

# An Africander collection

## [ BOOK REVIEW ]

Crais, Clifton & McClendon, Thomas (2014).  
**The South Africa reader: History, culture, politics.** Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press. ISBN 978-0-8223-5529-8. Pages 604.

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Of the many challenges that the editors of Duke University's new **South Africa reader** faced was the obvious one: what, amongst so wide a range of contemporary and historical material, should be included? The problem is exacerbated by the book's stated remit, as outlined in the book's subtitle, "History, culture, politics". This announces an expansive agenda and confers upon the editors the responsibility of including key selections from each of these three areas. Of course, every literary scholar or intellectual interested in South African history and culture will have quibbles regards what has not been included and what has. Some observations in this respect open up onto broader issues related to the efficacy of critical historical juxtaposition and the need to recover rather than merely reproduce history.

The book's list of contents is both generally chronological and yet themed, divided into a series of sections that enabled selections to be successfully clustered. The first section, for example, is "African worlds, African voices", the last is "Transitions and Reconciliations". While this mode of dividing texts generally works, it leads, perhaps inevitably, to the prioritization of recent history. For example, the book's last text, a journalist's report on the successes and failings of the 2010 FIFA World Cup comes off rather poorly by comparison with the richness of many earlier texts, such as Solomon Plaatje's **Mhudi**, included in the book's first section, or "An African woman at the Cape: Krotoa", penned by Julia C Wells, in the book's second section "Colonial settlement, slavery and peonage". That being said, there certainly are a variety of bold selections that the editors have opted to include amongst older historical materials, including W W van Ryneveld's "The necessity of slavery" and Piet Retief's "Manifesto". Particularly notable given its role as a progenitor of a form of Afrikaner (and subsequently African) Nationalism, is Francis William Reitz's searing indictment of British Imperialism, "A century of wrong", which ends, memorably, with the words "Africa for the Africander". This term, "Africander", and the

obvious resonance of Reitz's call with the later Africanist demand "Africa for Africans" makes for a wonderful moment of historical juxtaposition. One cannot help but wonder if the notion of the "Africaner", an effective contraction of "Afrikaner" and "African", might one day attain the status of a broad political context. It is in moments like this that the **South Africa reader** succeeds in a type of historical juxtaposition which pushes the reader to re-evaluate given texts and historical meanings. Incidentally, I was happy to see that the Francis Reitz piece was followed from a wonderful piece by his son, Deneys Reitz, "A Boer commando". Reading this extract in a volume that included also the likes of Mohandas Gandhi, Es'kia Mphahlele, Can Themba and even – how could he have been excluded? – Julius Malema, was an odd experience. It brought home to me the degree to which I still participate in a kind of mental partitioning of these literatures, assuming, somehow, that they should be politely demarcated rather than – as is the case here – overlapped, read side by side.

A few omissions are worth noting in the book's fourth and fifth sections "Apartheid and the struggle for freedom" and "From Soweto to liberation". Bloke Modisane is nowhere to be found, which poses the question: how not to include "Blame me on History"? A worthwhile inclusion would have been an extract from J M Coetzee's compelling essay "Geoffrey Cronje: The mind of apartheid". (Coetzee, rather notably, is not included at all in the volume.) More tellingly yet, there is nothing by Anton Lembede, the pioneer of African Nationalism and first president of the ANC Youth League, whose writings proved crucial not only to Africanist intellectuals the likes of A P Mda and Robert Sobukwe, but to the formation of the PAC in 1958. True enough, Robert Sobukwe is included – a brief article describing the Pan African Congress – as is the Black Consciousness militant Khotso Seatlholo ("Students and the Soweto Uprising"). Omitting Lembede is notable however inasmuch as the editors would have hoped to avoid cataloguing merely the most well-known struggle activists and authors. This would have been a persistent editorial challenge: to both include the necessary historical material, and yet to provide excursions of the well-beaten historical path. With a project such as this, a key aim should lie with resuscitating the importance of neglected and yet nonetheless vital historical voices, hence my regret about Lembede.

This being said, I was unfamiliar with Cosmas Desmond's "The discarded people" – an article whose historical relevance has grown rather than diminished with time, and I was delighted to find a short extract from Govan Mbeki, "The peasants' revolt", included. Here the book certainly succeeds, and against those who would complain that key historical texts have been cut in length, "sampled" rather than adequately contextualized, it gives us manageable doses of important South African texts we might never otherwise get around to reading.

The Sections on apartheid and the struggle for liberation include selections from many of the key political names one would expect to find in, Steve Biko, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, F W de Klerk, Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, Oliver Tambo and Desmond Tutu, and from some names one might not expect, amongst them K D Matanzima, P W Botha and Andries Treurnicht, whose "Never give in" makes for sobering reading. The editors have done their duty in including a number of historical documents and manifestos in these sections, including, the ANC Youth League's "Programme of action", the "Freedom charter", the "Women's charter", Mandela's "Inaugural address" and so on. They have also done well to include obviously reactionary and disconcerting texts, pieces which are disconcerting to read but which deserve their place in a book such as this which aims to exhibit crucial documents in the history of the country. The authors have also been astute in selecting pieces by more obviously literary writers – Zakes Mda, Olive Schreiner, Rian Malan, Antjie Krog and Zoë Wicomb – placing them, sometimes out of obvious chronological order, in between the less obviously readable historical document, succeeding thus in ensuring the narrative momentum

of the book as a whole. Likewise worth noting here is the combination of different types of texts (essays, memoirs, political manifestos, speeches, struggle songs, even recipes) which likewise adds to the texture to the volume as a whole.

