state is also pertinent here; that the political state is ‘as spiritual in relation to civil society as heaven is in relation to earth’ (‘On the Jewish Question’, in L.D. Easton and K.H. Guddat, eds. and trans., *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 225). More generally, K.A. Appiah, *In My Father’s House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 145-7 suggests that what Weber took for rationalization was the incorporation of all areas of the world, including private life, into the money economy. The triumph of instrumental reason and the disenchantment of the world applies specifically to academics and intellectuals, and Weber’s sociology of politics invites oversimplification because of the use of concepts at a high level of abstraction.

appearance of which is neither limited to Western development nor synonymous with it.<sup>3</sup>

Without this refinement the problem of modernity simply becomes a tensionless but lethal farce of, at best, good (or neutral) intentions and horrific results. It hardly explains the relative economic strength of South Africa that indicates, in financial terms at least, the positive results of some portion of a murderous development planning. Crais appears to concede the need for a variegated analysis when he claims that in the three decades between 1920 and the introduction of apartheid in the 1950s, 'state rationality went from bureaucratic to instrumental, a pursuit of technical solutions based on empirical data in which decisions were largely unencumbered by ethical considerations' (103). Yet in *The Politics of Evil* the grand narrative of bureaucratic rationalism itself becomes another myth, sliding into a version of puritanical essentialism if reason is reduced to its instrumental form, blurring the central question of the ends to which reason is instrumentalised. As Crais says of the official colonial knowledges, the procedure is "'standardization and formalization", not complexity and nuance [...]' (83).

How credible is the hypothesis that colonial and apartheid bureaucrats took decisions untethered from ethical consideration? As a gesture of repugnance such an assertion is understandable but must be guarded against if it ironically undermines the nature of the problem. Weber is relevant here in so far as he was concerned with the vanishing of the ethical in the precise sense of the retreat of a transcendental or communal source for the legitimation of bureaucratic authority. The ethical aspect remains in the form of abstract duty and responsibility, and is attested in symbolic value and social status. Surely even the worst apartheid official did believe that his actions were ethical, that he was serving a – carefully delineated – community, stoically doing his duty, and perhaps ultimately serving some transcendental agenda. It would seem that the ideological mix of Christian nationalism within apartheid ideology secured this sense of manifest destiny.<sup>4</sup> I would suggest that the Weberian idea of the decline of the religious can only be made to fit South Africa in a haphazard way that weakens its explanatory value.<sup>5</sup> Crais wants to shift the presence of religious belief onto the subaltern confronta-

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3. Apart from the overused 'state of emergency' epigram from 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' that heads part 2, Benjamin is noticeably absent from *The Politics of Evil*. This is curious because his attempt to write a history of the present that eschews the teleological narrative of progress finds echoes in Crais. Perhaps Benjamin's affirmative, messianic adherence to vulgar Marxism and his critique of defeatism remains as unpalatable today as it did to Adorno.
  4. See also G.W.F. Hegel's discussion of evil, hypocrisy, bad conscience, and good will in *The Philosophy of Right* (section 140): 'Only a bare minimum of intelligence is required to discover in any action, as those learned theologians can, a positive side and so a good reason for it [i.e. fulfilling one's duty] and a good intention behind it' (T.M. Knox, trans., *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 97).
  5. Weber's analysis in part two of the first volume of *Economy and Society* of religious propagation and the types representative of the various classes might be more useful. Chapter VI, part vii, 'Intellectualism, Intellectuals, and Salvation Religion', links the functioning of the religious bureaucracy to that of the academic. Altogether antipathetic to the masses and to the religious sects, humanist intellectuals 'remained alien to the turmoil and particularly to the demagoguery of priests and preachers; on the whole they remained Erastian or irenic in temper, for which reason alone they were condemned to suffer progressive loss of influence' (G. Roth and C. Wittich, eds., M. Weber, *Economy and Society* Volume I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 514). Crais's use of this section of *Economy and Society*, 'Religious Groups (Sociology of Religion)', is limited to page 519 which he misquotes twice (see Crais, 121 and 131-2). Given that, along with *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, this is Weber's major statement on religion (it has been published separately as *The Sociology of Religion*), it is curious that *The Politics of Evil* draws more on volume two of *Economy and Society* and the analysis of the characteristics of modern bureaucracy, the nature of patriarchal domination, and the nature and impact of charisma.



tion with an all-pervasive evil and the embracing of eschatologies that fall out of the purview of official surveillance. But this duality between a supposedly nominal official bureaucratic rationality and grass-roots messianism needs to be articulated in its mediations, institutions and practices rather than polemically asserted.

Crais privileges Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that 'the European Holocaust was a consequence of, and not a deviation from, the Enlightenment' (9). We have noted that this is part of his critique of modernity with apartheid as the exemplary 'triumph of instrumental rationality in which the ends increasingly justified the means' (10). In this context one can imagine the attraction of the dialectic of enlightenment as a vision of reified society intent on total integration, leaving no sphere independent of society. The model of rationality compatible with the society based on exchange that it sustains would seem to have a natural affinity with the classificatory and taxonomic project of colonial and apartheid administration and legislation. Still, despite the pessimistic and condemnatory tone of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the emphasis is on the dialectical nature of this development. The idea of incorporation certainly includes the acknowledgement of ferocious and sustained violence. But the major violence is to nature, or rather to a particular conception of nature that is instrumentalised. The originality of the concept of dialectic of enlightenment is that what passes before enlightenment - the archaic union with nature - is also a form of enlightenment, and the primal unity that is lost is always projected after the fact. The mourning or melancholia that is the dialectic of enlightenment, its schizophrenic progressivism and atavism, simply does not recognise itself. Hence the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be usefully reread as a diagnosis of the structural limits and pathologies of historical narrative.<sup>6</sup>

Crais invokes Foucault to underline the realisation of 'biopower' (9) as bureaucracy and surveillance, and appeals to the idea of 'the state's will to know' (103), despite its obvious homogenisation of the factions and levels of governance and coercion. However, Foucault distinguished his own analysis of the capillary conception of power as coextensive with the social from that of Weber and Adorno for whom 'it was a question of isolating the form of rationality presented as dominant, and endowed with the status of the one-and-only reason, in order to show that is only *one* possible form among others.'<sup>7</sup> Furthermore,

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6. As is well known, Adorno sought the solution for this terminal crisis in the liberating effect of the modernist aesthetic rather than in political action. See F. Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990); S. Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics. Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1977); and G. Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Macmillan, 1978). Max Horkheimer in his 'Thoughts on Religion' notes that religion is the record of the wishes, desires, accusations of countless generations: '[t]he principle that each one must have his share and that each one has the same basic right to happiness is a generalization of economically conditioned rules, their extension into the infinite' (M. Horkheimer, M.J. O'Connell et al, trans., *Critical Theory. Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 130). Questioning the liberatory potential of religion, Horkheimer points out the vested interest of religion in the failings of the earthly order.

7. M. Foucault, 'Critical Theory/Intellectual History' in M. Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power. Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 188. In the same interview in answer to the problem of opposing modernity, Foucault replied: 'I am not prepared to identify reason entirely with the totality of rational forms which have come to dominate - at any given moment - in types of knowledge, forms of technique and modalities of government or domination: realms where we can see all the major applications of rationality' (125). What, if anything, Foucault wished to salvage from the tribulations of reason is the subject of his late reading of Kant's *What is Enlightenment?*.

questions regarding the usefulness of Foucault in the colonial context cannot be ignored. The criticism is that when Foucault does introduce 'race' in the last chapter of the *History of Sexuality*, as one term in an array of terms to be calculated, he fails to specify the ways in which 'race' interacts, say, with the idea of formal equality.<sup>8</sup> Without such a critical stance theory can become its own charismatic voice of authority, a supposedly transparent and supra-historical panopticon from which to calculate, codify and manipulate the textual remains that make up historical knowledge. It is difficult, for example, to see the immediate usefulness of the trajectory mapped out in *Discipline and Punish* of the evolution of disciplinary techniques in place of spectacular and unconcealed violence to a span of South African history in which state violence has remained doggedly shameless.

These misgivings aside, let us return to the pivotal event of *The Politics of Evil*, the opening of chapter one, 'The death of Hope':

He held Hope in his hand. 'Go on I will follow', the Mpondomise paramount chief told the British magistrate Hamilton Hope in the early days of October 1880. And 'where you die I will die'. As Mhlontlo spoke these words of unwavering loyalty the chief's wife lay ill not too far away, slowly perishing from a long disease. Mhlontlo looked up and out to the hills cascading down from the high mountains of Lesotho from whence the clouds and rains descended and turned the wintered landscape into green pastures and waving fields of sorghum. But the skies still refused to give up their rains. (35)

Crais interprets the death of Hamilton Hope as a ritual sacrifice intended to bring rain and heal the land. Unawares, Hope has entered a realm of symbolic meaning where the recognition of his power was seen as magic that could be appropriated and turned to the benefit of the land and its people. From this 'exemplary story of encounter, conquest and culture' (40), the central role of magic and its link with power in colonial resistance can be uncovered: 'Magic's ubiquitousness defeated its centralization' (51). Or more tentatively: 'The evidence powerfully suggests, though does not unequivocally demonstrate, that magic was an important feature of the colonial encounter, including the violence of conquest itself' (67); 'it is probable that the Mpondomise believed Hope had

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8. See D. Kazanjian, 'Racial Governmentality: Thomas Jefferson and African Colonisation in the United States before 1816', *Alternation*, vol. 5(1), 1998, 73 on Foucault's 'uneven and speculative mode of argumentation' that is not itself free of the traditional discourse of modernisation. G.C Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988), 291 argues that, whatever the value of Foucault's analyses of asylums, prisons, and the university, his readings 'all seem to be screen-allegories that foreclose a close reading of the broader narratives of imperialism.' Foucault fails to link power to territorial imperialism even if he foregrounds the forms of disciplinary power at work on behalf of the West. The publication of Foucault's lectures from 1975-6 on the interaction of race and governmentality, '*Society Must Be Defended*.' *Lectures at the Collège de France* (2003), promises to correct this omission.

access to magic' (69). The connection between liberation struggle and theodicy is argued 'speculatively' (122).<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of apartheid is seen as representing 'a veritable reconquest of the region, reproducing in a new key many of the basic features of conquest' (164). This sense of repetition and foreshadowing is the central device of *The Politics of Evil's* attempt to capture the experience of history from below. The attempt to extrapolate 'a sense in the records', evidence that 'is tantalizing if incomplete' (173), can lead to strained interpretations. See, for example, the stress on the purifying associations of fire in the case of the Makhulu Span's violent actions against stock thieves in the 1950s: 'Makhulu Span remained thoroughly committed to the use of fire, even when it was raining. We know that many people considered fire to be an important part of the arsenal combating witchcraft. It seems reasonable to assume ...' (174). Fire, 'a common feature of violence throughout the eastern Cape' (190) is not to be interpreted 'as simply an effective way of dealing with one's enemies' because 'hut burnings invariably followed, instead of preceding, murders ...' (254). On this 'evidence and other data' Crais argues that 'magic and witchcraft formed an important feature of the [Pondoland] revolt, if not for everyone then probably for most' (254).

