REVIEWS

The Moon as Shoe: Drawings of the San. By MIKLOS SZALAY (ed.). Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2002. 310 pp. 76 b/w photographs & 264 colour plates, 2 maps. ISBN 3-8588-1138-6

That there were wonderful graphic artists among the oldest inhabitants of Southern Africa, the Bushmen or San, has been known for a long time. As far back as 1916 they were acclaimed for their artistic talent in a book entitled *The Human Body in the History of Art*.[1] Their rock art has captivated numerous researchers. Influenced by evolutionist principles, science long regarded the South African hunters and gatherers as representing the beginning of culture. This led to a tendency, which to some extent still exists, to relegate their engravings and paintings to the category of 'prehistoric art' and to label them as 'primitive' or 'primeval'. The original misconception that these works provide a realistic account of the lives of the hunters and gatherers has long since been disproved by research. Strong arguments have been put forward that the art reflects rituals and experiences of shamans who, in a state of trance, developed supernatural powers to cure sickness, avert danger, attract game and make rain. Although the radical cultural changes brought about by colonization in the 19th century are iconographically reflected in the rock art through motifs such as armed colonists on horseback, or such as ox wagons, prevailing interpretations of the art still tend to neglect its historical context. The ahistorical invoking of the spiritual world of long-destroyed cultures, which is a feature of primitivism, is preferred to an examination of historical reality.

All the more welcome, therefore, is a book that casts a different, perhaps unusual and possibly even demystifying light on the culture of the San and on their artistic talents. The fact that, in the period 1875 to 1881, six San should have captured fragments of their doomed culture in numerous drawings and watercolours has hitherto hardly been known. Produced on paper and no longer in the traditional context, these works fall outside the framework of established rock art research. This research had so far largely disregarded these less 'pristine' works, even though they were created by informants whose evidence has been important for a new interpretation of rock art. The explanations of that art put forward by Diä!kwain, the son of a rock artist, and by /Han≠kass'o, have contributed to a completely transformed understanding of its meaning.

It is owing to the initiatives of Miklós Szalay, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Africa Department at the *Völkerkundemuseum* of the University of Zurich, that this artistic treasure, comprising 470 loose sheets and a

1. Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Der Körper des Menschen in der Geschichte der Kunst* (Munich, 1916) 291.

number of drawing-books with more than 160 pictures, has now been unearthed in South African archives and made accessible to a wider public. Some years ago, while doing research on the history of the Khoi-San,[2] Professor Szalay, the author of several books on African art, came across these long forgotten drawings. Enthralled by their unique charm, he decided to bring them to public attention in an exhibition.

The drawings and watercolours housed in the National Library of South Africa, in the South African Museum and in the library of the University of Cape Town, came into existence as a by-product of a nineteenth century research project that aimed at a thorough scientific documentation of the languages of the South African San, which even then were threatened with extinction. They were drawn by six individuals of the /Xam and the !Xun San who, between 1870 and 1884, spent time as informants in the home of Berlin-born Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel Bleek (1827-1875) and his sister-in-law, Lucy Catherine Lloyd (1834-1914), in Cape Town. Bleek and Lloyd encouraged their informants to produce drawings and then proceeded to record the artists' comments on their work. Bleek and Lloyd's volume, *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, published in 1911, is still regarded as the principal work of Khoi-San research. An abridged version was published in 1938 in German. It is available nowadays as a facsimile edition entitled *Das wahre Gesicht des Buschmannes in seinen Mythen und Märchen* (*The True Face of the Bushman in Myths and Stories*).

In the course of the political changes which have taken place in South Africa since 1994 the San have been accorded a new status and their culture, officially at least, is receiving wider recognition. Since 2000, the Bleek and Lloyd collection of San texts and pictures has become part of the Unesco project, 'The Memory of the World', and the motto in the new South African coat of arms is written in the language, now extinct, of the /Xam San. Welcome though it is, this transformation in attitudes to the San turned out to be something of an obstacle to the organising of the exhibition, in that South Africa was reluctant to allow valuable and delicate artifacts of its longest established inhabitants to be taken abroad. The *Völkerkundemuseum* at the University of Zurich could therefore consider itself fortunate to have been able to hold the exhibition 'Der Mond als Schuh, Zeichnungen der San' (The Moon as Shoe, Drawings of the San) in Zurich, which opened in October 2002. Regrettably the works could be shown for only three months as they are extremely sensitive to light. A further opportunity for viewing the drawings and watercolours was provided in May and June 2003 when they were exhibited in Cape Town.

The book under review was conceived as a publication to accompany the exhibition. It is more than 300 pages long, is bilingual (German and English), and the high quality of the reproduction of the 229 selected drawings and paintings, together with the lavish graphic design, make it a strikingly attractive art book. The watercolours and drawings in pencil, colour and charcoal by the six San, Diä!kwain, /Han≠kass'o, !Nanni, Tamme, /Uma and Da, have been brought

2. See Miklós Szalay, *The San and the Colonization of the Cape 1770-1879* (Cologne, 1995).

together in a separate section of plates. They are accompanied by a section containing detailed texts contributed by the editor and other renowned experts in the field, such as Megan Biesele, Janette Deacon, Mathias G. Guenther and Roger L. Hewitt. Apart from information on the origin of the drawings, this section contains biographical details on the artists as well as two ethnographic sketches of their groups of origin, the /Xam and the !Xun. A further text deals with the relationship between the San drawings and rock art; another focuses on the oral traditions of the /Xam. In addition to the scientific contributions, the author has drawn a modern writer and two contemporary artists into his project by including a text written by Elias Canetti, as well as two contributions, by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré and Keith Dietrich respectively, which are reflections on the works of the San artists. The drawings which today speak to us as scientific testimonies and at the same time as works of art have thus been placed in a conceptual framework that accentuates their double function.

Included in the volume are numerous photographs that document the context in which the drawings and watercolours were produced and, at the same time, reveal how problematic this was. In some of the photographs the artists appear in the nude; in others they are depicted in ill-fitting suits, and surrounded by bows and arrows, skins, musical instruments and other items which formed part of their traditional culture. The photographs appear to us somewhat depressing, and we fail to see the happy smile, as described by Bleek's daughters Edith and Dorothea, with which Diä!kwain presents his hat and brass ring to the photographer.

The biographies of the artists, too, read as documents of the tragic fate that was suffered by thousands of San in nineteenth-century South Africa. Diä!kwain and /Han≠kass'o came from the notorious Breakwater Prison in Cape Town, where, together with many others, they had been inmates for several years. They were placed by the authorities at the disposal of the Bleeks for their research, but legally continued to be regarded as prisoners. When their prison sentences came to an end, both continued to stay with them voluntarily. There is evidence that they hoped to derive material benefits from their association with the Bleeks. One cannot disregard the discrepancy that existed between the objectives of the researchers on the one hand and the hopes and aspirations of the San on the other. Bleek was not in a position to induce the relevant authorities to order farmers to move away from the hunting grounds and water holes of the San, and thus to meet the wishes of his informants.

The drawings and watercolours reflect the artists' memories of life in their native surroundings. Animals, plants, topographies and events in their daily lives and in their mythology have been depicted on paper with a few sure strokes. In the works of the two /Xam, Diä!kwain and /Han≠kass'o, stylistically clear connections can be made with the rock art of their home territory, the north-western Cape, but these connections are absent from the works of the four !Xun, !Nanni, Tamme, /Uma and Da, who came from the northern border region of Namibia where there was no rock art.

In addition to portraying rain-bulls or water-bulls, which were important in rain-making and which also feature in rock art, the drawings of the two /Xam depict ostriches and springbok, hartebeest and gemsbok, porcupines, beetles

and frogs. It is striking how, through most of the book, a distinction is made between the male and female of each of the species illustrated. There are also drawings of the praying mantis, which was said to embody /Kaggen, the creator god of the /Xam. Shamans would make contact with him on their spiritual journeys. Diä!kwain himself is said to have had shamanistic skills. The drawings by Han≠kass'o, on the other hand, depict mundane facets of everyday life of the San: a porcupine burrow with tracks in front of its entrance, clay pots, ant larvae which were regarded as a delicacy, a springbok hunt, a dance, a game. Similarly, the drawings and watercolours of the much younger !Xun-artists are more concerned with everyday life. These children had been involved in gathering food-plants since early childhood, and their drawings depict various plants and roots whose uses they were evidently well familiar with.

That there is little by way of comment on the drawings may at first be surprising. Readers have mostly to be content with the brief notes made by Lucy Lloyd or make their own interpretation using the background information on San culture given in the book and what can be seen in the drawings. Animals, plants and certain implements like bags or sticks for making fire can easily be identified with the help of Lucy Lloyd's comments.

With regard to the manner of representation and the content of the drawings, however, much remains a mystery. Why, for instance, do the drawings of Diä!kwain and Han≠kass'o depict hardly any humans? Are there reasons for the obvious differences between the portrayal of a /Xam hunter lying in wait for a gemsbok and the people of another ethnic group? Is it a coincidence that the /Xam hunter lying in wait is drawn in the same colour as the gemsbok standing nearby? Or has this something to do with the presentiment of the Bushmen, as described in the contribution by Canetti, that they physically feel the approach of humans and animals from a distance before they can see or hear them? The questions remain unanswered. Instead of being burdened with scientific speculations as to their significance, the pictures have deliberately been allocated space to enable their aesthetic element to reveal itself.

The contributions by the writer Elias Canetti as well as the two artists Keith Dietrich and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré ultimately are an invitation to us to ponder fundamental questions in connection with the drawings, regarding our perception and our representation of the world around us. Perhaps quite unintentionally, Dietrich's dialogue with the San drawings may have become an invitation to approach the question of how culture determines the way we look at things. In small-scale watercolours, this South African artist and anthropologist tries to follow the encyclopaedic approach characteristic of the San drawings. When compared with the drawings of the San, however, his realistic pictures, created in the tradition of scientific drawing, remain strangely silent.

By contrast, the response of Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, a well-known artist from Cote d'Ivoire, comes across as provocative. His way of commenting on a selection of the San drawings is to make a subjective interpretation of them and to provide them with captions of his own with no regard for their ethnographic context or the comments added by Lloyd. He has been undeservedly accused of not treating them with due respect. Bouabré's captions do not in any way devalue

or degrade the drawings or detract from them; he *adds* to them from his own perspective. The testimonies of a lost and irrevocably destroyed world, somehow turn, in the moment of their reception, into something entirely new and this world comes alive again. In his dialogue, Bouabré picks up the topic of transformation, which finds expression in the title given to the publication, '*The Moon as* Shoe'; he reverts to a story of the /Xam and alludes to a pattern of thought typical of the San.

That everything is in flux and subject to metamorphosis was characteristic not only of the San's perception of the mythical age but also of their understanding of the times in which they lived. We find re-confirmation of these beliefs in the wealth of pictures contained in the publication here reviewed.

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Echoes of Slavery: Voices from South Africa's Past. By JACKIE LOOS. Cape Town: David Philip, 2004. vii + 168pp, index. ISBN 0-86486-661-5
An Unsung Heritage: Perspectives on Slavery. By ALAN MOUNTAIN. Cape Town: David Philip, 2004. 224pp. ISBN 0-86486-622-4

The authors of both these books argue that the study of Cape slavery has immense contemporary relevance and contend that South Africans are generally ignorant of this chapter of their past. 'The selective manner in which history was previously taught in our schools has led to a surprising degree of amnesia among South Africans about their slave origins,' writes Jackie Loos (vii). Whereas in the United States, African-Americans celebrate their slave heritage, in South Africa, by contrast, 'many of the descendants of Cape slaves ignore the richness of their pre-emancipation legacy' (Loos,vii). Descendants of slaves have been 'demoralized by apartheid's demeaning mythology' and as a consequence view their heritage 'as a matter for shame and concealment' (Loos, 142). Thus 'popular perceptions of slavery have been clouded by amnesia and denial' (Loos, 142) on the part of the descendants of slaves and slave-owners alike. South Africans would therefore do well to familiarise themselves with the wealth of stories to be found in the Cape Archives, a few of which are told in *Echoes of Slavery*. Alan Mountain goes a step further. Not only will the study of Cape slavery (and presumably South African history more broadly) bring awareness of the past, but it is essential to the project of nation-building. In this view, the Rainbow Nation cannot live up to its own image if it continues to wallow in ignorance: 'For personal and national reconciliation to be complete, this ignorance [of Cape slavery] has to be addressed so that the contributions slaves made to Cape society can be acknowledged and celebrated in a spirit of respect, compassion and understanding' (Mountain, 83).

