

REVIEWS

A Millimetre of Dust: Visiting Ancestral Sites. By Julia Martin. Cape Town: Kwela Books. 2008. 269 pp. ISBN 10: 0-7957-0263-9.

A Millimetre of Dust is the personal account of Julia Martin's search for the origins of humanity. Her quest leads her from her home in Muizenberg to the rocky aridity of the northern Cape – thought by some to be the cradle of humankind. She is accompanied on her journey by her husband, Michael Cope (whose book of sonnets from the northern Cape, *Ghaap*, was inspired by their journey), and their six-year-old twins, Sophie and Sky. Together they form a collective consciousness, a reminder to the reader that humanity is a plural, not a singular concept.

But it is Martin's intellect that structures this journey and shapes its significance, or, to use the central imagery of the book, she channels its flow and crafts its patterns. Her technique here is not unlike that of W.G. Sebald, a writer whom she quotes at the beginning of her book. Sebald's works often take the form of a seemingly haphazard journey, or volatile movement, where everything noted proves to be linked, significantly and mysteriously, to everything else in an intricate and, perhaps, indecipherable pattern. Like Sebald, Martin also embeds black and white photographs in her text, a visual footnote that draws attention to both the physicality and fragility of so much of what constitutes evidence of the past. In dealing with the ancient past of the northern Cape much of the evidence is in the form of stone – stone tools, rock engravings, caves and *koppies* – and Martin interrogates this stone with her sensitive imagination, and her growing knowledge of archaeology (gleaned from conversations she has with archaeologists along the way) in order that she might understand the humans who shaped it.

Part of what makes the northern Cape special is that it contains the largest concentration of stone tools on earth (Kathu), as well as the oldest continuously inhabited cave in the world (Wonderwerk) and some extraordinary rock engravings (Wildebessie Kuil and Driekopseiland), so there is no shortage of truly remarkable lithic material to examine. Though Martin is an excellent guide to these sites she is neither didactic nor opinionated. Rather, she is humble and meditative in her reflections on their significance, presenting her thoughts in simple yet highly poetic language. She is also, always, open to her surroundings, as aware of the present as of the past.

It is not only stone that serves as evidence of the past. Martin has a particular fondness for animals and nature in general. Humans once had a very close relationship with animals and with nature, so close, indeed, that the boundaries were not always precise. Proof of this intertwined relationship is contained within the pages of the Bleek-Lloyd Collection at the University of Cape Town, a

source which records the stories and folklore of the /Xam (the now extinct northern Cape San). Martin read these tales of humans and animals in the belief that they help to make sense of the landscape or, as she quotes Tim Ingold as saying: 'Telling a story is not like weaving a tapestry to *cover up the world*, it is rather a way of guiding the attention of listeners and readers *into* it.' Though the /Xam are gone, animals and plants may still be observed in 'nature parks' or farms and also in museums – stuffed, dried and mounted. Martin is a very sensitive reader of museums, and the objects within them, and one of the most delightful chapters of her book describes her family's trip to Kimberley's McGregor Museum. One is reminded of Nabokov's similar delight in certain objects – 'transparent things' through which the past shines.

The more recent past is also present in the artefacts of the Kimberley Mining Museum and the forgotten cemetery of Kimberley's early mining days, unearthed by chance by municipal workers digging a storm-water trench in 2003. Martin notes the opinion of certain historians, that it was at Kimberley that apartheid first took its characteristic forms. The legacy of apartheid is also present in her humorous appendix to Nancy Jacobs's study of the appropriation of that town's spring, 'The Eye of Kuruman', by those who sought to channel its flow for their own purposes (*Environment, Power and Injustice*, 2003). It is somewhat surprising that Martin does not pay tribute to another writer who wrote an account of his travels in this region – Dan Jacobson. Jacobson's *The Electronic Elephant* was published in 1994 and, like Martin's book, is concerned with evoking the past through an encounter with the present in the dusty streets of Kimberley, Kuruman and Barkly West. He is also a writer who, in *Heshel's Kingdom* (1998), compares the Big Hole of Kimberley to the past, 'the terrible echoless and bottomless darkness that gives back nothing' (a passage that appears, incidentally, in Sebald's *Austerlitz*).

Martin's view of the past is less terrifying, less hopeless. Hers is a far more optimistic view. The beautiful, gentle rhythms of her prose, as she delights in 'things', suggest not only that certain aspects of the past are retrievable (all is not lost) but that they can stir in us 'recognition and remembering' of the consciousness ('our original mind') that we share with our ancestors. Implicit in her view of life is that when we shape the flow of this consciousness into forms we are being creative, and that creativity is a feature of humanity. But it is also creative to be able to recognise forms, or a pattern, in flows we have not shaped. By making us aware of this, Julia Martin has, through the story of her journey, reminded us that contemplation of the past has the power to make us human.

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Studying the history of archaeology is a growing trend around the world. In South Africa, it has become an important part of the post-apartheid critique of the discipline. Examinations of early research and researchers have shown just how much they were influenced by the social and political settings in which they operated: imperial policies, nationalist agendas and competition between individuals and institutions all played parts in the shaping of the nascent discipline of archaeology in South Africa.

As with other branches of archaeology, the study of San rock art has a history turbulent with the influence of successive political, social and theoretical movements. These issues and their impact on the study and interpretation of San rock art have been dealt with by a number of researchers.

One of the most influential of the early recorders of San rock art was George William Stow. Although spending much of his time engaged in geological surveys on the fringes of the colonies, Stow developed an interest in rock art and made painted copies of paintings and engravings from a considerable number of sites. It is Stow's work on rock art and his copies of it that are the subject of Pippa Skotnes's book *Unconquerable Spirit: George Stow's History Paintings of the San*.

The most interesting aspect of Stow's copies is that a number of them were sent to Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd in Cape Town in 1875. Bleek and Lloyd had several /Xam San living with them and were studying the /Xam language and folklore. They showed Stow's copies to their informants, who commented on the paintings. There are only a handful of other contemporary San comments on copies of rock paintings. These comments are what make the Stow copies so interesting and useful.

Strangely, Skotnes makes little of this key importance of the Stow copies, reducing discussion of the San comments to an endnote (number 16). She does, however, reproduce several of the San comments in juxtaposition to the relevant copies, but with no explanation as to what they are, how they came to be made, or how they may help in understanding the paintings. As historians have long argued, documents – either written or oral – do not stand on their own, but need to be interpreted within the specific historical, social and cultural contexts in which they were produced. The informants' comments on the copies need just such a discussion.

Skotnes's way of understanding the paintings is split into two, somewhat contradictory, perspectives. First, she seems to favour following Stow's approach to understanding the art. Stow saw the art as a record of real historical events. As Skotnes phrases it, 'I have emphasised, in their presentation here, the "history" paintings that Stow copied, reflecting his desire to reveal the art as, at least in large part, a record of actual historical events and characters' (21). Since the mid-1980s it has been demonstrated that paintings containing historical subjects were

ritual in nature and used in the social negotiation and contestation of changing historical circumstances. They are not necessarily depictions of particular events.

Whilst Stow's view of the paintings as historical narrative may have been acceptable within the historical context in which he was working, its continued acceptance today is questionable. Skotnes not only provides no critique of Stow's historical narrative approach, but her extensive quotations of Stow's historical reviews in juxtaposition with his copies suggest her continued acceptance of this approach. No mention is made of subsequent research that refutes the approach.

Her second approach is also difficult to accept: 'To understand, one needs to be alert to the drama of the day, the passage of the sun across the sky, the crying of the winds, the coming of the rain, the hum of the insects, and then, as the light fades, one needs to listen to the sounds and suggestions of the night' (75). Such a position is nothing more than a verbosely stated version of the long-discredited 'gaze and guess' approach: anyone's guess is as good as any other. It ignores the last forty years' worth of careful, ethnographically based scholarship.

Presumably it is this disregard for careful scholarship that leads Skotnes to a long defence of the inaccuracies and misrepresentations in Stow's copies. These inaccuracies may be accepted as a product of the time and context in which they were made. However, to extend this lack of concern with accuracy to recent professional research is absurd. To state that 'contemporary archaeologists ... who believe that the copies made in recent years are more accurate, ... fail to recognise just how subjective is any method of reproduction and how much recent copies are, just like Stow's paintings, nothing more (or less) than interpretations' (75) is itself a misrepresentation. As an archaeologist engaged in the recording of rock art, I can assure readers that the limitations of copying images are well understood by archaeologists. The copies made by archaeologists are technical drawings made for a particular purpose and to illustrate particular features. They are not vaguely conceived 'reproductions'.