Thus the events of the early 1950s illuminate the events of 1960. And beyond this, Hope's story is echoed in that of the magistrate at Lusikisiki, J. Fenwick, who 'descended into paranoia, obsession, and delusions of bureaucratic perfection, the insanity of social engineering run amok – a crazy avatar of authoritarianism, a twentieth-century Hamilton Hope' (199). 'Fenwick, the mad master of apartheid, was Hope's successor.' (228) History becomes an interminable repetition, a neurotic typology of recurrent symptoms. This is effectively mirrored in Crais's own didactic writing style, a style that appears at times to mimic what he says of a twentieth century archive marked by '[a]stounding duplication and textual monotony ...' (p.102).

*The Politics of Evil* ends with bleak reflections on a post-1994 South Africa in which '[t]he state of emergency in fact continues' (224), with spiralling crime, corruption and the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Part of this is the legacy of the subaltern politics of evil that sowed passions of hatred: 'It has nurtured the horrible violence of men who celebrate brutal murder and the burning of flesh' (222). Another rests at the level of political leadership that has 'sought access to state power, not its repudiation [...] to use reason to end the nightmare of oppression' (143-4): 'Thus, while beginning a new era of state formation in the country, the ANC government is, in a quite fundamental sense, renewing a tradition of rule begun in conquest and continuing in the twentieth century with segregation and apartheid' (227). The ANC receives yet another *testimonium pauperitas*, the apocalypse has been deferred yet the scorching breath of its annunciation ani-

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9. 'We have speculated that at least some Africans believed that early magistrates had access to magic.' (137) 'While the data are admittedly scarce, it would seem ...' (129). 'I argued, partly by inference, at times by speculation ...' (148) 'Given the widespread belief in magic it is a reasonable conjecture that ...' (170) 'While the data are admittedly limited, we may presume ...' (197)

mates the trauma of abortive violence. Crais's final words prophesy a new political history that will also be 'a history of people's seemingly infinite capacity for hatred as well as their hope that the future will be different' (230). Curiously no mention is made of the carefully ministered contemporary use of Christianity in South Africa.

More interesting is Crais's comment on Renan's dry observation that the idea of a nation requires a great deal of forgetting. He notes that scholars have had far fewer problems with the state, 'its analysis requiring neither irony, nor for that matter, any other literary device' (227). Crais's own use of literary devices - montage, moving from the historical vignette to elucidation and extrapolation - raises the question of whether the pivotal examples can bare the burden of serving as synecdochal emblems for his anti-epic of South African liberation. For me the Fenwick *aperçu* is too slight to sustain the resonance claimed, and the Makhula Span episode remains inconclusive. But the problem of the effectiveness of *The Politics of Evil* rests not so much with evidentiary protocols or the poetics of Crais's history or his narrative strategies that remain within the tropic conventions of the historiographical genre. Rather an all-pervasive defeatism circulates that results from the historian-as-moralist turning away from the bitter taste of compromise and accommodation. This *ressentiment* signals the temporal present of the text, its own encrypted history, and it permeates the flickering narrative chronology with a freighted and distorting pessimism that reads everything in advance. The guiding conceit of the jeremiad is that the exploration of subjugated knowledges reveals that the subaltern oppressed share this sense of betrayal and outrage with the historian.<sup>10</sup>

The use of the Hope and Mhlontlo incident, and its various contested interpretations, foregrounds the double sense of history as what happened and its representation. The crucial insight, this historical truth, is chilling for it tells us that there is only defeat in victory. In this Pyrrhic history of the oppressed the barbarities of the past are seen as prefiguration of a future that is now, and which retrospectively reveals the truth of its earlier prophecy validated in its present fulfilment: the political elite will sell out the dispossessed and collaborate with the oppressor. As in the heuristic mode of Biblical interpretation as *figura*, as prefiguration and fulfilment, the events of the past (*historia*) are seen to prefigure the events of the present. The danger, or the productivity, of this procedure for historical similitude lies in the temptation to metalepsis (the substitution of effect for cause). In my opinion the lens of exemplarity delivers a history flattened into stereotypical indices rotating around a hollow present. The use of detail and fragment as references to a fatalistic totality signals an aesthetic grounded in intermi-

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10. Concern with 'the experience' of subjugation', 'the creative imagination of people' (5) and 'the consciousness of the colonized' (223, note 29) echoes that of the Subaltern Studies Group. Crais cites Ranajit Guha's contribution to *Subaltern Studies I*, but does not explore the problems attached to claiming a positive subject position for the subaltern. G.C. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in D. Landry and G. Maclean, eds., *The Spivak Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 212 points out that 'the subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the elite' in the very process of the (privileged) radical historian opposing elite historiography with the presence of the subaltern. The challenge of recovering the traces of subalternity from the official records of the oppressor means that the retrieval of subaltern consciousness and agency involves charting what can be called a subaltern subject-effect.

nable substitution without limit.

This said, I do feel that a sharp reminder of the losers dragged along in the wake of anti-apartheid victory is a salutary antidote to triumphalist hagiography masquerading as national history. It forms part of the charge that the dispossession of the apartheid oligarchy has led at best to tactical modulation of the social domination enjoyed by white capitalist interests. These interests, so the story goes, can, of course, be better protected by a government whose agents are not directly drawn exclusively from the dominant racialised class. Those with eyes to see can observe a class that, having abandoned political prerogatives to save its material interests, gains the advantage of being able to devote all its formidable energies to entrenching its economic role in collaboration with a newly hatched parasitic bourgeoisie. The oppressed gaze helplessly at a liberated state effectively subject to the differentiated but still functional economic imperatives of the directors of the old regime.

This type of analysis, which finds its model in Marx's diagnosis of the Second Empire under Napoleon III, is, of course, subject to its own problems such as the insistent perception of democracy as a sham and the mechanistic conception of the state as cover for class interests. Although Crais shares these peremptory prejudices he seems unaware of the history of his own historiography, a genealogy that includes Friedrich Schelling's image of the historian as the backwards-turned prophet and Hegel's salvational world history as theodicy. More worryingly, the view of the past as the repository of lost opportunities culminating in a disastrous present recalls the kind of Tory history Bolingbroke mobilised against the victorious Whig Parliament-based government's presentation of itself as the culmination of all that was good in English history.<sup>11</sup> A more critically informed awareness of a tradition that Crais suggests has been superseded by more supple theoretical conceptual tools might have enabled him to historicise his own sense of defeat and avoid the pitfalls of oversimplification.

On one hand we have the millenarian *melange* of syncretistic African Christianity looking forward to a purification of the land and a resurrected black nation. On the other hand sits the glowering positivistic fanaticism of the authoritarian state and its salvationalist racial nationalism. In this parable both banalities mirror each other in their extremist commitment to purification and the mobilisation of racial politics, even if the relation of master/slave renders principled partisanship a foregone conclusion. But what makes for a racy narrative of history as denunciatory moralising at the expense of the complexity of socio-economic history risks leaving the covenant of the new elite unshaken. Given the extremes Crais postulates, what is to stop occupation of the discursive field by the chiliaritic liberal capitalist argument that de-racialised economic development will serve to minimize social conflict and ameliorate economic disabilities? *The Politics of Evil* can be read as a sign of painful post-1994 disenchantment that fails to recognise its own profile in the very ruse of betrayal it deplores.

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11. See S. Fuller, 'Review of John Kadvanly, *Imr Lakatos and the Guises of Reason. History and Theory*', *Studies in the Philosophy of History* vol. 41(3), 2002, 397-8.

## REVIEWS

*The Plays of Miracle and Wonder: Bewitching Visions and Primal High-Jinx from the South African Stage.* By BRETT BAILEY. Cape Town: Double Storey Books (a Juta company), 2003. 200pp. ISBN 1-919930-20-5.

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Brett Bailey is enthusiastic about many things - but not professional historians. In the second play in this trilogy, 'PROFESSOR PEIRES' appears. This 'prominent white historian of the Xhosa Nation' has a 'pasty bespectacled clown face'. He hems and haws, pontificating about research, and is bundled off-stage to cries of '*Hamba!*' (117.) The tiniest child tears off the red shroud he is wearing: the Emperor has no clothes.

When it came to writing his third play, about a catastrophe on which Peires was an expert (the misnamed 'Great Xhosa Cattle-killing'), Bailey did not bother much with extant printed accounts. His three plays are all based on historical events in the Eastern Cape, steeped in male brutality, the occult and death - but Bailey is particularly interested in the violence of African men, and in culture which is oral, occult, Third World. Not savagery originating in his ancestral homeland. Not economics or politics or patriarchy. Consequently, professional historians typically have little to say to him.

So: Bailey and people he calls 'the guys' (actors in Third World Bunfight, his eastern Cape theatre company) travelled to remote Qolora, to gather oral accounts, about the female prophet Bailey had decided was central in the nineteenth century catastrophe. Guys armed with tape recorders descended on the populace. Unfortunately, locals were recalcitrant. They failed to appreciate unknown township men. Nor did they seem to know much about a teenager who had lived there 150 years earlier. The only stories they were prepared to relate had long been in print.

Realizing that his safari was petering out, Bailey decided on an open-air performance. 'My team did not look enthusiastic, but I was on a mission now, and I called the shots.'