The problem that texts of this nature face is that they do not question the nature of the 'ignorance' that they seek to correct. It is an open question as to how 'ignorant' South Africa is about its slave past. One could speculate with some certainty that basic facts about Cape slavery (such as the reality that life for the majority was so wretched that they were unable to reproduce their numbers until the first decades of the nineteenth century) are not in the public domain. There are obvious reasons for such gaps in the public knowledge. But one would also have to acknowledge that there is clearly a much greater public awareness about the fact that the Cape had slaves than was the case as recently as two decades ago. There has been a burgeoning interest (outside the academy) in the subject in recent years, a fact to which these books themselves are testimony. We have seen television shows, full-length feature films, and radio broadcasts. To the extent that these were at all possible, professional historians deserve some credit. But others have been hard at work too. As far back as 1982 André Brink published his *Chain of Voices*, which took the story of slave resistance and the poignancy of the slave condition into the public realm in a way that no historian could do. This observation of course begs many questions (about literacy, about the size of

the reading public, about the reception of historical novels, and so forth), but it does make the point that 'ignorance' is multi-layered. One also has to presume that 'ignorance' about slavery runs no deeper than about any other aspect of the colonial period – the early dispossession of the Khoisan, the 'Bushman' wars of the eighteenth century, the Great Trek, or the 'Mfecane', to name but a few. The larger question, which neither author poses, is perhaps not so much whether South Africa is 'ignorant' of the past, but to ask how the past is understood. For it can be stated with certainty that 'the public' – at whom both these books are aimed – have very definite ideas about the colonial past.

What, then, can South Africans learn about the slave past from reading these books? Loos's method was to compile a number of stories, many of which have appeared as columns in the *Cape Argus*, Cape Town's daily newspaper. Such stories, she claims (vi), are digressions that professional historians seldom have time for. (One only has to think of the work of John Mason and Nigel Penn to know that this is not always true.) These tales, chosen from the period of the British occupation, do indeed reveal much about slave life during the last four decades of slavery's existence, and Loos tells her individual stories well. Some are well known (such as the story of Galant's rebellion in the Bokkeveld, the subject of Brink's *Chain of Voices*). But there are also less well known ones of deserters and maroons, the struggles to maintain family ties (sometimes futile, at other times more successful), the crimes of passion, the indignant memorials sent to the highest officials in the colony, and perhaps most tragic of all, the widespread prevalence of the sexual exploitation of slave women. Some of the stories are immensely interesting and revealing of the social and cultural spaces that intrepid slaves were able to carve out for themselves. One is about the slave Arend (74-5). In about 1816 Arend left his master who lived in the district of Graaff-Reinet and fled to the vicinity of the Gariep, an area he had travelled to a few years earlier with John Campbell of the London Missionary Society. Here he lived for a number of years as a fugitive amongst the many groups that were to be found along the river. In 1823 Arend reappeared and, after meeting up with Robert Moffat and the traveller George Thompson, fought at the Battle of Dithakong. By this time he was a man of some means. Unhappy with his status as a fugitive, he persuaded Thompson and the *landdrost* of Graaff-Reinet, Andries Stockenström, to see if they could secure his freedom. After protracted negotiations over the slave's value, Arend's master accepted payment in ivory. In 1829 Arend was baptised by Moffat as Aaron Joseph.

There is much of interest in this tale – the fluid boundaries between slavery and freedom on the Cape's northern frontier, the ambiguous roles of missionaries and colonial officials, and the slave's determination not to forsake colonial structures altogether. But these are not issues pointed to by the author. Interesting as all the stories are, readers looking for guidance in their meaning will be disappointed. In chapter after chapter we are faced with a series of disconnected anecdotes. There is little by way of interpretation and certainly it is hard to review a book without argument. Perhaps these comments are unfair, for, as we are told in the very first line of *Echoes of Slavery*, this 'is not a history book – it is a collection of true stories' (vi). I am not sure how to understand this statement. At best it

should compel historians to ponder the age-old question of their discipline: what is history? At worst, the view that selected accounts from the historical record can be presented as 'true stories' is downright dangerous.

Alan Mountain's book is of quite a different kind. Part 1, derived almost exclusively from the secondary literature, provides a detailed and authoritative overview of the history of Cape slavery. *An Unsung Heritage* is richly illustrated with depictions of slave life by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists, and these are complemented by present-day photographs of sites where slaves lived and rebelled. This is certainly the most visual account of the history Cape slavery to date.

The second part of *An Unsung Heritage* is a celebration of the Cape's debt to slavery. This can be seen in a number of spheres: religion, language, cuisine, music and architecture. Mountain explains with some authority how Islam became a means by which slaves could subvert the authority of their masters, how the first Afrikaans book was in fact written in Arabic script, and how the Cape's rich musical traditions of *klopse*, *nagtroepe*, Malay and Christmas Choirs had their roots in slavery. The brilliant colours of the houses in the Bo-Kaap and the costumes of the *klopse* are in the make-up of the Rainbow Nation.

But this *bobotie* and *blatjang* view of slavery's legacy is deeply troubling. Once we leave the vibrancy of Cape Town's urban culture, Part 3, entitled 'Sites of Remembrance', takes readers on a detailed photographic guide of the countryside, to 'places created by the hands of slaves' (133). It leads readers out from central Cape Town, through the southern end of the Cape Peninsula, across to the wine farms of Cape Town's hinterland, and as far afield as the Overberg region. The thatched roofs of mission stations and magnificent 'Cape-Dutch' gables of wine estates are shown in all their splendour. The most well-known wine estates – *Meerlust*, *Boschendal*, *Spier* – are all represented. Some of the descriptions read like advertisements. *Spier* is described as a 'holistic, exciting and socially relevant multi-dimensional project … with wine-making, superb restaurants, a luxury hotel, a country club, large-scale organic vegetable production, land reform and community development' (181). This, then, appears to be slavery's legacy.

But Cape slavery, of course, has another legacy. It is one of *baasskap*, of dependency, of grinding rural poverty, of alcohol addiction and foetal alcohol syndrome, of limited educational opportunities for the majority, and most recently, of obscene 'black empowerment' schemes designed to enrich a privileged few. Mountain does tell us in the earlier historical section that many of the descendants of slaves 'still remain shackled by the chains of poverty' (77), but none of this is to be found in Part 3, 'Sites of Remembrance.' Perhaps it is not the kind of thing that domestic and international tourists want to read about. Or perhaps, highlighting these aspects of the legacy would not do nation-building any good.

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Social Death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa. By JOHN EDWIN MASON. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003. xiii + 334 pp. ISBN 0-8139-2179-1

In the introduction to this study, Mason identifies story-telling and social death as the twin pillars on which his book is based. Let us begin with the stories and Mason's refreshingly open-ended attitude towards them. In one of many highly eloquent passages in this study, he reflects that: 'Historians, unlike our more subtle cousins the bards, poets, and novelists, feel the need to make our points explicit. We are uncomfortable with the idea that readers or listeners might draw from the evidence we present conclusions other than the ones we intend ... As a historian, I am not particularly comfortable with the thought that the ambiguity that I confront in the archives – the multiplicity of voices, the volatility of facts – will reappear on the printed page like an unwanted guest ... So rather than try to get our unwanted guest off the couch and out of the door, I have learned to live with ambiguity, accepting as inevitable the fact that the stories I will tell will have multiple meanings. I console myself with the thought that a well-told tale is richer than any analysis that might try to cling to it.' (6)

The stories that Mason tells are taken from the Slave Office records. In 1826 the British appointed officials to act as Protectors or Guardians of the Slaves. To a quite remarkable degree, these officials did act in the interests of slaves and, to an equally remarkable degree, Cape slaves used their new rights to bring complaints to these officials. Mason indicates that some two thousand slaves – over 5% of the total number of slaves at the Cape – went to the offices of the Protectors and Assistant Protectors based in the major towns of the colony. In the absence of slave narratives, estate records and other comparable sources, their collective testimony provides the richest single source on the institution of Cape slavery as seen through the eyes of slaves.

Each of the substantive chapters on the slave experience opens with a story drawn from this archive and these fragments of life histories inform the arguments throughout. In what I rate as the best chapter on the history of Cape slavery, Mason explores the relations within the patriarchal slaveowning household. For it was the household, he insists, that must be the starting point for any exploration of the slave experience. This was 'the site of the larger and smaller struggles, accommodations, victories, and defeats ... lives were shaped more by the nature of their [slaves and apprentices] relationships with members of the patriarchal household that by any other factor ...' (69) The households at the Cape were typically small, averaging around eight slaves per holding in the Stellenbosch and Cape Districts, and only four in the eastern districts of Somerset and Graaff Reinet. Living arrangements were often relatively intimate and here Mason's knowledge is particularly impressive, providing a clear but complex account of the space of the household. While slaves on large farms occasionally slept in separate quarters and those in the eastern districts occasionally slept in their own straw huts, the most common pattern was for slaves to sleep in the

storerooms or kitchens of the master's home. This 'nearly constant physical proximity' needed careful management: sundry 'little arrangements' or rituals of rule. The case study at the heart of the chapter concerns the slave Floris and his master Francois Jacobus Roos of the Stellenbosch District. The rituals of subordination to which Floris was subject included 'saluting' his owner as master or sir (baas or seur), showing a respectful demeanour and, most strikingly, a daily washing of his owner's feet. The latter was a far less unusual ritual that one might have imagined.

Relations with mistresses were often more ambiguous with stories of slaves running to their mistresses for protection from the patriarch's wrath alongside stories of brutal beatings. Hester van Rooyen exclaimed: 'It's my money, my Slave, and if I beat her dead it is no ones [sic] business.' While beating was a ritual of last resort, Mason's case material powerfully suggests that violence was pervasive and much the most important means of keeping slaves in check. Slave women were subject not only to the violence of the master, but not infrequently to his sexual advances. Here again the data base of case studies allows Mason to go further than others have done in documenting the extent of sexual abuse of slave women by owners. He indicates that 'dozens' of cases involving sexual abuse came before the Protectors' offices. In a finding that is echoed in the chapters on work and the slave family, he argues that the experience of slave women was very different from that of slave men.

It was when reading subsequent chapters that I began to question the appropriateness of Mason's conceptual reliance on Orlando Patterson's idea of slavery as social death. Based on his sociological comparison of a vast range of slave societies from antiquity to the nineteenth century, Patterson argued that three features set slavery apart from other forms of unfree labour: the degree of violence, the natal alienation of slaves and the dishonoured status of slaves within those societies. Mason's focus is on the first two. As noted above, he provides a highly persuasive case for the pervasiveness of violence in the lived experience of the vast majority of Cape slaves. Young masters and slave children were socialised into this from an early age.

Yet to reinforce the centrality of the fist and the whip is very different from the claim that slave status at the Cape in the 1820s and 1830s was a form of social death. The majority of the slaves in this period were born at the Cape rather than say kidnapped in warfare in a way that substituted social death from actual death. Their ability to form families, of which the evidence is abundant and seemingly particularly characteristic of this late slave period, does raise serious questions about quite the degree of 'natal alienation' involved. Above all though, the texture of social relations between the slaves and their masters or mistresses constantly contradicts the concept of this as a form of social death. For Mason's study provides the most powerful case for slave agency that we have; of slaves struggling, negotiating, complaining, accommodating, outrightly resisting, asserting forms of autonomy through families, religion and work. When put together this mass of evidence suggests to me that the idea that these slaves were 'socially dead' – in any sense at all (even legal at the time of amelioration) – is at best a concept of limited utility. Mason's own repeated refer-

ences to 'fortunate slaves' (an ironic term of course), to slaves 'cheating' social death, to slaves resurrecting themselves and many more such phrases constantly reinforce this sense.

My own feeling is that the concept of reform, reflected in the title of the fine Yale doctoral thesis ('Fit For Freedom') on which this fine book is based , would have been more modest but more appropiate for the highly nuanced and complex slave-centred account that Mason provides. The reasons for the shift in emphasis relate perhaps to marketting the study as one about Cape slavery in general, rather Cape slavery in an era of reform. By making these wider gestures – even the title 'in South Africa' is an exaggerated claim – the book raises more questions than it answers. Mason's grasp of the late slave period is superb but that of earlier periods reliant on what others have written and obviously far less textured, given that there is not a comparable collection of two thousand case studies on which to base such knowledge. None of this, I believe, detracts much from the study for the evidence, the stories, the nuance of analysis, the knowledge of everyday relations under slavery is obvious in every chapter whether one chooses to read these stories as dallying with a kind of death or as I would, as a largely period-specific response to new opportunities in which the agency of slaves drives the narratives.

Who are the 'fortunate slaves' that most obviously challenge the applicability of Patterson's metaphor of social death? They were almost all slave men. Mason begins with the artisans, some of whom were favoured slaves on farms, but most of whom lived in Cape Town or the towns and villages of the colony. These slaves were able to derive 'satisfaction, pride', even 'a sense of community' from their work. Some, notably the coolies, hawkers and artisans in Cape Town, created spaces of autonomy for themselves.

It is the evidence of autonomy and property-owning in the eastern districts that is Mason's most important contribution here. There were several thousand slaves in cattle country, some of whom had a striking degree of mobility. The Guardian documented a surprisingly widespread ownership of livestock amongst these slaves: 'almost all well behaved and Provident Slaves breed goats and Sheep, and not a few of them possess Horses and other Cattle.' Jephta of Graaff-Reinet owned 51 goats, 31 sheep, 10 head of cattle and 4 horses; November from the same district accumulated no fewer than 254 sheep and goats and 9 head of cattle; in an unusual case, a woman slave, Maria of Albany, was owed 249 rixdollars for 141 sheep and 30 goats sold to that Voortrekker icon Piet Retief, a debt she probably never retrieved. Many other slaves were permitted to cultivate vegetables in their own garden plots. Isaac van der Merwe in the Worcester District gave plots to all twenty-five apprentices on his farms and even allowed them to use his wagons to transport the produce to Worcester for sale. This brought in 3 pounds in earnings for one such apprentice. While slave property was always fragile and the social relations of 'fortunate slaves' remained subject to the degree of permissiveness of the owners, the fact that a 'significant' number of slaves owned livestock and that market gardens became a 'common feature' is suggestive (to me at least) of a degree of agency that contradicts the notion of slavery as social death.

