BOOK REVIEWS

Shady Practices: Agroforestry and Gender Politics in The Gambia. Richard A. Schroeder. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. Pp. 172.

Scholars commonly abstract the realities of daily life in Sub-Saharan Africa in their efforts to conceptualize the institutions available to, the obstacles faced by, and the issues confronting communities, firms, households, and individuals throughout the region. Such abstractions (e.g., formal versus informal economies, modern versus traditional societies, urban versus rural biases) are appealing, in part because they simplify complex issues and contexts, create theoretically unambiguous boundaries between groups and philosophies, increase the clarity of arguments and allow scholars to present cogent cases in support of a particular approach to development policy. Although most are aware of the limitations of abstractions as a means for predicting human behavior, many agents and agencies in the development community eagerly integrate such theoretical simplifications *prima facie* into policy prescriptions and aid initiatives targeting African communities. As Richard Schroeder aptly demonstrates in his Gambian case study, such direct applications of development theory are often accompanied by "slippage" when conceptual ideas are processed into applied projects and programs by development institutions and agencies. In doing so, agents and agencies may mistakenly view such models and idealizations as being more representative of human nature and behavior than reality itself and this, in turn, may lead to project failures as implementation contexts and local power relations are inadequately accounted for in the design phase of a development initiative.

Shady Practices details over two decades of economic, ecological, social and spatial change in lowland farming systems in the community of Kerewan, situated on the North bank of the Gambian River. Schroeder focuses primarily on the garden systems developed by collectives of women starting in the late 1970s (up until 1995) on lands traditionally controlled by male elders. The book provides a detailed history of these gardens and describes how they were transformed from small-scale contributors to household welfare into primary sources of income for many families as traditional cash crops (e.g., groundnuts) became less tenable in the face of drought and structural adjustment policies. The story is particularly intriguing when Schroeder explains how women's success in off-farm crop sales bred resentment among many men (husbands) and led to conflicts within the community and households. In some cases, men attempted to regain control of lowland areas through the (re)assertion of traditional patrilineal land-use claims, especially as they related to earlier rules on tree planting and tree crop usufructory rights. Beyond detailing the dynamics of such gender politics, Schroeder shows how intra-household relations were influenced by foreign aid initiatives and also does a superb job of demonstrating how NGO project officers and state extension agents at first facilitated (through Women in Development [WID] based initiatives), and then obstructed (through

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sustainable development programs), the development of women's garden plots in Kerewan. The longitudinal nature of this work allows the reader to observe the shifting sands of foreign aid programs in The Gambia over two decades and is therefore an excellent empirical case study that demonstrates some of the problems that arise when development objectives rapidly shift from one paradigm to the next. In this case, it is the shift in donor priorities from WID to sustainable development programs that enables men to regain some of the economic power lost to women as a result of their success in the gardens.

This book tells a fascinating tale rife with lessons about the dynamics of rural development processes, gender relations and the political economy and ecology of foreign aid. At its best, the book forces the reader to consider the complex ways in which intra-household and community power relations interact with foreign capital and ideas to influence the outcome of seemingly straightforward development programs. Moreover, the study questions some of the abstractions applied in the development of such programs and critiques contemporary theories on the role of women in development, the relationship between women and the environment, and sustainable development. In essence, Schroeder's book is one part political ecology, one part political economy and one part farming systems research that powerfully demonstrates the value of longitudinal studies that examine the dynamics of development at the local level within Sub-Saharan Africa.