The book is lavishly produced in full colour and most of Stow's known copies of rock paintings and a sample of his copies of engravings are reproduced. The colour reproduction is excellent, certainly far better than any of the previous publications of Stow's copies. As such, it is a useful collection of the copies, although some notes linking the copies to their original publication and the commentaries that went alongside them would be useful.

Sitting as it does across two domains, the book can be assessed in two ways, either as a coffee-table book or more rigorously in terms of the historical commentary it presents. The first is easily dealt with: the book is certainly attractive; this reviewer is in no doubt that many coffee tables will be happily adorned with this volume. As a scholarly work, however, the book is somewhat lacking.

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Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company. By Kerry Ward. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. ix + 340 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-74599-4.

Over the past decade or so there has been a perceptible resurgence in interest in the Indian Ocean as a historical space. After a period of relative ‘obscurity’ and marginalisation in relation, for example, to the robust (some might say overly robust) field of Atlantic history, it appears that the Indian Ocean is once again gaining in appeal among scholars of diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Drawn perhaps by its potential as an ‘in-between area’¹ or by its appeal as a ‘watery site of cross-cultural exchange and struggles’² – particularly at a time when a great deal of discussion continues to take place about the deep-seated ‘crisis’ facing the academy (most especially the Humanities and perhaps most visibly in Area Studies) – the Indian Ocean is re-emerging as rich terrain for the exploration and writing of ‘post-national’ and ‘post-Area’ histories. It is also, as part of the so-called ‘new thalassology’,³ contributing in vital ways to broader attempts to historicise the world’s oceans.

Kerry Ward’s *Networks of Empire* fits squarely within this larger context. Published as part of Cambridge University Press’s well-regarded ‘Studies in Comparative World History’ series, the book is a rich and exciting new addition both to Indian Ocean scholarship and to studies of empire. There is no doubting that this is an ambitious book. Its focus is on the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the seventeenth and especially eighteenth centuries, but the author has sought to rewrite the history of the Company by placing forced migration between Batavia and Cape Town – in the form of legally sanctioned slave trading, political exile and penal transportation – at the centre of her analysis. Although Ward notes the importance of slave labour to the existence of the VOC in the Indian Ocean, she examines most closely political banishment and penal transportation as ‘forms that have received far less attention in the study of the Dutch East India Company’ (285). Perhaps most innovatively, the book reconceptualises the imperial realm of the Company in the Indian Ocean as constituted by overlapping commercial, legal, administrative and political networks whose competing and often contradictory dynamics were nevertheless critical in structuring VOC sovereignty throughout its oceanic empire. Ward is thus able to show convincingly how coercion and forced passage were integral to the existence, functioning and ultimately power of the early modern Dutch empire.

There is much to admire in *Networks of Empire*. Central to the argument is a view of the VOC empire as manifest through ‘cultural, legal, administrative, transportation, territorial, military and exchange networks that amalgamated spa-

1 I. Hofmeyr in ‘AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,’ *American Historical Review*, 111(5), 2006.

2 D. Gabaccia, ‘A Long Atlantic in a Wider World’, *Atlantic Studies*, 1(1), 2004: 1.

3 M. Vink, ‘Indian Ocean Studies and the “New Thalassology”’, *Journal of Global History* 2, 2007: 41-62.

tially and over time into an imperial web whose sovereignty was effectively created and maintained but always partial and contingent' (6). Ward's use of the concept of the imperial network as a key structuring mechanism (and 'visual organising principle', 41) owes much to the work of others – as the author acknowledges – but *Networks of Empire* seeks to develop this analytical framework 'by alternating between spatial and temporal levels of analysis' (9). It also allows her to integrate macro- and micro-levels of analysis throughout the book. The focus within the Dutch imperial web specifically on Batavia and Cape Town thus enables the author to recast the VOC empire as a relational enterprise in which the social, legal and political dynamics of these 'imperial nodes' were interwoven and mutually constitutive in arenas of shared histories of the establishment of Dutch sovereignty; this process was structurally imperative to the broader imperial network of forced migration and in turn was influenced by it. By placing the establishment of Company imperial sovereignty in Java and South Africa within the same analytical framework, one of the book's greatest strengths lies in resituating VOC history within the larger context of an Indian Ocean empire of 'connected histories'.⁴ In so doing, Ward contributes in important ways to the historiography of empires generally and to the increasingly dynamic field of Indian Ocean history. But the methodological innovation of *Networks of Empire* in examining two distinct yet inter-related imperial nodes within a single frame allows the author to contribute also to the histories of South Africa and Indonesia.

The book is divided into seven chapters that take the reader through the complexities of the dynamics of VOC administrative rule, the structures and jurisdiction of the Company's legal system, and the local and trans-oceanic politics that it enabled in relation to regimes of forced migration in the eighteenth century Indian Ocean. A very long first chapter introduces core conceptual frameworks and makes the case for regarding the VOC empire, and early modern empires generally, as 'comprised of the material manifestations of lands and peoples conquered' in which 'durable networks, with regional circuits and sub-circuits, and territorially and institutionally based nodes of regulatory power, operated not only on land and sea but discursively as well' (6). Ward makes the case, as she does in other parts of the book, for the unique nature of forced migration in the VOC empire by comparing it with the Portuguese and British cases. Unlike the latter, whose centralised and integrated political structures were underpinned by the dual authority of either the Crown and Church, or the Crown and Parliament, as the legal authorities mandating forced migration to the colonies, there was no legal mechanism in the United Provinces for the removal of criminal or political elements from the metropole to the Company's colonies and settlements. Although based on the laws of the United Provinces, the VOC legal network effectively 'operated separately from the exercise of law in the Netherlands' (15) and therefore structured sovereignty in the Indian Ocean through spheres of colonial inter-relation. The chapter also underscores a related central element of

4 I draw here on a formulation by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Networks of Empire: undermining the conceptual binary of metropole and colony which in recent years has been influential in shaping intellectual frameworks of studies of empire. Ward's approach and focus on imperial networks and the nodal points that structured them in the ocean thus add greatly to the recent work of scholars such as Thomas Metcalf⁵ and Tony Ballantyne who have argued for the significance of what might be termed a 'lateralist' perspective in understanding empire and imperial relationships as structured around and dependent upon 'a series of crucial horizontal linkages among colonies'.⁶

A detailed analysis of the administrative imperatives of the VOC and of the evolution of its legal structures and the dynamics of the establishment of sovereignty in its empire forms the subject of the book's second chapter. In linking the development of public international law in the United Provinces with the development of the VOC legal network in the Indian Ocean, Ward argues that the dynamics of state formation in the metropole were 'deeply imbricated with those of the VOC empire' (53). The chapter is useful in showing the processes through which the Company evolved from a trading enterprise into an oceanic empire. It exposes the multi-layered dimensions to VOC rule and the tensions that developed both between the 'Seventeen Gentlemen' in the United Provinces and the High Government in Batavia, and Batavia Company officials and Cape Company officials and their respective settler populations, over divergent interests (the latter wished to maintain social order while the former were interested in securing labour and discipline). The interplay between and across these dynamics of imperial rule in the Indian Ocean – particularly as it reinforced and reflected the making of a legal network seeking the application of justice through exile and penal transportation – was important in shaping the nature and reach of the Dutch socio-political (and economic) presence.

In chapter three Ward examines the legal mechanisms and institutional structures in Batavia that criminalised behaviour and produced convicts for penal transportation and political figures for banishment to the Cape and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. Indigenous slaves and Company servants were routinely punished for transgressions that ranged from theft to acts of sexual 'deviancy'; in offering a close reading of the criminal record of the Council of Justice for the period between the 1730s and the 1750s, Ward is concerned to provide the reader with an understanding of the 'practical application in everyday life' (90) of Company law as it sought to exercise control over the populations under its jurisdiction. She accomplishes this in impressive detail and is thus able to show the complex nature of Batavia's socio-urban landscape, where relationships and social interactions cut across ethnic and racial lines in revealing ways.

Networks of Empire shines most brightly, however, in three subsequent chapters that form the core of the book. The first, 'The Cape Cauldron' (chapter four), is excellent in resituating the Cape within the wider imperial world of the

5 T.R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India and the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2007), especially the introduction.

6 T. Ballantyne, 'Rereading the Archive and Opening Up the Nation-State: Colonial Knowledge in South Asia (and Beyond)' in A. Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003): 102-121.