The themes of 'Violence and Resistance' taken up in the chapter that follows (Chapter 6: 'Words Will Not Suffice') might seem at first glance to be very familiar territory in the historiography of Cape slavery. Here again though it is Mason's detailed knowledge of this data bank of case studies that allows us to get a more complex and nuanced image of the 'moral economy of the lash'. The innovation of this chapter is the evidence that slaves drew a distinction between just and unjust punishment. In the case of the slave, Blom, 'he did not come to complain because of the beating ... but because it was undeserved.' The story that most fully illustrates this distinction is that of Mey, a slave of Hendrik Albertus, a case described in detail in an article by Mason published some years ago in the *Journal of African History*. When Mey was beaten for returning to work late one spring day in 1832, he had no complaint. But when, a few days later, he was beaten for working slowly as his wounds had not yet healed, this he deemed to be 'undeserved' punishment and he actively sought the intervention of the Guardian.

I am also convinced by Mason's argument for 'a community of values, understandings and norms', of an 'ethos of solidarity that slaves shared even when they were not engaged in collective acts of resistance.' Here again though we come up against the issue as to how specific the ethos of collectivity is to the early nineteenth century when most slaves were born at the Cape and many had family ties. The emphasis that Nigel Worden and Robert Ross place on the limitations and fragmentary nature of largely individualised acts of resistance relate to a very different period. The very demography most starkly illustrates this: in the 1720s or 1730s the vast majority of slaves had experienced capture, kidnapping, dislocation and Shell's metaphor of 'The Tower of Babel' seems apposite for this dizzying diversity of languages and cultures. By the 1820s and 1830s, as Mason's book powerfully illustrates, things were very different. Ross's analysis of the eighteenth century court records suggests that one cannot really say of this earlier period that 'instances of collective resistance were common', or even that there was any strong ethos of solidarity. This comes down again to the packaging of Mason's study as one of 'Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa' organised around that attractive universal theme of 'Social Death and Resurrection' rather than a more explicit recognition that this is a work confined for the most part to the 1820s and 1830s, though uniquely expansive in its geographical focus on the entire Cape Colony. Would Americans readers want to buy a book called 'Fit For Freedom': Slavery and Emancipation in the Cape Colony, 1823-1842'? (The beginning and end dates here are those of the first reform act passed by Governor Somerset and of the Master and Servants Ordinance.).

Faith and family form the subjects of the last two chapters on the slave experience. The chapter on slave religions begins with the story of Valentyn Snitler, slave of a Uitenhage master, Jacobus Stephanus Vermaak. Like so many others Snitler came to the Assistant Protector to complain of an unjust beating. He had been too sick to work, he claimed, but his master had given him ten stripes with the cat-o'-nine tails. When Vermaak was summoned he declared that insolence rather than indolence or indisposition was the cause of the punishment. Snitler had spoken in 'an impertinent manner' and refused outright to take any medication. When Valentyn insisted that he return to work he 'commenced to

cursing and swearing, and [,] holding his finger in [my] face said "We have been created by one God and I am as good as you."' Mason indicates that the details of the case do not reveal whether Snitler's God was a Christian or Muslim one, but in either case he had clearly absorbed something of the essence upon which these faiths are based: 'that there was but one God and that this creator had made him, in some essential sense, Vermaak's equal.' (177)

The chapter highlights the importance of religion in the lives of 'a large minority' of slaves and apprentices in the 1820s and 1830s. To a degree seldom fully acknowledged Christianity had begun to exert an influence. The story of the move of former slaves to mission stations following the end of the apprenticeship period is very well known. The role of Christian schools in introducing slave children and some adults to the rudiments of literacy after Somerset's reform provisions of 1823 is less appreciated. Between two and three thousand slaves attended such schools within months of the new laws. The gap between attendance and rates of conversion – which remained frustratingly modest for Christian proselytisers – leads Mason to speculate that slaves were using these government and missionary schools for practical purposes: primarily 'to acquire skills, such as literacy, ... rather than to find God.'

The rapid expansion of Islam, by contrast, was driven as much by spiritual needs as any other. Challenging Shell's view that the dramatic rates of conversion of slaves and apprentices was simply a search for community and that the religious tenets were 'not clearly understood' by these new converts, Mason puts the religious motivations at the centre of attention. He follows Adil Bradlow in tracing the origins of Islam at the Cape back to three Sufi shayks exiled to the Cape in 1667 and positing the existence of secretive, isolated groups who kept the beliefs alive over the century that followed. By the 1770s there were regular meetings of Muslims in Cape Town homes. The release of Tuan Guru from Robben Island was, by all accounts, the founding moment in the creation of a new and invigorated mosque-based Muslim community from the 1790s and 1800s onwards, that came to number some 6,500 in Cape Town alone by around 1840. In his insistence on taking spirituality seriously, Mason uncovers fascinating evidence of parallels between the widely reported ritual of *ratiep* at the Cape and a ritual known as *rapa'i*, part of Islamic practice on the Indonesian islands from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: 'in Malaysia it is called *dubbus* ... During the *rapa'i* members of the *tariqa* pierce their bodies with swords, knives, and awls. The point of the rite is to demonstrate the power of God ...' When transported to the Cape and its slave context, this rite became a potent reassertion of slave control over their own bodies.

The chapter on slave families begins with comparative reflections drawn from the historiography of slavery in the Americas: was the slave family a space of refuge and cultural resistance, or did it act in the interests of the owner by stabilising the institution of slavery, encouraging acceptance and producing more human capital in the form of slave children? Mason suggests that the forms of slave families at the Cape were so diverse and complex that there is no pat answer to this, though his emphasis is again on slave agency and the struggles of slaves to carve out spaces of autonomy. It is perhaps the ability of 'thousands' of slaves

to create families for themselves within and across the oppressive structures of the slaveholding that most directly challenges the applicability of Patterson's notion of slavery as 'social death' based on the 'natal alienation' of slaves. In the 1820s and 1830s Cape slave families took on a bewildering variety of forms: most were single-parent and matrifocal, many were spatially diffuse spread across two slaveholdings (the term 'abroad' or ''broad' marriages being applied from the American literature). Others involved slaves marrying free blacks, Khoisan and members of the white working class. But lest we romanticise the experiences of slaves or the slave family as a cosy haven, Mason argues that it was 'not uncommon' for slave parents to abuse their children. Drawing on Nell Painter's work on the psychological damage caused by an institution based on systematic violence, Mason documents the degree to which at least some slaves transferred the violent treatment that they had experienced onto their own children. In some cases the intensity of the abuse shocked witnesses and the protectors who heard such evidence. It is Mason's willingness to reflect on these less palatable aspects of slave experience that is refreshing and illuminating. While some slaves were heroic in the degree to which their instincts for survival allowed them to challenge their owners, others succumbed to the negative psychological effects of an extreme institution with highly damaging consequences for their loved ones.

The opening paragraph of the Epilogue – resurrection – is among the book's most eloquent passages: 'The heavens wept on Emancipation Day. At dawn on 1 December 1838, the skies opened and a cold, gray rain swept across the land. For three days, the deluge and the chill continued: rivers flooded, and snow draped the shoulders of the mountains of the western Cape. Not for a generation had there been such curious weather, so late in the season. The former apprentices, the freedpeople, understood: the rains were God's tears, shed for those who had died in chains.'

The story of Katie and her husband Jacob is at the centre of this concluding chapter. On the morning of Emancipation Day Jacob was forced at gunpoint from his master's farm and ordered never to return. Katie's own relations with her master and mistress were very much more ambiguous. When Jacob wished her to leave the farm with him, her mistress implored her to stay and she convinced Jacob to remain on the farm with her. They did, however, formalise their marriage in a local chapel. The story draws attention to the diversity of owner-slave relations and their impact on how individual slaves would have responded on Emancipation Day, but also to the very meaning of freedom. It was closely associated with mobility, the ability of former slaves to find new spaces of autonomy, whether physical or social. Some went to missions, many more went to Cape Town or the towns and villages scattered through the colony.

The conclusions are refreshingly liberating. Rather than seeing emancipation as a kind of non-event, something which did little to change the overall structures of racial and class domination in the longer term, a closer up and more intimate view demonstrates that freedom did mean something for many thousands of former slaves. When one takes a people-centred view attuned to the psychological as well as the sociological, this was indeed a moment of freedom. Social and economic relations in the post-emancipation era were different from

those under slavery. At the very least, it allowed former slaves to escape some of the systemic violence that they had experienced as human property and exercise a greater degree of choice.

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Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850. By KIRSTEN MCKENZIE. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004. 210pp. ISBN 0522-85075-8

This study represents the culmination of a decade of research into the history of middle class formation in British colonies during the first half of nineteenth century. We may trace its genesis back to McKenzie's Honours thesis on Samuel Eusebius Hudson, published by the University of Cape Town under the title: *The Making of an English Slaveowner: Samuel Eusebius Hudson at the Cape of Good Hope, 1796-1807*. Here she traced his rise in status from personal servant of Andrew and Lady Anne Barnard to man of independent means. Hudson went on to own sixteen slaves and much property. The decisive moment in this transition is recorded in his diary: the expressions of anguish and self-doubt as this one time abolitionist, who had emigrated at precisely the time when the abolitionist campaign against the slave trade was at its height, purchased his first slave.

McKenzie's Masters thesis at the University of Cape Town presented a meticulously detailed reading of the language and concerns of one Cape colonial newspaper, (that mouthpiece of early liberals, the *South African Commercial Advertiser*) in the early 1830s, on the cusp of abolition. Here she began to explore many of the themes that are developed in *Scandal in the Colonies*: the separation of spheres and the masculine character of the public sphere, the ways in which middle class colonial identity emerged in opposition to the older aristocratic ethos symbolised by colonial governors like Lord Charles Somerset, the conservative authoritarian ethos that Chris Bayly elucidated in *Imperial Meridian*, and above all the self-conscious role of an emergent press in the shaping of that identity. Here too we find the interest in status, the defence of the reputation of the colony from metropolitan criticisms, the anxieties about taint from below: slaves, servants and in this earlier study, dogs and dirt. We can also trace her interest in the changes in material culture that came with British rule and how masculine identity was paraded in specific spaces of the city – coffee houses, the Commercial Exchange, the newly established South African Public Library. These themes were developed into a fuller story covering the 1820 to 1850 period in her Oxford doctoral thesis. Here there was much more detailed engagement with the wider politics of colony and empire, notably say in the re-analysis of the Anti-Convict Crisis and struggles for representative government as propagandistic exercises in the assertion of a kind of morality .

It is the comparison between Cape Town and Sydney that she began to explore in her time as a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Queensland that provide the most exciting and innovative aspect of *Scandal in the Colonies*. Historians of Cape slavery, as is now very well known, have long compared slavery here with the institution of slavery across the Atlantic, usually the southern states of North America but also sometimes the British West Indies. More recently there has been growing interest in the Cape in the Indian Ocean world: the Eastern origins of slaves and convicts. A fine recent exhibition

at the South African Cultural History Museum looked at the material culture of Batavia and compared it with the Cape. Yet the nature of the settler society at the Cape calls for a different kind of comparative framework and McKenzie's study makes an absolutely compelling case for the comparison between Cape Town and Sydney. They were both of course colonial port cities. The anxieties of middle class identity were partly a function of their character as societies in a desperate state of flux. Cape Town was more 'motley' but both cities contained a mix of an older military presence, incoming settlers, and a bonded underclass of slaves or convicts. They were both small enough to still be face-to-face communities where people knew each other's business. Sydney's population grew from about 12,000 in 1820 to some 50,000 in 1850, while the population of Cape Town remained more stable numbering between 20 and 25,000 over this period. As British colonies, both cities underwent a comparable process of social reform, sometimes driven by the emergent settler middle class, sometimes imposed by metropolitan policy-makers.

Central to this story and the delightfully rich case studies within it is, as the marketable title suggests, scandal. The circuits of gossip, rumour and scandal operated both at the level of rarified micro-politics and interpersonal relations, but often took on a surprising global and public aspect: scandals could lead to commissions of enquiry, were splashed abroad in newspapers in other colonies. Most of the focus is on the negative implications of scandal – for men accused of disreputable origins or lack of creditworthiness, and women accused of loose morals. But there are glimpses too of its positive potential for others: how it could be used by slaves against their masters as yet another weapon of the weak.

The body of the book is divided into three parts. Parts one and two, 'Patrolling the Boundaries' and 'In the Courts', deal with the 1820s and 1830s. They were the highlight of the book for me, drawing as they do on a range of new source materials. While criminal court records have been extensively used in micro-histories of the Dutch colonial period at the Cape in particular, the cases brought before the civil courts have seldom been consulted by historians. McKenzie's knowledge of the colonial press is also commanding, from the mainstream newspapers in both colonies through to more popular satirical broadsheets like *Sam Sly's African Journal* (Cape Town) and the *Satirist and Sporting Chronicle* (Sydney). But this is not all: her study draws on the whole gamut of middle class cultural expression: from 'pipes' to plays to drawings and sketches. The sophisticated use of visual sources is one of the most exciting aspects of the study: here the works of colonial visitors like Charles D'Oyly are deeply embedded in their micro-political contexts. With this new range of source materials comes a new cast of characters in the middling range. We are thoroughly familiar with stories of prominent persons. Colonial governors, newspaper editors, political campaigners have their biographers, as do slave rebels like Galant van de Kaap. Yet the numerous settlers of the middle range, arguably far more representative, are seldom brought as clearly to view as in these stories of scandal and ruin.