The editors also deserve commendation for the wonderful use of imagery throughout, that is, the use of historical photographs, artist's depictions, cartoons, maps – although more use could have been made of these – to illustrate the book's various chapters. As anyone who has attempted to fit historical images to existing (written) texts will know, this is no easy exercise. The chosen images need not to intrude upon or overpower the writing, but to harmonize with and illuminate the words. Such a balance is difficult to attain, but the illustration of various of the book's chapters has been attended to here with sensitivity. The book's special section "Everyday life in Soweto: The photography of Santu Mofokeng", written by Patricia Hayes, is obviously a standout example in this regard.

My lasting impression of the book is one of being "forced" to read a series of texts (such as those by Buthelezi, Hobhouse, Matanzima, P W Botha, Trollop and Treunicht – an eclectic cross-section of authors if ever there was one!). These are historical texts that, left to my own devices, I would have set aside on the assumption that they possessed little contemporary historical significance or were simply politically incommensurate with my own views. This is where the book succeeds: you find yourself reading authors that almost surely you otherwise would not have, and finding in such texts observations and ideas that are often more relevant than you would have guessed. It tells you, time and again: "This too is part of your history".

# Voice of the bewitched: Implication of the belief in witchcraft in South Africa

## [ BOOK REVIEW ]

Niehaus, Isak (2013) **Witchcraft and a life in the new South Africa**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; & London: International African Institute. ISBN 978-1-107-65600-0 pbk. Pages xxiii + 239.

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Despite the rationalism implicit in contemporary thinking, in many parts of the world like South Africa, belief in witchcraft exists and is a core belief, influencing the world-view of many people. In these contexts, witchcraft is believed to be responsible for social experiences including, illnesses, sickness and death. Due to the deeply set belief in witchcraft that has penetrated every sphere of society in South Africa, from politics to sport, witchcraft belief is a prominent feature culminating in fear.

Scholars have studied witchcraft for centuries across the world through various disciplines, providing explanations that focus on different elements of social life like politics, economics, historical conditions and psychological functioning (Parrinder, 1963; Levack, 1995; Ashforth, 2000; Heinemann, 2000). Salmon (1989) for example indicates that historians have conceptualized “witches” as beggars who were turned away by more prosperous community members. These prosperous individuals would accuse the beggar of witchcraft “to salve the conscience or justify the selfishness of those who refused charity” (Salmon, 1989: 484).

Rowlands and Warnier (1988, in Geschiere and Fisiy, 1994) emphasised that sorcery lies at the centre of state-building processes. In a system where one political view is dominant accusations of witchcraft serve as a mode of political action (Niehaus, 1993). In reviewing the explanations put forth, one comes to a realisation that witchcraft accusations may be used as an explanatory framework, for social change, interpersonal conflict and misfortunes, illness and even death.

In his book, **Witchcraft and a life in the new South Africa**, Niehaus adds to the understanding provided in the literature (and his previous writings; Niehaus, 1993; 1998), and uses the biography of Jimmy Mohale, an average South African man to demonstrate the centrality of witchcraft belief as it currently functions in South Africa. The reader is immediately drawn into Jimmy's life as Niehaus demonstrates the power of witchcraft belief in the lives of many South Africans.

Niehaus, in the book's frontispiece, quotes Geertz (1973) stating that "over its career religion has probably disturbed men as much as it has cheered them, forced them into a head-on, unblinking confrontation of the fact that they are born to trouble as often as it enabled them to avoid such a confrontation ...". Rightfully so, I think, Niehaus chose this quote as central to the belief in witchcraft, is the belief in religion. Furthermore, he extends this understanding and allows the reader to locate witchcraft belief not only as a function of religion, but as a phenomenon extending into all areas of human life, including politics, illness and interpersonal conflict.

As I read the book, I was drawn into the world of Jimmy Mohale and his experiences that Niehaus analyses. What stands out most prominently is the link between politics, witchcraft, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and power. Niehaus's accounts of Jimmy's life alludes to the main character's perceived lack of power over various situations and circumstances that he faced. For example, in chapter 3 (*Becoming a man*), Niehaus accounts for the financial, academic, interpersonal, cultural and political circumstances that Jimmy lived. In doing so, the reader is able to draw the links between these factors and the centrality of witchcraft belief.