The book is a brisk read that is divided into seven chapters and an extensive Preface. Chapter 1 introduces the study and presents a small sample of the literature (mainly that related to women in development and women's relationship with the environment) influencing Schroeder's approach to the research. Chapter 2 describes the farming systems of Kerewan and reviews the changes to these systems since the 1970s. Chapter 3 describes how husband-wife relations changed with women's success in the lowland production of horticultural products for off-farm sale and tells how foreign aid agencies actively aided women in the establishment and maintenance of the cooperative gardens. Chapter 4 details the labor inputs required by women to produce these crops and describes the difficulties faced by women trying to "calibrate" the labor outputs required for garden production in the dry season with those needed for rice production (a critical staple) during the rainy season. Chapter 5 examines the lowland garden system from the perspective of the landholders – the men – and describes how elders in the community began to regain control over lowland land claims through a renewed interest in tree planting and with the help of foreign aid agencies promoting sustainable development practices. Chapter 6 evaluates the net impact of men's attempts to reassert their power and presents some of the outcomes observed among the sample of garden sites researched by Schroeder. Chapter 7 raises interesting questions about the conceptual bases for many development initiatives and stresses the need to account for agents and power relations more readily in development theories and applied programs.

The book's main strengths derive from Schroeder's understanding of The Gambian context, gained through his experience living among and working with the Mandinka people; moreover, he efficiently details the social relations, economic practices and external influences (i.e., foreign aid and state sponsored programs) that have shaped (and reshaped) gender relations in a rural Gambian community. Ultimately, the book is a powerful case study that leads to four general conclusions: 1) idealized conceptualizations of women, as manifest in theories that view them

as "nurturers" of the environment or as "maternal altruists" (willing to do anything to preserve the well-being of their families), may lead to development initiatives that ultimately undervalue the social and economic cost of women's labor; 2) the abstractions used by development agencies to model African households and farming systems may excessively blur the realities of daily life and ignore the power relations existing in a community, which can lead to unanticipated outcomes from aid initiatives; 3) rural women should not be viewed simply as helpless victims of patriarchal societies and male-dominated development processes, but rather as agents of change and as political actors engaged in a daily struggle to restructure a social and economic system undoubtedly biased against them; 4) donor and state agencies and actors often actively participate (knowingly or unknowingly) in gender relations at the household level, especially during the implementation or funding of development projects.

As for weaknesses, the primary concern is that the book reads a bit too much like it was carved out of a much larger text (i.e., a dissertation) and seems thin in terms of its conceptual grounding. This criticism in no way detracts from the value of the book as an empirical case study, only that it was difficult to situate the work within a broader theoretical tradition as the literature review was a bit narrow in focus and short in length. Another criticism relates to the fact that the Preface contains extensive and important information about the methods, history, and approach of the study that should have been weaved into the main body of the text. Otherwise, the book is extremely well written and the tables, maps and photographs are effective and informative throughout.

The book will be of interest to a variety of individuals in both scholarly and applied settings and will be particularly valuable as a tool to demonstrate the complexity of rural development processes in Sub-Saharan Africa. For students and teachers, the book can act as a useful case study in courses dealing with such diverse subject matter as gender, political ecology, cultural ecology, the political economy of development aid, sustainable development, farming systems, rural sociology and environmental ethics. For scholars, the Kerewan case offers an excellent base for comparative research on rural land-use systems in developing countries and on gender politics in Sub-Saharan Africa. In sum, *Shady Practices* is an important contribution to the literature on rural livelihoods, common property systems, gender relations, and development politics in Sub-Saharan Africa, and is a book that will serve as a valued resource on Gambian farming systems for many years to come.

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Making Nice on Ethiopia: Believers, Heretics, and the Post-Imperial Transition

Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State. Theodore M. Vestal. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999. Pp. 229.

Ethiopia: A New Start ? Kjetil Tronvoll. UK: Minority Rights Group International, 2000. Pp. 36.

Both volumes reviewed in this essay examine the politics, economy and society in Ethiopia over the 1990s. Yet it would be excusable, if slightly far-fetched, if some readers were to argue that Vestal and Tronvoll are concerned with two different societies, or with distinct historical periods in the same society. Consider the sub-titles of the works. Vestal's *A Post-Cold War African State* [hereafter *VE*] hints at a description of the "historical present" with or without particular analytic-theoretical commitments. On the other hand, Tronvoll's *A New Start* [hereafter *TE*] implies there had been *some* old, probably false steps. This in turn suggests both localized, cumulating experiences against which progress can be measured, as well as some institutional order-in-the-making.