So let me recount a selection of these tales. First up and undoubtedly most dramatic is the Wylde affair. Sir John Wylde began his career in New South

Wales before taking up the position of Chief Justice of the Cape in 1827. He was a peculiar mix of vivaciousness, theatricality, diffidence and nervousness. The gossip began among the ladies of Cape Town when Jane Elizabeth Wylde, one of the elder daughters of Sir John appeared to be pregnant. Soon after she was whisked off for some months to a half-way house between Cape Town and Simonstown. Visitors were turned away. Sir John was – a later enquiry revealed – found to be consulting books on gynaecology and childbirth in the South African Public Library, an unsettling circumstance in a world of separate spheres for men and women. This was not all: 'revolting rumours' began to surface that Sir John himself was the father of the child. Lady Wylde had remained behind in New South Wales. Domestic circumstances initially deemed out of the ordinary were now rumoured to be disgusting and unnatural. As McKenzie puts it, 'the Wylde case was particularly disturbing to contemporaries precisely because it blurred the boundaries that this society deemed it necessary to draw between male and female worlds, public and private spheres, and gender-specific knowledge.'

Such was the currency of these rumours that the colonial governor, Sir Lowry Cole, brought Wylde in for quetioning, but seems to have been satisfied with Wylde's claims that his daughter had been ill rather than pregnant. The taint remained. By 1833 the continuation of the rumours were sufficiently serious for the Colonial Secretary to launch an official enquiry into the matter, the source of most of our information. Wylde rallied his friends in defence of his honour and a series of interventions in the local press attempted to control the damage and represent him as a man wronged by jealous rivals and an authoritarian governor. He was eventually exonerated, not so much McKenzie suggests because the evidence favoured his story – it did not – but because a change of governor and the delicacy of colonial politics on the eve of emancipation meant that the British policymakers were desperate to smooth over the affair. Wylde remained in his office for decades, though of the private torment and tragedy of Jane Elizabeth Wylde the records tell us virtually nothing.

'Fair Fame and Credit: Conducting Business' (chapter three) traces parallel defamation cases against colonial auctioneers. This was an age when the wealth of a landed aristocracy was being superseded by more fluid forms of property, ones which were inherently more unstable. In a context in which the colonial economy was knitted together through a web of credit and debt, auctions played a particularly important role. But there still remained a sense of taint about these new forms of wealth and in particular about the idea of personally handling goods. In this sense auctioneers were particularly vulnerable to being seen as not entirely reputable in their means of livelihood. When one of the leading auctioneers at the Cape, Michiel Cornelis Wolff, questioned the credit-worthiness of a bidder, Hermanus Mauritius Hesselmeyer van Hellings, the latter was outraged. 'Long of name and short of temper', he called Wolff a 'rascal' and a 'blackguard'. When he refused to retract the insults by means of public apology via a notary and the press, Wolff took him to the civil courts. In the end the court found that his insult was a fair response to of Wolff's [insult] on his reputation. Subsequent events seem to have borne out Wolff's charge though: two years later Van Hellings was sentenced to transporatation and seven years at Van Diemen's

Land for stealing a promissory note to the value of 1,500 rixdollars. This was commuted to five years on Robben Island, albeit on a regime of light labour due to 'Rheumatism' and 'Haemorrhoids'. He died as a disreputable man a few years after his release.

The case of Mr. Lyons, Sydney's leading auctioneer, had wider political import. Like the Wylde affair, it demonstrates how 'scandal could use a small thread to tug at a far greater one'. Lyons was a convict who had risen to prominence in Sydney society. He was an office-holder in the newly established Australian Patriotic Association (1836). It was his political campaigning for the rights of emancipists that lay behind the *Sydney Herald*'s questioning of his claims to honesty and respectability. Lyons took them to the civil courts and asserted the right of an emancipist to be regarded as a man of character. The court found in his favour, ordering the *Herald* to pay 200 pounds in damages.

'Tales of Ruin: Sex and Marriage' (chapter four) traces the stories of unfortunate couples. McKenzie sets these stories in the context of a narrowing of space for independent economic activity for middle class women. By the mid-1830s and 1840s premarital chastity and a respectable marriage was virtually the only means of social advancement for middle class women. Deviations from this pattern were potentially scandalous, as Elizabeth Greef was to discover. Greef fell in love with a young French naturalist at the Cape, Pierre Jules Verreaux. When she fell pregnant, young Verreaux got cold feet and began to plead poverty. Taking such cases to court was always a last resort as the taint of public censure was bound to stick. Nonetheless, Greef's family brought Verreaux before a judge on charges of breach of promise. The judge was sympathetic, but Verreaux was saved by his age. Being a minor he could not be convicted and forced into marriage. While Verreaux's reputation grew in subsequent years earning him a place in the *Dictionary of South African Biography* for his work as a naturalist and taxidermist, we know far less about the private anguish, taint and dishonour of Elisabeth Greef.

Some years later in Sydney, the family of Louisa Hanna Rule, a surgeon's daughter, brought a charge of breach of promise against Robert Hicks. The couple were, by all accounts, happily engaged until Hicks received news of an unexpected boon: an inheritance of 1,000 pounds. When his fortunes increased, his marital horizons widened. Tipped off by a neighbour that Rule was now planning to leave the colony, the surgeon consulted an attorney and requested damages. Although the case was resolved before it went to court, the preliminary arguments are revealing. They centred on the moral character of Louisa Rule and the extent of her respectability in society. Did she attend an evidently notorious public house? Had she acted as barmaid? Did she attend theatre and in whose company? How late did she stay out at night? The colonial press came to her defence and portrayed Louisa Rule as a woman grievously wronged by a predatorial suitor. Like Hermanus van Helling though, Louisa Rule was soon back before the courts. She was charged along with her father and sister for a trumped up accusation of rape and sentenced to jail for conspiracy and perjury.

In part three, 'Transforming the Colonies', it is not so much the case studies and intimacy of personal detail that draws in the reader as the compelling

arguments for parallel political processes in the making of Sydney and Cape Town. McKenzie persuasively argues for the similarities between the respective institutions of bondage – slavery and convict labour – and their perceived taints on respectability. These anxieties were particularly acute in the domestic sphere as convict or slave servants were conceived of as threatening contaminating presences within the home, a kind of enemy within. Interesting too is the degree to which the anti-transportation movement in Australia borrowed from the language of anti-slavery. By mid-century respectability was increasingly an issue of colonial reputation rather than private status. The British settler communities – or at least a dominant faction within them – were concerned to project themselves in a new light, as progressive reformers in step with the spirit of the age. The discussion of the ways in which colonial artists – J.S.Prout and Joseph Fowles in Sydney, and Thomas Bowler in Cape Town – crafted a new image for the urban middle class in the making is a particularly compelling illustration of this point. Motifs like gas lamps, wide streets, churches and carriages feature throughout their sketches, paintings and lithographs. The moment of political realisation for both groups came in the form of parallel mass meetings in Cape Town and Sydney in 1848 and 1849, attended by the middle classes in unprecedented numbers, to oppose the transportation of convicts. The language was a near hysterical plea against contamination and taint in defence of respectability.

This then is the story of the book. Any review of it though would be incomplete without reference to writing style. *Scandal in the Colonies* has gone into a second edition within a year of its appearance. While this may owe something to its glitzy pink cover and alluring title, or even McKenzie's propagandising on the radio or at highbrow book launches, it also owes much to the refreshing simplicity and clarity of expression.

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Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid. By FRAN BUNTMAN. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 352 pp. ISBN 0521537681

Fran Buntman's book is an insightful account of political imprisonment and resistance in South Africa. As the title suggests, this book is principally concerned with exploring prisoners' resistance that, it is averred, transformed Robben Island from an 'institution of repression' into a 'site of resistance'. While the focus on incarceration on Robben Island is hardly novel (the past decade has witnessed the publication of numerous and varied works on Robben Island), Buntman adds analytical depth both to our understanding of political imprisonment on the Island and, by extension, the broader politics of resistance. Also as a study of political imprisonment, it speaks to similar experiences elsewhere in South Africa and even globally.

The first part of the book discusses how prisoner struggles evolved from 'resistance for survival' to 'resistance beyond survival'. It then proceeds to examine how the struggles on Robben Island and of ex-political prisoners, on their release, influenced the broader liberation struggle. The final part of the book expounds an interesting theoretical framework, which allows for a nuanced comprehension of the nature and forms of political prisoner resistance on Robben Island. In so doing, Buntman's study has made an important contribution to the literature on political imprisonment in South Africa, which remains woefully undeveloped in the academy.

The book provides incredible insights into the harrowing experiences endured by prisoners, particularly during the 1960s and early 1970s. The first period of political imprisonment on Robben Island was characterised by reigns of terror, which were enforced by, among others, the sadistic Kleynhans brothers and by the equally brutal Colonel Badenhorst in the early seventies. Every aspect of imprisonment – the unpalatable food, forced labour, minimalist sleeping and archaic ablution facilities – was appalling and deliberately intended to assault the dignity of prisoners. Torture and humiliation were pervasive and embedded in the prison's culture of domination. For example, prisoners were regularly subjected to the infamous 'tauza' (naked prisoners had to jump around and expose their rectums to warders for inspection), which Buntman suggests was a form of 'sexual mortification' and a 'rite of humiliation'. This practice was especially degrading for older men for whom it was taboo to strip naked in front of young males. Incarceration was clearly intended to strip prisoners of their humanity.

The first cohort of political prisoners (who were overwhelmingly PAC/Poqo members) suffered especially harshly, both from the racist prison authorities and the common law prison gangs (eg, Big Five, Big Six), which preyed on the often-defenceless political prisoners. Hundreds of PAC activists were imprisoned on the Island before it was brought to the international community's attention with the arrival of the famous Rivonia group. This largely unknown (and mostly forgotten) group of political prisoners was at the mercy of the unfettered brutality of prison authorities. Their experiences unfortunately still remain largely

obscured, even in Buntman's account. Thus the story of political imprisonment and resistance usually and problematically commences with the arrival of the leaders of the ANC and PAC.

Escape, according to Buntman, is usually a 'powerful form of resistance'. However, the near impossibility of mounting a successful escape bid from Robben Island (although several such plans were contemplated) meant prisoners had to direct their energy to mobilising opposition in the prison. The book vividly highlights the myriad struggles embarked on by the political prisoners first to save their humanity, then to improve their conditions and eventually to alter the balance of power on the Island. Resistance was sometimes secretive but often overt and ranged from individual acts of defiance to spontaneous outbursts against harsh treatment to co-ordinated collective actions, such as hunger strikes. These struggles enjoyed uneven successes, especially in the early period, but nonetheless laid the foundations for more sustained resistance from the mid-seventies. A salient thread running through the accounts of resistance is the prisoners' determination to defend their dignities, which was a huge achievement considering the dire character of apartheid imprisonment. These personal struggles – for contact with families, the right to perform religious and cultural practices, for access to reading material, for decent food and clothing – are often neglected or simply rendered as small parts of a bigger political struggle, and as a result deprive us of a comprehensive understanding of the people at the centre of these struggles. For Buntman, however, this level of resistance for basic human rights was important in its own right as well as constituting a critical element in the overall evolution of resistance on the Island.

Buntman identifies five phases in the transformation of resistance on the Island: resistance as survival, resistance as dignity and self-consciousness, resistance as open challenge, resistance as reducing state power or defeating the oppressor's ends, and resistance as the appropriation of power (see chapter nine). These were not clearly delineated phases and elements of each existed in the other. It is shown how prisoners took control of their lives and created formal and informal institutions that, over a protracted period, reconfigured power relations on Robben Island. The book argues that 'the core of resistance on Robben Island was concerned to slowly but surely whittle away state power. The method for diminishing regime power and control was to develop and maintain the very organisations, political understandings, and sense of community that incarceration was meant to destroy.' (261) It is within this framework that the book explores the evolution of resistance.

Coercion and control affected every aspect of imprisonment. Almost inevitably, therefore, resistance assumed various forms and addressed most spheres of prisoners' lives. Extramural activities provided opportunities to escape the drudgery of daily prison life. The organisation of sporting tournaments, cultural and entertainment events, debates and particularly a very sophisticated programme of political education were deliberate efforts by prisoners to determine how they occupied their time, itself an important act of defiance. Moreover, the organisation of these activities created an alternative and increasingly effective socio-political community and contributed immensely to forging a common identity

and sense of purpose among the prisoners. Political education was particularly important in this respect and constituted a pivotal plank in the construction of political cohesion and in maintaining high levels of commitment among prisoners. Robben Island's reputation as a 'university' is based largely on the emphasis given by prisoners to education, both political and academic.