Niehaus states that "Jimmy did not see his own trouble at work as being only structural. He did not blame his lack of progress on the structural violence of apartheid or on the inequities of the post-apartheid situation. Rather, he saw the thwarting of his ambitions as rooted in envy and jealousy in the sphere of interpersonal relations" (p78). And, rather than an acknowledgement of the contextual factors that may have contributed to Jimmy's situation, he further informed Niehaus that "he suspected that the lack of return on his investment in education and in work might have been a result of secret, sinister forces that were somehow blocking his progress" (p78). Evans-Pritchard (1937) and Briggs (2002) tell us that witchcraft beliefs are linked to experiences of misfortune, rivalry and jealousy and that these beliefs can be regarded as an expression of conflict. This indicates that witchcraft beliefs play a role of a social buffer, which removes personal autonomy from misfortune and places this misfortune as stemming from within the social context.

As the main character, Jimmy allows the reader into a world within a world, where malevolence, evil and envy are held responsible for the misfortunes faced by many. The HIV/AIDS pandemic itself has succumbed to witchcraft (Van Dyk, 2001). This was demonstrated by Jimmy, because regardless of how ill he became, he refused to seek medical assistance believing that his suffering was spiritual and not biological. The implication of Jimmy's belief, that his HIV status was linked to witchcraft is far-reaching, as this may represent the belief held by many South Africans. Although one may think that witchcraft belief itself has declined (for, in the Western world, witchcraft accusations have mostly ended) the reality in Africa, and South Africa in particular, is that witchcraft belief continues to influence the thinking and behaviour of many people (Parrinder, 1963; Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998). It follows that if witchcraft is believed responsible for HIV/AIDS, the understanding of and treatment thereof will be aligned to such beliefs. The implication posed to the understanding of psychological disturbances can be inferred from Jimmy's understanding of his HIV status. One may question the treatment

options available to those who believe that their psychological ailments are the work of “sinister forces”, as described by Jimmy.

Niehaus’s book, **Witchcraft and a life in the new South Africa**, is applicable across a variety of disciplines, as it touches on a multiplicity of factors. I think the book is specifically relevant to practitioners and students in the field of psychology, even though this book is framed within the discipline of anthropology. One of the deeper insights left in my mind after reading the book, was the intersection of religio-cultural belief systems and the predominant biomedical framework employed in psychological practice and education. This understanding and integration is essential, as our treatment and work with clients must become more holistic, being cognisant of the unique characteristics that define illness and health. This will invariably allow practitioners in diverse contexts to locate their training in ways that are reflective of the beliefs that surround them.

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# Troubled normalities: “Living on” and “living with” HIV in the treatment possibility era

## [ B O O K R E V I E W ]

Squire, Corinne (2013) **Living with HIV and ARVs: Three-letter lives**. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-0-230-28423-4 hbk. Pages vi + 275.

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In **Living with HIV and ARVs: Three-letter lives**, Corinne Squire delves into very touching issues related to living with HIV in the treatment possibility era and what some have come to call the era of a possible AIDS free generation. Conducted in two settings, the UK and South Africa, the author looks at how HIV has come to be naturalized (seen as a natural, manageable and understandable part of our everyday biological, social and economic environments). This naturalization has been brought about by the medicalization of HIV, which because of scientific and medical breakthroughs in HIV, sees ARV treatment as especially important to the treatment and management of HIV. Naturalization also occurs through the normalization of HIV, where HIV is presented as a regular and unproblematic part of everyday health and social relations, and through marketisation where participation in market economies has been presented as a solution to living a normal healthy HIV lifestyle for the HIV positive.

This virtual and discursive presentation of HIV and ARV treatment as potentially problem free undermines the complexities of three-letter lives which are often un-narrated. We can see this for example in the proliferation of medical knowledge that is meant to liberate HIV positive people from death, delivering them (and us) from uncertainty to the certainty of a prolonged life. The old “knowledge is power” maxim can now be translated to “medical knowledge is power to live”. Yet to live as an HIV positive person entails something more than access to knowledge, which is in itself problematic (access to knowledge often requires resources that are not equally available to everyone). We can see how it confers control and responsibility on the HIV citizen without questioning the ability for citizens to act on this responsibility,

or questioning the limits and extent of responsibility between citizens and the state or other vehicles or mechanisms of power.

In **Three-letter lives**, we are confronted with accumulating evidence of how in the face of optimism and in the context of progress, HIV is slowly taking a backseat, pushed to relinquish its seat at the forefront of politically and socially sensitive issues, for what are stated to be far more pressing social concerns such as crime and poverty. In public health discourse, HIV is normalized as an everyday illness, no different from other chronic illnesses, with HIV positive people enticed with the possibilities of living a normal life. And HIV positive people can live a normal life, or some semblance of a normal life. It is not to argue that they cannot. Yet HIV is not just another chronic illness, there are deeply particularized aspects of three letter lives that evade, that resist its normalization as just another chronic illness. If there is any normality in HIV, it is a troubled normality, reflected in the normalizing discourses that participants participate and implicate themselves in, but that sometimes veil the troubled voices, the troubling features of living three letter lives. These are the tensions, the contradictions and ambiguities represented in the normative and counter-normative narratives of HIV's naturalization, and expressed in participants' stories of their three letter lives that the book deals with. Corinne Squire looks at the particularities of living with HIV and ARVs in this climate of growing optimism arguing that this framing often undermines deeply particularized aspects of living with HIV and ARV treatment.