On pension day, they set out in a bakkie for a captive audience with cash: pensioners queuing at an isolated spot. The actors included the man chosen to play the female prophet: a hunchback dwarf who had won fame as a soapie star. The men dressed up in skirts, bras, and Cameroonian masks. Waving their arms, they advanced on the queue. Women screamed. People fled. Then the mood changed. The crowd advanced on them, pelting them with rocks. The dwarf was beaten over the head with a cellphone. Others managed to reach the back of the bakkie. Here they crouched, 'surrounded by a bellowing horde of grannies and grandpas, beating the car with their weapons, thrusting spears through the grills that covered the back windows and baying for our blood. They tried to pull the doors open to get us, but we clung to the handles for dear life. "No! No!" I cried. "We are Arts and Culture! Arts and Culture!"'

A teacher hauled Bailey out and shoved him into the driving seat. 'A rock slammed into the back of my head as I opened the door, and an axe was sunk through the metal flesh of the bonnet. A gunshot went off nearby.' As he drove blindly over the track (his spectacles had been lost in the mêlée), a rock ripped out the exhaust. Soon afterwards, Bailey, who was exhilarated, and his actors, who were traumatized, were pulled off the road. A rifle was shoved through the window. Police thought they had cornered the gang who had tried to rob pensioners of their pittances.

Bailey told this anecdote, with self-deprecatory wryness, in a draft of *Plays of Miracle and Wonder*. It is, however, absent from the published text. Why, I wondered, has this richly symbolic story, one of the most memorable in the book, been deleted?

Consider the production and marketing process of this glitzy book, containing the scripts of three plays representing episodes in the history of the desperately impoverished Eastern Cape, as well as Bailey's accounts of his safaris. Costing R254, subtitled *Bewitching Visions and Primal High-Jinx* from Africa, saturated with colour and visuals, it has a cover photograph of three black men, naked but for mud, horns and (perhaps) underpants. It is clearly aimed at the well-heeled, seeking an excursion into the wilderness, guided by the artistic partner of London's Barbican Theatre. Rave reviews encourage faith in the guide. 'Bailey produces works of genius, mapping the route to a new South African theatre' (Zakes Mda). 'He presents a true picture of African spirituality' (*Sowetan*). 'He is a groundbreaking voice in African drama' (blurb). Does one want to advertise that certain people - those whose history is represented in these pages - did not appreciate his talents? That they instead sought to pulp him and his guys? One can understand if Bailey's editor or publisher nudged him: delete.

Nonetheless, tension exists between those attempting to market Bailey, and his own volcanic desires. Not for nothing does John Matshikiza term him an *enfant terrible*. Bailey has unconcealed contempt for sheltered suburbanites, ranging from nationalist politicians in three-piece suits, to his mother, frightened of black male convicts. Consequently, awkward bits of Bailey protrude from that half of the book where he tells his own history, and that of his plays. Despite packaging and deletions, *Plays of Miracle and Wonder* reveals a guide whose ambitions are considerably darker than many middle class people might appreciate.

Bailey starts by presenting himself as the archetypal male hippie searching for meaning in life. After growing up next to a prison in suburban Cape Town, after throwing off mom's shackles, after studying drama at university and Buddhism in the Himalayas, suddenly, in the first half of the 1990s, as the transition to the new South Africa occurred, he felt the call of Africa. Thereafter, *sangomas* provided one of his main sources of inspiration. He lived with them, learnt about their dances, songs, rituals, drugs - and did not, like most, see them simply as priest-healers. He saw, in addition, actors. *Sangomas*, in his view, use potent performance techniques to ignite their audiences. It is, above all, Bailey's transplantation of techniques rooted in the domain of African healing and religion, into showbiz, that has underpinned his rise to fame and fortune.

He laboured under severe disadvantages, both personal and structural, in attempting to transplant the medico-spiritual into alien soil. *Sangomas* are called by their ancestors. Bailey, of settler stock, was called by a vision of 'the African Spirit, come to drink at the River of Life' (13). (This snake-man, we are told, has guided him ever since). *Sangomas* have apprentices, whom they train. Bailey has guys, whom he trains. By drawing on what he knew of *sangoma* drugs and rituals, mixed with pop psychology, he aimed to ensure that 'the Spirit rushes ... like a river' through his guys. Since his township actors (largely amateurs from the eastern Cape's inexhaustible unemployed pool) often had more conventional aspirations - eating buffets in hotels, watching pay television, charging school-girls for each kiss, performing on stages with velvet drapes - they had to be re-educated. Their living and rehearsal space for one play (in mid-winter) was an icy cave in the Maloti Mountains. For all plays, trance-inducing 'exercises' were mandatory. Bailey describes these with considerable reticence: not surprisingly, since the glimpses he provides justify the shock of Dutch female dramaturges, who 'freak[ed] out' when they witnessed them. His actors, runs one of Bailey's workbook notes, must be disciplined: 'Mallets and razors must be applied.' 'I have blindfolded them in a forest for hours while they explored their animal selves, and then chased them screaming and stumbling blind down a steep river course.' It has 'taken a lot of coaxing and cold water to bring a few out of a state of catalepsy.' One can only wonder how many black men - whose recalcitrance surfaces as a *leitmotif* through this text - began thinking of an alternative source of income. Their peers certainly expressed doubts about the wisdom of joining Bailey's company. When one performer tried to persuade other township actors to undergo the exercises, they responded tartly: 'That white guy has made you crazy' (20-23). By Bailey's own account, he became frightened after 'burning' some performers with 'brain-searing trances' during rehearsals (160, 198).

Then there is the equally problematic matter of injecting the Spirit into audiences. People normally consult *sangomas* with pressing problems, for which they seek medico-spiritual aid. Those patronising showbiz typically have very different agendas. Since, to Bailey's frustration, they typically fail to recognize his guys as their *sangomas*, mass re-education is necessary at performances. Preferably, audiences should be placed in an unusual theatre space: cemeteries, for example. They should inhale chemically different air: that saturated with the fumes of trance-inducing herbs has been deemed suitable. (At the very least, this will probably induce vertigo). Seats should be different: bales of straw, in which a snake was hidden, have been used. Lighting might derive from poles precariously laden with candles (which, with all that straw around, have considerable incendiary potential). Actors planted in audiences provide additional *frisson*: theatre-goers might suddenly simulate fits, then be dragged on stage to play dead men. In general, audiences should be assaulted with a barrage of sensory weapons. To the anguish of Cape Town suburbanites, these included on-stage slaughter of an animal. They, according to the director, had not realized they were in a sacred space, and that he was facilitating the emergence of wild African primal energies. More mundanely, he states in this book, engineering hysteria is part of his agenda.



When it comes to the content of his dramas, Bailey's task finally becomes easier, thanks to his location in a society with a plethora of historical events suitable for inducing hysteria, particularly when reshaped by a director enthusiastic about voodoo and drugs. The first play in this book, *Ipi Zombi*, was based on 1995 events in Bhongweni (Kokstad), where youths drew up a hit-list of fifty women to kill as witches, and successfully murdered three. The play pivots around this femicide, and the chopping up of corpses. The second, *iMumbo Jumbo*, was inspired by a conman-*sangoma*, sponsored by big business to trawl Scotland for the skull of a Xhosa king. (An expedition heavily dependent on the liquor industry finally uncovered the skull of a white woman). The third play, *The Prophet*, revolves around the actions of people Bailey terms junkies, desperate for the fixes provided by an alleged *sangoma* and his niece. They ultimately produced 40,000 corpses, and many more cattle carcasses (the 'Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing', as rewritten by Bailey). He, clearly, has more than a slight enthusiasm for black corpses, and few scruples about raiding history to confirm his personal predilections.

A warning, however. What we have in this book are not the events, not the plays, but merely the scripts. These fail to realize their gothic potential. They were largely produced through assembling some members of Third World Bunfight, presenting them with a scene, and taping the improvisations of people who had already undergone brain-searing trances. Or they were the taped recollections of people about the historical events. Or they were originally words scrawled by Bailey during drug-induced euphoria. ('I want to smoke a joint ... I light up and gaze ... I feel the song of a small girl surfacing' (154)). It is one thing to listen to such sounds while sitting uneasily in an unusual space decked as a voodoo temple, filled with the fumes of mind-altering drugs. It is another to page through a glossy text that runs

We have come from deep inside Ssh oom-uh-uh oom-uh-uh oom-uh-uh-uh-uh oom ... yogon yogon yogon yogon You go on, you go on, you go on, you go on The beginning is - in the end, and so You go on, you go on...*xuluqamqam xuluqam xuluqamqam xuluqam xuluqamqam xuluqam* ... shoom-uh-uh-oom Deep inside you - is - the pot of gold. (170, 181, 190, 192-3).

Not surprisingly, Bailey notes that many dazed audiences only vaguely understand the plot. We should not read his plays for their ideas or their philosophy, he warns. His advice should be heeded: they should most certainly not be read for their ideas, philosophy, prose, analysis or coherence. Bailey's forte is feelies - not words.

Anyone stubbornly clinging to the unfortunate habit of reading for ideas is likely only to have a sense of *déjà vu*. The cover photograph of three men is posed after Jane Alexander's 'Butcher Boys' sculpture. The scripts recycle even more familiar ideas. Natives conform to every settler stereotype. They do no work: instead they dance, sing, clap, chant hypnotically, become frenzied and kill one another. They are manifestly stupid, gulled as they are by *sangomas* who are

either conmen or promoters of mountains of corpses. Their gender politics are, if anything, even more clichéd - in a society with one of the highest levels of gender violence in the world, where femicide is rife, and no less than half of cases before courts involve rape. Bailey's guys, in addition to dominating the stage and colonizing female roles; in addition to denying responsibility for raping children and grannies and women and dogs (possessed as they are by a snake-spirit), also justify murder of women, particularly mothers. At every performance of *Ipi Zombi*, a man in drag points into the audience. 'She is a witch! ... And that one! ... even that one! ... this place is infested - call the doctors!'(50) Such witch-hunts are popular. Spectators have frequently responded with explosive laughter as female witches are slaughtered by male actors. But the promotion of femicide is no laughing matter: not for the majority of the population. The thought that *Ipi Zombi* was about to be performed near Bhongweni was intolerable for forty-seven women still on the hit-list, and their terrified relatives. Their history had been inscribed in an alleged work of genius - but they successfully kept Kokstad free of this *Play of Miracle and Wonder*. Their acts, and those of Qolora pensioners, meant that Bailey was unable to perform in the historic settings of two of his three *Plays of Miracle and Wonder*.