One of the most important achievements by the political prisoners was the constitution of a relatively efficient network of political structures. Political organisations were established almost as soon as prisoners arrived on the Island and served multiple purposes. In the first instance, they saw their primary purpose as continuing the struggle in prison, which required unity and discipline, both of which objectives became critical functions of the political leadership on the Island. Joint structures, such as the High Command, were also created to facilitate interaction and collaboration between the different political movements and also to represent a united front before the authorities. Collectively these organisations and activities constituted an alternative social order that, over time, assumed control over increasing aspects of prison life.

Any political history of the liberation struggle faces the challenge of providing a balanced account of the role played by the various movements. Buntman has deftly negotiated this tricky terrain by highlighting the activities of the main organisations (ANC and PAC) as well as the other smaller formations (BCM, National Liberation Front, Non-European Unity Movement and the African Resistance Movement). The book also explores some of the political dynamics in these organisations and the relations between them, and reveals how issues such as membership and political authority were contested, often acrimoniously and sometimes even violently. Debates (between different parties and often between tendencies in the same party) featured prominently in the political lives of all organisations. The book discusses several of the well-known disputes on the Island (between the ANC and PAC, the ANC and BCM, between Mbeki and Mandela, among others). After 1976, with the influx of youthful activists, generational tensions emerged as young comrades, many of whom were adherents of Black Consciousness, openly challenged what they perceived as conservatism of older political prisoners. Their arrival inaugurated a period of intense debate over the nature of the South African struggle, which mirrored the political discussions on the mainland.

A salient feature of the emerging political movement on the mainland was the growing influence of Marxism and class politics, especially among activists. A plethora of Marxist literature circulated and was intensively studied in reading groups and semi-clandestine cells across the country. The book gives little indication of a similar surge in the popularity of Marxism on the Island. In fact, socialist politics receives only minimal attention, except with reference to some of the disputes between the ANC leadership and the more left-wing leaders such as Govan Mbeki and Harry Gwala. The role of the Communist Party and other socialist groups or individuals remains largely unexplored. Although the SACP did not function as an independent organisation on the Island, it was always influential and there is evidence that some prisoners were recruited before their release. Thus, an important set of political voices remains sidelined.

The book makes a strong case for the influence of ex-political prisoners on the broader struggle after their release. Political imprisonment, especially on Robben Island, was a badge of honour in the struggle and accorded ex-prisoners an elevated status in the liberation movements. It is true that activists such as Joe Gqabi, Harry Gwala and Neville Alexander who were released in the 1970s became influential figures in the emerging internal movement. Similarly, younger activists became leaders in the 1980s of independent trade unions and the new national political organisations such as the UDF and Azapo. Kgalema Motlanthe, 'Terror' Lekota, Murphy Morobe and Saths Cooper were among this cohort of Robben Island prisoners. Nonetheless, Buntman tends to exaggerate the influence that the leadership on the Island had on the genesis and growth of the internal movement. Thus it is argued, 'there is reason to believe that Robben Islanders played formative, albeit behind-the-scenes role in the seventies renewal of the labour movement.' (167) This is incorrect. Buntman acknowledges that the position of the Congress-aligned Islanders was that 'unions and union organisers who were not aligned with Congress-movement political groups were the enemy', which echoed the official exile Congress position. In fact, the Congress leadership opposed the formation of independent trade unions. Rank-and-file Sactu activists did however play a role in the building of these unions, together with workers and students. Did the Congress leadership on the Island actively encourage their members to join the independent trade unions?

In similar vein, Buntman states that 'Robben Island was critical to the formation and development of the UDF … [and] … It is reasonable to suggest that much of the thinking and tactics involved in the UDF emerged out of discussions on Robben Island, without there being a carefully though-out plan in which the UDF was conceived.' (164) The qualification notwithstanding, this line of argument tends to undermine the organic processes, comprising hundreds of struggles in townships across the country (which resulted in creation of numerous organisations) and the debates among activists over how best to unite these local struggles, that resulted in the formation of the UDF and other united fronts (See for example, J.Seekings, *The UDF*, chapter two). It was these processes, far more than Robben Island, which played the critical role in the development of the UDF. Buntman's argument unfortunately feeds into the erroneous belief that the leadership, both on the Island and in exile, somehow orchestrated the birth and growth of the anti-apartheid revolutionary movement.

One of the strengths of the book is its utilization of oral testimonies with ex-political prisoners. Although cognizant of the limitations of the oral methodology – the inconsistencies, contradictions and lacunae that arise from relying on memory – the author has skilfully used oral testimonies to construct a dynamic narrative and insightful analysis. In this respect, the book amply demonstrates the value of oral history. Importantly also, agency is emphasised and the stories and contributions of individual prisoners are given priority. Although the book begins with a strong reference to Mandela, it astutely avoids the 'Mandela-isation' of political imprisonment on the Island. The voices of other less well-known activists are allowed to shape the book, adding texture and depth to its contents. However, these occur largely within the framework of a dominant narrative – of

almost continuous resistance by iconic male activists that culminated in a reconfiguration of power relations on Robben Island, then the rest of the country and culminating in a negotiated settlement, which processes were led by the ANC leadership. Dissenting voices (of individuals and formations), contrary processes and alternative politics are thus marginalized. A further level of critical engagement with the stories of the ex-political prisoners would be required. An issue worth exploring is how political education contributed to the emergence of a dominant and homogenous narrative of South African history and the extent to which this subverted individual life histories.

Another question not adequately explored is how Robben Island transformed the prisoners, not only politically but also personally. This line of enquiry would require some engagement with the pre- and post-prison lives of the prisoners, and seems critical if one is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the prisoners as people. The personal stories require more attention, including those of families of the political prisoners. Political imprisonment often wreaked havoc in the lives of families left behind. Their struggle for survival and contribution to the broader liberation struggle needs to be placed more centrally in the narratives on political imprisonment. Such an approach would also contribute to highlighting the role of women and children in the struggle.

The book bravely begins to confront issues that are normally avoided in the male-centric resistance literature on political imprisonment, such as homosexuality, 'anti-social' behaviour and resistance to cultural conformity. The control over prisoners' sexuality, particularly the explicit prohibition on homosexuality, which was regarded as deviant, and masturbation constituted an important part of the political discipline imposed on prisoners. Buntman critically exposes the weakness of the arguments in favour of this prohibition and argues that 'For many Islanders, underlying the abhorrence of homosexuality was a belief in the superiority of men, or at least of male sexuality, and of very defined roles for men and women.' (242) The brief discussion on circumcision also opens the possibility of exploring generational and cultural dynamics that were omnipresent on the Island but continuously sidelined in the political literature on imprisonment.

The discussion on political imprisonment and the state (chapter 8) highlights the links between the prison authorities and the broader security apparatus. It mainly focuses on the state's response to prisoner resistance. Again, this discussion occurs within the dominant and all too familiar narrative of the evolution from resistance to negotiations. An interesting angle into the understanding the prison and the state could be via the local prison authorities, especially the warders and their families (who resided on the Island). Life histories of these characters may reveal not only why some warders were so despicably heinous and sadistic but also how they perceived their role as local functionaries of the apartheid state. It may also shed further light on the initial coherence and resilience of the apartheid state and its subsequent fracturing and demise.

The criticisms raised above should not detract from Buntman's seminal contribution and accomplishment, which has been to highlight the ways in which political activists transformed their place of incarceration into a citadel of resistance. Their efforts turned the Island into a potent symbol of resistance, the exact

opposite of what the state intended. Buntman's book brings these stories graphically to life and does more by framing it within a coherent theoretical discussion.

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Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid. By BELINDA BOZZOLI. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004. 326pp. ISBN 1-8681-4406-2

At the time of the World Summit on Social Development, the new social movements spearheaded a march whose route was from Alexandra to Sandton. A leading activist declared: 'We are going to take Sandton'. This was part recognition of the symbolic importance of Sandton as representing the commanding heights of the economy. It evoked discussion in the new social movements with a response being that 'we need to take Alexandra'. This was about activists and their relationship to the ordinary working class people of the area – their hearts, minds, visions and willingness to mobilise. Belinda Bozzoli has produced a work which takes us back in time to encounter the same interplays and associated issues in what has come to be known as the Alexandra rebellion of 1986. She focuses in part on 'the 6 day war' when youth largely 'took Alexandra'.

For Bozzoli '(m)ost strikingly, the rebellion took a spatial and highly theatrical form' (2). The conceptualization of struggle as spatialised and the metaphor of struggle as theatre are central in her description and analysis of the rebellion. She describes 'the architecture of the book' as designed in a threefold manner: 'taking a roughly narrative form', weaving 'into the "story" a panoply of conceptual and interpretive frameworks', and with the 'actual design of the book tak(ing) a broadly "cinematic" form' (16). For her, 'the very heart of the book' is a chapter on 'The Private Utopia', taking us 'right inside the people's courts, the institutions which epitomised the rebellion, and view(ing) them from the point of view of those who experienced them.' (16) Bozzoli uses records of the Mayekiso trial as 'imperfect but valuable narratives of the time', preferring to 'rely on stories told at the time, while acknowledging that they too are flawed'. The chief claim to 'methodological novelty' which she makes is in the 'detailed treatment' (18) which her sources are given.

Drawing on testimony close to the events and her thorough documenting of events, Bozzoli is necessarily critical of the functioning of the TRC process and what are revealed as distortions to accord with nationalist mythology. 'The fact is that the youth of Alexandra organized and led a revolt, whose main contours hardly appear at all in the hearings…' (279).

The core concern which seems to underlie her account is captured in a quote which she takes from *City Press* towards the end of her work:

> if it is true that a people's wealth is its children, then South Africa is bitterly tragically poor. If it is true that a nation's future is its children, we have no future and deserve none…[We] are a nation at war with its future…For we have turned our children into a generation of fighters, battle-hardened soldiers who will never know the carefree joy of childhood. What we are witnessing is the growth of a generation which has the courage to reject the cowardice of its parents … to fight for what should be their's by right of birth. There is a dark,

> terrible beauty in that courage. It is also a source of great pride – pride that we, who have lived under apartheid, can produce children who refuse to do so. But it is also a source of great shame…that [this] is our heritage to our children: the knowledge of how to die, and how to kill. (Editorial quoted on page 276)

Hers is a scholarly, detailed, vivid and profoundly moving contribution to studies and understanding of the processes of struggle during the 1980's. Both the spatial and theatrical aspects help her to illuminate movement – and thereby to represent the dynamic of the historical process, although they are stretched too far when it comes to explaining. Her study is all the more vivid and informative precisely because she seeks to focus on what might be called the heart and soul of rebellion without which any account of historical process is bereft. At the same time, she insists on focusing on the empirical detail of event and activity within which this heart and soul was located, an insistence which again takes us closer to the facts and realities, not just of her specific focus, but the broader dynamics and rhythms of 'youth rebellion' in general. Much academic work in the social sciences and humanities is a reflection of the hegemony of 'market thinking'. This has made for intellectually dour, deadening and stifling 'debates' with a policy focus in which economics, reduced to relationships between things, dominates, and 'debate' is almost exclusively about arithmetic. The context is also dominated by the partly ex post facto reconstruction of historical processes of struggle to accord with the 'nationalist narrative'. Given that, her work has a particular value because it is grounded, although she might not say it like this, in a recognition that the stone-throwing youth mattered in historical process because they were agents in the making of history; and that, as agents, their passions and emotions and views need also to be recognised and understood if we are to get closer to understanding the historical processes of struggle. I hope it will inspire work in that mould.

All of this is reason enough to read and appreciate the book. It deserves to be read against its own claims and intentions. Having said that, I want to comment on a set of issues which I think the approach, content and silences of the book bring to the fore.

Passionless sociology

Bozzoli draws on Elias Canetti to portray a vision of the crowd as an organic form – 'It moves, grows, attacks, kills, spreads, shrinks, sighs, moans and dies.' (19) She argues that the 'passionless, theory-driven sociologist is at a loss in the face of this.' (19) In doing this, Bozzoli is invoking earlier antagonistic debates about theoretical work versus empirical studies of local situations. I don't think the alternatives were usefully posed earlier and I don't think they are usefully posed in her current work. She is herself drawing on a theory of crowd and exploring a particular local situation with a theorized vision. I want instead to separate the passionless from the theory-driven and dwell on the former.

Bozzoli talks of the 'poetic, quixotic, noble, passionate, brave, daft, terrifying, angry, bewildered, bewildering, imaginative, and stubborn qualities' (18) of

those who experience and engage in rebellions. But what is the alternative and antidote to passionless scholarship? Is it a passionate scholarship? Is it passion about the people and situations and events we are studying? Is it work which evokes passions? Surely it requires of us that we take explicit responsibility for our own beliefs and values – our politics – and how they mould what we see, what we write about and how we judge it – an explicitly politicised and partisan scholarship. Without that, is it anything more than the potentially smothering embrace, by a passionless sociology, of the passions of others?

Theatre as metaphor – performance as reality

Performance was a necessary part of the political process – acting in a particular way to create particular impacts – or with the intention of creating particular impacts. The metaphor of theatre may be useful in capturing and illuminating some of the dynamics of real behaviour. A problem develops when the illuminating metaphor becomes the concretized analytical explanatory categorization of what is actually taking place – where the actual behaviours of human subjects in the everyday life of rebellion is reduced to staged performance. Exactly when she is trying to capture the reality of the unreal being made real, things being stood on their heads, the impossible happening and being made to seem possible, the fantastic being made ordinary – the reality of rebellion – Bozzoli uses the conceptual imagery of make-believe which undermines that. Whether intentionally or not, the metaphor of theatre adds to a narrative which renders the youth struggle as 'unrealistic'. How far is she really wanting to take that? Is she suggesting that it was actually all just an impossible dream? Is that what happens with crowds? Can meaningful change happen without dreams initially rendered 'impossible'? Did meaningful change happen without them?