The narratives that Corinne Squire engages in with her participants show us that as much as we can say that to live three-letter lives is to live a normal life, that is not entirely true. HIV citizenship is still confronted by issues that other forms of citizenship are not confronted by. The particularities of three letter lives take place in the context of neoliberal markets in which normal citizenship and HIV citizenship have to be constantly negotiated, weaving in and out of each other. In the global financial crisis which has had a severe impact on health budgets, HIV positive people are often the worst affected by reductions in health funding which means that social support services are reduced, NGOs and CBOs that provide support are shut down because of lack of funding, and the downscaling of HIV remittances. At a policy level, according to Squire "health for all" has meant a diversion of funding for HIV to focus on health in more general terms. Medical practitioners are under pressure and this means that HIV positive people may often compromise their own health needs over those that are deemed to be more important.

Medicalization of HIV has resulted in a flourishing of HIV knowledge in which HIV is treated only in medical terms. This has resulted in the creation of an expert HIV patient who is well informed and well versed in HIV. What has resulted has been the shifting of responsibility to HIV patients for their wellness without due regard of the difficulties that this knowledge may pose for some HIV positive people. HIV positive people are entreated to take full responsibility for their lives through the acquisition of knowledge even though the acquisition of this knowledge, and whether people are able to act on it, is often in question. We are confronted by an even direr situation: the marketization of the HIV citizen. Marketization is meant to normalize the HIV citizen by incorporating him/her into normal everyday relations of consumption. But even here we have a problem since HIV tends to be concentrated around people who are resource-constrained and so that means that they are never fully incorporated into this normalization. Alternative and less marketized means of dealing with the side effects and stress of living with HIV are often less discussed than conventional Western medicine. We are confronted with how HIV positive people are "being left behind", a useful phrase for looking at what happens when naturalization is forced onto people without really taking account of some of the personal difficulties that this poses for people living with HIV.

How are HIV positive people supposed to live then? This is a question that is tackled by the book. We are faced with a situation where people either have to “live on” with HIV in contexts like the UK that have a longer treatment history, or “live with” HIV in resource low and middle-income settings such as South Africa. “Living on” refers to survival in spite of the precarious nature of living three letter lives. In the UK, it encompasses “living on” with the loss of loved ones and therefore a constant reminder of the effects of HIV on people’s personal lives. Somehow, infected people must still find a way to live on with this perpetual sense of loss and the sometimes unstated but present fear of impending doom over their own lives. “Living on” involves a strategic rejection of certain aspects of one’s HIV positive identity while simultaneously facing HIV related feelings of depression and HIV complications. “Living with” HIV in South Africa entails resourcefulness and negotiation in the context of poverty and resource constraints. Resourcefulness may mean skipping ARV medication in the absence of food to supplement the medication, it entails finding new strategies for social and psychological support amidst lack of access to these resources, it means having to endure the sometimes ravaging side effects of ARV medications on already weak and impoverished bodies. In South Africa, living with HIV also means living with the severe cash constraints that make living a healthier life almost impossible.

The book shows us the complexity of living three-letter lives in this era of a possible AIDS free generation. This is a complexity that HIV naturalization, in its optimism and progressive zeal may often gloss over. It glosses over the uncertainty that faces HIV positive people, on the borders of scientific and medical progress, at the helm of fluctuating global markets that they have no control over. It means that social and economic uncertainties that have a direct and indirect bearing on the lives of HIV positive people are sometimes placed on the periphery of medical progress and discourses. As much as medical and public health, and even media discourses can claim through medicalization that HIV positive people have control over their wellness, there are a host of things over which HIV positive people have no control. It glosses over the dents and threats to personal and other forms of security that encounter people living three letter lives. This book will enable us to consider issues of social justice, where we are forced to take account of the context of ambiguity that HIV positive people have to live with as part of their three letter lives in this era of optimism.

# Strategically vague

## [ BOOK REVIEW ]

Bernstein, J (2013) **Violence: Thinking without banisters**. Cambridge: Polity Press. ISBN 978-0-7456-7064-5 pbk. Pages ix + 228

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As an unidentified dyslexic in primary school I worked my way into the advanced reading group. When a school inspector arrived, conducted a series of tests and declared that I was some rather significant number of years behind in my reading age, my teachers expressed shock. I had fooled them by learning and applying two lessons: the blurb on the back of the book gives you a lot to talk about; and never be too specific, leave what you say open to almost any interpretation, that way you will never be exposed. In reviewing **Violence: Thinking without banisters**, I am left reflecting on these primary school years. Firstly about just how exposed I would be if I tried to use the blurb on the back of the book to bluff my way through a review (the book itself has little to do with the proposed summary on the back cover). Secondly, I missed my calling, I should have been a philosopher. Apparently if you leave everything you say unspecific and open to interpretation, people speak about you for years after your death – mainly because they are looking for themselves, or at least their ideas, in your non-specific writings.

The blurb on the back of the book, the blurb I read before agreeing to review the book, speaks of how “we live in a time when we are overwhelmed with talk and images of violence ... we can’t escape ... another murder, another killing spree ... Our age might well be called “The age of violence?”. It goes on to say that because of this it is important to ask, “What do we mean by violence? What can violence achieve? Are there limits to violence and, if so, what are they?”. The blurb suggests that Richard Bernstein seeks to answer these questions by drawing on the work of five thinkers who have paid attention to violence: Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon, and Jan Assmann.