Indian Ocean, of which it formed an integral – if often overlooked – part as an ‘oceanic crossroads’ (169). The development of the Cape settlement was shaped by its connections to the VOC’s network of forced migration through which a range of slaves (including individuals from Mauritius where the Company maintained a settlement until the early eighteenth century), convicts and political exiles were brought to Africa from the Company’s Indian Ocean empire. Ward discusses the intricacies of the extension of territorial sovereignty at the Cape through treaty-making in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the Khoekhoe that ultimately altered the nature of Company jurisdiction ‘from being embodied in people to being resident on the land’ (163). This transformative process not only eroded the sovereignty of the Khoekhoe (and others), who were increasingly brought under VOC jurisdiction; it contributed also to the growing tensions and conflicts that developed in the late seventeenth century between VOC elites and the free burgher population whose growing resentment at what it regarded as an intrusive and overbearing presence in their lives at the Cape crystallised around the consecutive governorship of Simon van der Stel and especially his son Willem Adriaan between 1679 and 1707. Settlers had become angry with the governor for attempting to monopolise local labour supplies and for adopting a hard-line attitude to dissenters and opponents which included banishment to Batavia. Access of Company elites to imperial and patrimonial networks that were beyond the reach of free burghers – coupled with a shift in land access in the early eighteenth century from freehold grants to loan farms on which rents were paid to the VOC and the VOC’s increasing stranglehold on local markets and the economy – fuelled settler alienation and anger for much of the century.

While these tensions were a factor in influencing the dynamics of colonial society at the Cape, it was – as Ward reminds us often – its embeddedness within the Company’s broader legal network and circuit of forced migration connected to Batavia and other sites in Southeast Asia that was of great significance in shaping the social fabric of the Dutch colony. Slaves, convicts and free-blacks, along with Javanese royal political prisoners and a number of minor political exiles, forged a complex and at times contested existence in Cape Town and on Robben Island which, despite Dutch intentions to use banishment as a tool of political and criminal control over colonial populations, exposed its limitations and the unstable nature of social categories based on ethnicity, rank and freedom. Further, they produced unintended consequences for the Company’s oceanic empire that were to have profound effects. These are themes explored in chapters five and six whose narrative arc moves seamlessly between Java and the Cape. Ward focuses on the complexities of the forced migration nexus between Java, Makassar and the Cape, and develops an analysis of Dutch politics of exile that demonstrates the interactive influences of the flow of elite and non-elite individuals across the Indian Ocean. A number of these were Muslims whose presence the Company deemed inimical to its diplomatic or commercial interests. Exile was thus used by Dutch authorities to remove ‘dangerous’ individuals in networks of banishment operating as ‘a political strategy that simultaneously bound together its imperial realm and wove the Cape into the fabric of Southeast Asian politics’ (191). Ward is particularly lucid in her discussion of the bi-directional influence

of Islamic practices in the VOC empire and exposes how Muslims challenged the boundaries the Company attempted to erect between ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ individuals and the distinctions it sought to maintain between ethnic and religious categories. Prominent individuals like Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar in South Sulawesi epitomised the unintended consequences of exile for the Company: far from undermining his influence as a religious figure in the western Indian Ocean, his removal from Southeast Asia to the Cape provided a fillip to the spread of Islam there. Although the Company could control the movement of individuals through its network of forced migration, it was largely unable to curtail practices in everyday life which in the case of Shaykh Yusuf continued well after his death. Ward highlights the Indian Ocean Islamic networks to which Shaykh Yusuf and others were connected – and the circulation of mystical Islam in the form of religious object and writing – both to place Cape Islam within a broader regional reformist context and to suggest the depth of Islamic practice across the ocean.

Despite its seemingly enduring quality, the VOC imperial network did not outlast the British takeover of the Cape in 1795. Over a relatively short period lasting about twenty years, Company rule came to an end as the Cape was incorporated into new British imperial networks in the Indian Ocean. But the influence of the Company’s network of exile outlasted its oceanic presence, as demonstrated in Java where great-grandsons of the King of Madura (banished to the Cape in the 1740s) appealed for support to the British Crown in reclaiming the throne of Madura from an heir they considered illegitimate because he had been installed by the Dutch in furtherance of their own interests.

The strengths of *Networks of Empire* are many. The book does, nonetheless, contain a few issues that were distracting. Ward was not always successful at reformulating language that was clearly drawn from a dense doctoral dissertation, which meant at times that parts of the narrative were either overwhelmed by detail (132), did not have a clear objective or sharp focus (104, 136), or were awkwardly expressed in long, rambling sentences (14, 179). Of course, these in no way detract from the overall significance of the work. Ward is to be congratulated for producing a fine book which challenges scholars to reconsider conceptual frameworks in the study of early modern empires. Her insights can be applied more broadly to deepen our understanding of empires as economic, political, social, cultural, ideational and discursive entities whose connections extended beyond the oceanic ‘borders’ of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. This is a long-overdue perspective whose unquestionable challenges (multiple research languages, balancing multi-sited research agendas, questions regarding locational imperatives) perhaps urge us to work far more collaboratively than has hitherto been the case across the humanities.

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Slavery, Emancipation and Colonial Rule in South Africa. By Wayne Dooling. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. 2007. xi + 249 pp. ISBN 978-186914-1103.

Wayne Dooling's book covers a large swathe of Cape history, from the eighteenth through the late nineteenth century, although he also makes forays into the even earlier period. Dooling analyses the myriad ways in which the Cape colonial settler class of former slaveholders managed to secure their rule even after slave emancipation had threatened the very economic and social foundations of their society. Paying attention to economics, Dooling argues that to the extent that the Cape gentry remained in power, it was those who had seized the moment and made alliances with both older connections and new sources of credit.

The first half of Dooling's book covers now fairly well-known territory: the rise of the slaveholding economy, the coming of amelioration and, finally, slave emancipation. Chapter one analyses the rise of the Cape gentry. Dooling attends to the significance of landholding by widows as an important part of the economy of slavery in the Cape. There are certainly very interesting comparisons to be made in this regard with slavery in Latin America, for example. The second chapter examines the coming of British rule and particularly the way that the Khoisan were incorporated under colonial legislation. Dooling's argument, which he has also made in other publications, about the importance of a moral economy of honour to slaveholders' views of their society and the maintenance of the slaveholding regime is very welcome. It would have been good to see Dooling engage more with the work of Nigel Penn on Khoisan struggles against the encroachment of the colonial regime.

The following chapters in the book are primarily concerned with the transformations in economy and society following the ending of Cape slavery (after four years of so-called apprenticeship) in 1838. Dooling charts in very helpful detail the way credit was and was not extended to former slaveholding individuals, and the importance of this to determining those who survived the economic challenges of slave emancipation. Chapter three addresses the ending of slavery. This reader misses an engagement with the burgeoning literature on gender, slavery, and emancipation, both in the Cape and elsewhere which has recast some of the debates around the nature of power in slaveholding systems. However, the study of credit, which Dooling provides at a very local level, is fascinating and significant. He shows how prior relationships within the slaveholding class were an important means of securing credit, and that only some farmers were able to access the credit from banks in Cape Town.

In chapter four, Dooling analyses the challenges that the workings of a free labour market, if not an ideally free one, brought to former slaveholders. He challenges Marincowitz's argument that the rural Cape economy in the Western districts remained 'backward' into the late nineteenth century. Instead, he shows the degree to which various farmers mechanised their agricultural production as a means of remaining competitive. He argues that even in comparative perspective,

Cape wheat farming was very progressive, having been almost fully mechanised as early as the 1860s. The final chapter charts the crisis of the 1860s when farmers were caught up in drought and a long-lasting recession.

This book contributes to our growing knowledge of the rural Western Cape in the grand transition from slavery to the rise of wage labour, especially in its attention to the extension of credit and the way that members of the former slave-holding elite were able to maintain their dominance after emancipation.

Pamela Scully

Women's Studies and African Studies

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This is a book about the Arabic Study Circle that was founded in 1954 in Durban by a group of Gujarati-speaking Muslims. These men were passionate about breaking away from a dogmatic understanding of Islam. They were inspired by modernist scholars such as Muhammad Abdu in Egypt and Ahmad Khan in India, who projected Islam as the religion of reason, science and individualism. Circle members exemplified their search for meaning in a changing world. Arabic, not Urdu, was for them the key to the discovery of new meanings in the Qur'an. If one lived in Durban, or had some interest in Arabic, one would easily be able to identify with the sub-themes of this book: the history of the middle-class Indian Muslim community, the biography of Dr Daud Mall, the efforts to promote Arabic at schools, the popular speech contests, and the vilification of Muhammad Asad and Salman Nadvi.