Youth and adults

The conceptualisation of the spatial form of the struggle has been made primary in Bozzoli's analysis of the situation, but it is human interactions – what people did to and with each other – which was and emerges as central. There are vivid, graphic and harrowing accounts of violence and brutality 'acted out' by youth. It is certainly overwhelmingly clear that youth in large numbers challenged and for a time overturned traditional authority of adults. Central to the exercise of state power over young people was the denial to them of their own agency. If decisions had to be made about them, they always had to be made by others. Taking some control over their own lives in a struggle against the imposition of political control over them inescapably meant clashing with such patterns of control and domination in the everyday. At the same time, there is evidence of the extent to which the relations between youth and 'parents' was much more complex, nuanced, fluid, dynamic and contradictory than one of even conflict, let alone rebellion.

The thrust of condemnation of perpetrators of apartheid (and capitalism) is not that they lacked the capacity for responsible moral judgements. On the con-

trary, it is located precisely in their responsibility for the inhumane way in which they exercised that capacity. It is about choices and judgements which were morally and politically wrong. But what precisely is being said about youth engaged in violent and brutal actions? There is a blurring between what may be related but are very different positions: outrage because children were placed in circumstances which generated such action; horror at the action itself; pain at the harm done to its 'perpetrators'; opposition to the actions and the decisions behind them.

One of the questions which emerges from this work – a question which an impassioned and passionate scholarship would surely confront more directly – is whether children can make responsible moral judgements. The question is inescapably posed by what Bozzoli writes and how she writes it, but the reader is left to guess and deduce what position is informing and underlying what she says. The question becomes blurred when, as sometimes appears to be suggested, the portrayal is not really judgements being made, but the crowd, become 'mob' which is being swept along outside of its own collective control, and individuals within it being swept along outside of their own individual judgements. If in the nationalist narrative, the youth are demeaned as wayward, what is happening if their capacity to be responsible moral agents is being implicitly questioned? If their actions are dismissed, ex post facto, as sometimes undisciplined and uncontrolled in the nationalist narrative, what is happening if they are portrayed as part of a crowd turned 'mob'? Is it about the capacity for moral agency itself, or is it about disagreements with its exercise and choices made? Is it outrage at the vileness of a society which places its children in positions where they shouldn't be, deciding about life and death, or an underlying belief that children can't take such decisions? In rebellions? As heads of households ravaged by Aids? Deciding whether they will take ARVs if they are HIV positive? Resisting physical and other forms of abuse from adults? The answer does not lie in more detail. On the contrary – it is the richness of the detail which throws up the moral and political questions and dilemmas actually posed.

Alternatives and Utopias

Marx talks of 'instances of popular vengeance'. Are they more brutal when they are popular, just because they are popular? Is a public stoning more brutal than a relatively private poisoning or choking? Is violence less violent when those in whose name and with whose support it is committed leave the act to others? These and variations of these questions are inescapably posed for a passionate scholarship and a scholarship of passion – but they are neither explicitly posed nor explicitly addressed by Bozzoli.

Bozzoli carefully takes us through a necklacing and presents us with a vivid dynamic account of People's Courts, charting what she explicitly describes as their movement from morality to brutality – a process of degeneration. She provides an illuminating account of what happened and how it happened but runs two associated risks of vivid description. The first is that in documenting so clearly what happened, she makes its clarity a substitute for explanation; the second is that in doing that, she makes what happened appear almost – or completely

– inevitable. She is not helped in this regard by the way in which she uses theatre and space. Theatre is useful as descriptive metaphor – deeply descriptive – but still descriptive. The spatial form of the struggle helps in capturing the dynamics and tensions of what was happening but it does not explain. So what does explain? Is it because it was youth? Is it what happens when there is a 'crowd'? Was it inevitable that there should be such degeneration? Were there choices and alternatives in the situation? I am not here asking for a rewriting of what might have happened instead – but a consideration of choice and alternative as part of what did happen.

Centres of their own political universe

Bozzoli points to the ways in which formally stated ANC policy could have been both incentive and legitimation for the violent actions of the youth. She also correctly argues that the youth were, however, acting on their own initiative and taking their own decisions. She captures the reality of leaders tailing and being forced to tail events. In all of that, however, some of the youth and their action reflected key aspects of the political method of dominant ANC leadership. In particular, there was the denunciation as counter-revolutionary of any political alternative within the movement of struggle; a lack of sustained and consistent respect for ordinary workers and the struggles, organizations and processes of rank and file workers' democracy, and a heavy reliance on militant armed groups (MK) as the necessary substitute for what were seen as limitations of ordinary mass working class struggle. It was a political approach which left unchallenged and in fact promoted the disrespect for ordinary working class people, reducing them to either supporters or, if not, thereby opponents, of what others were deciding and doing.

Ordinary guerrillaism carries a powerful and usually irresistible impetus for substitutionism – for the activist to substitute themselves and their actions for those of a mass organized collective. Precisely the same pressure operated in the situation of the youth Bozzoli describes. They became centres of their own political universe, acting on behalf of, sometimes instead of, sometimes even in opposition to, those in whose interests they believed they mobilized. Whatever else is happening in that situation, the activists become over-extended, separated and potentially isolated and vulnerable. The political alternative in the situation – both to the action of the youth and to guerrillaism more generally – was working class leadership. It was embraced by many youth who were no different to those in Alexandra, perhaps less visibly also by many youth for much of the time in Alexandra. At the core of the success of the 'historic Vaal stay-away' of November 1984 was a call from youth to their 'parents':

> WORKERS YOU ARE FATHERS AND MOTHERS, YOU ARE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. OUR STRUGGLE IN THE SCHOOLS IS YOUR STRUGGLE IN THE FACTORIES. WE FIGHT THE SAME BOSSES GOVERNMENT. WE FIGHT THE SAME ENEMY.

> Today the bosses government has closed many of our schools. OUR BOYCOTT WEAPON IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH AGAINST OUR COMMON ENEMY, THE BOSSES AND THEIR GOVERNMENT…
> WE STUDENTS WILL NEVER WIN OUR STRUGGLE WITHOUT THE STRENGTH AND SUPPORT FROM THE WORKERS MOVEMENT (Congress of SA Students, Southern Transvaal Region)

Bozzoli shows the rebellion as being bounded in space. If youth in the rebellion became the centre of their own political universe, then they made Alexandra in which they were central **into** the political universe. If there were questions of morality in that situation, they were also political questions. The situation demanded a politics which allowed the youth to look beyond the space and themselves for strength and solution – to which they could bring their strength and solutions. The ANC offered itself as providing such a connection – but in ways which could allow the youth to remain isolated, largely unarmed, unschooled in respect for ordinary workers.

Utopianism

Could the youth rise above the contextual violence and brutality? Did they? Were they doomed to reflect and repeat that in their struggle to challenge and change it? Bozzoli explores what she calls a puritan utopianism which was sometimes manifest amongst youth in Alexandra. The theme of trust emerges in her portrayal of events and in the words in testimony of some of the youth. She arrives at it explicitly towards the end of her book where she portrays a situation of trust and hope betrayed, with the kind of explicitness which would have served her better on a broader range of issues. Bozzoli categorises their utopia as limited, associating it with puritanism, particularly in its emphasis on ending the abuse of alcohol. But there is an equal emphasis on ending crime and oppression and exploitation. These are about what some people do to other people in the context of structured inequalities. Ending them means both a challenge to the structures which generate them – and to the people, relationships, behaviours and values which express and legitimate them. It means different structures, different people, different relationships behaviours and values. There is nothing limited about this. It is vast.

Bakhtin has pointed to the ways in which the everday both expresses the realities of inhumanity and the utopias of humaneness. Bozzoli's work captures this contradiction, even if her commentary does not always pursue it analytically. In the midst of the experience and the practice of violence and brutality, she shows care, compassion, generosity and sharing amongst the youth and others in Alexandra. It is exemplified, in the yearning after the event, for the trust which was embodied in the relations between activists in the event. Bozzoli emphasizes instead a betrayal of trust in the more recent history. It is in cruel contrast. But the trust in the situation was not only in great leaders, great organizations and in

forces outside to 'deliver' on promises. It was a trust of the youthful activists in themselves and each other – in an individual capacity to say no and collective capacity to interfere and make things different and better. Whatever else was going on, it is that which made history. If a part of that trust was misplaced, then that is the problem, which does not of itself remove the size and value and potential of the trust in collective itself. If in the nationalist narrative, hope is being located ex post facto in those who some might feel have betrayed hope, what is happening in an account where there is little visible enduring hope in what youth did themselves?

It would be a sadly missed opportunity to go into the dynamism and passions of the Alexandra and other youth mobilizations, and come away without recognition of what is reflected in their willingness to say no and interfere with the everyday brutality of apartheid and capitalism around them: the hope embodied in their search for and construction of a selfless collective trust in struggle for a utopia without oppression and exploitation.

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The Number: One Man's Search for Identity in the Cape Underworld and Prison Gangs. By JONNY STEINBERG. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2005. ISBN 1-86842-205-4

First things first: *The Number* is an excellent book, deserving of a wide South African and international, as well as academic and non-academic readership. Steinberg traces the history of one man, as he attempts to make his way through the socially and racially warped Capetonian society – from the segregated spaces of the township into the prisons and their infamous prison gangs to end on the outside, where the reader finds the main character trying to re-suture his broken life and put together his family after years of incarceration. As in his highly acclaimed previous book *Midlands*, Steinberg tells the story of one man whilst in the process shedding light on social and historical processes in ways that leave historical anthropologists envious. Through the narrative we meet institutions, historical marginalization and the gendered violence that have become synonymous with urban South Africa. Steinberg's account captures and enthrals. He masters the art of writing that academics sometimes lose in their attempt to conduct theoretically-informed, rigorous analysis. Steinberg is also well aware of his own positionality in regard to the lives he depicts. Although positionality is important when white, middle-class men explore a non-white moral universe, this becomes somewhat tedious at times, as the book tends to focus on Steinberg's route through the maze of urban and institutionalized Cape Town, rather than his 'hero's'.

The Number can be read in several ways, and we have chosen to focus particular attention on two of these ways. First, it can be read as a succinct commentary on the racially and socially warped world of Cape Town. As such, it is a book about marginalization and coping in Cape Town where violence, stigmatization and incarceration are everyday realities for coloured men. Secondly, it can be read as a prison ethnography of which there are precious few in a non-western context. In the context of Steinberg's main character's life, the two stories intersect and animate one another.

The Number is about one man with many names. He uses his many different names as a means of coping with different forms of marginalization and as a way of conning the powers that be. However, the many names also translate into a search for a permanent and stable masculine identity. The main character, Magadien through most of the book, began his life as Darryl, a youngster growing up in the old inner-city neighbourhood of Cape Town and the emerging coloured townships on the Cape Flats. After years of searching he finds out that he, in fact, belongs to an old Muslim family and he takes the name Magadien. In prison, he becomes JR, a feared and, in time, high-ranking prison gangster. During one of his periods of freedom, he robs a white man and assumes his name, William Steenkamp. When he finally makes it out of jail, most of his ploys to get back meet with failure and as the book draws to an end, Magadien becomes Darryll once more, and member of a born-again Christian church. To each of these names particular identities are attached. JR draws his strength from prison and gang narratives and practices.

William Steenkamp is the chief warder's preferred inmate and link between the prisoners and the state. Magadien is the Muslim devout and the prospective father and family man he hopes to be. Darryl is the *bekeerde* (the saved) person who has given his life to God and is finally (partially) accepted into non-racial fellowship.

Through telling the story of Magadien-William-Darryl-JR Steinberg manages to relate and explore the story of urban Cape Town and its coloured underbelly almost without mentioning race or using it as an analytic device to understand the city. Nonetheless, we are presented with all the paradoxes of coloured masculinity in the form of racial stereotyping associating the coloured male township body with crime, deviance and violence (that is, the *skollie*); we encounter one of the most important institutions, the prison, to which countless coloureds have been assigned; we encounter the religious negotiations of identity. Steinberg also presents us with the most important ways in which coloured men cope - religion, the gang, family and sometimes politics. And he does so with very little sentimentality or political correctness.

In this way, Steinberg's book is part of an emerging literature on Cape Town that explores the everydayness of life on the Cape Flats and in the city.[1] This new literature constitutes a much-needed break with some of the older literature that grew out of a critical engagement with the apartheid regime. Although the older accounts contributed to understanding race and class in non-biological ways, they also tended to reify resistance and be blind to all the inconsistencies and tensions within the sub-altern groups. Steinberg's book commits few of these errors.