I was left expecting a book which would draw on these five thinkers to shed light on current happenings. I was interested to see how Bernstein would pull this off. Knowing

a little of these thinkers' work (or rather a lot of some and none of others) I was curious how their work could be used to reflect on the individual experience of general violence – the experience of reports of violence or the depiction of violence in movies. I wondered how our current time could be thought of as the Age of Violence – I can think of a few ages more deserving of the title.

Contrary to the blurb, what I found was a detailed discussion of what each of the five figures wrote and what that implies about what they thought – and how much time can be spent figuring out what someone was thinking from what they were writing. First there is a separate discussion on each of the five authors, and then this is drawn together with the author's own reflections on the questions raised in regards to each of the five. The author's reflections are interesting, and insightful, but general, with little reference to current events. The book is a reflection on a body of literature – not an application of that body to the current time.

The book was not what I expected, but that in and of itself does not make it good or bad, it simply highlights the failings of the back cover (or the successes, but I shall return to that). The introduction, the five chapters, one on each of the figures, and the final chapter of the author's reflections make for a fascinating read, overall; although not all chapters were created equal.

The chapter on Carl Schmitt spends a great deal of time justifying the consideration of his views. Schmitt was an openly anti-Semitic Nazi supporter. To say that it is important to consider his writings in a reflection and critique of violence does, not surprisingly, require justification. However, the length of the justification detracts from what is otherwise a sensitive and insightful summary, both of his work, and its failings. Most interesting is Bernstein's discussion of how Schmitt relied on the very thing he ridiculed, a normative base.

The chapter on Walter Benjamin was, for me, the low point of the book. Of Benjamin's body of work, his work on violence is arguable not among his most useful contributions. Even Bernstein notes, in the concluding chapter, that Hannah Arendt, despite being Benjamin's friend, writing extensively on the topic and having a clear interest in his work, never mentions Benjamin's work on violence. Bernstein speculates that Arendt thought it a stumble. From Bernstein's discussions in the chapter focused on Benjamin it is clear that there are grounds for such speculation. Benjamin draws a distinction between mythical violence and divine violence, but explains the latter in cryptic terms. This lack of clarity has led to great number of highly varied interpretations. In summarizing a number of these differing interpretations Bernstein succeeds only in clarifying that Benjamin said very little, but the little he said provides ample opportunity for others to find support for their own ideas. From the numerous commentaries that have been written it appears people do like to find support for their own thinking in characters from the past, even if finding it requires a few leaps of faith and some mental gymnastics.

The analysis of Arendt and Fanon are the high points, both in the individual chapters and the concluding reflections. Bernstein highlights many misinterpretations of their work, particularly Fanon's. In his reflection he develops a wonderful conversation between the two – drawing out similarities that have been all too often missed. He dispels the simplistic interpretation of Fanon as a glorifier of violence, showing rather how his work was in fact a critique of violence. He shows how the ideas of Fanon and Arendt, far from being always at odds, often overlap. The book is worth the read if only for the chapters devoted to these two authors and Bernstein's exploration of the overlaps in their thoughts.

The final thinker covered is Jan Assmann, the only contemporary thinker included. His focus on religious violence, a topic of some interest in the current time, gives some hope of bringing the book back to life. That hope is, however, unfounded. This modern thinker spends his time writing about past thinking or rather remembering.

The book ends with Bernstein's own reflections. After discussing how the authors relate to each other, he turns to his own thoughts, seeking to draw out what he sees as the lessons learned. He covers three points: "(1) The endurance and protean quality of violence; (2) the limits of violence; (3) nonviolence, violence, and politics". He ends off with the conclusion that public debate is needed, rather than solitary wrestling with the issues. If there is no debate, he argues, violence will all too often triumph.

The book is about political violence, violence on a large scale, violence between states or warring parties. I am interested in violence at the individual level. I am interested in how people understand violence – not philosophers, but everyday people, those who see violence, experience violence, commit violence. The back of the book suggested I would not be disappointed, and so was successful in getting me to select the book for review. But of the thinkers covered in the book the only one to come close to the issues I was interested in was Fanon. He talks of the effects of a violent system on people and how this alters their self-perception and can possibly lead them to act violently. He addresses sources of violence, not only at the macro level, but at the level of the perpetrator of the act itself. I wanted to read a book about what we could learn from such thinking; a book about what the effects of current systems are on people's understandings of violence, and on their propensity to be violent. Maybe I will find that somewhere else.

# The traumatic history of psychoanalysis

## [ BOOK REVIEW ]

Kuriloff, Emily A (2014) **Contemporary psychoanalysis and the legacy of the Third Reich: History, memory, tradition**. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-88319-1 pbk. Pages xvi +177.