The focal issues overlap yet differ, albeit slightly. *A Post-Cold War African State* is all-encompassing and ambitious, its arguments elaborated in eighteen chapters of varying lengths and analytic depth. Vestal's audience is no less varied – among them Africanists of all hues, as well as analysts of American foreign policy on the developing world. By contrast Tronvoll's subject, the condition of minorities in post-imperial Ethiopia, is more focused, as is the primary audience for *A New Start*: civil society organizations, minority groups rights activists, and advocacy communities in Ethiopia and elsewhere served by Minority Rights Group International, a non-governmental body based in the United Kingdom that commissioned the report. Notwithstanding the variations, both works have considerable appeal for students of transitions to democracy in 'non-Western' societies.

The basic pre-analytic question concerns the applicability of dominant conceptual-analytic categories. As Thomas Kuhn (1962 [1996], p. 113) counsels, all perceptions depend on both the object and the perceptors' training and experience. Put differently, observers impose order on reality by discernment effected variously, through prisms molded as much by societies under observation as by the attributes particular observers bring to bear on the problem(s) at hand. Of course, non-compliant situations are only to be expected from efforts to blend general abstracted statements with particular experiences. Still, Ethiopia is always likely to raise peculiar difficulties. Africa's oldest autochthonous state is also "a warehouse of images, a repository for obsessions and projections of various identities both from within the [African Horn] region and from without (Sorensen 1993, p. 3)." While each image and identity frame parades more or less well-articulated positions on distant and recent pasts alike, there is very little in form of a grundnorm on Ethiopia's present institutional frame or road map to a shared future.

Scholars and observers are no less divided, either. Vestal and Tronvoll also bring contrasting experiences to their tasks. Vestal's engagement with Ethiopia dates back four decades to the 1960s. As a young volunteer in the American Peace Corps program, Vestal saw in Ethiopia both "a heaven-blessed land of natural beauty and potential abundance (*VE*, p. xi)"

and vast opportunities for the United States to extend its vision of modernization and progress around the world. Those early encounters would generate life-long friendships and social contacts, including with Ethiopians in residence in the United States. Now a political science professor, Vestal would also serve as advisor to the ruling Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in the early 1990s (*VE*, p. xv). Thereafter, he would publish critiques of the post-1991 transition in *Ethiopian Register* and the *Ethiopian Review*, two U.S.-based newsmagazines opposed to the Addis Ababa régime, and to which he has been editorial advisor. The move from advising EPRDF to advising opposition media might be deft politics, but there is no doubt Vestal is a true believer in Ethiopia and a well connected observer-cum-participant in its affairs. In turn Tronvoll belongs among new-generation Ethiopia observers, a Norwegian anthropologist who cut his scholarly teeth on the Horn region in Eritrea, on which he has done fieldwork on land tenure, served as observer during the 1993 referendum, and remained a noted commentator. Tronvoll has been far less 'involved' with Ethiopia; he is also the more dispassionate of the duo.

Vestal sets out to "bring *some* balance to description and analysis of events in Ethiopia *since* the EPRDF came to power (*VE*, p. xiii, italics added)." In this scheme, history either begins in 1991 or goes back no further than 1974. Nearly two decades of military rule under the *Derg* does not appear to have adversely affected his perceptions of historic Ethiopia. "The Ethiopia subjected to the power play of the EPRDF and EPLF [Eritrean People's Liberation Front] in May 1991," Vestal declares matter-of-factly, "was a shattered remnant of the land of promise that Western donor nations had analyzed and subsidized before the [1974] revolution (*VE*, p. 5)." The EPRDF government "purposefully intensifies ethnic distrust among the people," while the élite pact under which post-*Derg* Ethiopia was administered is dubbed the "charter of anomalies" for turning Ethiopia's unitary state structure inside out and for conceding Eritrean independence (*VE*, p. xiii; 7). Since the "carefully orchestrated pinchbeck elections of 1992," the EPRDF has persistently denied space to opposition groups and human rights activists yet managed to keep on the side of the US diplomatic and foreign aid establishment, the donor community, and Africanist constituencies (*VE*, p. 22; 52; 80; 85). In Vestal's eyes, it is not difficult to turn Ethiopia around; EPRDF operatives "beguile" and hoodwink *ad nauseaum* while major international actors, including the US, make nice, or pretend not to notice.