If we listen carefully, and range beyond this expurgated text, there are many who have had unnerving experiences of a dramatist inspired by a snake-man. Think of Qolora grannies, standing in a pension queue, as men trained to be in touch with their animal selves rushed forwards wearing bras and masks. Of women already threatened by extra-judicial execution, now obliged to cope with a play legitimating femicide, touring southern Africa and abroad, to great acclaim. Of actors drawn from the dispossessed, hoping for upward mobility, but instead undergoing cataleptic experiences when recruited by an ersatz *sangoma*. Of captive audiences, subjected to a director displaying breathtaking contempt for their rights to ordinary air, let alone broader needs like an environment free of snakes, fire hazards, decapitated animals, invasive men, or other threats to life. Think even of readers of a R254 book, wading through 'oom-uh-uh-uh-uh', and adolescent masculine enthusiasms for corpses, feelies and keeping women in their place.

This is groundbreaking drama in democratic South Africa? Smash-and-grab raids on audiences and actors, on history, religion, health and art, are the best that is on offer? Assuredly, affirm critics, dazzled by Africanization of a western genre. Others have seen crime. One does not have to be a rural pensioner, grimly advancing on Bailey and his guys, to sense the violence of male gangsterism lurking just beneath the surface of this glitzy book.

HELEN BRADFORD  
*African Gender Institute*  
*University of Cape Town*

*A Literary Guide to the Eastern Cape. Places and the Voices of Writers.* By JEANETTE EVE, illustrations by Basil Mills. Cape Town, Double Storey Books (a Juta company), 2003. xii + 402 pages. ISBN 1-919930-15-9.\*

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Ever since the rise of industrial capitalism, middle-class writers from William Wordsworth of *Lyrical Ballads* to David Bristow of *Getaway* magazine have recommended gazing at nature as an antidote to the pressures of urban existence. For Wordsworth, the English Lake District blows away the cobwebs, and for Bristow, the varied landscapes of southern Africa do the trick. Jeanette Eve recommends the Eastern Cape, and with descriptions of the region's attractions by about 100 writers, *A Literary Guide to the Eastern Cape* invites readers to experience the 'literature that encompasses the personal or imaginative responses of writers to the myriad little worlds contained within this extensive province' (2). Whether readers join her tour 'literally or imaginatively', Eve advises adopting the following attitude: '[w]hether place makes you want to read the literature or the literature makes you want to visit the place, give yourself to both, explore the ideas they evoke, add a dash of your own imagination and enjoy the riches of the Eastern Cape and its literary heritage' (2-3).

A single map of the entire Eastern Cape is provided at the outset, and twelve chapters of varying lengths deal with different regions of the province. Each chapter includes summaries of the region's travel routes, geography and history; illustrations and photographs; biographies of the selected writers; and (in brown print) extracted descriptions of the landscape. The writers include both well-known South African literary figures (Schreiner, Fugard, Mda) and previously unpublished poets (Eve herself, as well as Beth Dickerson and Jean Edmunds), and all genres are represented - poetry, fiction, drama, travelogue and autobiography. The length of each chapter has been dictated principally by the number of literary descriptions the particular region has inspired, so that Port Elizabeth and its environs (with Fugard prominent) have 68 pages, whereas East London's more modest line-up of writers (Beryl Bowie, Nola Turkington, Jon Burmeister, Elsa Joubert and Howard Cain) sees it restricted to seven pages. Despite the long chapter on Port Elizabeth, the overwhelming majority of literary extracts describe non-urban landscapes - beaches, mountains, valleys, Karoo scrubland, and so on - and only occasionally (as in Brian Walter's poem 'Swartkops') do people intrude upon the landscapes in the selected extracts.

The final stanza of Eve's own poem 'Gamtoos Valley Orchestra' is a useful starting point for conveying the flavour of the literature on display:

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\* My sincere thanks to Nicola Watson, who is completing a major monograph on literary tourism, and who generously let me look at her as-yet unpublished research. Thanks too to Shane Moran for his comments on an earlier draft of this review.

The Khokhoe ('Men-of-Men')  
 Now vanished from their clan lands,  
 Britons and Dutch  
 Who thought to tame the wilds,  
 Naming the natural,  
 Composed a symphony.  
 The notes of their languages  
 Reverberate  
 Reverberate:  
*Harmonies that echo and re-echo in the mind.* (21, italics in original)

The parenthetical translation of 'Khoekhoe' in the first line anticipates an audience unfamiliar with South African society, and the balance of the stanza proceeds to provide a compressed history of the Gamtoos Valley. To paraphrase: the Khoekhoe (now 'vanished from their clan lands'), the Britons and the Dutch named 'the natural', and in so doing 'composed a symphony' of reverberating and echoing harmonies. As a euphemistic description of colonial violence, Eve's lines on the 'now vanished' Khoekhoe would take some beating. However, her projection of the Gamtoos Valley and its history as a harmonious symphony is not out of tune with post-apartheid's favourite metaphor of the rainbow nation. For Eve's symphony, as for the ANC's rainbow, different and historically opposed elements (like discordant musical instruments or clashing colours of the rainbow) have been melded together into a collective unity of transcendent beauty. This version of South African history 'reverberates' like an unrelenting bass throughout *A Literary Guide*, as the extracts either explicitly, but more often tacitly, collude with this nationalist teleology. Further, the selection of extracts consistently excludes literary writings that contradict this tourist-friendly, rainbow/symphony version of the Eastern Cape's past and present.

It would be facile to take up most of the review expanding upon writers of literary, historical and political interest that have been left out of Eve's *A Literary Guide*. Benjamin Stout's 1797 *Narrative of the loss of the ship 'Hercules'*,<sup>1</sup> *The Cape Journals of Archdeacon N.J. Merriman, 1848-1855*,<sup>2</sup> and Jeremy Cronin's attack on World Bank policies via his poem on the Cattle-killing 'The Time of the Prophets',<sup>3</sup> are but three examples that come to my mind immediately. What I prefer to do instead is to look briefly at two writers – Thomas Pringle and Zakes Mda – who are given substantial coverage in *A Literary Guide*, and to note which aspects of their work have been suppressed.

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1. B. Stout, *Narrative of the loss of the ship 'Hercules', commanded by Captain Benjamin Stout, on the coast of Caffraria, the 16th of June, 1796-; also a circumstantial detail of his travels through the southern deserts of Africa, and the colonies, to the Cape of Good Hope. With an introductory address to the Rt. Honourable John Adams, President of the Continental Congress of America* (London: J. Johnson, 1798). Stout's account was re-published in 1975 by the Historical Society of Port Elizabeth.
  2. D. H. Varley and H. M. Matthew, eds., *The Cape Journals of Archdeacon N. J. Merriman 1848-1855* (Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1957).
  3. J. Cronin, *Even the Dead, Poems, Parables and a Jeremiad* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), 36-8.

A number of extracts from Pringle's writings are included. From his journal-diary, there are descriptions of Bethelsdorp, of the Baviaans settlement in the Winterberg, of the Moravian mission at Enon and the surrounding Zuurborg, and of the Mancazana Valley (all written between 1820 and 1822). Of his poems, there are extracts from 'Evening Rambles' (written in 1822), 'The Emigrant's Cabin' (first drafted in 1822), 'The Desolate Valley' (first drafted in 1822), and 'Makanna's Gathering' (written in 1825). With the exception of 'Makanna's Gathering', the extracts from both the journals and poetry describe landscapes and settlements of the Eastern Cape. 'Makanna's Gathering' (known initially as 'The War Song of Lynx') is of great interest, as in the poem Pringle assumes the voice of Makanna, who led an unsuccessful Xhosa attack on Grahamstown in 1819. Angered by what he saw as the injustice of settler expansion, Pringle sympathetically expresses Makanna's point-of-view: the white men are 'Amakosa's curse and bane' (119). The force of the poem, however, is moderated in *A Literary Guide* by being introduced with reference to the monument at Egazini commemorating the 1819 battle, which 'is dedicated to reconciliation' (119). The histories of colonial violence are thus narrated as belonging to a regrettable past that has been transcended in the pathos of post-apartheid reconciliation. The possibility that the violent dispossession of Xhosa and Khoikhoi land in the nineteenth century might in part explain the massive inequalities in wealth in the Eastern Cape in the twenty-first century is thus side-stepped by appealing to a symbol of reconciliation that is entirely at odds with the temper of Pringle's poem. To put it another way: by framing the poem with references to a contemporary monument of reconciliation, Eve attempts to contain the uncomfortable thought that Makanna's impoverished descendants in the townships of the Eastern Cape might still feel anti-settler anger of the kind expressed in Pringle's poem.

As regards Pringle's descriptions of landscape, Eve uncritically endorses Pringle's way-of-seeing. In writing about the Mancazana Valley, for example, Pringle contrasts the 'very impressive character' (280) of the land and its rich potential for farming, and the 'remains of Kafir hamlets ... of a very melancholy character' (281). Writing of the present, Eve repeats Pringle's sense of contrast: the region is 'a strange mixture of scenic beauty and devastation, bearing the scars of successive settlements, evictions, battles and neglect, in the midst of what should be a fertile and productive region' (280). That this might not be the only way of seeing the landscape is simply never entertained. Would the inhabitants of the 'Kafir hamlets' share Pringle's point-of-view? Would Eastern Cape farm-workers today share Eve's vision of a 'fertile and productive' landscape?<sup>4</sup> The specificity of Pringle's point-of-view and its spurious claims to be the 'natu-

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4. That conceptions of landscape are contingent and socially constructed is now widely accepted. The cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, for example, argues that the rise of the concept of landscape is coterminous with early modern capitalism, which consigns those working the land to the position of 'insiders' who can never see their land as landscape: 'The insider does not enjoy the privilege of being able to walk away from a scene as we can walk away from a framed picture or from a tourist viewpoint'. (*Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998 [1984]), 19).

ral' or 'universal' way-of-seeing have been discussed by David Bunn, who argues that 'landscape, an aesthetic and material practice, helps to naturalize the settler subject and establish a local version of the bourgeois public sphere.'<sup>5</sup> In Pringle's case, Bunn continues, his writings about landscape ought to complicate our understanding of his sympathy for slaves and exploited labour because 'an economic imperative moves like a hidden undertow through much of his poetry.'<sup>6</sup> In other words, Pringle's sincere sympathy for Makanna and his people cannot be disassociated from his keen eye for fertile land and cheap labour - the necessary elements for capitalist agriculture. Eve's eye for the contemporary Eastern Cape landscape inhabits precisely the same trope, and accordingly updates Pringle's contradictory commitments.