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In the final chapter of **Contemporary psychoanalysis and the legacy of the Third Reich** (2014), Emily Kuriloff refers to having asked psychoanalyst Jack Drecher whether he thought the field of psychoanalysis had been influenced by “the Shoah” (p143). The answer Kuriloff quotes, “How could psychoanalysis *not* have been influenced by its own history” may be, as she suggests, characteristically Jewish (in responding to a question with another one) but it is, of course, much more than that. How could the most terrifying genocide in living memory, directed to the extermination of the very people that gave rise to the description of psychoanalysis as “the Jewish profession”, have not influenced both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis in important ways?

I raise this point via Drecher’s question because the book’s main title, together with its expansive subtitle, plays an important part in my response to it. While it is true that the history of psychoanalysis, like that of any other field, must always also be about “memory” and “tradition” in some sense of these terms, this title, applied to a genocide in particular, raises expectations that the book might connect its subject matter to some of what I believe to be amongst the interesting concerns in contemporary thought. Kuriloff’s title certainly echoes those of Dominick LaCapra (1994) in **Representing the Holocaust: History, theory, trauma and History and memory after Auschwitz** (1998) or that of Cathy Caruth’s (1995) edited collection entitled **Trauma: Explorations in memory**.

With expectations of this kind still more or less in mind, I closed the book with a response best described as disappointment. But, knowing that disappointment may be unfair response, I think it important to say at the outset that **Contemporary psychoanalysis and the legacy of the Third Reich** has much that is of interest to present. The material Emily Kuriloff has

gathered is both rich and rare and the disappointment I experienced does not relate to the material itself but stems from what is done, or rather not done, with this material. The first thing that Kuriloff does not do with the material is organize it clearly, a problem that the form of the work makes clear.

The book is based almost entirely on in-depth, first person interviews with some of the more important names in the history of psychoanalysis; people who had a personal relation to the Holocaust as survivors, the children or descendants of survivors or those who lost close relatives in the gas chambers. It is a slim book, divided into seven chapters, each of which has a number of subheadings. For example, the first chapter, entitled, "It's not what you have written down" has twelve subheadings, some of which are followed by no more than one paragraph, while the longest of these subsections (that which ends the chapter) covers approximately three and a half pages. The subheadings themselves are very varied in form and style including cryptic short titles like, "The silence" or "Exile" as well as bold ones such as "History and personal history".

This pattern, a chapter followed by short headings (sometimes just the name of an interviewee, or of a period or theme) characterizes all the chapters and accounts for much that is problematic in the work. As you read these sections there is little sense of why they follow each other in that particular order, nor does the subtitle chosen obviously fit or illuminate what follows and, as the book unfolds, the sense of many roads - from highways to foot paths - contemplated, but not taken, grows.

One road Kuriloff appears, for example, to contemplate taking is that related to the fact that some of the analysts she talks to seem to think it right to separate their memories of suffering or trauma from their work and seem, in addition, to be unwilling to relate their personal experiences of "extraordinary human unhappiness" and doubt, as Dora Hartmann puts it, that many aspects of her experience at the hands of the Nazis are "really of professional interest" (p15).

Although it is true that that Dora Hartmann's personal experiences may not, as Kuriloff points out, have been as horrifying as those of others, the point I see in germinal form at this early stage in the book is not just a personal one, nor can it be confined to the question of "professional interest". It relates to the much bigger question as to what counts as trauma, and what kinds of trauma, experienced by the analyst or her patients, should be seen as pathogenic and in what particular ways.

Something of the complexity of this question emerges explicitly in the material Kuriloff presents in two later interviews. Under the subtitle "As if nothing happened" Dr Nathalie Zajde talks of the significant differences between her training in France and her work in California. She talks about contexts in which reference to the transmission of trauma within Jewish survivor families is understood and conceptualized and where it is not, and goes on to refer to working with a follower of George Devereaux, an ethnologist and psychoanalyst, who encouraged her to work with her own "ethnic" trauma. Zajde goes on to say that her parents were hidden children and her grandparents deported to Auschwitz and to talk of her own "Yiddishkeit" and its "terrible disappearance" (p121).

Crucially, at the end of the section, Kuriloff quotes Zajde as saying:

*"I tried to have my psychoanalyst get interested in it too - to think of me not only in terms of drives and unconscious - but also through my origins, my family, my story, etc - but she couldn't given the fact, I think, that she was a very serious and strict Freudian analyst."* (p121)

There is much that is of importance in this quotation. Zajde seems to be talking of what Kuriloff refers to much earlier as “blind spots in the consulting room”. But if so, what kind of blind spot is this? The ambiguity here, as I see it, relates to whether Zajde’s analyst’s unwillingness to discuss certain aspects of the patient’s life in the therapy, is a conscious, theoretically-based decision or a symptom, “a defensive distortion” based in some way on the legacy of the Third Reich (p72).

I highlight this point because there are a number of places in the book in which this question is raised - albeit on another level. There is that of psychoanalysis as “a profession long burdened by its insularity and divisiveness” (p142), which is reminiscent of something said earlier by Regine Locket who refers to the “furnace of theoretical discussion” given the label of “theoretical differences”, but ones Locket sees as stemming from “blaming others for one’s own inability to integrate parts of yourself and your past ... the German past that is hard to accept” (p76).