Reinforcing this anti-EPRDF outlook are two major considerations. One is Vestal's support for diasporic populations in the United States, those "educated cosmopolitan democrats [with] starkly different views of the theory of governance" *vis-à-vis* EPRDF élites (*VE*, p. 6). The other is a vision of democracy reflecting admiration by the exiled élites of *normative* political practices in their host societies, or of the open climate from which they have benefited (*VE*, p. 6-7). Attempts to project back home values acquired in the West have defined efforts to affect Ethiopia either by taking direct charge, or through relentless criticism of EPRDF and its functionaries.

It is not entirely surprising that diasporic Ethiopians are generally opposed to the sitting régime in Addis Ababa. Many have long been physically removed from their homeland and have not fully partaken in the multiple revolutions and endless internal wars in post-1974 Ethiopia. Moreover, exiled populations generally tend to hold on to versions of national history and sentiments they migrated with, or aspects thereof, which are amenable to memory and recall as conditions in exile permit. In Ethiopia's circumstances however, some traditional

attitudes and practices are certain to have been swept away by Marxist doctrine or by pragmatic calculations on the part of domestic populations. This hiatus probably explains, at least in part, why some groups failed to transform their elegant rhetoric to *real* political capital in 1991 (*VE*, p. 57; 198-199). There is also much infighting within opposition ranks:

When[ever] the opposition gathered, it was like the lively junction of tectonic plates – the earth shifted and shuttered, but when things settled down, there was nothing but destruction to behold. Criticism of everyone was *de rigueur*, but it was not constructive. The more the division, the greater grew the contentions, and the greater the flow of words, the less the importance of what was said. The notion of compromise had little utility to wily strongmen leaders of personality cults, intent on maintaining their personal power, or to ethnic chauvinists who fostered distrust of all except the chosen few of their own kind… The clash of groups over questions which elicited radical disagreement engendered paralysis, squandered everyone's time, and exacerbated animosities (*VE*, 49).

While the mix of optimism and frustration in the opposition has considerable merit, the analysis underlying it is problematic. In a sense Vestal is judge, jury and executioner all rolled in one. He has been editorial advisor to *Ethiopian Register* and *Ethiopian Review*; his book draws copiously from fourteen of his own essays previously published in both; and his might well be *the* voice of Ethiopian groups in the US that are opposed to EPRDF! If the same groups are all chauvinistic and politically naïve, as Vestal also appears to suggest, it might well be that the transnational opposition is oversold, or the mantra on historic unity is slightly jaded.

On another level, *A Post-Cold War African State* rests on avoidably narrow analytic foundations. Apart from private correspondence from eyewitness accounts, mostly partisans or other participants implicated in the processes described, there are few primary sources *internal* to Ethiopia. By contrast 'wildcard' sources hint casual conceptual specification, one case being a legal decision in the United States cited in support of claims on press freedom in a poor African country without established traditions of division of powers or independent judiciary (*VE*, p. 58). More surprising perhaps, an analysis of secret EPRDF documents (*VE* chps. 7, 10) draws on English translations in *Ethiopian Register* without any backup whatsoever from news and views published *in* Ethiopia. Yet, since Vestal believes that Ethiopia's vernacular newspapers offer credible, in-depth commentary (see *VE*, p. 134), he *could* have had some of these translated into English. Such firsthand insights could have enriched the rather formal-structural overview of EPRDF thinking and certainly other issues.