It is also worth noting how Pringle saw his own poetry. In a letter from the Eastern Cape frontier to John Fairbairn written on 5 August 1825, Pringle reflected:

... I have always cherished at the bottom of my heart the ambition of writing some day or other a little volume of poetry worthy of being preserved. A very small portion of what I have yet written is in my own sincere opinion of that description. But some 'fair future day' I still hope to write something that may not dishonour Scotland. At present however I almost feel criminal in giving up any portion of my heart or time to poetry. I am sensible of the vast importance of the task I have undertaken - and I will not flinch from it. Yet the demon of procrastination often gets the better of me. I am not yet fairly warmed to the work, & I fly to versifying like a man with an evil conscience who flies to drink to drown remorse. But I mean to reform now. I am come over here with Dr. Philip & am awakened from my lethargy by the edifying example he exhibits of indomitable pertinacity.<sup>7</sup>

In the opposition Pringle establishes here between writing poetry and fighting for political reform, he describes the former as a personal vanity, an almost criminal indulgence, and as a form of escapism comparable to a drinker reaching for the bottle. He tried to resolve the opposition by writing polemical poems like 'Makanna's Gathering', 'The Bechuana Boy', 'Bushman Song' and 'To Oppression', poems which aim 'to excite sympathy in very common readers'<sup>8</sup> and thus contribute to political struggles on behalf of the dispossessed Africans of the frontier. With extracts from but one of Pringle's 'political' poems, and so many extracts from his (as he saw them) self-indulgent landscape poems

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5. D. Bunn, "'Our Wattled Cot': Mercantile and Domestic Space in Thomas Pringle's African Landscapes' in W.J.T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 138.

6. Bunn, 'Our Wattled Cot', 159.

7. Quoted in D. Shaw, 'Thomas Pringle's Bushmen: Images in Flesh and Blood', *English in Africa*, vol. 25, 1998, 42.

8. Quoted in Shaw, 'Thomas Pringle's Bushmen', 46.

and writings, Eve therefore reverses Pringle's own sense of what mattered most in writing about the Eastern Cape.

Turning to Mda, his work is covered in Chapter 12 'Layers of Landscape and Literature. The Transkei', where six pages are allocated to Qolorha Mouth and the 'Cattle-killing' of 1856-57. The chapter provides a cursory summary of events, without any dates but with respectful quotations from Jeff Peires, and then six literary re-workings are mentioned in the following order: Guy Butler's *Pilgrimage to Dias Cross*, Mda's *Heart of Redness*, H.I.E. Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, Credo Mutwa's *Africa is My Witness*, Mtutulezi Matshoba's short story 'Three Days in the Land of a Dying Illusion', and Margaret Gough's poem 'Nonquase'. Dhlomo, Mutwa and Matshoba's works are not quoted at all, but there are extracts from Butler and Gough's poems, and four long extracts from Mda's *Heart of Redness*. All four passages from Mda's novel contain purple prose enthusing about the beauty of Qolorha Mouth: in the first passage, the character Bhonco's 'eyes feast on the green valleys and the patches of villages with beautiful houses painted pink, powder blue, yellow and white' (355); in the second, the character Camagu 'concludes that a generous artist painted the village of Qolorha-by-Sea, using splashes of lush colour' (355); in the third, the character Zim's close bond with a fig tree is described; and in the final passage, the character Camagu's memories of an Eastern Cape childhood are evoked: 'He can see dimly through the mist of decades all the lush plants that grew in his father's garden ... So many things in Qolorha bring back long-forgotten images' (356).

These passages serve Eve's purpose of promoting an appreciation of the Eastern Cape landscape and of the Eastern Cape writers who have written words in praise of said landscape. However, this selection from *Heart of Redness* leaves out crucial aspects of the novel, and suppresses debates about the future of the Eastern Cape's 'natural' landscapes. The plot of the novel centres on various factions competing to transform Qolorha Mouth: developers want to build a tar road and casino, and try to appease locals with promises of jobs; the Xhosa-speaking store-keeper Dalton wants to develop a cultural village with actors playing *abakhwetha* initiates so that tourists will see 'various aspects of the people's culture in one place' (Mda, 285); and Camagu proposes a co-operative 'fully owned by the villagers themselves and ... run by a committee elected by them in the true manner of co-operative societies' (Mda, 286). The casino developers are defeated, and there is a rapprochement between Dalton and Camagu, but the third-last paragraph of the novel strikes a deeply pessimistic note. I want to quote from this paragraph, as it demonstrates that there is more to Mda and to the literature of the Eastern Cape in general than vivid descriptions of scenery:

[Camagu] feels fortunate that he lives in Qolorha. Those who want to preserve indigenous plants and birds have won the day there. But for how long? The whole country is ruled by greed. Everyone wants to have his or her snout in the trough. Sooner or later the powers that be may decide, in the name of the people, that it is good for the people to have a gambling complex at Qolorha-by-Sea. And the

gambling complex shall come into being. And of course the powers that be or their proxies – in the form of wives, sons, daughters and cousins – shall be given equity. And so the people shall be empowered. (Mda, 319)

In Eve's *A Literary Guide*, Mda's social critique in *Heart of Redness*, which is directed with such bitterness at the power elites of the new South Africa and their disingenuous clichés, is thus ignored in favour of his descriptions of nature.

Two final points to conclude. In the opening paragraph of Chapter 12, Eve presents another version of Eastern Cape history, and proceeds to explain the relationship between Eastern Cape history and Eastern Cape literature as follows:

[The Keiskamma Valley] is a region in which many battles over claims to the land have occurred, from minor and more serious confrontations among the Xhosa themselves to the major clashes of the frontier wars. Its literature, however, manifests a mingling of cultures and a common attachment to the landscape. (297)

Eve's view of Eastern Cape history as dominated by battles, confrontations, clashes and wars might pass as a fair generalization, and is certainly more plausible than the 'symphony' in her poem on the Gamtoos Valley. However, her notion of Eastern Cape literature as a characterized by a mingling of cultures and an attachment to the landscape returns to her former harmonious version of history, and presents a clearly ideological view of the regions' literature. Not only is there a significant body of Eastern Cape literature that shares history's concern with violent colonial and neo-colonial conflict, but her metaphor of cultures 'mingling' also represents nothing more than a tepid variation on her commitment to a nation of 'rainbows' and 'symphonies'. As regards the attachment to landscape, even the most superficial reading of Eastern Cape literature reveals that an attachment to land as an economic resource precedes and determines attachments to landscape, and that far from being a 'common attachment', rival groups have competed over the land itself and over its discursive (including literary) representation. To suggest but one of many instances: how much 'cultural mingling' and 'common attachment to landscape' is depicted in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*?

Finally, it might reasonably be asked: what else do you expect from a literary guide of this kind? Surely the genre itself is conservative, nostalgic, nationalist, and ultimately driven by the profit motives of the tourist and publishing industries? The answer is that there have been radical literary guides. Indeed, one of the founding texts of the genre, Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was written with the self-conscious ambition of attacking the English establishment, and Canto III (composed in 1816) in particular savages the reactionary English nationalism of the post-Waterloo settlement. Not unlike Mda's fate at the hands of Eve, Byron's anti-nationalist political radicalism was suppressed by subse-



quent editors, as John Murray pandered to the nineteenth-century rise of literary tourism by publishing only extracts of Byron's poem, with the descriptions of battle sites and landscapes intact and the stanzas of political critique excised.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Byron's poetry won the approval of middle-class Victorian England, and only in recent decades has Byron been rescued from respectability. It would be extremely disappointing if the dissident literary voices writing about the post-apartheid Eastern Cape suffered a similarly protracted period of misrepresentation.

DAVID JOHNSON  
*Department of Literature*  
*The Open University*

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9. On Byron's reception in the nineteenth-century, see A. Elfenbein, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995) and K. Grimes, 'William Hone, John Murray, and the Uses of Byron' in S.C. Behrendt, ed., *Romanticism, Radicalism, and the Press* (Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 192-202.

*Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853.* By ELIZABETH ELBOURNE. McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2002. xi + 499pp. ISBN 0-7735-2229-8.

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Make no mistake, this is an absorbing study, beautifully produced and superbly written. With 380 pages of script, 70 pages of notes, 40 pages of bibliography, as well as excellent maps and photographs, it is not only an enthralling read but it also brings together a wealth of information which will be invaluable for anyone researching the period in South African history. A must for any reference library.

To be honest, my first reaction was why another study of colonialism and missions? Surely this topic has been covered pretty thoroughly in the last couple of decades? But that is where the sub-title is somewhat misleading. The substance of the book revolves around the tragic story of the Khoekhoe, a pastoralist people commonly known as 'Hottentots' in colonial writing, in the first half of the nineteenth century. The book's title, *Blood Ground*, employs the evangelical concept of 'blood guiltiness' as a leitmotif, linking the reflections of a number of Khoekhoe and missionaries with the biblical story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:8-16) – 'Yahweh asked (Cain), "Listen to the sound of your brother's blood, crying out to me from the ground. Now be accursed and driven from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hands."' Khoekhoe blood, which drenched the soil in the cycles of bloodshed throughout this period, and beyond,<sup>1</sup> is said to be crying out to God for vengeance (369ff).

As the century progressed the earlier political importance of the Khoekhoe was overtaken by their more numerous and more powerful compatriots, the Xhosa-speaking people, and they were relegated to the margins of history. Even though the Xhosa themselves ultimately failed to stem the advance of the land-hungry Dutch and British settlers, ever more furiously trying to push the frontiers of the Cape Colony further eastward, they were better able to mount a defence of their land, their culture and their traditions, and so take centre-stage in colonial politics.