And then, under the heading, “Nothing is off limits”, there is the material that emerges in the very rich interview Kuriloff has with Robert Prince after reading his book entitled **The Legacy of the holocaust: Psycho-historical themes in the second generation**. Kuriloff, rightly I think, devotes a lot of space to this interview, one in which Prince is very clear what the legacy of the holocaust means to him – as a person, as an analyst and as an analyst of a particular orientation. He believes that his experience as a member of “the second generation” has everything to do with his professional life. He talks, for example, of growing up as the only child of holocaust survivors and of his sense that in choosing a healing profession he was trying to heal parents. He talks too of his own aggression and his projections and of encountering “the dark side of psychoanalysis in Freud” (p143).

Prince, crucially, says, that he was warned that psychoanalysis was not interested in the impact of “historical” trauma on the individual in adult life but rather focused on infantile trauma with its emphasis on the “canonical centrality of the psychosexual unconscious” (p147). As important he talks of the confluence of historical and personal dynamics in his work saying, “I guess the holocaust drew me to interpersonal psychoanalysis” because “as the famous saying goes what really happens really matters” (p147).

I have referred to the Prince interview in detail, and linked it to other interviews, because I am hoping to illustrate what I think is of interest in **Contemporary psychoanalysis and the legacy of Third Reich** but also why I found it disappointing. Choosing these examples from the interviews Kuriloff has presented, it seems to me that the issues raised by her interviewees are concerned with no less a question than that concerning the limits of psychoanalysis, as both theory and practice. And this is the second thing that Kuriloff does not do – she does not make the centrality of these issues and what is at stake in them, clear.

Firstly, we can take the idea that the psychoanalytic profession, with its theoretical divisiveness can be related to the holocaust, and to the “Jewishness” that was its deadly target. Where people were, where they moved to, or were in exile and how close they were to Auschwitz, all played a part in establishing what their theoretical affiliations and their instantiations in practice came to be.

Zajde’s “strict Freudian” could be seen to embody the classic view that ordinary or even extra ordinary human unhappiness should not be confused with neurotic misery, nor should the extraordinary experiences of the adult ego be confused with those always “other” intrusions from the unconscious. A strict Freudian draws classic distinctions; should not forget that mourning is significantly different from melancholia, that real, adult trauma lures the

unconscious and in doing so implicates, to a greater or lesser extent, that which has its origin in the traumatic fantasies of childhood.

Secondly, Prince's almost throw away comment that "what really happens really matters", *really matters* to the history of psychoanalysis itself. For a start (and it is not really only 'for a start') it opened up the space for interpersonal psychoanalysis and similarly also opened up a space outside psychoanalysis that has yielded much for the study of trauma more widely. To return to LaCapra in **History and memory after Auschwitz**, (and to the term "historical trauma" used by Prince referred to earlier) it has opened up the "problematic distinction between structural or existential trauma and historical trauma that enables one to pose the problem of the relations between the two" (LaCapra, 1998: 47). And discussions of this problematic distinction continue to prove fruitful in many ways and in many unexpected places.

Finally, I think it important to make it clear that am not saying that Kuriloff *should* have explicitly demonstrated an awareness of any of these wider issues, nor can she be asked to have taken a stand on any one of them. My personal disappointment may stem from her not making any of these more reflective moves, but perhaps more legitimately, I believe she could, minimally, have been expected to organize her rich material with more insight.

In the end the book feels like the first draft of a thesis that a very good PhD student, who has gathered wide ranging and rich material, might have produced before attempting to pull it all together. It is a book filled with the thoughts, opinions, and experiences provided by some very remarkable people, one which reads as the work of someone who, perhaps intentionally, wants to do these people justice by letting this rich data speak for itself. But although **Contemporary psychoanalysis and the legacy of the Third Reich: History, memory, tradition**, is undoubtedly a book about real (and really living) issues, in standing this far back from them, it is one that pays the price of being a book without a real author.

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# Creating decent work for all

## [ BOOK REVIEW ]

Carr, S C, MacLachlan, M & Furnham, A (eds)  
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Up until very recently, psychology's contribution to humanitarian work has been insufficient and modest. **Humanitarian work psychology** presents a new speciality within the field of Industrial and Organisational (I/O) psychology that focuses on humanitarian work. The book provides compelling arguments for organising humanitarian work to meet humanitarian ends. Humanitarian work psychology is the application of I/O psychology to humanitarian issues with a specific focus on developing a psychology that promotes humanitarian work. From both an ethical and practical perspective, humanitarian work psychology promotes humanistic as well as humanitarian ends including the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of reducing world poverty by 50% by 2015 (Annan, 2000). Humanitarian work psychology is in every way invested in the promotion, creation and maintenance of decent work for all.

The rationale behind this specialisation is the fact that despite major advances in human society, the world continues to face humanitarian crises. These crises include war, starvation and poverty, climate change, and among other things, natural and human-made disasters. First world, economically powerful nations are often better prepared to contain and deal with many of these crises successfully, but not always. *Organisations* (non-government organisations) are placed at the forefront of managing such humanitarian issues. And so, it makes sense to ensure, as in the case of any organisation, that humanitarian organisations have the requisite organisational support structures for successful operation, as well as the successful performance of its workers. There is a need to recognise that organisations have a great capacity to advance humanitarian goals. I/O psychology, given its well established research base and practice of developing effective organisations, is argued as being central in achieving humanitarian ends.