The book is not only about the Arabic Study Circle, but also about the Durban Indian Muslim community. Jeppie states: 'We learn about a subculture ... in a minority situation; we learn also of extended conflicts over doctrine ...; and we learn about hybrid organisational methods, often mixing modernist forms and particularistic sympathies' (9). Furthermore, it expresses the ethos and practices of South African civil society, not only its religious minorities (9). The study about the organisation also provides a better understanding of the larger world of organised Islam in one city; and with transnational ramifications linking South Asia, the Middle East and the West to a single ethno-religious section of the city.

While *The Teaching of Arabic in South Africa: History and Methodology* (ed. Y. Mohamed, 1997) was the first systematic book on Arabic in the South African context, Jeppie's is the first to focus on Arabic in the Durban context. In the first part of the book (chapters 1–3) the author provides the cultural-historical context in which the Arabic Study Circle emerged. This includes information about population, ethnic groups, religious scholars and their theological orientations, and the political context of apartheid. Jeppie skilfully captures the mood and atmosphere of the 1950s in Durban. He provides us with interesting biographical detail about Dr Daud Mall, the founder of the Circle, who was strolling one afternoon near his surgery and 'peeped into a hall where he saw a gathering of thoughtful young men and women, madrasa teachers among them, but all apparently modern in posture and disposition and in Western dress like himself. The bespectacled and impressive figure of Prof. Hussain stood in front of the class' (32). Dr Mall was impressed with how the Aligarh professor provided a word-for-word explanation of the whole of surah Yusuf (chapter of Joseph). This was innovative for that time when students were accustomed only to reciting and memorising the Qur'an. Thus, Dr Mall was inspired and motivated to introduce Arabic as a matriculation subject in the public schools.

Jeppie's historical narrative is vivified by the biographical detail he provides of important personages. The author introduces two controversial figures, Joseph Perdu and Muhammad Asad (d. 1992). The former was a Bahai missionary, and the latter a Jewish [not German] convert to Islam and author of *The Road to Mecca* and *The Message of the Qur'an*. Mr Makki, the editor of the *Muslim Digest* and *Ramadan Annual*, accused Asad of espousing the so-called Qadiani idea that Jesus died a natural death. Although Asad shared in this view, he was not inspired by Qadiani sources, but classical commentaries on the Qur'an.

The biography of Perdu, covered in two chapters, appears to digress from the focus of the book. However, it does serve the purpose of providing more insight into Dr Mall's mind and the sensitivity of the local community. It is evident that Dr Mall admired Perdu's rationality and eloquence. Dr Mall states: 'He [Perdu] was a professional, he was multi-faceted. I would say, as a speaker, a genius, a gifted speaker who spoke with authority, quoting the Qur'an, quoting hadith, quoting farsi, French everything' (68). Impressed with Perdu's talents, and while even knowing that the man was not behaving as a Muslim, Dr Mall hosted him in Durban. Dr Mall took a long time to discover the true identity and beliefs of Joseph Perdu. When Circle members discovered his Iranian identity and his Bahai missionary motives, they distanced themselves from him. But this did not diminish the Circle's tarnished image, and Makki continued to accuse the Circle of promoting Qadiani ideas.

The author concludes with the legacy of the Circle, which became the precursor to the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa and the Islamic Propagation Centre. The Circle lost its popularity among the youth after the 1970s. Jeppie states: 'Ultimately the effects of the Circle's influence would create the conditions of its own gradual disappearance as a tangible association with an agenda and direction' (108). One reason given for its failure was its lack of innovation. Its most tangible achievement was the introduction of Arabic at schools and the publication of Arabic textbooks.

Jeppie has a lucid and lively style of narrating history. Every new personage introduced is immediately vivified with biographical facts, and every new place named is immediately described. Jeppie is admirably impartial. This does not mean that he does not have his own views, but they are supported by historical facts, not conjecture. Unlike the physicist who merely describes natural phenomena, Jeppie integrates factual account with penetrating insight into the complexities of human nature. His historical style is not only in the compilation of facts, but also in the lucidity of expressing these facts. It is evident that the book was not written in haste, but every care was taken to avoid any obscurity in meaning. Thus, this book provides us with unbiased information in a clear manner, and it has filled an important gap in the history of an organisation and the community in which it emerged.

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It is one of the recurrent features of colonial history that many of those who made their fortunes in the colonies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries chose not to reside permanently there, either living largely in the metropolis or commuting between the old country and the new. But this could be considered an advantage for South African art galleries, as it was to galleries in other parts of the British Empire. For when they benefited from the philanthropy of successful colonial entrepreneurs who were art lovers, the collections that they received, as donations or bequests acknowledging the profits the colonies had bestowed, had been assembled in the flourishing art markets of Britain at a time when the markets of the colonies were in their infancy.¹ Those inclined to look gift horses in the mouth might find it disappointing that the customarily rather conventional taste of these self-made millionaires meant that their collections were lacking in avant-garde modern works. Others might bemoan the unfortunate disregard of South African art in the early years of the country's public galleries when holdings were so strongly flavoured by donations of conservative foreign art. Yet these gifts have lent a resonance to gallery acquisitions that have in any event more than made up for the previous neglect of local art, even if the highpoints of modernist twentieth-century art have remained largely out of reach of their modest budgets.²

Anna Tietze is certainly one of those who fully appreciate the value of these collections and her writing could be seen as something of a campaign to have it reassessed, with much of her work focused on early collections gifted to Iziko South African National Gallery. Her most recent research on the artworks bequeathed to the gallery by Abe Bailey has resulted in the publication of the full catalogue that is the subject of this review. In it Tietze argues that not only is the Abe Bailey Collection of value to the newer breed of art historians who strive to understand art as a social manifestation of the periods within which it was produced, but that there is much merit in the collection in its own right, and she writes about the works with admirable enthusiasm. The attractive layout of the publication with its full colour illustrations, too, encourages a fresh assessment of these works, where clichés about not undervaluing gift horses seem particularly pertinent, as a high proportion of this collection is devoted to sporting paintings and prints and a number of fine equine 'portraits'.

1 Tietze points out that the availability of works for sale on the British art market from private collections was increased by the 1882 Settled Lands Act which, to avert a crisis on large English estates, allowed trustees to sell off possessions.

2 An exception was the collection put together for the 1910 opening of the Johannesburg Art Gallery by Sir Hugh Lane at the behest of Lady Florence Philips, which was unusually modern for the time even if not what might be thought of today as avant-garde. But neither taste nor budgets encouraged South African galleries, nor Johannesburg itself in subsequent acquisitions of the earlier twentieth century, to follow this example.

The catalogue opens with a brief account of Abe Bailey's life. Born in 1864 to an English father and Scottish mother, he spent his early childhood in the Cape, but attended school in England. He also began his career there, working in a trading company before returning to South Africa, where he was to become one of the country's leading mining magnates. Twice married and fathering seven children, Bailey maintained family homes in London and Sussex, but spent much time himself on his farm estate near Colesberg and at Rust-en-Vrede in Muizenberg, where in 1940 he was laid to rest on the hillside above the house. Tietze tells us that he always acknowledged that South Africa provided opportunities that would not have been afforded him in Britain, enabling someone who (in Bailey's own down-to-earth mixed metaphors) 'did not come out of the top drawer ... to rise from the bottom of the ladder' (3-4). It was no doubt because of his affection for the country that fostered his good fortune that he bequeathed his art collection to the South African National Gallery, as well as setting up various other benefactions. Not the least of these was the Abe Bailey Trust which continues to support initiatives for British and Afrikaans South Africans to 'work together wholeheartedly in devotion to the interests of their ... common country' (6) – and sponsored the publication of this catalogue.

Disappointingly little is known about Bailey's collecting practice, other than that he seems to have made his purchases through Leggatt Bros of Piccadilly – not a fruitful source of information for the researcher, as Tietze points out, since their records were destroyed during World War Two. But the nature of the collection reveals much about the collector: Bailey's artworks might be said to reflect the social aspirations that formed part of the well-to-do life that his wealth provided. His success with his racing stables and his enthusiasm for hunting explain the acquisition of a remarkably large range of paintings and prints of fox hunting, game shooting and horse racing. Enjoying the leisure pursuits of the upper classes despite his demanding professional career, Bailey seems to have organised his life to suit the racing and hunting calendar, although instead of merely transferring from town house to country estate and back again like the English gentry, he moved between continents. Tietze describes how Bailey's travel arrangements revolved around these interests, ensuring that he arrived in Britain in time for the Derby, and left only after he had enjoyed the pheasant-shooting season. It is hardly surprising then that he collected pictures that reflected the pursuits that gave him so much pleasure, paintings and prints made chiefly by artists who depicted this sporting life in the earlier nineteenth century when it was at its height, with the addition of some contemporary paintings of racehorses from Bailey's own stable. From the arresting repose of George Stubbs's classic horse studies dating from the late eighteenth century to the freer paintwork of Alfred Munnings's depictions of Bailey's winners in the twentieth, the works are characterised by an accessible representational style which was no doubt also appealing to Bailey, who does not seem to have had any interest in the experimental art being produced in the earlier twentieth century when he was assembling his collection.