Vestal and Tronvoll agree on the significance of EPRDF's near-total control over the state. However, Vestal is less willing to admit to its deep historical roots. According to Vestal, the desire to monopolize political power drives EPRDF to routinely set one ethnic group against another, disrupt a long Ethiopian tradition where 'races and ethnic groups had for centuries been inextricably mixed and blended in unity' and, in effect, repudiate "the ideology of… 'Greater Ethiopia'" (*VE*, p. 47; 165; 184. Much of this is valid, yet open to distortion and exaggeration. Few will deny available statistics on arbitrary decisions, harassment of journalists and the political opposition, detention without trial and extra-judicial killings under EPRDF watch. On the other hand, the pre-1991 Ethiopia in which Eritrean, Tigray and Oromo élites took up arms against the central authority is *not* an epitome of unity, only a society at risk from

self-destruction. For Tronvoll, ethnic federalism does deconstruct old Ethiopia, but it was also necessary to re-constitute the body politic following the collapse of imperial-type centralization.

This suggests two general points. First, regardless of the mode of acquiring state power, an incoming administration has much of its work cut out for it by its predecessor. Second, there is more to EPRDF's reform program than opportunistic restructuring. The 1994 constitution not only "represent[s] a clear *breach* with former Ethiopian Constitutions," but also that federalism was about the only mechanism by which to keep Ethiopia together as a single unit after Eritrea attained *de facto* independence in 1991 (*TE*, p. 18-19). Many of the difficulties Vestal ascribes to EPRDF thus come across, in Tronvoll's analysis, less as intended effects than problems in managing structural change in circumstances where nearly all key players are at sea or blinded by self-interest, and politics-as-activity and mutual trust are uncommon currency (*TE*, p. 16-17; 20-22). Vestal agrees that Ethiopia lacks traditions of limited and accountable government and of participatory politics (*VE*, p. 45; 87; 89). Still, his analysis of the Constitution suggests the EPRDF could have made the quantum leap to liberal-democratic practice in a few years – despite its own military antecedents and threats of violence by the opposition (*VE*, p. 32).

So which way the Ethiopian transition? Both authors are cognizant of the international influence on Ethiopia, but internal social dynamics are no less critical. Vestal urges disaffected groups such as the Oromo to "avoid" the secession-unity dialectic in favor of inclusive discourse (*VE*, p. 203). His basic prescription though, is that the US re-assess its hand-in-gloves position: tighter aid conditionality, and constructive engagement with human rights and democracy activists must be applied to EPRDF, as they have to China and Sudan. There also is a moral case for greater US involvement in Ethiopia,

…where generations were taught by dedicated American teachers or worked in U.S.-led businesses; and where many Ethiopians, when forced to leave their homeland, demonstrated their affinity for the United States by going there to live in far larger numbers than any other place. Ethiopians literally have voted for the American way with their feet. For such trusting friends, must the United States continue to look the other way when Ethiopia's rulers make a mockery of democratic processes and commit gross indecencies against their people (*VE*, p. 197-198)?

Perhaps not. However, Ethiopia is also an important bridgehead for US interests in the African Horn, where national sovereignty still evokes considerable passion. As such, US preferences by themselves are hardly sufficient grounds to expect a policy reexamination in Addis Ababa.

For example, the EPRDF response to international pressure for economic reform has deepened its domestic clout. Vestal appends a list of business ventures owned or controlled by the ruling coalition, apparent results of a privatization program by which EPRDF elements have been buying with the left hand, what the state it controls has been privatizing with the right. However, the list also illustrates EPRDF is "serious" in its commitment to market-based reform (cf. Ottaway 1999, p. 73-77), and hints at the making of a new capitalist bourgeoisie in Ethiopia whose elements might one day encourage further political liberalization. In the meantime though, state power remains central to economic relations; difficult decisions remain to be made on property relations in land, and the economic implications of formal equality granted to all ethnic-regions. Since unequally endowed entities *cannot* realistically compete on the same

terms, Ethiopia unwittingly might be creating a climate that entrenches group inequality, encourages a new hierarchy of groups, or even denies that minorities *do* exist (*TE*, p. 19; 22-23). Ethiopia's transition to modern statehood, it seems, has a long way yet to go.