The authors of this book opine that humanitarian work psychology still has a substantive contribution to make towards what is already available and known in the area. Work psychology has historically delved into the arena of humanitarian issues. Previous attempts were not sufficient in creating any lasting profile for psychology in development work. The authors make a clear distinction between a psychology of humanitarian work and a work psychology that is humanitarian. Regarding the former, most of the literature and research in the area tends to focus on aid worker wellbeing with the view that a lack of wellbeing is due to organisational, rather than, humanitarian related stressors. The latter, a work psychology that is humanitarian, focuses on the promotion of a more humanitarian perspective within work in general, specifically on ensuring decent work for all workers. Humanitarian work psychology has its key focus here: it is concerned with developing and maintaining decent work.

Against this backdrop, the book is divided into three parts which include Conceptual Foundations (part I), Applications (part II) and Building Capacity (part III).

Part I of the book provides the conceptual basis for humanitarian work psychology, its history, theory, method and ethics. Riechman and Berry (Chapter 2: The evolution of Industrial and Organisational Psychology) present I/O psychology as the foundation stone of humanitarian work psychology. They provide an excellent review of the history of I/O psychology and emphasise its evolution as it relates to the development of humanitarian work psychology. The main arguments presented in the introductory chapters (part I) emphasise that in order for humanitarian work psychology to develop an identity of its own and grow into a speciality, it has to not only depend on what I/O psychology has to offer, but widen its perspective and develop its own value systems. This is an important point to consider in that attention must be paid to humanitarian work psychology developing a broader proficiency that draws from disciplines outside of I/O psychology.

While reading the section on the conceptual foundations, I was drawn to a key piece of writing by Pietersen (2005) who argues that Industrial/Organisational psychology, particularly in the case of South Africa needs a considerable amount of published research in the narrative-interpretive, philosophical and interventionist modes of understanding of human behaviour in the work and organisational context. To achieve this, he argues, will be an appreciation for relevant perspectives, ideas, methods and solutions from other knowledge disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Thus, despite the strong arguments for using I/O psychology as a foundation for humanitarian work psychology, there also needs to be an appreciation for the fact the I/O psychology itself faces identity crises, often shifting away from mainstream psychology. Furthermore, there is also a need for I/O psychology to regularly consider its applicability in localised contexts.

This idea of local context is driven throughout the text in arguments for developing cultural competence. Lefkowitz (Chapter 5: From humanitarian to humanistic work psychology: The morality of business) suggests that we should endeavour to develop an expanded normative model of work psychology characterised by humanistic values. Similarly, in their paper, "Motivating the teacher workforce in Uganda" (Chapter 7), Tumwebaze & MacLachlan outline many factors which contribute to social, cultural and economic development. Of particular importance, they comment on the *ubuntu* philosophy which emphasises, unlike in Western cultures, the idea of collectivism – again highlighting the need for developing cultural competence. This idea is carried through in many of the chapters throughout part II and III of the book.

Part II of the book deals with a range of *applications*. For example, enhancing public services in health and education. These applications are in response to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the urgent need to develop and sustain decent work for all.

Part III of the book deals with *building capacity* with a particular focus on future directions. Schein (Chapter 11: Women, work and poverty: Reflection on research for social change) emphasises the need for humanitarian work psychology to focus on issues of women, work and poverty. Interestingly, Schein writes that I/O psychology itself has been unable to make a sufficient contribution to these issues and that humanitarian work psychology needs to expand its foci. Schein makes an argument for social advocacy research in achieving this.

Atkins and Thompson (Chapter 12: Online volunteers and SmartAid) considers how the use of information technology and I/O psychology can improve the effectiveness and wellbeing of those both receiving and delivering aid and discusses both the trends and opportunities in online volunteerism. A programme (still under development), called SmartAid, aims to become a tool that looks at an alignment between a person, a job, and a recipient that has an appreciation for local contexts.

Gloss, Glavey and Godbout (Chapter 13: Building digital bridges: the digital divide and humanitarian work psychology's online networks) acknowledge the central role that the internet plays in the work of humanitarian work psychologists, particularly through the use on online networks and communities. For continued success, these online systems need to be made accessible to people from various income brackets, thus moving beyond the digital divide. Moving forward, efforts must be made to create meaningful digital bridges – the authors provide a set of recommendations to do so.

At the heart of the argument and a key feature of this book lies in the conceptual grounding of humanitarian work psychology and the very real contribution that I/O psychology can make to humanitarian work psychology. I/O psychology has heavily informed, ethically, practically and otherwise, humanitarian work psychology. The development of cultural competence is a key idea that runs throughout many chapters of the book. Humanitarian work is concerned with the development of decent work in all places of work where efforts must suit the local needs/context. Despite its many successes, the book also highlights many of the gaps that still exist in the research and practice of humanitarian work psychology in its efforts to enhance human welfare.

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