Both the strengths and the weaknesses of the book lie in its format, the narratives and life of one man. The format allows the structures of domination and coping with them to become very real and tangible. Yet the format hinders Steinberg from theorizing about the character and the tensions he faces. Instead of being one man facing harsh life and prison, it could have been a book about racial hierarchies, institutions and strategies. Instead of being a book about one man in and out of prison in Cape Town, it could have been a book about marginalization, race, masculinity and incarceration, which could have appealed to more than those interested in Cape Town and South Africa. Only in one regard does *The Number* truly manage to escape the local and that is as a prison ethnography.

Despite the fact that prison studies have exerted tremendous influence on the social sciences[2], it remains true that 'serious research that provides new knowledge in the area of incarceration is very.[3] The field is surprisingly under-researched especially when it comes to studies of prisons outside of industrialised

1. See for example E. Salo, "Negotiating Gender and Personhood in the New South Africa: Adolescent Women and Gangsters in Manenberg Township on the Cape Flats." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, 3, 2003; Z. Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town; Kwela Books, 2001)and A. Badroodien "Race, Crime, Welfare and the State: Social Institutions in South Africa from the 1940s". *Social Dynamics*, vol. 25, 2, 1999.
2. M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) and E. Goffman, *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961).
3. R. Morris, (1998) 'Conclusion: imprisonment at the millenium 2000 – its variety and patterns throughout the world', in R. Weiss and N. South (eds,),*Comparing Prison Systems: Towards a Comparative and International Penology* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998).

countries. The majority of prisons research is dominated by sociological studies of prison life in industrialised countries and most studies are concerned with trends, systems, ideas or policy rather than the situated experiences of implicated actors. Developing countries are arguably systematically excluded from comparative studies[4] and prisoners lives are theorised not in terms of the relations and dynamics of everyday life but as abstract entities effected by experiences of prisonisation[5] and mortification.[6] Whilst practitioners have been active in the field of penal reform in non-industrialised countries their reports remain limited to description and denunciation with little by way of explanation or analysis.

The standard voice emanating from prisons in Africa has this to say: prisons are overcrowded, conditions are appalling, health is threatened, justice is slow, two-thirds of prisoners are awaiting trial/not convicted, violence is the norm, human rights are routinely violated. This diagnostic package – description wrapped in approbation and denunciation – fails of course to tell us much about causes, dynamics or processes. Whilst necessary, it is abstract, general and banal. What prison studies lack are in-depth ethnographic engagements with practices of detention at the level of the everyday. We need to *account for* prison practice and not only *keep accounts* of (bad) prison practices.[7] What are absent from studies of prisons, not only in Africa, are insights and explanations about the micro-processes of everyday life behind the walls. Prison studies are all too often depopulated and desituated.

Steinberg's compelling tour de force begins to redress this state of affairs. Whilst not an ethnography of prison practice as such, Steinberg's narrative succeeds in conveying in convincing fashion the multi-layered, complexity of prison life through its detailed (re)presentation of one man's 'trajectory of participation' in and out of South Africa's prisons.[8] The book is a captivating, persuasive account of prison practice, more specifically prison gang practice. Perhaps most striking is the sense one gets of contentious institutional life mediated through ritualised oral histories, artefacts and secret languages, issues that Steinberg pursues in even more depth in his short work *Nongoloza's Children*.[9]

Steinberg attempts to explain the flux that characterised prison gangs in Cape Town (the 26's,27's,28's) in the early years of the 20th century.[10] It is an attempt to understand the changes that were underway as historically sedimented prison gang identities began to be dissolved and transformed in the face of post-apartheid (un)organised crime beyond the prisons. The book developed from a concern to write 'a serious history of lawbreaking in South Africa'(9). It became a history of the gangs and the institutions that simultaneously frame, limit and encourage their activities.

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4. A.M. Jefferson, 'Confronted by Practice. Towards a critical psychology of prison practice in Nigeria' (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2004).
5. D. Clemmer, *The Prison Communit*y (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1940).
6. Goffman, *Asylums*.
7. P. Ricouer, 'Imagination, Testimony and Trust: a Dialogue with Paul Ricouer', in R. Kearney and M. Dooley (eds.) *Questioning Ethic: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1999).
8. O. Dreier, *Subjectivity and Social Practic*e (Aarhus: Center for Health, Humanity, and Culture, 2003).
9. J. Steinberg, *Nongoloza's Children. Western Cape Prison gangs during and after apartheid*. (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2004).
10. N. Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Resting explicitly on over 50 hours of conversations Steinberg had with the main protagonist of the narrative Magadien Wentzell, the book is undoubtedly enriched by Steinberg's shadowing of a senior Pollsmoor warder over a nine month period. This methodological innovation contributes to the extent to which prison practice got under Steinberg's skin and is starkly revealed in his prose.

Prison gangs in South Africa are nothing new; they are a historical phenomenon: 'They are a century old, avowedly political and yet horribly pathological … they show us why generations of young black men lived violent lives under apartheid and why generations more will live violently under democracy'(11). 'The very idea of banditry' writes Steinberg 'hovers ambivalently between an aspiration to social equality and anti-social violence, between a disdain for the current order and disdain for social order in general'(8). Politics and pathology, equality and inequality, legitimate grievances and damaging practices are threads that run through the book as they run through the history of gangsterism itself. The idea was to try to 'decipher the impenetrable politics of the prison.' What emerges is a timely addition to the canon of South African criminological literature.

Langer's *Holocaust Testimonies* protests vigorously against redemption narratives. Steinberg's tale of one man's journey through the gangs and through the prisons is for the most part devoid of romance.[11] The ambiguities and ambivalences that pursue the hero's struggle to conduct a life are told with a disarming empathy. Steinberg's juxtaposition of Magadien's accounts with his own visits to the places and people that situate and populate these accounts give added richness and authenticity. Only when the narrative pursues Magadien as he is released from prison and must reinvent himself does the reader begin to feel a slight disappointment. Discussions of Magadien's post-prison life feature a reduction in intensity and eloquence. At one point Steinberg pensively, and in almost victim-blaming mood, reflects on how Magadien himself has become less informative and less reflective. Paradoxically, in the shift from the past to the contemporary the narrative loses its intensity and immediacy. Accounts of contemporary events demand perhaps to be dealt with in different ways to events of the past? How should accounts of mundane, everyday life be written? How can people, whose prospects of survival outside of gang affiliation and action are ambivalent at best and hopeless at worst, be represented? How should an author deal with his/her own ambivalence and sense of obligations in such contexts? As Magadien emerges from prison, his life, at least in the narrative is temporarily and periodically interwoven with Steinberg's. As the former dividing line of the prison wall disappears, divisions at the level of class and race becomes more apparent and more striking and the bonds so persuasively built up between author and subject tend towards dissolution. Two lives previously lived separately, featuring an element of narratively constructed commonality suddenly share the same world, a world which inevitably reveals itself as radically different after all. This is of course a point in itself.

11. L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

It is only towards the end of the book (and most definitely in the afterword where sentimentality imposes itself) that the expectations built up during the first four-fifths cannot be lived up to. As a study of prison gangs in South Africa and a study of identitary strategies among coloured men in Cape Town, however, this is a book that powerfully illuminates identitary and prison practices and deserves to be read by scholars and policy-makers alike. Situated midway between state and population, prisons and crime occupy a crucial mediating position for the study of the generation of categories of statehood and personhood. *The Number* addresses primarily the latter but offers food for thought to the former. How will the South African state develop as the gangs of the Western Cape change form? How will the changing face of imprisonment and the changing face of crime make themselves felt at the level of the political? What can be done to overcome generations of social, racial and class exclusion, marginalisation and disorder? How will 'disdain for the current order' allied with a 'disdain for order in general' continue to make itself felt in the everyday lives of South Africans and on the South African political scene? These questions deserve further attention. We can hope that future accounts, however troubling will be told with the same alacrity and style as *The Number*.

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South Africa – The First Man, the Last Nation. By R. W. JOHNSON. London and Johannesburg: Weidenfeld & Nicholson and Jonathan Ball, 2004. xxviii + 233 pages. ISBN 1-86842-208-9

This is a short and fairly readable gallop from pre-history to present day South Africa. But it has a number of worrying aspects, starting from the characterisation of the author on the back flap of the hard cover edition. This states that R.W. Johnson was 'unable for political reasons to return home to South Africa for many years'.

The implication that Johnson was a South African exile is simply wrong. However, British-born Johnson, who was educated in South Africa and Britain, has not in the past made any secret of the fact that he was a visiting lecturer at universities in South Africa even at the height of apartheid repression. He settled in Cape Town in 1995, having spent most of his adult life in Norwich and Oxford.

In and of itself, this book jacket blurb is of little consequence, as are the facts of Johnson's birth, residence and academic career. However, this misleading assertion is symptomatic of a general failing in this attempt at a popular, all-encompassing history. Poor research or editing has resulted in a number of obvious errors including the labelling of Nepad as the New Programme for Africa's Development rather than Partnership and stating that the apartheid state supported the ANC-aligned Joshua Nkomo in Zimbabwe.

In the preface, there is also an attack on 'the Marxist historian' Colin Bundy who is now the director of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. Bundy is blamed for the 'demolition' of South Africa's 'only institute for historical research' that had 'found itself under fire from the crude new wave of Africanism'. Bundy is claimed to have played a role in this, but Bundy was not present when the row erupted and an acclaimed institute for historical research continues to this day at the Wits.

Johnson's interpretation of the row as some form of African/Black racism can be contested. However, the manner in which he has portrayed it seems typical of the style of polemical journalism for which he has become, in many circles, notorious: he seems deliberately to set out to shock and offend.

A classic example is his snide reference on the second page of this book, to 'a whole new elite proudly parading in new dress and new names'. Most South Africans, previously classified 'black' bore 'white' names alongside their given names because their masters and madams found African names too difficult to remember or to pronounce. Now, in an example of pride and equality, they are asserting their right to use their given names.

This reference to change of names reveals both ignorance and insensitivity. It is the sort of comment that has resulted, in recent times, in his former employer, the Helen Suzman Foundation, publicly dissociating itself from some of his outbursts. That he also, at times, makes sweeping statements without any substantiation has also resulted this year, in an apology having to be published in

the British *Sunday Times* for whom Johnson was a correspondent. He also faces possible libel action.

This book does not contain grounds for libel, but Johnson is likely to stir considerable anger with a number of bald assertions. Most noteworthy, is the claim that former South African president Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela was effectively a lame duck leader manipulated by his then deputy and now successor, Thabo Mbeki.

Johnson writes: 'Outside the government [Mandela] was a towering figure but within it he had little power. The ANC exiles exercised complete control over his actions and speeches. Had ordinary South Africans known that Mandela was so disempowered that he often wandered out of Cabinet meetings long before they ended, they would have been scandalised.'

This would indeed be a shocking revelation, if true. And not only South Africans would be scandalised. But there is no source quoted for this statement and all the plentifully available evidence shows Johnson to be plainly wrong. However, this is the sort of rumour beloved of many of South Africa's reinvented liberals who shelter under the political party umbrella of the Democratic Alliance. They practice a peculiarly South African form of liberalism where the professed ideology is filtered through the distorting prism of race. Many in the DA and certainly party leader, Tony Leon, hail Johnson as their 'merchant of ideas'.

Johnson's underlying thesis is the exceptionalism of a South Africa where there is little to choose between the nationalism of the apartheid state and the nationalism of the present government. Such a view conflates the contemporary South African ethos with the old authoritarianism. Yet the latter was a form of legislated racism while the former exists within the framework of an explicitly anti-racist and notably liberal constitution.

This does not mean that trends and tendencies within the present government and the policies pursued should be immune from criticism. Far from it. But wild and unsubstantiated assertions serve no useful purpose whatsoever.

And there are plenty of surprising and dubious assertions in this latest offering by Johnson. The businessman and former mineworkers' union leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, may, for example, be amused to find himself described as a communist. But constitutional court president Arthur Chaskalson, could well be offended at his appointment being described as 'truly Orwellian'. Archbishop Desmond Tutu may also take umbrage at being described as a 'master of self promotion', but African historians should wince at the apparent confusion between Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole.

In a syrupy epilogue, Johnson equates himself, an historian, with being a soothsayer and magician. This seems singularly appropriate, since the one deals in mystical prophecy and the other in illusion. History is the loser.

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Permanent Removal: Who Killed the Cradock Four?. By CHRISTOPHER NICHOLSON. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004. 248 pp. ISBN 1-8681-4401-1

'Permanent Removal' is a powerful account of the search for truth to the question, 'who killed the Cradock four?' The author, Christopher Nicholson, mindful of the sensitivities for the families of the dead to remember and recount, challenges himself with the task of assembling the often contradictory versions of the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and brutal murder of Mathew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonto and Sicelo Mhlauli. Nicholson recalls the political atmosphere during the 1980's, describing the harsh reality facing Mathew Goniwe and his comrades in the Eastern Cape during this period of South Africa's political history. He uses this historical context as a backdrop to the unraveling of truths behind the layers of cover-ups, deceit and denial on the part of the apartheid government ministers and members of the state security forces involved in the ordering of the 'permanent removal' of Goniwe.

The author reminds the reader of the omnipotence of the apartheid state as he recounts the official version of the murder of the Cradock four. Senior ranking members of the apartheid state security forces involved in the murders, give statements as government representatives in which they blame the killings on 'black on black' violence and seized this opportunity to reiterate their commitment to establish law and order in communities experiencing unrest across the country. Nicholson methodically assembles available evidence to uncover the extent to which senior government officials were aware of the ordering of Mathew Goniwe's 'Permanent Removal'.