Other than that they fall into the same general stylistic bracket of admired painting skills in the service of naturalistic representation, the portraits Bailey acquired, including fine examples by such well-known British artists as Reynolds,

Raeburn and Romney, seems harder to explain. While a few represent esteemed contemporaries, such as Lord Milner and Cecil John Rhodes, the majority are eighteenth-century works. Tietze suggests that they took the place of a pedigreed lineage for the *nouveau riche* who lacked their own upper-class forebears. 'It mattered little to a collector like Bailey that the portraits he collected ... were of people with no connection to himself or his family. They signified Heritage, and aristocratic grandeur, and offered an ideal to which one might aspire' (7). In that way the portraits too may reflect the aspirations of the 'top drawer' life that Bailey was leading at the time he bought these works.

Tietze uses these principal categories of subject matter to organise the first part of her catalogue into portraits and sporting paintings – the latter further subdivided by horse portraits and racing, hunting, game shooting, coaching and scenes of country life – and a small section that is a catch-all for miscellaneous works. The second part is arranged by dividing works on paper into two sections – drawings and watercolours, and prints – with similar subject categories used again for additional subdivisions. It is one of the difficulties in writing on a large and diverse collection that obligations of coverage can defeat aspirations to achieve continuity. Tietze employs an introduction for each section, giving credence to her conviction that all deserve our equal attention. However, the number and significance of the works do lead to differences. For example, most of the portraits have enough independent interest, regarding either their subjects or their artists or both, to warrant individual entries (presented in a distinct font to differentiate them from the text of the accompanying essay) and they are few enough to make this possible. While there are further notes of this kind, the sporting works, of which there are well over two hundred, are inevitably not given this attention. Instead sporting painters are given the dignity of individual biographical entries (unexpectedly including George Morland),³ which is not granted the portraitists. It was probably felt that much material was available on the portrait painters elsewhere, which is not the case with the less known sporting artists. But this would not apply to the makers of prints and they are not accorded individual entries, unless as the painters of the originating works from which prints were made.

The small and diverse units of text and information that make up each section mean that this is perhaps not so much a book for reading from cover to cover as for consulting. Although there is no index, the useful appendix with a full list of works acts as one, giving the page numbers where the works are illustrated, usually adjacent to the relevant text. It is, however, not clear how the works were arranged under each artist in the list – not apparently by title or date or SANG accession number – so that it may take a little more effort to locate a particular work. The 'bytes' of different types of information in the catalogue lend themselves perfectly to the excellent website that has been constructed for the collection (www.abebailey.org), which can also be used as a kind of index, and where

3 George Morland did paint country scenes, but is usually thought of as a commentator on rustic life rather than being involved with the sports of the well-to-do.

those interested can study larger images than the sections on the ubiquitous sporting paintings and prints in the catalogue usually provide. The website does, however, reveal a few idiosyncrasies. For example, while the search list has painters organised alphabetically in the customary way, that for the printmakers is alphabetised by first not family name!

I came across another oddity when focusing on the detailed comparison of George Stubbs's *Two Bay Hunters by a Tree in an Open Landscape* and Benjamin Marshall's *The Old Favourite*. Puzzled by Tietze's reference to the structure of the stable and a glimpse of sky in the background of the Marshall painting, not evident in the reproduction on page 35, I turned to the website. It was to reveal the vagaries of illustration: the image in the catalogue has been cropped at the top so that these details are not visible; they can be seen in the website image, but there the image is reversed.

The comparison of Stubbs and Marshall is introduced by Tietze to argue a case for the diversity of style in animal pictures. But while it is certainly true of this pair of works and others like them, it is stretching a point to make the same claims for the sporting works in the collection in general. Many of them were designed as illustrations for publications such as Henry Alken's *National Sports of Great Britain* or journals such as *The Sporting Magazine* rather than as independent works of art, and they do display a certain sameness. It may be that the small images in the catalogue impede our sense of their differences, but in truth their commonality of style is part of their charm, and characteristically encourages an anecdotal rather than an aesthetic appreciation. Their value rests chiefly in the information they offer about society and the sporting practices of their time. Yet this does not make them less interesting as a visual genre that followed certain conventions – including one that Tietze herself refers to in the depiction of horses galloping with all four legs extended in a 'rocking horse' pose – and they might have warranted fuller consideration had space allowed.

Tietze does not in fact give a great deal of attention to visual analysis in this catalogue, no doubt feeling that the works speak for themselves. Instead she concentrates more on providing introductions that will facilitate understanding of the context of the works: the different types of paintings, their subject matter, their social milieu, and their media. The works in the miscellaneous section, such as Dughet's Italianate landscapes, paradoxically receive rather more individual attention, presumably because they are not covered by the broader themes that Tietze has selected. In the thematic essays, she writes on such topics as the status of portraiture in the eighteenth century, attitudes to hunting and its historical development, the evolution of guns and the effect on sport, and the legal limitations on game shooting (although here the text (51) is misleading, saying that 'Game Laws, in force in Britain from 1671 to 1831, prescribed the range of animals that all but wealthy landowners ... were allowed to shoot', which should surely have read 'than none but wealthy landowners ... were allowed to shoot'). There are also short sections on watercolour painting, and on reproductive prints and printmaking techniques. The discussions are all necessarily brief in a publication of only some 150 pages when so much space is allocated to the catalogue images. But they nonetheless include some anecdotes to enliven the

text, such as the gift of Indian muslin by Edward Parry to his sisters, who were depicted by Romney clad in the resulting dresses, Thomas Asherton Smith's taste for dandyism as well as his personal ownership of a pack of hounds, and how Frank Paton's etchings for Christmas cards of animal subjects might have possible political references. Tietze's writing is accessible and provides an enjoyable accompaniment to the images for readers who are not familiar with the periods in which the works were made. Additional readings are listed in a select bibliography (inexplicably omitting a number of items referred to in the text, such as H. Sayer's Honours dissertation and Phyllis Lewsen's article, both on Abe Bailey). Although the bibliography is limited to only one or two texts on, for example, portraiture and landscape, it provides a useful starting point for those who might want to explore further.

The holdings of South African galleries are all too often not fully documented, at least not in print, and publications of this kind make an important contribution to our knowledge of art in public collections. The catalogue is thus a valuable record, providing both careful documentation of Abe Bailey's philanthropic bequest to the South African National Gallery and an introduction to the artworks that meets Anna Tietze's stated goal 'to make the collection entertaining and accessible' (Introduction, n.p.).

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Before the Soweto uprising of 1976, local urban history in South Africa was dominated by non-academic writers. They were usually motivated either by official boosterist designs or private entrepreneurial ambition, or a combination of the two, even if in some cases the authors had genuine affection for the places they wrote about. This local history was mostly focused on discovering and describing senses of place and urban achievement in what were perceived to be, and represented as, white localities. These were the city centres and predominantly white suburbs of cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, even if it was (often briefly) acknowledged that such places had what were described as exotic, picturesque and occasionally problematic black components.

After the Soweto uprising, academic forays into the local became far more frequent and unsettled many of the pre-existing myths of urban progress. Prompted by the context of urban revolt, up until the coming of democracy in 1994, these academic histories were mainly concerned with discovering and exploring the urban origins of segregation, acts of resistance against segregation and – their authors initially hoped – evidence of emergent African working-class consciousness and urban culture. Much of this work explored the creation of urban locations or townships and what Africans did in those places. These histories revealed a great deal about the history of elements of urban regulation and control: the migrant labour and pass system, mine compounds, the establishment of locations, location administration, location finance (particularly revenue gathered from a monopoly on beer brewing) and housing, as well as about urban African culture and consciousness.¹ Only since 1994 have a hundred flowers bloomed in South African urban history, albeit that the new floral varieties – for instance, studies that have looked at the creation of myth and memory in urban communities destroyed by apartheid; or at gay spaces or locales in the city; or at matro-focal communities; or at respectable, chiefly Christian local communities – have often resembled randomly arranged and thinly planted blooms.²

ALEXandra clearly falls within what one might call the predominant tradition of township history writing established in the aftermath of Soweto through the likes of the Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town History Workshops. *ALEX*'s authors are two Witwatersrand University colleagues who have devoted much of their careers to this tradition. *ALEXandra* falls specifically within the rubric of 'whole history' township writing pioneered by one of its authors, Phil Bonner: *Soweto: A History* and *Kathorus: A History* (also co-written with Nieftagodien) being predecessors of this ilk.³

1 P. Maylam, 'Explaining the Apartheid City', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(1), 1995: 19-38, provides a particularly useful summary and analysis of this work

2 For a recent detailed discussion of academic urban history in South Africa, see V.Bickford-Smith, 'Urban History in the New South Africa: Continuity and Innovation since the End of Apartheid', *Urban History*, 35(2), 2008.

