

BOOK REVIEWS

The Myth of Continents: a Critique of Metageography. Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1997. 359 pp. \$55.00 (Cloth), \$19.95 (Paper).

Geographic scholarship has recently become much concerned with issues of language and representation, with the multiple ways that depictions of spaces and places embody biases, naturalize contingent social relations, and emphasize some political perspectives while marginalizing others. Readers interested in Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism, Orientalism, post-colonial thought, and geographic education will find *The Myth of Continents* a useful volume that summarizes a great deal of classic and contemporary research. It serves as an important stepping-stone between frequently obtuse, jargon-laden academic works on the one hand, and popular views of geography on the other.

Lewis and Wigen's concern is metageography, which they define as "the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world" (p. ix). Geographies are thus much more than just the ways in which societies are stretched across the earth's surface. They also include the contested, arbitrary, power-laden, and often inconsistent ways in which those structures are represented epistemologically.

Lewis and Wigen's critique of metageographies (e.g., First and Third Worlds, North-South, etc.) reveals how earlier notions of world geography as a neat series of continents tends to disguise both an implicit environmental determinism and a blindness to the politics of space as a social construction. For example, the distinction between Europe and Asia has had many uses throughout history, including different sides of the Aegean Sea, the Catholic and Orthodox realms, Christendom and the Muslim world. Ostensibly "clear cut" boundaries such as the Urals, which separate European and Asian Russia, reflect changing political interests, particularly the desire to naturalize certain distinctions in the name of imperial expansion. Thus "Europe" as a separate region was largely a construct essential to the emerging hegemony of European culture and power. Similarly, as Edward Said has so powerfully shown, the Orient was also a construct of the overheated fantasies of the West. "Asia" has steadily migrated in Europe's eyes, from northwestern Turkey to the Muslim world, to the East-West divide of the Cold War, to the Far East of the Pacific Rim, in the process giving rise to terms such as the Middle East and South Asia as they were spun off from the broader conception of the Orient. Typically, the farther a region is from Europe, the more internal variations are overlooked, so that varying cultures within Europe's 'Other' are lumped together under convenient labels (e.g., "India," despite its massive linguistic diversity). Associated with these regional labels are ethnocentric, and often racist, views of the people who live within them. Asians, for example, were often portrayed as submissive in nature, resigned to life in stagnant and despotic societies

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/4/reviews.pdf>

(e.g., Wittfogel's infamous Asiatic Mode of Production), in contrast to Western individualistic rationality. Even critics of these ideologies (Said included) incorporate simplistic East-West divisions into their critiques.

Readers of this journal will be most interested in Lewis and Wigen's critique of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. If Eurocentrism has persistently marginalized Africa's role in intellectual history, Afrocentrism repeats the error in another form. Radical Afrocentrism makes exaggerated and untenable claims; essentializing Africa's numerous real contributions in the form of some abstract quality of black people. In both cases, regions (Europe or Africa) appear to acquire a life of their own, attaining an aura of being "natural," pre-social, and immutable. Critical geography seeks to denaturalize this tendency, to unpack the political origins and consequences of regions as discourse. Although Lewis and Wigen resist the label of postmodernism, their work falls broadly within that perspective. Postmodernists are concerned with the linguistic construction of social and spatial reality; with the inescapable oversimplification that language always brings, of a complex and messy world, with the politics of the choices that underlie every categorization, and with the social consequences, as well as the origins of, discourse.

Lewis and Wigen cover an extensive body of literature concerned, among other things, with the use of civilizations as discrete units of analysis, Arnold Toynbee's influential conception of history, Sinocentrism, Wallerstein's world-systems theory, and the role of culture in the demarcation of regions as coherent entities. They explore how the formal system of world regions that pervades geography textbooks today arose after World War II, and provides the basis for most forms of "area studies" within universities, despite the fact that this scheme legitimizes some regions, such as Southeast Asia, which is fundamentally incoherent, and delegitimizes other regions, such as Central Asia, which has a long history as a trading crossroads and as a center of Turko-Mongolian heritage. This discussion prepares the groundwork for Lewis and Wigen's own regional classification, implicitly assigning priority to religion (e.g., the Eastern Orthodox realm) and/or race (e.g., African America, which includes the Caribbean, although Cuba is only 15% black, and northeastern Brazil). Their format strongly resembles most existing regionalizations. They conclude the book with ten principles of a critical metageography.