In the meantime, the deprivation and suffering of the Khoekhoe under both Dutch and British rule makes a sorry tale. This included physical violence meted out by farmers and even some administrators, being hounded from their land with concomitant loss of essential pasturage for their stock, social breakdown of familial networks and dispersion, coercion into farm labour through successive punitive vagrancy and pass laws, pernicious head taxes requiring cash payments, repeated conscription into the colonial forces to fight endless battles for months or even years on end without recompense while their families starved in their absence, growing racial abuse and discrimination on every front, and much more.

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1. J. Peires, 'The Legend of Fenner-Solomon' in B. Bozzoli, ed., *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 65-92.

From the start of the missionary venture there is no doubt that as the loosely knit networks of Khoekhoe became ever more fragmented and dispersed, mission stations like Bethelsdorp not only offered them a measure of security from white exploitation and a place to call their own, but also a new social structure, a sense of belonging to a community which had been lost, and the means of coping with radically disruptive socio-economic, political and cultural change. The role of the early LMS missionaries, more especially Johannes van der Kemp and James Read Sr, is meticulously recounted as is the missionaries' struggle to fight for justice for the indigenous people in the face of the unrelenting antagonism of white settlers. The latter saw the mission stations as 'nests of idleness', (idleness being regarded as a besetting sin), giving protection to much desired cheap labour. As Elizabeth Elbourne so elegantly demonstrates, religious change in southern Africa can only be truly understood in the material context of ethnic conflict and bitter struggles over land and labour.

Where Elbourne provides a unique contribution in this narrative is in offering us a fascinating insight into the relationship between the Khoekhoe, the British Empire and the London Missionary Society during a time of incessant conflict. The fact that she has chosen to weave her story around 'the contest for Christianity' between these three interest groups makes a welcome change from the innumerable secular histories of mission which focus on economic, political and social history: anything but their religious reason for being. Her main thesis is that the different groups, including white settlers at the Cape, 'all used the language of religion, particularly Protestantism, in competing ways. Communities deployed Christianity to define their identities, to justify internal stratification in their own societies, and to frame the ways in which they interacted with other communities' (7).

For Elbourne, a central methodological innovation of her study, 'is to portray the history of Christianity in the Cape Colony not only as a dualistic clash between cultures [a la the Comaroffs]...but also as a series of negotiations within the limits of shared language' (18). Moreover, taking her cue from Quentin Skinner (20), she refuses to see Christianity as a monolithic system, as is customary in such works, but as a language subject to 'different interpretations for different speakers, changing subtly over time and across cultures.' This means that 'the mechanisms of transmission of particular interpretations and the contest to establish the ideological hegemony of one interpretation over another' are as important as the interpretations themselves (18-20). Such 'mechanisms' included missionary meetings, travellers' journals, letters, sewing circles, organizational networks designed for the oral transmission of religious beliefs, and a wide range of publications.

A third methodological commitment is Elbourne's brave, and exceedingly successful, contribution in attempting a transnational narrative by interrogating 'British' and 'South African' history simultaneously (21). In particular, her penetrating study of Protestant evangelicalism in Britain in the 1790's (Chapter 1), and the evolution of its influence over time (Chapter 8), provides a strong thread which not only connects many different 'local histories', but also informs the interaction between the local and the global at different points of the story and

the political implications thereof. To mention but a few, we have the ascendance of the evangelical driving forces in Britain who were responsible for sending missionaries to serve at the Cape, the role of successive powers that be in the Colonial Office in London and of liberal leaders in parliament who co-opted the authority of the anti-slavery lobby to drive their political agendas, the vicissitudes of Khoekhoe converts as they struggled against alien forces, the infighting between the LMS missionaries as well as the material function of their mission stations, the political influence both in the Colony and in Britain of Dr Philip, superintendent of the LMS during a critical period, and the gradual development of a more explicit language of race. In following some of the lead players, though, what is not touched upon is how successive governors at the Cape, who wielded enormous influence over frontier politics, fitted into this religious picture. Were they mostly dissenters, Anglican evangelicals or high church, and did this make any significant difference in the ultimate scheme of things? A minor criticism indeed.

There are a wealth of other local histories which hold the reader engrossed. In fact it is impossible to more than brush over the content of such a magisterial study. Elbourne has a very useful section in which she sifts through the evidence on existing Khoekhoe beliefs and rituals, and notes that early Khoisan interaction with Christianity was shaped by them (Chapter 4). My most serious criticism of her take on Christianity is that for me it is still too instrumentalist. For sure I take her point that the encounter between a missionary society and a colonized group could never be about religious belief alone (7). She does indeed consider Khoekhoe preaching and traces continuities of their religious behaviour into the received forms of evangelical Christianity: the channel of God's grace being through personal conversion and faith in the saving gospel of Christ rather than good works, and 'the Word' expressed in preaching and prayer rather than in sacraments. She also provides a mass of evidence to show how the Khoekhoe and other indigenous communities used Christianity to define their identities, to justify internal stratification in their own societies, and to frame the ways they interacted with other societies.

Following this argument, conversion may well be understood as an avenue towards upward social mobility and acceptance for some in a class-ridden and racist dominant white culture. Undoubtedly, it has also been a means of gaining respectability where, increasingly with the passage of time, the prevailing mores of the incoming culture were defined by the accoutrements of western civilization: a square house boasting a number of rooms, western clothes, 'the gospel of work', time organised by the clock, the taking of European baptismal names, and the rest. Again, Christianity has a bad track record as a patriarchal and authoritarian religion (344). But despite the fact that Elbourne argues that 'spiritual experience needs to be taken seriously by the historian' (22), she nonetheless seems to come across as being slightly apologetic in recording and defending the numerous instances in which Khoekhoe converts were clearly genuine believers and witnessed enthusiastically to their faith. In fact she offers evidence of a good number who functioned energetically if not sacrificially as preachers, evangelists and teachers with little formal recognition or remuneration (especially Chapters 4 and 9).

What must not be forgotten is that Christianity is a language of faith, it is about believing as well as belonging, and that over the ages many aboriginal Christian converts have been able to distinguish the gospel message from the white messengers who brought it. Indeed, a good number have been prepared to die for their faith no matter whether they be regarded as 'loyalist' or 'rebel' by the political status quo, as in the Kat River Rebellion (Chapter 10). Typically, too, in Africa as much as in other parts of the world, Christianity became the belief system of those who experienced marginalisation and exploitation. The oppression and suffering of the Khoekhoe would have predisposed them to be open to new plausibility structures, the more so when they were clearly able to take the initiative in expressing their faith in Christ in their own unique way. What I would like to have had more on is the actual dynamics of the 'inculturation' process: specifically, of how Christian symbols and ritual were appropriated by the Khoekhoe into their indigenous world view, and of how their own symbols and images, metaphors and myth, enriched their understanding of Christian belief and praxis, so providing a spiritually liberating potential which had profound political implications.

My first impulse when opening such a book is to turn at once to the bibliography to see what ground has been covered. This book offers us a wonderfully comprehensive range of primary and secondary sources, which can hardly be faulted. However, seeing that 'the contest for Christianity' is the central focus, I would have expected to see some of the standard works on Christianity in Africa that provide a wider context in which to set similar studies in southern Africa. This is particularly pertinent in that Elbourne makes much of the fact that the Khoekhoe were far more effective in spreading the gospel than the missionaries themselves. So too, Adrian Hastings,<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Isichei,<sup>3</sup> and especially Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed,<sup>4</sup> who all provide copious evidence to show how from earliest times indigenous Christians in Africa took a leading role in what is known as the fourth great age of Christian expansion. This is even more significant when one remembers that Africa is now the centre of Christianity in the world. But again, this is a mere quibble.

Elbourne notes the perennial problem of sources in such a history, and of the necessary over-dependence on white voices, and male at that. Even so, we are in her debt for combing the archives to provide us with so much original Khoekhoe material. The sections on the establishment of the Kat River Settlement and the subsequent Rebellion are particularly rich (Chapter 10). None the less, the absence of Khoekhoe women's voices is especially telling when one remembers that women were far in the majority at stations like Bethelsdorp. Moreover, there is abundant evidence to indicate that Christianity has achieved its greatest growth in Africa through oral traditions to which we no longer have ready access. As Elbourne shows, singing and dancing, praying and preaching,

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2. A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

3. E. Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present* (London: SPCK, 1995).

4. B. Sundkler and C. Steed, *The History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

weeping and wailing, were all part of the Khoekhoe expression of their new-found faith providing continuity with the old; but how one longs to know more about both the dynamics and the content of the ongoing process of religious change that was taking place.

As Lamin Sanneh has so convincingly argued, language and culture are essential aspects of Christian transmission, more especially Protestantism, where the Bible is the crucial standard of authority.<sup>5</sup> Because the Khoekhoe were familiar with the Dutch language, already in the process of becoming Afrikaans, there was no need for the earliest Dutch-speaking missionaries to use interpreters or adopt the vernacular in spreading the gospel. Even so, one presumes that the idiomatic use of Dutch (incipient Afrikaans?) by the Khoekhoe in their preaching and evangelism must have led to the radical indigenization of the gospel message as in other African contexts, reinterpreting Christianity to fit their experience of life as of course did the different white factions. This leads us to a central thesis of Elbourne's, the way in which the ownership of the gospel was contested by competing groups. Personally, I prefer talk about the ownership of sacred symbols, but Elbourne is persuasive in arguing her case: 'God was available to be mobilized for one side or the other in the bitter conflicts that afflicted this contested religion' (378).

My hope is that the material in this book will be fed into school text books as soon as possible as a corrective to that which lingers on from earlier days. More than fifty years ago my introduction to South African history was an extremely biased telling of the hundred years of 'Kafir Wars'. We have moved on from there but there is still an urgent need to make recent historiographical research available to a much wider audience. In this instance, the descendants of the Khoekhoe would be a priority in their ongoing search to recover and reflect on their past history.

JANET HODGSON  
*PO Box 513, McGregor, 6708*

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5. L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message. The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

*Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain.* By ALAN LESTER. Routledge, London and New York, 2001. 257pp. ISBN 0-415-259-142.