3 P.Bonner and L.Segal, *Soweto: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998); P.Bonner and N.Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History*, (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 2001).

A major difference is that *ALEX* is less obviously intended for a popular market than *Soweto* or *Kathorus*, as is clear from its format, length and style. One intention behind its production was apparently at least in part to place-sell: the book presents Alexandra as a unique and ‘vibrant’ place (that ubiquitous twenty-first-century term), with a distinctive and interesting history, and thus worth visiting. As such this is semi-official history: *ALEX* was produced with the support of the Alexandra Tourism Development Board, and its substantial content is reminiscent in some ways of elements of official town histories produced for eighteenth-century (and beyond) England or the United States, or by those non-academic South African urban histories up to the 1970s.⁴

In this generic vein, Bonner and Nieftagodien tell us how the history of Alexandra interacts with national political history, and thereby gains in reflected glory. They list all the members of several local committees, such as the first Alexandra Vigilance Committee, a bit like the way that John Shorten lists the membership of the first municipal councils in his official histories of Johannesburg or Cape Town. They give an instance of how someone famous viewed the place: in this case how the famous (temporarily) resident Nelson Mandela liked Alexandra because it was ‘politically and culturally vibrant’. They tell us how Alexandra received its name, a feature of most official (and unofficial) urban local history. And they constantly remind us of Alexandra’s distinction, what gives it distinctive characteristics and what makes it distinguished.

It is the way that this distinction is described and analysed that marks the major difference between *ALEX* and official histories of what their writers deemed to be the creation of predominantly ‘white’ South African places. Official histories by the likes of Shorten, or Janie Malherbe for Durban, or of particular ‘white’ suburbs are largely narratives of progress and promise: Johannesburg from open veld to golden metropolis; Durban from sandbank to superport; or Rondebosch from place of wild animals and frontier skirmishes to educational centre.⁵ *ALEX* certainly recognises moments of achievement, be it in some results produced by bus boycotts or the eventual apartheid government’s permanent stay of execution in terms of the township’s existence. But *ALEX* is a far more nuanced history, not simply a tale of teleological history of progress. Thus it ends with the residents of Alexandra facing continued uncertainty over renewal projects and by briefly relating something of the ghastly xenophobic violence of 2008.

Perhaps throughout the book, save in a passage on prisons, violence (including domestic violence) is nonetheless somewhat sanitised or downplayed in *ALEX*, given the book’s at least partial intent to celebrate the place. But violence

4 S.V.Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities, 1850-2000* (London: E and F.N.Spon, 1998); R.Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); V.Bickford-Smith, ‘Creating South African Green Zones: urban history, antiquarianism and the creation of urban boundaries in white South African imagination, 1940s-1970s’, electronic publication, Urban History Group (UHG) papers 2008, Centre of Urban History Leicester website.

5 J.R.Shorten, *Cape Town: The Golden Jubilee of Greater Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Shorten Ltd, 1963); J.R.Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga* (Johannesburg: Shorten Ltd, 1966); J.Malherbe, *Port Natal* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1965); A.H.Honikman, ed., *Cape Town: City of Good Hope* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966).

is still mentioned, not only in what one might describe as ‘dark tourism’ of the past, which recounts some of the doings of the Spoilers or Zorro’s Fighting Legion, but also in the accounts of the near present, of what the place is like today. Problems have not been confined to the past. A promising future does not necessarily await inhabitants, as it would do in most official urban boosterist history writing.

Bonner and Nieftagodien make extensive use of both written archival sources and oral histories in relating their history of Alexandra. The authors convincingly argue that this township’s distinction lies in a particular combination of circumstances and events: because it was a rare black freehold area and had a class of owner-occupiers and long-term tenants; because it was also a peri-urban area and thus a ‘sponge’ for migrants to the city, a source of consequent tension with owners and longer-term tenants who called themselves the ‘bona fide’ residents; because it managed to escape destruction, in part because it fell between different municipal jurisdictions; because of its political significance and tradition, not least during the bus boycotts of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the ‘six-day war’ of 1986; and because of the cultural creativity, perhaps particularly in the realm of music, that gave it something of the status in this respect of the more written-about Sophiatown and District Six.

ALEX is particularly strong in its detailed accounts of local political history, often a lacuna in South African urban history. The authors provide both a history and explanation of the varying forms of local institutional authority as well as accounts of party organisation and mass political mobilisation. And these are not just accounts that dovetail with the post-1994 new nationalist grand narrative that has privileged past achievements of the ANC. The authors give considerable weight to other political tendencies (such as Trotskyite or Africanist) and mobilisations in Alexandra, and allow for the political influence of outsiders such as Baruch Hirson, Vincent Swart and Rusty Bernstein. They also reinforce the view that local issues were often, if not usually, central to ‘nationalist’ mobilisation, consciousness and action.

Yet one wished that the authors had explored local identities in a little more detail. Certainly they usefully analyse the difference between the (generally more affluent) ‘bona fide’ residents and newer migrants, and give some sense of spatial social geography. But one was at times left wondering how (some) Alexandrans may have viewed other places on the Rand, and perhaps thereby distinguished themselves in this respect, or how they compared Alexandran urbanity with, say, that of the ‘white’ northern suburbs. There are very many ‘white’ accounts of townships, usually describing them either in (Victorian) terms as slums, or as akin to council housing development in twentieth-century Britain; but beyond some novels, there are very few ‘black’ accounts of ‘white’ residential areas, or of cities as a whole. And one danger of township or suburban histories is that they are inevitably racialised and that the production of such racialised history reinforces racial identity.

Perhaps the nature of *ALEX*, its semi-official history purpose, also precluded more comparative urban history. Yet one wished at times for greater authorial comment on similarities or differences between Alexandra and other townships on

the Rand, or elsewhere in South Africa and beyond. Indeed, one might also have wished for something in the introduction, or for a conclusion, that explained the approach that the authors were taking to Alexandra's history: why the predominance of political history over social and economic; why so (relatively) little focus on the quotidian experience of living in Alexandra compared with histories, say, of District Six or Windermere? How does Alexandra compare with similar areas that contain substantial informal settlement in South American or Indian cities, or indeed in other parts of Africa?

One wondered in addition about questions of micro-locality and identity, of to what extent neighbourliness or kinship bound particular parts of Alexandra and gave them distinct identities beyond the Jukskei River divide, itself important as the authors make clear. One wondered where the gangsters lived and who they were, and indeed about what determined choices, perhaps alternations, between gangsterism and respectability; or of how, more precisely, Alexandran musical traditions varied from others described by the likes of Coplan, Erlmann, Ballantine or Ansell, and whether that music might have been an element in a specifically Alexandran identity.⁶

ALEXandra is sensibly a book that implicitly at least takes a middle position between the tendency to see particularly recent African urbanisation as resulting either in utter misery or in opportunity and creativity.⁷ Perhaps by way of a more substantial conclusion, one would have liked the authors to give some more explicit indications of their thoughts about this debate. How does their research into Alexandra shed light on whether the 'Disorderly City' can or should be ordered more agreeably? How does Alexandra's recent history relate to, challenge or reinforce the views of Murray or Nuttall and Mbembe on Johannesburg, or of Davis or Newirth on 'slums' more generally?⁸ Yet the authors are to be congratulated for the range of themes that they do cover, often (especially the political) in substantial and nuanced detail, and for producing a township history that offers at least implicit comparative possibilities with previous work on townships and other urban localities.

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6 See D.Coplan, *In Township Tonight* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985); V.Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); C.Ballantine, *Marabi Nights: Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993); G.Ansell, *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music and Politics in South Africa* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

7 See the concluding sections of B.Freund, *The African City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) on these debates.

8 M.J.Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2008); S.Nuttall and A.Mbembe, eds., *Johannesburg the Elusive Metropolis* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008); M.Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2007); R.Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, An Urban New World* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

At the Heart of Healing: Groote Schuur Hospital, 1938-2008. By Anne Digby, Howard Phillips with Harriet Deacon and Kirsten Thomson. Johannesburg: Jacana Media. 2008. xxx + 334 pp. ISBN 978-177009-6424.