A strong concern for geographic education and literacy runs throughout the book. Given the abysmal, embarrassing, and widespread ignorance of world geography among university students in the U.S., pedagogic representations of the world's peoples and places are an important matter. Very few students are in a position to interpret regional schemes critically. The recent revival of interest in geography, particularly in light of the complexities of post-Cold War ethnically based geopolitics, has made geographic understanding all the more significant.

Readers interested in the politics of space, in questions of representation, and those who wish to introduce geographic pedagogy to contemporary social theory will find this volume useful. It would be especially so for instruction at the undergraduate college level as a supplement to existing texts in world geography. I highly recommend it.

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Mau Mau from Below. Greet Kershaw. Athens: Ohio University Press. 1997. 354pp.

The historiography of Mau Mau, Kenya's anti-colonial revolt of the 1950s has been totally revised during the last decade through research and publications by scholars in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The common thread in this development has been a movement away from the earlier colonial generalizations and later nationalist counterfactualizations toward a focus upon the event itself as it happened on the ground. The discourses have shared a concern with the social and economic causes of Mau Mau, narrating the experiences of the squatters in the settler farms in the Rift Valley, the urban workers and the under classes in both Nairobi and Nakuru, to the thought systems of the Agikuyu themselves as they confronted this massive change in their values and expectations. Much of the latter input has been greatly influenced by the long-unpublished thesis by Greet Kershaw. Its publication at long last therefore is most welcome, particularly for what it says about Mau Mau as experienced in two villages in southern Kiambu District.

Mau Mau From Below is the agrarian history of two Gikuyu moieties, referred to as clans or *mbari*, from the nineteenth century into the mid-1950s when Kershaw first researched in the areas of *mbari ya Igi* and *mbari ya Thuita*. It is about the deep histories of the clans, and how their shadowy ancestors colonized the land, became devastated by two famines in the 1830s and again in the 1890s, and how on each occasion they sought to re-work systems of alliances for the accumulation of wealth in people who came as neighbors, dependents, and landless clients, *ahoi*.

By the time of the arrival of the British in late nineteenth century, this was a land and wealth conscious community with an ethos that linked wealth to virtue, and virtue to a sense of history that regarded land and goat ownership as a trust for future generations. Then in 1902-3 there arrived a *muthungu* (a white man). "He was like a Ndorobo, only better because he had guns to protect the goats" (p. 84). Soon enough he began fencing the good uplands and forbidding Gikuyu entry, cultivation, or grazing rights. The elders reported this trespass to the European administrator, John Ainsworth, who sided however with his kinsman. "The gist of the interview was that the *thirikari* (government) backed the European; the Kikuyu should understand that conditions had changed" (p. 86). The local community lost between thirty and seventy per cent of its best lands. The story of Gikuyu land hunger had begun. Groups of Gikuyu moved to found new communities in the Rift Valley.

Those that remained behind had to rework new property relations. The rich landowners tightened their hold on the land, gradually shedding off their gift-giving obligations (*tha*) in terms of access to land to their kin. The middle-class and poor peasants kept hoping for redress, especially when the British sent out the Carter Land Commission to look into the land grievances. The commission's report satisfied no one and "a sense of anger and urgency" filled the land (p. 104). The large landowners, who were also colonial chiefs like Magugu Waweru and Waruhiu wa Kungu, continued buying more land. The poor landholders found it increasingly impossible to subsist off the land while the males found it increasingly difficult to find jobs in Nairobi during the 1940s because of their lack of skills. Poor women coped with the triple burdens by working their patches of land, working for wages in the neighboring settler coffee plantations, and raising their families on little or no money. Poor men lost their positions

as heads of households. The poor invested much hope in education for their children (but school fees were hard to find for the women), and in the expectation that they would be allowed to grow coffee. They thought they would make money out of this and invest it more wisely than the Europeans who "ate what they earned and did not buy land" (p. 167). The lot of the *ahoi* became hopeless as they no longer had access to landowning patrons, could not find regular jobs for lack of skills, nor educate their children. The preconditions for Mau Mau were in place by the late 1940s. The Agikuyu began taking a variety of oaths in the Rift Valley, in Nairobi, and at Githunguri, Kershaw's research area.