Together *A Post-Cold War State in Africa* and *A New Start* illustrate two unexplored themes on Ethiopian studies: how bewitched and/or divided scholars and observers of Ethiopia can be by disparate constructions of their subject, and the costs in unrealized political as well as analytic capital, of visual-conceptual categories from epochs gone by. Vestal's concern for what EPRDF has *not* done to restore the *status quo ante* is so overwhelming he glosses over the turmoil in Ethiopia's immediate past, as well as the law of cumulative incrementalism, by which change takes place as a small, additive process. Tronvoll in turn points to several important attributes of a reform program that, despite its shortcomings, has created a new climate for non-violent political interaction. Surely EPRDF has benefited from Ethiopia's situation, but self-aggrandizement by sitting régimes is invariably part of institution building. Without it hegemonization would lack variable political content. Vigorous opposition is equally important nonetheless: by checking abuses and focusing the popular imagination, opposition groups might well energize the quest for a new élite settlement. Ethiopia's first steps in that direction, it seems, must include further elaboration of existing mechanisms to redress perceived deficiencies and create an environment more conducive to shared political and organizational spaces.

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State Legitimacy and Development in Africa. Pierre Englebert. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000. 244pp.

In *State Legitimacy and Development in Africa,* Pierre Englebert directly links the developmental capacity of African states to their level of legitimacy. He contends that Africa's overall developmental incapacity springs from states' illegitimacy, which he sees as endemic throughout the continent. Similarly, the author accounts for Africa's successful nations by pointing to their relative legitimacy.

Englebert begins by highlighting the exogenous origin of most African states and the concomitant disruptions of colonialism that disconnected African peoples from their political and economic institutions. The state structures and boundaries created by colonial powers and post-colonial leaders bore little resemblance to those that preceded colonialism. The states and their leaders were therefore illegitimate, according to Englebert. Consequently, he argues, illegitimate African leaders have been forced to bolster their power through ineffective policies such as rent-seeking and neo-patrimonialism.

Not all African countries, however, have suffered this fate. Englebert shows that the most economically productive African states, e.g., Botswana, Mauritius and the Seychelles, are also the continent's most legitimate states. Their leadership and political boundaries, he argues, are embedded in the history and culture of the country. Therefore, their leaders do not need to maintain political power at the expense of development. It is this historical legitimacy that separates these successes from economic disasters like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. Herein lies the book's greatest strength; while most authors who attempt to explain African economic failure pay little attention to the continent's successes, Englebert's theory explains both success and failure in Africa as two sides of the same coin. Legitimacy leads to success while illegitimacy leads to failure.

Englebert's comparison of the Congo and Botswana beautifully illustrates the historical peculiarities that have given these two countries drastically divergent paths over the last thirty years. While civil war and a deteriorating economy have engulfed the Congo since independence, Botswana had the highest economic growth rate in the world from 1960 to 1985. Englebert shows that Botswana's massive diamond reserves alone did not stimulate the country's growth. Rather, good governance and good policies allowed the Botswana government to utilize their diamond reserves as a springboard for economic takeoff. The Congo's richness in diamonds, copper, cobalt, zinc and gold has not propelled the Congo to wealth or even stability. "If Botswana's miracle is one of natural resource endowment," Englebert argues, "then it should have been dwarfed by development in Congo (p. 106)." Poor policies and governance in the Congo did not allow that to happen.