With Anne Digby, Howard Phillips and Harriet Deacon, three of the most accomplished and respected historians of medicine and health in South Africa – more than ably accompanied by Kirsten Thomson – as its authors, it is not surprising that this is a considered, comprehensive and carefully weighed history of one of the Cape’s, the country’s – if not the world’s – iconic medical institutions. Best known for the first successful open-heart transplant in 1967, the medical, nursing and auxiliary staff and service departments of Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) today continue proudly to proclaim the motto of ‘Servamus – we serve’. With fifteen million patients passing through its doors and corridors since 1938 (the ‘new GSH’ opened on the same grounds in 1987), this institution occupies an important historical place to which many continue to choose to come, even though more local hospitals have become available. What *At the Heart of Healing* reveals, however, is that its history is more complex and contentious than its popular image would first suggest.

It is not surprising that the history of GSH was shaped by the racial, class and gender politics of the country and of the Cape region more particularly. What perhaps has been surprising is the controversy that this book has engendered, with some claiming that the authors have not done justice to the quality of care given at GSH, or have not completely covered the careers of GSH’s very many luminaries, or have undervalued the extent of its resistance to apartheid.¹ One critic (not a historian) suggested that ‘the task of reflecting on the role of those “at the heart of healing” beyond the heart transplant era may be too proximal for adequate coverage, and the history (other than that related to the new building) should probably have stopped in the late 1970s or early 1980s.’² But for historians, this broad sweep of time and the venture into the recent past are among the strong points of the volume. Given the difficulties of accessing documentation from archives for this time period, this has been no mean feat. Supplemented by a broad range of interviews and interesting illustrations, this amounts to an important contribution to the historiography of medicine in the region.

With an affinity for puns on the part of the two principal authors (which in some appropriate places, along with a penchant for alliteration in titles, helps to lighten the seriousness of the subject matter), from the outset we are alerted to the complexities of writing the history of such a ‘chameleon-like institution’. While there are some genuinely amusing anecdotes, and there are many acknowledgements of the great men (and women) at GHS, the authors have also

1 H. Phillips, ‘How to avoid landing up in the casualty ward of history: Reflections on writing a hospital history’, Unpublished paper presented at the 22nd Biennial Conference of the Southern African Historical Society, 22-24 June 2009, Unisa, Pretoria: 4.

2 ‘Well-researched but fails to get to the heart of more recent events’, *Cape Times*, 30 April 2009.

been at pains to avoid a ‘congratulatory chronicle’ (xxix). The book also has an innovative structure which is largely successful in avoiding repetition, though there is a rhythm in the main themes. Each of its four parts is preceded by a helpful synopsis. Through this structure, the authors are not only able to include the experiences and contributions of the full range of actors who all keep a hospital functioning, but they are also able to critique hagiographic and elitist genres of hospital history.

The first section, ‘Eras’, gives us the ‘backbone’ of the narrative of GHS from its conception in the immediate post-Union era, through to 2008. Common themes are the architecture and structure of the Hospital, its administration and management, finances and ‘the healthscape in which it operated, and its seminal relationship with the Provincial authorities and UCT – all against the changing political, economic, medical and healthcare environment of Cape Town, South Africa and the world’ (Synopsis, facing p. 1). Major benchmarks were its early construction as a public hospital and as the University of Cape Town’s teaching facility, along segregationist principles culminating in the opening of GSH in 1938 with a staff made up of white nurses, (male) doctors and administrators, yet with increasing numbers of Coloured patients. A flagship institution in 1938, it very soon became overcrowded, though by the late 1950s it was being praised by the Cape Province’s Administrator as ‘one of the finest hospitals in SA. ... a very important place for medical research’ (329). The apartheid government hailed GSH as a show-piece of South African science. This section too describes the ‘momentous effect’ on GSH of ‘the operation’, a stunningly significant event made possible by a combination of many factors including some brilliant staff, committed research and surgical departments, a supportive administration and UCT Medical Faculty, dedicated nurses, and a less litigious climate than existed in the USA.

This context is important for it has long been noted that apartheid South Africa was characterised by a paradox: it boasted such elite institutions as GHS but at the same time the majority of its people had little or no access to the most basic state-sponsored health-care. While GSH always catered for both ‘the relatively affluent’ (in small numbers) and (by far the majority of) ‘the very impoverished’ (xxvii), it was during GHS’s ‘Golden Years’ of the 1950s to the mid-1980s that the state moved directly against several hospitals – usually missionary-initiated – which catered for black patients in cities such as Johannesburg and Durban, pushing aggressively to have them moved out of urban ‘black spots’ or closed down altogether. It is a pity that the authors do not make more of this wider context as a way of highlighting the extent to which GSH represented something of a protected anomaly at the same time that other hospitals had to fight for their very survival. Not all succeeded.³

3 Bridgman Memorial Hospital in Johannesburg was forcibly closed in 1965. McCord ‘Zulu’ Hospital at the intersection of Durban’s (white) Berea and its ‘Coloured and Indian’ Overport areas faced repeated threats of being moved or closed throughout the same decades as GSH enjoyed its ‘golden years’. My point is not that the authors are unaware of this history, but that an understanding of the specificities of Cape liberalism and urban politics is important for the wider context of GSH’s history, especially in the high apartheid period.

After the mid-1980s, however, GHS was also battered by the increasingly turbulent political climate in South Africa, as financial cut-backs, worker militancy and escalating violence were felt inside the hospital as well as outside. It was against this background that the 'new Groote Schuur Hospital' opened in 1987, with the 'decanting' (transfer) of patients taking until 1991 to finalise. What is striking to us today is just how recently the Cape Provincial Administration was attempting – Canute-like – to insist on separate facilities for black and white patients. It is greatly to the credit of many GSH staff and administrators that by the time the new GSH was opened, all wards were racially integrated. The reasons for this lie in both individual acts of conscience and conviction and in the economic and logistical needs of expensive, comprehensive, high-level clinical care which made nonsense of the duplication of facilities, especially in GSH's innovative Intensive Care Units. The final chapter in this section surveys GSH's moves towards fuller racial and gender representivity and its positioning in an era of rather different state policy since 1994.

Part 2, 'Race, the South African Disease', places racial discrimination – both large and petty – at the heart of the story of GSH and describes how the actions of individuals as well as the context of Cape liberalism ameliorated, resisted, or reinforced racialised attitudes and practice at GSH. There is no doubt that Coloured, Indian and African medical students experienced both direct and indirect discrimination, an experience duplicated across the country. Yet the oral testimonies recalled only a tiny minority of teaching staff as openly racist, while others went out of their way to break down and out of racialised interactions. As was common elsewhere – at Witwatersrand University and the Durban Medical School and their associated hospitals – until late 1970s, white patients were seen exclusively by white doctors and white medical students. Black doctors were excluded from examining white patients, dead or alive. (As if apartheid were not absurd and tragic enough, we learn that this was so despite there being black autopsy assistants at GSH.)

In these chapters, some difficult questions are raised and judiciously considered, most especially whether segregated facilities and nurse and doctor training translated into unequal quality of care, something which was and is passionately denied by many GSH staff, past and present. It is noted for instance that there are 'few recorded references of differentiation in treatment' (107) but, it is argued, in the period up to the 1980s at least, cultural misunderstandings and the overcrowding in 'Non-European' wards, as well as every-day forms of patronising interaction between even well-meaning whites and black patients could well have on occasion compromised 'respect for the individual human dignity of black patients'. Whether clinical treatment differed is 'a complex and contested matter' (108). When interviewed, nurses of all backgrounds asserted that there was no difference, but again 'unconscious racism could operate in the way patients were approached' (109), and white patients were more demanding and possibly received therefore greater attention. Patients themselves, black and white, were also not always immune to racist attitudes.

Along with the move towards expensive high-tech facilities, it was the ever-increasing pressure of patient numbers, however, which acted as a force for

desegregation of wards, and this had largely been achieved even before the move to the new GHS. This process was piecemeal and undertaken at the initiative of individuals. The realignment of the demographic profile of GHS's staff proceeded more slowly than that of its patients. Even post-1994, 'transformation' has been slow to occur, though by 2007 almost 75% of nursing staff were Coloured. Whites continue to occupy a disproportionate number of high echelon posts, but 'this is not surprising as it takes 20-25 years to become a principal specialist' (131). This section concludes that 'as a liberal institution GSH both resisted *and* reflected, in various degrees and at various times, "the way it was" in the wider, racially divisive society of South Africa ... (which) at times ... compromised its own universalist ideal of "Servamus"' (132).