Enter Jomo Kenyatta. After fifteen years abroad he had come back to a hero's welcome and settled in Githunguri as the head of the Teacher's College. His greatest welcome came from the young landless and poor. "He had been described as the man who could bring deliverance, the embodiment of new Kikuyu power" (p. 216). He settled down to being a Gikuyu elder by buying land and marrying well to a daughter of Senior Chief Mbiyu Koinange, by advocating the right of the Agikuyu to freedom and independence from British oppression, and to administering oaths of unity towards this end in Githunguri. "(H)e was familiar: he attended some oaths of heavy contributors" (p. 234). The colonial Governor declared a state of emergency and arrested Kenyatta on 20 October 1952.

Here is Kershaw's writing at its best:

"After months of anxiety and at times horror, after having suffered curfews, suspicions and being accused of crimes because they took oaths, land poor, landless and many landed exploded into *joy* (my emphasis)...Kenyatta's arrest, charged with being the leader of Mau Mau, changed fear and anger into hope. The landed had not given him a great deal of credit for leadership; they had seen him more and more as someone trying to become a landed Kiambu elder. Land poor and landless had seen this growth and sadly concluded that he had little to share now and offered even less for the future. No one doubted that he was in favor of resistance and his brand of Mau Mau, but the overwhelming opinion had been that he was not in control of Githunguri, nor of other Mau Mau. If in spite of what they had thought, he had secretly been in control, outwitting them and the colonial government for years, then he was far more astute than they had given him credit for. The time of secrecy was over; Kenyatta might be arrested, but freedom had never been so close. Those who had, against Kenyatta's will, offered their multiple oaths, should cease to do so and acknowledge him. All people should send Kenyatta a sign that they had understood and would follow: the time for *umoja* (unity) was now" (p. 248).

Much has been written on the myth of Jomo Kenyatta. This was its local grounding in Githunguri. "The government's arrest of Kenyatta, its declaration that he was the leader, renewed their hope and trust and they flocked to the oath-taking ceremonies" (p. 250). A calculated 57.7% of the people took the oath.

The British moved to curb this development by screening suspects and forcing them to take a cleansing oath, a strange instance of colonialism gone native. Concocted by the anthropologist Louis Leakey and rich landowners, including Chiefs Waruhiu and Kibathi, Harry Thuku and Mbira Githathu, the Agikuyu were to swear upon the *githathi* (sacred stones) for a reversal of the Mau Mau oath. In the instance, chiefs and Home-guards picked on some suspects and forced them to take this hybrid oath. In revenge, these elements organized an attack, resulting

in the Marige massacre of 5 April 1953. Kin turned against kin. "The *Mbari* has killed itself," an elder lamented (p. 257).

Marige effectively marked the end of Mau Mau in *mbari ya Igi* and *mbari ya Thuita*. The people were villagized, the Mau Mau were defeated, and by 1957 some of the detainees returned. By the time of Kershaw's research, there was hope that Kenyatta would return, get power and freedom under Kiambu leadership, and give land and hope to the poor. "All agreed that Mau Mau should become a closed chapter of history for the sake of the future and for peace... Though harder for some communities than for others, words such as Mau Mau member, Home-guard, or loyalist were to be erased from one's vocabulary" (p. 257). Collective amnesia would undo half a century of the deep cleavages of the clan. The Agikuyu were right about Kenyatta.

This is a powerful book, full of passion and meaning. It will make compelling reading for college students and faculty alike. The lack of maps is a drawback, as much of the narrative turns on the specifics of geographical scale.

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Bureaucracy and Race, Native Administration in South Africa. Ivan Evans. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 403 pp.

Before apartheid was declared officially dead, people used to puzzle over two big questions. One was whether the 1948 electoral victory of the National Party really represented a 'parting of the ways' from the preceding segregationist years. Another was how had the apartheid state managed to contain the resistance of the vast majority of the population. Ivan Evans' book answers both questions for the period extending roughly from the late thirties to the early sixties, focusing mainly on the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1940s the Department of Native Affairs [DNA] had been a "vacillating liberal outpost" staffed with paternalists, and after the 1948 election it gradually became an "arrogant apartheid fortress". The later, infamous phase flowed fairly smoothly, Evans argues, from the former, more benign one.