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W.H. Auden was fond of saying that when he found himself in the company of scientists, he felt like a country curate who had stumbled upon a drawing-room full of dukes. I begin to have the same feeling of social anxiety about the two kinds of historian out there: that, as someone trained against the ‘complacent’ truths of empirical inquiry, I now begin to feel distinctly like a curate coming to his senses (somewhat drunk and undressed) among the dukes, those genuine historians who browse the archive and drive between the villages, and whose naïve faith it is that they will disclose to the world something more about itself, as true as can be, that will help explain it.

Alan Lester’s *Imperial Networks* is an impressive and laudable book, and I wish I had written it, but it belongs to the company of curates. Indeed, the eastern frontier has been blessed with both comprehensive syntheses and intriguing theoretical revisions in recent years, and Lester’s contribution must now stand among them. But what and how great is the debt we owe to those who have done the actual work of disclosure? It is a nagging truth that just as literature departments have bred a species of academic whose theoretical revisions and dismissals of literary texts and their priority are essentially parasitic upon precisely those texts and their authors, so too there is emerging a kind of historian, or historiographer, whose existence depends upon the empirical histories he or she can only refute, realign or revise. I don’t have a problem with that, in itself. It is in the nature of the progress of human knowledge to produce an industry of criticism. But I do feel increasingly uncomfortable about the relative statures of the two undertakings, especially since I place myself squarely among the curates. And I do think there are two undertakings, curates and dukes.

Having said that, Alan Lester’s book is, a *tour de force* of synthesis and theoretical realignment. It is his stated intent to reconcile materialist and post-colonial accounts of colonialism, and he does so, for the most part, intriguingly (though, to some extent, one feels that such a reconciliation is not altogether necessary, postcolonial departures from materialist positions being inevitably their own kind of reconciliation with the parent). Lester’s book is, thus, full of the lexical technology of ‘discourse’, ‘circuits’, ‘traversing’, ‘representation’ and ‘identity’ and with this (or despite it) he makes a good deal of sense to me. He posits three main strands of discourse operating through the colonial frontier and its imperial ‘metropole’ and describes the construction of these most usefully. The first he calls ‘governmentality’ (a term too clever by half), the next is humanitarianism and the last settler capitalism. I think he’s right about these, and indebted to the work of Bank, Elbourne, the historians of slavery, and then Peires and, after him, Keegan for the important recovery of emphasis upon the last two since the 1980s.

One of the most impressive things about *Imperial Networks* is its synthesis

of scholarship on British humanitarianism and the eastern frontier, a relationship once skewed by the priority of the Report of the Select Committee on Aborigines in the historiography. It is good to find the noise of that episode, of John Philip, and of its detractors, more and more fully integrated within a history of imperial, or I should say, metropolitan, positions on the human subject, and to find the Cape instance restored to the sort of significance it should have in metropolitan history and culture. I am reminded that the aging Coleridge considered Thomas Pringle's 'Afar in the Desert' 'among the two or three most perfect lyric Poems in our Language.' It is important that our histories of the eastern frontier do, as Lester's does, insist upon the continuities of empire and colony and upon the need to consider the colonial condition of provincialism not as nature's relegation, but history's, whose dynamic is integral to understanding neither empire nor colony, but the thing they both are.

If I have a criticism of Lester's account of humanitarian discourse, it is one that probably accommodates his accounts of governmentality and settler capitalism also, partly because I think his study ought to show the intimate relationships of these three to one another as well as their contested ground. I think the ideology of what literary scholars call 'Romanticism' tends to be neglected by historians schooled in a kinship to the Enlightenment. Lester's account of governmentality, as of humanitarianism and settler capitalism, might usefully accentuate the European, indeed global, context of revolution and militarisation after 1789. The Napoleonic Wars were really the first world wars, and there is a way – are several ways – of reading the Zuurveld in 1811 as one among their fronts. Similarly, there are ways in which Romanticism reconciles much that is common to both humanitarianism and settler capitalism: rugged individualism, an inclination to picaresque biography, whether in travels or conversion tales, sublime landscape, 'industry and British manufactures', even the neglected connections between British radicalism and the 1820 settlement, with its relish of free speech and trade, and its seditious grumbling and trafficking.

Altogether, *Imperial Networks* is a stimulating and satisfying work, and its range and rage-to-connect are not only in themselves impressive, but also salutary. I am left with a few afterthoughts, however, that seem to me to have a kind of bearing upon the book. The first is this: that Lester's account, like others, is perhaps inevitably blind to the 'other side' of the frontier, to the discourses of independent emaXhoseni. In his *Road to Botany Bay*, Paul Carter speaks of the condition of unknowability that must attend the traduced (de)construction of aboriginal space, and the same may be said of the 'identity' (I find the word so discomfoting) of the independent Xhosa. Or may it? Perhaps we assume too quickly that colonization is an annihilation, are too inclined towards models of subsumation, too little inclined to see the resistance that is in creolisation.

The second is related to this first observation, indeed is a criticism of it, perhaps, and it is that Lester's, like most histories of the frontier, is inclined to treat that frontier as a betwixt, so that the history proceeds to describe either or both sides of the frontier and their interactions. But perhaps we should extend across the frontier just the kind of alteration in focus that Lester brings to bear



upon the distance between empire and colony. I think that we have for too long thought that the epistemological antonym for ‘settler’ in Cape history is ‘Xhosa’, which is to buy into the discourse of binary contestation that underlies the idea of the frontier itself. I think the antonym of ‘settler’ is vagrant, and I think, more and more, that a true account of the frontier is not to be written of its breach and its character of absence, but of its bustling activity, the activity of vagrants and deserters, runaway slaves, recusants of all sides, the people of ‘the middle’. We’ve got that intuitively, in our fascination with the Kat River settlement, the mission stations, and so on, but we need to press home the advantage, with histories of the Khoi levies, of the society of the commandos, those who ‘took the kaross’, the relation of the ‘red’ and the ‘school’ (surely a correlative of settler corporatism and settler individualism), and so on.

Thirdly, I think that theoretical readings deeply indebted to philosophies of language need to keep faith with their roots. I don’t like the term ‘networks’ in Lester’s title because of its anachronism, and my fidelity to both the language and all those who’ve been ploughed under by history urges me to ‘criticize’ the metaphor. It is so redolent of the age of information in which we live, and of all the silly shadows of that age – conspiracy theories, the industry of spying, the fantasy of unity that underpins the game of six-degrees-of-relationship – that it doesn’t sit well with an account of the identities (acts of self-knowledge) of people who could not have thought about networks as we do. I suppose there is a related concern, to do with the creation of identity through discursive processes: is there a way to ‘show the workings’ of this immaterial business? It seems to me that we can only amass circumstantial evidence and take a leap of faith. In writing about identity and its construction, such abstractions, we produce a sleight of hand by which this essentially linguistic operation is discerned at the level of material economy and power. If identity is constructed, a representation, then it is of the province of language and we need to look again at the relationship between what happened and history, because that relationship is what we call ‘metaphor’, a process of necessary lying by which we sketch approximations of what we don’t know. At times I think we see pigs in the past, where really there were only bad manners at table.

Why should this bother me? Well, because Alan Lester has written a careful and judicious book of history, fuelled by the love of ideas and of a place (or places) and a time and its people. I share those, a curate among dukes, whose curatorial concern must be to some extent for all those lives dissolved back into the earth so that all we are left with now is the traces we call ‘identity’ – an holographic thing projected in the space of Lester’s enquiry, somewhere between economy and the culture it describes, a chattering, hissing space in the zoo of human creations, discourse, something terrifying to me, not only for its vacancy and ineluctability, but also because this, rather than people, is what we begin to write about.

PETER ANDERSON  
*Department of English*

The central text of this edition is hardly changed from that first published in 1989 by James Curry, Indiana University Press and the late lamented Ravan Press. The major changes include a shift of the notes from the ends of chapters to the end of the book and more elaborate captions for the illustrations. Peires also includes a thirty-four page 'Afterword' that takes account of selected critical responses to the original publication. Given the vehemence of some of those critiques,<sup>1</sup> it might have been better placed as a foreword. The author appears to agree, as his last sentence marvels that his book has survived so long, and 'how much longer it continues to survive depends entirely upon you' (391).

The sentence is telling in its yearning to create a personal relationship with unseen readers. Peires' 'Afterword' brushes aside intellectual and methodological interrogators of his work by personalising his relationships with them. Thus Helen Bradford's feminist critique is first noted as being 'waspy' and challenging 'my personal integrity as a historian and human being' before being dismissed as 'misleading and wrong' (372, 379). Jack Lewis provokes Peires to 'come out of the closet' and acknowledge himself as another one of the 'same intellectual generation' who 'took Marxism seriously' (381). Criticisms from Clifton Crais and Adam Ashforth provoke a diatribe against the 'grandiose conceptions' of post-modernism. While Peires had been 'fully occupied with the National Democratic Struggle', word reached him 'that a new race of giants had appeared on earth, especially those parts of the earth inhabited by graduate seminars and university tearooms' (383). This in turn provokes the 'frank admission that I have never read Jaques (sic) Derrida or Hayden White or Greg Denning's allegedly seminal work on the Marquesa (sic) Islands' (384). Tim Stapleton is introduced, pointedly, as a '*Canadian* historian' who 'has somehow appointed himself guardian of Maqoma's reputation' (382, my italics). Those who complain that his book failed to situate the 'Cattle-killing' within the larger global literature on millenarianism are told that he saw no point in making comparisons, even though he had studied it all and 'could have dazzled readers with my erudition and my virtuosity, but I would have lost them in the process' (364).

Someone should have told Peires that it's not about him. The tendency to turn intellectual quarrels into personal ones closes off debates worth having. The great strength of *The Dead Will Arise* is its compelling narrative power in describing a collective human experience of almost unbearable sadness. That has been acknowledged by practically everyone and is the reason why the book is now reprinted. However that still leaves great deal of room for debate about

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1. See especially *South African Historical Journal* vol. 25, 1991, 226-68 and H. Bradford, 'Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zones, c. 1806-70', *Journal of African History*, vol. 37, 1996, 360-68.

causes, consequences and meaning. Those who ask for a larger comparative perspective are not being unreasonable. Under what circumstances do second-hand versions of eschatological Christianity merge with long-standing prophetic traditions to impel ordinary people to self-destructive acts – and when are they irrelevant? Critics who ask for gendered understandings or more class analysis are likewise entitled to a reasoned debate.