Part 3, 'People', tells the intertwined stories of GHS, changing medical knowledge and practice and the South African body politic through the experiences of the great variety of people who worked at or sought help at the Hospital. These include – and individual chapters focus on – patients, nurses, doctors and medical students, allied health professionals, and general hospital workers. This is 'history from below' and many of the themes already mentioned (race and gender in particular) are explored through the lens of the experiences of these groups of people, though professional differences, hierarchies, alliances and conflicts within these groupings are also taken into account. A marked trend for the nurses and allied health professionals (including radiographers, physiotherapists, social workers and very many others) was the gradual shift from their role as helpmeets and auxiliaries to valued and recognised professionals in their own right who are now an integral part of a network of sub-specialists who contribute to patient care. Nonetheless, 'hierarchy, discipline and professional dedication marked the life of the hospital' (135). For historians of medicine, these terms will immediately bring Foucault to mind, and the chapter on patients is titled 'the gaze from below'. One interesting response, however, is in the moving oral testimony of patients who had been involved in teaching demonstrations: far from experiencing this as objectifying and dehumanising, they report feeling validated and 'privileged to help' (149).

As in many other institutional settings – schools and army units for instance – hospital staff actively created their own identities and sense of self-worth through loyalty to traditions and figure-heads which fostered a camaraderie that appealed across class and occupational status, expressing itself here as the feeling of belonging to 'the GSH family'. This sentiment was and is powerfully expressed by GSH staff and employees across the spectrum from specialists to porters and cleaners. But, families are not egalitarian, nor are they static in their exchanges, and while care of and commitment to patients was by-and-large exemplary, GSH could not remain isolated from the strains and pressures of the times and by the 1980s there were 'some complaints ... now including allegations of neglect, negligence, disrespect, and even abuse' (151).

By the 1990s, a sense of the deterioration of the hospital had begun to become more widespread, and unionisation and worker militancy were escalating. Once again the difficult question of whether 'standards had really declined (or whether there was only a perceived decline, one that was really a screen for

racism)' is tackled. Yet, this section ends on a more upbeat tone, noting the resilience of GSH's staff and the ongoing efforts by the vast majority to ensure the best quality care (265). It should also be noted that even as clinics and secondary-level hospitals expanded into areas nearer to many patients' homes, many still continue to 'vote with their feet' and come to GSH in preference, claiming that it offers the best health care available in the Cape.

Part 4, 'Labs, Wards and Clinics', covers the people and topics which would conventionally have been at the forefront of the story of GSH. While succinctly highlighting the numerous surgical, clinical and other achievements at GSH, this section is also noteworthy for bringing us right to the present, including several direct invitations for those influential in the health-care sector to consider carefully the implications of the reorientation of South African health services since 1994. Divided into two chapters – focusing on clinical research and clinical medicine respectively – it is argued that research and treatment 'went increasingly hand-in-hand, and were mutually beneficial'. The success or otherwise of this partnership shifted over the course of GSH's history: in its first decades, research was poorly supported; during the 1950s to mid-1980s funding poured in and facilitated the great number of breakthroughs not only in the fields of cardiac surgery, but also in liver transplants, in nutrition and kwashiorkor and very many other areas of research and clinical practice. Even though staff and patients were categorised by race and despite state funding, 'clinical research at GSH was not used as justification for apartheid or white supremacy. In fact, GSH and UCT were supported by a racist government in positioning their clinical research within the growing international ideal of universal scientific research' (271). Nor in recent years – especially under former President Mbeki and his Health Ministers – has the state's stance on medical science been particularly progressive. Moreover, while state support for 'elitist' academic research agendas and highly expensive, specialised, technically-based medicine has shifted in favour of horizontal primary health care and community medicine programmes, as this chapter points out, racial categories have not disappeared. Rather, they have gained a new life and meaning post-1994: however, socio-economic factors influencing poor health continue to be under-recognised and genetic ones over-emphasised (272). Indeed, this chapter should make us think about the 'mix' of tertiary, secondary and primary health care (and educational) facilities best suited to the country's needs since a 'more nuanced understanding should inform its strategies for transformation ... not all research institutions can and should focus on the same priorities' (300).

The final chapter is concerned more directly than elsewhere in the book with the actual practice of medicine itself, arguing that while there has been much innovation over the last seventy years there have also been some important continuities of practice and values. At GSH, the 'big three' of Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics/Gynaecology held sway until relatively recently, with some significant new initiatives occurring under their aegis. For instance, it took more than 30 years before Psychiatry was able to establish itself independently at GSH. Nonetheless, progressive outreach programmes in this discipline and in many others were developed from the 1960s and especially from the 1980s. The chap-

ter also details the increasing patient numbers, and the effects of an international shortage of health-care workers, tight budgets and the surge of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses. Within the hospital, some services have declined or are now less readily available (on p. 314 for instance, we learn that a shortage of radiographers led in 2003 to some women no longer having the option of a lumpectomy followed by radiation therapy, but instead proceeding straight to mastectomies). By 2007, there was a sense that the ability to deliver full care to the maximum benefits of clinical medicine had indeed been compromised. More positively, however, the authors conclude that staff at GSH have responded with characteristic creativity, commitment to hard work and have in many cases helped refine post-apartheid hospital and medical referral models so as to remain at ‘the “cutting edge” of clinical medicine’ (324).

The Conclusion provides, via a number of snapshots recorded decades apart, reflections on the ‘shape’ of GSH’s history, and leaves us with many issues to ponder, not least of which is that if before 1994 it was important to ask whether South Africa could afford such high-end, technically well-endowed and cutting-edge research hospitals, it is now equally important to ask whether we can afford to do without them. Indeed, attentively read, *At the Heart of Healing* is not only an impressive history, but it also offers cautionary insights for present and future health-sector administrators and planners, who operate in no less an ideological or political context than their predecessors, a realisation which may be both uncomfortable and unwelcome, but is all the more important for that.

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There are now on the market a number of up-to-date single volume histories of South Africa aimed at undergraduate readers. What makes Iris Berger's latest addition distinctive?

The title, and the series in which it appears, promises to locate South Africa in a wider global context. The publishers pitch it towards the burgeoning college teaching of the 'new world history', especially in the United States. An introductory text which locates South Africa within its African continental context and which explores links and connections across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans would be extremely welcome. For connections, rather than comparisons, are the hallmark of the new world history and such work is at last beginning to emerge in South African historiography.

However, in this Berger's book disappoints. On the very first page she proclaims that 'this book is too brief to explore in depth the connections and comparisons between South Africa and the rest of the world. I have tried however to highlight some of these parallels as well as the close connections between black South Africans and African Americans' (1-2).

The connections made are indeed few and far between. This is a pity as some are intriguingly original: for example the conscious modelling of the UDF on Vietnamese resistance tactics (142). Parallels and comparisons are also sparse but suggestive, such as that between the Great Trek and North American and Australian settler expansion (60-1). African American parallels are made for an American readership, but are sometimes rather forced and less relevant. Almost nothing is said about continental African connections or connections after the initial chapter on early hominid development.

That said, Berger's book has much to offer. It is fully cognisant of the latest research and written with verve and clarity. More than any of its competitors, it skilfully uses individual stories and episodes to convey the complexity of life in South Africa. Telling details of life histories open up the big issues, such as those of the landholdings of Sandile's daughter 'Princess Emma' (66), Sol Plaatje's marriage (78) or Albertina Sisulu's early life (109). Berger cleverly uses Mandela's childhood to explore the nature of pre-colonial African societies. Poetry, novels and eyewitness accounts are frequently used to convey the atmosphere and emotions of specific times and places. For example, the book ends with a comment on the current dilemmas of South Africa that draws on Zakes Mda's novel *Heart of Redness* (163). This history is lively and poignant.

A very welcome feature is the prominent role given to women. This is the first general history of South Africa to properly reflect the experiences and contributions of half of its population. Women, however, not gender. Little is said about constructions of gender, both male and female, a key theme of recent South African historiography. There are other gaps, some of which Berger herself identifies, such as environmental histories, health and medicine (xii).

Clearly a short history cannot and should not try to cover everything. But the absence of these approaches is a symptom of a broader feature of this book. It does little to alert readers to the debates and diverse approaches that have made South African historiography such a lively field over the past decades. Highly controversial issues are glossed over. Segregation and apartheid appear as almost inevitable processes. The big questions – why did it all happen the way it did, and why do historians disagree so much? – are absent. There is a guide to further reading (175-9) and a very useful list of websites (181), but little sense of how these works relate to the arguments of historians.

The result is a book which is refreshingly lively and vivid, smack up-to-date and innovative. It thus makes an excellent overview for the newcomer to South African history. But students will need more of a sense of the key debates than this book gives them.

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