Evans shows the DNA, the bureaucracy responsible for African administration, enforcing obedience by many means other than force. Choosing three foci of the administrative process—labor bureaux, planned urban locations, Bantustans—Evans demonstrates how the DNA normalized coercion and conditioned African compliance. He reveals the philosophical and practical disjuncture between rural and urban administration, the former retaining its paternalistic bias while in the 1950s the latter became the galvanizer of apartheid. He sharpens our awareness of the fact that authoritarian regimes do not work by force and terror alone. The 1950s were particularly marked by the growth of the mundane workings of the newly centralized and authoritarian state administration. (This decade stands in contrast to the periods from 1960 to 1976, when repressive forces like labor control boards and internal security

apparatus ruled, and from 1978 to 1989 when repression was mixed with reform.) Apartheid worked initially because it was dispersed into the routine details of daily life.

No one should be surprised that a book with "bureaucracy" in the title reflects the language and tone of people who work in offices. Abstractions (such as "the African elite") abound, voices are often passive, and the impact of policies on people's lives is muted by bland words. Individual profiles rarely intrude to enliven matters. These barriers to a lively read could be said to go with the territory. From an analytical point of view, the sources may limit the book's revelations in a couple of ways. First, the immiseration of African rural life is stated in a blanket fashion as having been true for the entirety of the inter-war years rather than acknowledged to have been temporally, geographically, and personally variable. The focus on the Transkei, accompanied by references to indirect rule in Natal, effectively excludes discussion of rural administration in other African reserves. Secondly, the "curious" blindness of magistrates to the complexities of rural life is asserted rather than probed. Administrative ideology goes only so far in explaining this myopia; we need also broader some exploration of contemporary ideology which would include racism and scientism.

Evans' work joins several recent studies of South African administration, all drawing a far more complex picture of racial oppression than the simple paradigms of domination and resistance that flourished in the 1970s and 1980s. He sees little support for radical theories, put forward by Harold Wolpe, Frederick Johnstone and Marion Lacey, that posit a state obediently and efficiently serving the needs of capital. His approach provides an effective sequel to Saul Dubow's study of the DNA during its segregationist years (1919-1936). Like Deborah Posel, Evans rejects the view that the state is an undifferentiated "black box", preferring to accept that administrators have their own interests and power. He suggests, however, that she has underplayed the National Party constituency's "zealous predilection for grand plans" and overplayed the ad hoc development of apartheid policies. (While Posel's work focused more narrowly on labor bureaux, her title-*The Making of Apartheid*-fits Evans' book perfectly). Like Adam Ashforth, he is fascinated by the logic of administrators. Unlike Ashforth, who used seminal government reports to analyse the "politics of official discourse", Evans employed Native Affairs Department files, perforce up to the mid-1950s, to reconstruct the process of administration and not just its rationale.

The fact that a few top-down studies of apartheid's actual operation have appeared for the first time in the 1990s is a sign of how intently scholars used their profession to attack the regime's legitimacy during the apartheid years. (It is also a sign of archival restrictions, hence Evans' inability to extend his use of the DNA files past the mid-1950s.) Until recently, this topic might have been misunderstood to be an apologia. Now that apartheid is officially over and scholarly enquiry has become more free of pressures to be politically relevant, Evans has provided specialists with an excellent resource. His book will allow them to check readily which apartheid credos were actually enacted and why. It will help them gain a view of the making of apartheid policy that is truly "dynamic", a word much favored by Evans. He discusses, for example, how policy-makers responded to African nationalism and conservatism and in turn influenced their development. His clearly written book embraces an important sweep of time, issues and context rather than focusing narrowly on partial problems as so many monographs do. He takes into account the better part of three decades and situates problems within the

context of British imperial policy, the local political economy based on cheap labor, and even Nazi bureaucracy. Evans closes his book with the provocative suggestion that today's state cadres might learn from Minister of Native Affairs Verwoerd's ability to get things done in the 1950s, if they can force themselves to search beyond the regime's racist authoritarianism.