NORMAN ETHERINGTON  
*Department of History*  
*University of Western Australia*

*The Story of an African Game: Black Cricketers and the Unmasking of One of Cricket's Greatest Myths, South Africa, 1850-2003.* By ANDRÉ ODENDAAL. Cape Town: David Philip, 2003. 368pp. Illus. Index. ISBN 0-86486-638-0

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*The Story of an African Game* is a culmination of nearly thirty years of work by André Odendaal on the history and development of black cricket and sport in South Africa. Uniquely qualified for the task as a former first class player, cricket administrator and professor of history, Odendaal's work in this book, as with his prior studies, has been to recover and help to construct the history of black cricket in South Africa. In the process, Odendaal's work has been an invaluable corrective to the histories of South African sport written during the periods of segregation and apartheid. Indeed the political objective of including all South Africans within the history of sport in the country is an urgent task with recent 'histories' such as Luke Alfred's 2003 book *Testing Times: The Story of the Men Who Made South African Cricket*. As Odendaal points out, Alfred's only mention of a black South African is of Dennis Brutus on the last page.

Odendaal does not confront the reader with a political sledgehammer, however. He saves the bluntest language for the concluding chapters (there are 43 in the book) in which he demonstrates the legacies of the past that have shaped mainstream (read white) perceptions of black cricketers, the structural difficulties black cricketers have faced and the responsibility of all South Africans to be aware of their collective past in order to shape a progressive and just non-racial future.

The book is presented with a coffee table look. It is richly illustrated and full of new detail that has not appeared in any previous studies of African cricket. For this alone Odendaal should be commended. The author, though he could easily have done so, does not overly insert himself into the text. Drawing on his earlier histories of black South Africa in the Victorian era, the first part of the book examines the broad developments in society, education and sport that shaped the black sporting experience in South Africa during the era of segregation and the establishment of apartheid and moves towards non-racialism in the 1950s. The rest of the book takes a much more narrow, yet also successful, approach of examining the history of black and later unified cricket through the experiences of one family, the Majolas of New Brighton township in the Eastern Cape. The key figures in the study are Eric Majola, a 'Bantu Springbok' in rugby and cricket in the 1950s and his son Khaya, a leading cricketer in the 1970s and 1980s and administrator in the 1990s. In the concluding chapters, Khaya's younger brother Gerald, who became CEO of the United Cricket Board of South Africa in 2001, comes to the fore. The book ends with a discussion of the 2003 Cricket World Cup and the current state of progress towards non-racialism and equal opportunity in South African cricket.

Through the experience of the Majolas and close friends and key figures such as Dan Qeqe, Odendaal recounts the struggles that black cricketers faced, particularly those from the African majority. The complexities of South African

sport are richly detailed in the process. Odendaal lays out the fine line that sportsmen had to walk in their efforts to compete. A young Khaya Majola, for example, was the first African cricketer to play abroad when he went to England in 1974 as part of a Derrick Robins organised tour. Soon after, however, Majola became a leading figure in non-racial cricket circles as cricket and other sports began to reorganize under the aegis of the South African Council of Sport (SACOS) from 1973 onwards. While SACOS was successful as an agent of action against apartheid sporting structures, it ultimately failed to become an agent of change for a new sporting dispensation because it never took root in African communities. Indeed, the experience of Khaya Majola and other leading African cricketers during the 1970s and 1980s shows that a form of racism existed within the upper echelons of non-racial sport as Africans were only nine of the 450 cricketers who played in the top South African Cricket Board of Control (SACB) competition between 1971 and 1991.

*The Story of an African Game* is a must read for historians of South African sport, for South African historians more broadly, and for South Africans and others to understand the long history of black participation in sport within South Africa. There are minor quibbles that could be made as some wider events, such as the Hansie Cronje crisis, are mentioned only in passing or that the focus is too much on the Eastern Cape. However, these do not detract from a first rate book that does so much to outline the development of black South African cricket, the struggles of African sportsmen to achieve a fair go in sport, the processes that led to Unity in 1991 and the subsequent difficulties in creating broad representation at first class levels in the past decade. In addition to a detailed story, the book is the most richly illustrated of any that I have seen exploring the history of black sport in South Africa and would be worth the price alone. The book is also enriched by the forward written by Nelson Mandela.

Sadly, Khaya Majola lost his battle with cancer while the book was being produced, but gladly for his legacy and that of so many other black cricketers, André Odendaal has delivered a text that provides a wider audience with a detailed account of their struggles, their lives and their sporting exploits.

JOHN NAURIGHT  
*Sport and Management*  
*Georgia Southern University*

*Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts.* By LESLIE WITZ. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press and Cape Town: David Philip, 2003. xii + 324 pp. ISBN 0-253-21613-3.

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This is one of those books that can be read in (at least) two ways, or perhaps it is really two books within a single cover. For me the most attractive is to see it as the detailed analysis of a specific historical event, namely the celebrations of the tercentenary of the landing of Jan van Riebeeck to found what was to become the Cape Colony. This is something which Witz has managed with great skill and conviction. The result is that he is able to take what was once seen as a relatively minor event in the history of early apartheid South Africa and use it to provide a whole set of new insights into the contradictions and tensions within the South African white elite. In this sense it is a work within the classic tradition of micro-history.

Witz begins his account with a history of the various ways in which Van Riebeeck and the founding of the Cape Colony had been celebrated since the first centenary of the landing in 1752. Initially, it was the Dutch East India Company which had brought civilisation and Christianity to South Africa; only after the Company's demise did Van Riebeeck himself come to prominence, in the first instance under the Batavian Republic whose leaders, as Patriots, had been opposed to the VOC, but who as Dutchmen wanted to stress the national connections. After the definitive British conquest of the Cape, Van Riebeeck became an ambiguous symbol. Was he to be used to celebrate colonial conquest, or Dutch (and later Afrikaner) ethnicity? In general, Van Riebeeck was seen as the harbinger of an inclusive Western civilisation, rather than an exclusive Netherlandish one. This can explain why, for instance, Cecil John Rhodes could fund (and have his name inscribed on) the statue of Jan van Riebeeck at the bottom of Adderley Street in Cape Town.

There is, incidentally, a fascinating article to be written on the relation between Rhodes as the arch-jingo and Rhodes as the lover of the Dutch past of the Cape, not just Van Riebeeck but also the architecture. Perhaps someone has already written it.

These tensions surfaced again in the run-up to 1952. In the past decade and a half there had been two major celebrations of history in South Africa, the re-enactment of the Great Trek in 1938 and the opening of the Voortrekker monument in 1949. Both were massive expressions of Afrikaner nationalism. It might be thought that 1952 would have provided an ideal opportunity to repeat the operation. The problem, however, was that the festival could only be based in Cape Town, which after all was where Van Riebeeck founded the colony, and the anti-nationalist City Council was never going to co-operate in too blatant a display of Nationalist propaganda, as it would have seen it. The result was that the events - primarily a parade through the streets of Cape Town on floats and a large and instructive park on the recently reclaimed, but not yet built up, foreshore of Cape Town - were designed and expanded as the honouring and expounding

upon the establishment of Western Civilisation and white colonialism in Africa. Van Riebeeck had become an inclusive white symbol.

What this entailed within the white political community was not uncontested, but the contestations were kept within bounds. In an attempt to incorporate the complete (white) nation, the various towns and cities were asked to provide floats on designated subjects from the country's past. East London wanted to display Sir Benjamin D'Urban and Sir Harry Smith subduing the Xhosa and founding the city on the banks of the Buffalo, but in the end received the Statute of Westminster. Whether the resulting display of the Misses Britannia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, announcing the countries' Dominion Status within the Commonwealth, was quite what the organisers had in mind, is open to question.

A much sharper contestation came from those who could not be incorporated into the celebration of white colonialism. There was an almost total boycott of the events on the part of the blacks and the left. It is true that some of I.D. du Plessis's Malay clients and a number of Griquas, already smelling the advantages of collaboration, did parade in an almost empty stadium a couple of days before the main pageant. Otherwise, 1952 provided the opportunity for the first systematic exposition of an oppositional history, coming out of the Unity Movement in Cape Town. At the same time, modern politics could make use of it. 6 April 1952, the day chosen to celebrate the tercentenary of the colonial state, was also chosen by the ANC for the launch of the Defiance Campaign. Most remarkably, the boycott was so efficient that the organisers had to bus people in from the Eastern Cape to give colour to the Foreshore fair and house them in special camps, as no-one in Langa would participate, or even look after, those who, for a wage, put themselves on show. Politics trumped individual economics.

This, then, is the core of the book. It is well-written, entertaining, enlightening and, in its way, important. I would recommend to anyone whose interests are such that they have come to read this journal that they read Chapters One to Five of this book.

I would also recommend that they pass quickly over the introduction and conclusion. This is the other book. The conclusion is perhaps necessarily summary, dealing with the ways in which Van Riebeeck has been used in post-apartheid Cape Town. The problem which this provides in a sense exemplify the strengths of the main body of the work. Once the work loses its detail and its comprehensiveness, it becomes rather haphazard in what is discussed. This sort of work has to be done properly, or not at all, as otherwise it degenerates into journalism. We do not know why some events have been selected, and others not, and Witz has not been able to filter his own reactions and judgements of what he has seen out of the descriptions - he is of course a legitimate observer, and voice, but only one among many, and not, in principle, a privileged one. There may well have been pressure to bring the work 'up to date', but if so it should have been resisted.

The introduction, on the other hand, tends to become involuted, and at times far from pellucid. I think that what Witz is trying to tell us is that the Van Riebeeck festival, to the extent that it can be reconstructed, should be read as any other historical text. This means that it was part of, and as the result of, an ongo-

ing argument happening in and around the time in which it was produced. Like any piece of argumentation, it may have something to say to later generations, but that, for historians, as opposed, perhaps, to philosophers, must always be subservient to its contemporary meaning. (Part of the trouble with Witz's argumentation, incidentally, is that it is never quite obvious whether he is using that difficult word to mean 'then' or 'now'.) Also the Festival's meaning was not so much what the organisers thought they were producing, or intended to produce, but rather what the consumers of that festival made of it all. That at least is the way in which I read the book, and took benefit from doing so.

ROBERT ROSS

*Department of African Languages and Cultures  
Leiden University*