He contrasts the official accounts given during the inquest into the death of the Cradock four, with the revelations made during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) amnesty hearings. Positioning the reader as a witness to the experience of the families of the four murdered men through these various truth seeking processes, the experiences of the families are reenacted as sanitized versions of the events are told and retold. The search for truth proves to be increasingly complex as snippets of truth lead the investigation to higher levels of authority within the apartheid state. In spite of increasing evidence against them and the opportunity to be granted amnesty for their crimes, the security police fail to provide compelling accounts of their role in the murders. Frustration builds as the hope for hearing the truth and promoting reconciliation is shattered by the lack of willingness on the part of the amnesty applicants to engage with the opportunity provided to them. Instead their motives become increasingly clear – to craft and calculate their statements in order to maximize the chances of being granted amnesty.

Nicholson stops short of a critique of the TRC and its amnesty process in particular. Given his legal background, a brief analysis of the TRC process would have deepened the understanding of the limitations and inadequacies of the TRC to establish collective responsibility as opposed to individual accountability. It

would have shed light on the reasons why George Bizos' overarching question (the legal council for the families) 'Who gave the order?', proved to be rhetorical in the context of the amnesty process. The book seeks to unveil the truth about who carried out the murders of Goniwe, Calata, Mkonto and Mhlauli and to expose those responsible for giving the euphemistic order to kill Goniwe.

'Permanent Removal: who killed the Cradock four?' is a chilling reminder of South Africa's brutal history and the numerous untold stories and incomplete truths that many South Africans are forced to live with. Although the book is verbose in parts which sometimes distracts from the storyline, it succeeds in its quest and reminds the reader of the cost of the political freedom South Africa now enjoys. A cost carried in the form of painful experiences and haunting memories by many victims of political violence; experiences and memories which find little comfort in the absence of establishing responsibility for the heinous crimes committed in the name of political conflict.

PAUL HAUPT

The Road to Democracy, Volume 1: 1960-1970. By SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRACY EDUCATION TRUST. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005. 756 pp.
ISBN 1-8687-2906-0

In 2001 the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) launched a research project to capture and synthesize South African liberation history from 1960 through 1994. The project would aim at a history based on previously unheard voices, and indeed at being a corrective to previous historiography, including liberal, radical and postmodern approaches. The project would further attempt to balance out the celebratory and triumphal histories and biographies of the past ten years with solid scholarship. For these purposes SADET released several teams of researchers onto a countrywide tapestry of unwritten history, there to conduct oral history interviews and to integrate findings with primary and secondary evidence.

Three years on, in 2004, the Trust released the first fruit of the fieldwork and intellectual labour of the teams – *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 1 (1960-1970)*. Twenty-four scholars, some eminent, others unknown but budding, combined to produce this 750-page bookend of a history.

Social anthropologist Bernard Magubane first places the study within post-1948 ideological, political, statutory, and resistance contexts. He asserts that 'economic prosperity cloaked political conflict' during the 1960s. The number of persons tried for the violation of apartheid and security laws in 1967-68 approached the half million mark. The much vaunted stability of the post-Rivonia 1960s was flawed, he argues. One expects then that the research findings will show the volatility of that period.

Then, in the ensuing chapters, the researchers leave the icons of the struggle backstage and indeed shine their lights of inquiry on those who participated in the struggle on the frontlines of engagement with the apartheid state. These players speak frankly of their experiences of sacrifice, pain, and pride – cadres such as Monde Mlando and Zolile Keke (from East London), Rita Ndzanga, and Elma Carolissen. This way *The Road to Democracy, Volume 1* constitutes an insider's take on history. The book addresses the transition to armed struggle, rural insurrections, and urban terror, as well as above ground political activism.

Given the turn to violence in the early 1960s, much of this volume necessarily focuses on the ANC and its military off-shoot, Umkonto weSizwe (MK), and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and its military wing, Poqo. The 'military' retaliation to repression unfolds in triumphal tone, yet the cadres attacked civilians as often as they did government installations. There was certainly been nothing military in the killing of Sipo Mango, Susie Noriet (17), Daphne Hoyi (14) and Maurice Berger. The court (in State v Mkaba and Others, *South African Law Reports*, 1965 (1), 215-218) puts it that in the case of Mango it was not a matter of open political conflict. In fact, when the first plan to kill Mango failed, the conspirators made another attempt and succeeded.

Generally, failures are not mentioned, and yet again Petrus Molefe, the MK

cadre who died in a bomb blast in Dube, and to lesser extent Benjamin Ramotse (injured in the same incident) are eased out of history by omission. It seems that Edward Feit's assessment in *Urban Revolt in South Africa* (1971), that the ANC recognized only successes and ignored failures, is confirmed in *The Road*.

A real military altercation, the Wankie campaign, however, is toned down by a prodigious amount of research and the authors succeed in achieving a balanced account. As such, it does not seem that the Wankie campaign is blown up into what it was not.

MK and Poqo cadres do tell their stories and these voices revitalize and enrich our history. Their personal traumas nuance the slaughter through which the country had come. Although Monde Mlando's story is not fleshed out – in 1952 he warned the nuns that a murderous mob was headed for St Peter Claver Catholic church and mission, later he joined the exile movement and armed struggle, and gave his fullest measure of devotion to the struggle, and he was then forgotten – he is mentioned as an example of the sacrificial ethos that prevailed at the time.

Many new stories surface, some of them clearly untested. While voices from the frontline are of course welcomed, history does not require that they be accepted uncritically.

Not much is said about the processes leading up to arrests and prosecution, except that 'informers' suffused society. This is true, but the phenomenon is not analyzed in terms of poverty and power, traditionalism and secularism, fear and survival. The result in such cases is a simplistic villain-and-hero history.

Inaccuracies, evasions and vacuums also pothole *The Road* especially with regard to early 'military' activity. It is readily conceded here that in re-imagining the past there is always a lack of evidence and failing memories – the book has a significant interview base – and that researchers naturally have to be selective. But inaccuracies suggest sloppy work, and blatant evasions are indicative of a hidden historical and political agenda. One wonders what happened to the PAC's Operation Ransom – the plot to kidnap white children in the Orange Free State and with them as ransom demand the release of PAC and Poqo cadres. And what about the story of how the activist Clippard Komsana, who knew the PAC inside out, spilled the beans?

With regard to the thwarted Poqo attack on East London, the plot here unfolds on the basis of untested testimony. Researchers conducted interviews in East London but no one called on the police officer who infiltrated Poqo and then busted the plot – which was to kill as many white civilians as possible. Even if there are incidents to be ashamed of, in history, these too must be uncovered and paraded before posterity.

The alleged cases of torture require comment also. These one-sided say-sos, often refuted as false or cases of mistaken identity at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, are uncritically accepted as fact. Several cases suggest 'victims' may have made up stories – for whatever reason: justification, staking a square in history, compensation.

At the Umtata TRC hearing for instance Zamiwonga Kati said that, in 1962 when investigated about his involvement with MK, 'We were assaulted for three

days, one comrade was injured, his name was Mr Mgabela from East London. His eardrum was ruptured and again his testicle was also ruptured, his was urinating blood.' Where Kati got this information is a mystery, because Mgabela put it in a book, for all posterity to read, 'At no stage did anyone beat me or try to change my views.' (*Fallen Walls*, 2002, 62).

Also, in his submission to the TRC Kati complained that Donald Card and a Van der Bergh had subjected him to deprivation in that they refused to let him wash his body. At the actual hearing, although led by the chairperson, Kati came up with the name of neither Card nor Van der Bergh. One would in any case have to wonder why the East London-based Card and the head of the Security Police, based in Pretoria, would bother to be in Idutywa to deny a suspect the opportunity to wash. And this on New Year's Day 1988, eighteen years after Card had resigned from the police and when he was mayor of the city of East London.

The suppression of the Pondoland rebellion can be seen in the light of the above tendencies. All the authors touching on the revolt either portray it as a glorious uprising or couch it in the euphemism of 'extensive unrest'. Nothing is said of what actually happened in the course of this 'extensive unrest' – bodies chopped up after the eyes had been cut out, huts burnt down, innocent people shot for their association with chiefs and headmen.

Detective-Sergeant Donald Card spent two years in Pondoland investigating murder and other criminal cases. So did his legend grow in this period that locals referred to him as Sigquku si Bomvu – 'red hat', for that was what he wore during the investigation! Sigquku si Bomvu single-handedly got the perpetrators to voluntarily surrender. Yet there is not a single reference to his work here, and, more importantly, to his perspective on the revolt. Card also knows more about the ANC-MK and PAC-Poqo onslaught against the apartheid state than any person living. Nothing of this is revealed in *The Road*.

In reference to the Rivonia Trial, advocate Joel Joffe described Card as 'card index' for his phenomenal memory which helped to bring many to book (*The Rivonia Story*, 1996). Yet the only reference to Card is that he had, according to one V Magaza, as paraphrased by the researcher, tortured Magaza. In the recent interview Card contested this. The researcher did not bother to interview Card and took Mgaza's word as truth.

The sub-head 'Political Executions' invites a note or two also. Several cases are pitched as 'political executions', yet evidence show many of the accused were found guilty of murder and other criminal offences. In this regard it is to its discredit that *The Road* skirts the issue and does not state that MK cadre Washington Bongco had been found guilty of and executed for murder.

The treatment of the attack on Inkie Hoyi's home (the subject of the Bongco case) also suggests sloppy work. It is in the public record that the attack on Hoyi's home took place on December 15, not December 11, and that Daphne Hoyi, 14, did not die 'in the attack' but succumbed five days later to the 85% burns sustained during the attack. This researcher clearly did not visit the East London Public Library. In fairness, however, it is granted that this matter has not found its way into the literature. East London activists Malcomess Mgabela and Monde Mkunqwana, both of whom were close to the events and knew of them

personally, are eerily silent about it in their testimony in *Fallen Walls: Voices from the Cells that Held Mandela and Havel* (2002).

In regard to the Hoyi case it can be stated that if the authors honestly visited the entwined tale of activists, 'collaborators' and the police in Duncan Village, they would have found intimidation and violence, violation of MK policy, attacks on persons, denials and claims, reality and power. These findings may have prompted them to conclude that the liberation movement, the ANC-MK in particular, had traveled different routes to freedom, some of them heinously criminal, rather than the simplistic exposition of valiant cadres taking on the oppressive political state, as is the case in *The Road*.

The Road inadvertently vindicates Feit's assertion in his classic, *Urban Revolt*, that the failure to condemn violence against persons 'made it seem that policy was only window dressing and that acts which endangered life were tacitly approved … Success was the measure; failure alone was condemned.'

Above ground activities include the efforts of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO). NUSAS emerges almost glowing, even though the black students' secession sullied its career. Steve Biko's letter to NUSAS announcing his intended resignation is here featured for the first time in a book. As SASO operated most vigorously in the 1970s this chapter obviously holds back. Chapters 15 and 16, respectively on the post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground and above ground activity in the 1960s, are excellent pieces of scholarship, the former adding detail and nuance on the back of interviews and post-1970 scholarship (and goes further than Joel Carlson, *No Neutral Ground*, 1973) and the latter improving on Gail Gerhart's seminal study (*Black Power in South Africa*, 1979).

The profile given NUSAS, the National Committee of Liberation, the African Resistance Movement shows that the power of the pen can place relatively minor groups on the centre stage of history. For the intellectual dexterity with which these groups are handled one can easily impute greater historical significance to them than they deserve.

The chapter on Robben Island emerges as a neat précis of known information. For a full exposition and analysis on politics on the Island, skip *The Road* and read Fran Buntman's excellent *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid*. When Nelson Mandela's letter books covering 1969-71 are opened – it was returned to the grand old man of South African politics on September 21, 2004 – the SADET team will have something fresh to add.

Finally, three major omissions grate. First, no attempt is made to 'solve' the murder of Albert Luthuli in Natal in 1967, except to imply the accepted 'wisdom' in struggle circles that the state had been responsible. Secondly, no mention is made of the emerging anti-apartheid sports movement. Finally, the thrust of the cultural workers in putting South Africa on international agendas is also not addressed.

Later, when the SADET team tackles the 1980s and early 1990s, they will have to grapple with similar cases as in *Volume 1*. We know that Vuyisile Mini and Washington Bongco gave the orders respectively in the Mango and Hoyi cases – even though none of the researchers accepts that Mini was convicted for

murder. The SADET team will have to contend with who killed Finkie Msomi in 1989. We know that Charles Zwane was convicted for the killing of Finkie. We still need to know who gave the order. In order for a transcendent position to be reached, the researchers will not merely go on the say-so of activists, as is often the case in *The Road…Volume 1*.

President Thabo Mbeki states in the Foreword that 'At last the lions have produced their own historians.' It is not clear if he refers to the interviewees or the contributing authors. Both are problematic because of the one-sided selectivity that suffuses their work. *The Road* does show new characters striding into history, talking frankly, if on eroded memories, and the course to South Africa's democracy is that way indeed nuanced. But some stories hop along for the inaccuracies, evasions and voids along the way.

SADET's first volume fleshes out what happened during the darkness of the 1960s, but it leans worryingly over to the side of therapy through overcompensation, although not as in classical Afro-centrism.

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