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Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence. By Margaret Hall and Tom Young. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997. 252 pp.

Margaret Hall and Tom Young have collaborated on a book that focuses on the past two decades of politics in Mozambique. A brief introductory chapter sets the stage at the end of Portuguese colonialism, with some limited information on the liberation struggle. The book then addresses the immediate post-independence period in a chapter titled "Anything Seemed Possible," which discusses the development of Frelimo's Marxism, development strategies, the rise of Renamo, and the increasing problems in the economy and political organization. Final chapters cover the nature of the war with Renamo, important political changes in the early 1990s, the peace talks, and, briefly, the elections in 1994. Much of the evidence presented is drawn from official statements and speeches as well as newspaper reports. Although Young, at least, was in Mozambique in the 1990s (he was present at a speech by President Joaquim Chissano in 1992 and was a United Nations observer at the 1994 elections), the book does not include much evidence of data collection or interviews conducted in Mozambique, or with Mozambicans.

Reliance on secondary sources means that the more original discussion in the book is at the level of political theory, and the more flawed areas are those that deal more directly with Mozambican society. Among the interesting insights are an analysis of Frelimo's Marxism, which the authors demonstrate was abstract, rather than grounded in Mozambican reality. Throughout they are at pains to explain how Mozambican politics was built on ideas from outside Mozambique: first on socialist and Marxist models, and more recently on Western liberal democratic capitalism. Although much of their evidence suggests that Mozambique has been a weak state that has suffered the imposition of the politics of others, they conclude that "In the case of both Constitutions [1975 and 1990] Mozambicans, or at least their leaders, had a considerable say in the matter and in some sense opted first for a version of socialism and latterly for a version of liberalism" (p. 219).

One useful task Hall and Young undertake is textual analysis of their sources. For instance, part of the explication of Frelimo's Marxism includes an examination of Samora Machel's speeches and his reliance on images and ideas about cleanliness and order as essential elements of his political vision, perhaps not surprising given his training as a nurse. The authors call for a detailed study of Machel's speeches, but they have made an important beginning in this book

(p. 66). Later they look closely at the language in the two constitutions as embodying Marxist and then liberal tenets (p. 218).

Despite the value of isolated sections of their political analysis, there are major flaws in this book, which unfortunately appears to have been rushed through production in order to be timely. There are numerous typographical errors, some more serious than others. For example, Nachingwea is placed "inside Mozambique" rather than correctly in Tanzania (p.13), leading to some confusion when discussing Frelimo activities in the following pages. Frelimo leader Armando Guebuza's name is misspelled in two different ways. "Machambas" is translated as "plantations," when it is most commonly used for small farms or fields, a very different type of agriculture than plantations (p. 20). The authors appear unwilling to credit Frelimo with any improvements, and this is in part because they essentially ignore the experience of Portuguese colonialism. It is easy to criticize Frelimo in hindsight, but in the immediate post-independence period the frame of reference was the contrast with fascist colonialism. People I spoke with in the early 1980s often commented on certain freedoms -- for instance to speak to co-workers at their workplace -- that had not existed less than a decade earlier. The other factor related to the colonial experience is the persistence of the Portuguese bureaucracy. Although some difficulties in implementing development strategies were related to centralized Soviet-style bureaucracy, many of the specific snarls were directly inherited from the colonial system, such as requiring specific documents, special paper, signatures, and fiscal and rubber stamps for every step of any official undertaking. Hall and Young simply ignore this aspect of Mozambique's colonial legacy, making it appear that all problems were related to the model of a centralized socialist economy.

The analysis is also flawed by the authors' confusion over the goals of Renamo and South Africa in Mozambique. They apparently dismiss the idea that Renamo's main goal was the destruction of Mozambique when they comment that "[T]his account of Renamo as a violent apolitical movement whose only rationale must be that it operated on behalf of some malevolent outside interests was assiduously cultivated by the Mozambican government and its academic and journalistic publicists with considerable skill and success" (p. 165). Elsewhere they call these other scholars "pro-Frelimo spokesmen" (p. 124), implying that these writers were so biased in favor of Frelimo's politics that they could not report reliably on what was happening. Yet their own evidence demonstrates the terrible extent of Renamo's violence and destructiveness. The diaries found in 1985 detail a meeting between South African and Renamo leaders to develop a "General Plan" which included as goal number one: "Destroy the Mozambican economy in the rural zones" (p.129-130). The authors also comment that "extreme brutality appears to have played a part in Renamo's rapid spread throughout Mozambique after 1980" with the twin goals of attacking the Frelimo state and paralyzing the population through fear. Attacking the state included the "destruction of the economic infrastructure" (p. 168). Thus the academics and journalists who worked to bring the facts of this devastation to world attention were reporting on actual events, not working as "publicists" at the behest of the Mozambican state.

Hall and Young may exhibit their own bias in the curious omission of any mention of the assassination of Ruth First in 1982. Likewise, the treatment of the 1986 plane crash that killed Samora Machel and many others is overly concise. Many in Mozambique and elsewhere still

hold South Africa responsible, while these authors simply state in a footnote that "The issues were highly technical, and opinion was split between those who blamed the crash on pilot error and those who suggested that the plane had been diverted by some sort of decoy beam" (p. 195). These two deaths convinced many observers of the hostility South Africa had toward Mozambique; it was this hostility that allowed such attacks to continue throughout the 1980s. Editorial decisions to omit or reduce factual information about South African apartheid terrorism results in a skewed retelling of that dreadful decade in Mozambique.

A major problem of omission is the nearly complete absence of gender analysis or any information on women. This is particularly glaring in the discussion of Renamo's development, where life in Renamo camps is described as having the "attractions of excitement and access to luxury items and women," with absolutely no reference to the fact that the women themselves were captured, raped, and forced to submit to sexual abuse in those camps (p. 170). This error is compounded a few pages later by a reference to the "wives of soldiers" being kept imprisoned at the camps (p. 176). It is simply not acceptable any longer to write a male-centered description of events that had such a devastating impact on women. An earlier discussion, otherwise useful, on the dissension over ideas about tradition and modernity in Frelimo politics, would have made more sense if it had included polygyny, bridewealth, and forced marriages among the traditional practices that Frelimo advocated ending. The traditional customs involving women were among the most contentious of those censured by Frelimo and the Women's Organization (OMM), and the analysis is extraordinarily incomplete when they are not included in the discussion.

An intriguing part of the book discusses the role of local religions and spirit leaders in Renamo and their links with Zimbabwean practices. Yet this is also flawed by the lack of any mention of the potential role of women as diviners, even when one is mentioned by title (Nyamasoro) (p. 182). The Nyamasoro has been long recognized as a spiritual leader in southern Mozambique, and has frequently been a position held by women. Dora Earchy, in her book *Valenge Women* defines Nyamusoro as "priestess" (Earchy, p.182 [London, 1933]; see also Luis Polanah's research from the 1960s, *O Nhamussoro*, [Lisbon, 1987]). The discussion of spirit leaders is also impaired by the lack of information on Naparama, which is mentioned only in passing many pages later in a different context. Any discussion of the role of local beliefs about diviners and occult religious elements during the war in Mozambique must include the rise of Naparama and its connection to Frelimo (p. 209).

My own experience in Mozambique includes living in Beira for two years (1982-84), years described several times in this book as the most difficult of the entire post-independence period. I returned briefly in 1989, and was also a UN observer at the 1994 elections (and I would agree with Tom Young's aside that "the opportunity to observe the UN [was] at least as valuable as the opportunity to observe the elections" [p. 231]). This relates to yet another omission: there is no analysis of the election results included here. In fact, with the exception of a vague footnote about União Democrática's unexpectedly good showing, there are no election results at all, usually considered a foundation of political analysis.

While Hall and Young have some scattered information and analysis that furthers our understanding of recent political events in Mozambique, the flaws are many and deep. Use this book in conjunction with other publications, such as William Minter's *Apartheid's Contras: An*

Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique (London, 1994) and Stephanie Urdang's *And Still They Dance: Women, War, and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique* (New York, 1989), neither of which is cited nor even listed in the bibliography in the book under review.

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