But what explains these distinct paths? Again, Englebert argues that legitimacy is the crucial difference. While Belgian colonial leaders carved out the Congo with no concern for local political and cultural realities, Botswana's limited form of colonial rule did far less damage to its political and social continuity. This continuity, or legitimacy, has enabled Botswana to escape the "politics of illegitimacy" so common throughout Africa (p. 97).

Englebert furthers his argument with an impressive, though at times esoteric, quantitative analysis of the effects of legitimacy worldwide on development. He uses a variety of statistical methods to show the correlation between state capacity (i.e. good governance and good policies) and economic growth. While Englebert understands that legitimacy is not the only determinant of development, he clearly believes that it plays a crucial role.

Englebert's work fits within the existing literature on the state in Africa and political economy. Thus, his argument is heavily grounded in the theories of Crawford Young and Peter Ekeh, both of whom stress the imported nature of the African state, and those who have analyzed the ineffective policies of African leaders, such as Catherine Boone and Robert Bates.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of this book lies in Englebert's conclusion that the sanctity of the African state must be questioned. If Africa's intrinsic defect is its preponderance of illegitimate states, Englebert asks, why doesn't the international community reconsider state boundaries in Africa? Initially, this sounds far-fetched and radical. Perhaps Englebert does go too far here. The re-arrangement of state boundaries anywhere, let alone in as ethnically diverse and politically complex a place as Africa, would be fraught with myriad problems. Should the many Tswana-speakers in South Africa become assimilated into Botswana, for instance, or would this simply undermine Botswana's successes? Clearly, the problem is not simple. But, as Englebert points out, Somalia, Congo and other African states have already unraveled and others are bound to follow. Holding fully to the sanctity of illegitimate borders makes as little sense as carelessly ridding the continent of those boundaries.

Because Englebert's work draws from the political economy literature, political scientists and development workers will find the book to be of great interest. Africanist historians will also see the merit of his work, as it is, fundamentally, a historical argument of development and underdevelopment. This book's combination of rigorous analysis and clear prose make it a wonderful addition to the present literature on African affairs.

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Do I Still Have a Life? Voices from the Aftermath of War in Rwanda and Burundi. John M. Janzen & Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2000. Pp. 234.

The title and publication date of "Do I Still Have a Life?" may suggest that this book deals with the situation in Rwanda and Burundi a few years after the respective tragedies of 1994 and 1993. For anyone interested in the current situation in both countries, this would be an exciting prospect. In Burundi, due to ongoing low to medium intensity conflict, it has been nearly impossible to carry out any ethnographic work over the last few years. This has also been the case in Rwanda. Since the return of the refugees at the end of 1996, the possibilities for conducting fieldwork among rural and ordinary populations inside Rwanda have been extremely restricted. For this reason, researchers have a very limited understanding of how people have resumed their lives and are now coping in the years immediately following the tragedy.

The fieldwork for this book was carried out over a two month period from the end of 1994 to the beginning 1995. At that point, it was still relatively easy to carry out fieldwork due to the fact that there were over 150 international relief agencies in the region. The authors were recruited by the Mennonite Church to provide analysis and philosophical reflection on the situation in the Great Lakes and to listen to individual stories. This gave the authors access to vast networks, which allowed the authors to discuss events with people freely. Indeed, many people were very eager to tell their stories; this situation has changed dramatically since then. Following their fieldwork, the authors have continued their work by following up on some individuals through correspondence in order to cross-check divergent accounts of certain

events and learn about the complicity and participation of certain individuals they interviewed. *Do I Still Have a Life?* has clearly been put together with a lot of reflection and commitment, and thus is, in this sense, a quite remarkable book.

This book is an ethnography, focusing on individual experiences of the war and genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, but it differs from the majority of existing testimonial anthologies in three fundamental ways.[1] First of all, other works have mostly focussed on genocide survivors, while the Janzens' have tried to collect as many different perspectives as possible (visiting both the camps in Zaire and localities inside Rwanda and Burundi). They have opted to give voice and agency back to the individual characters in the wider tragedy, without objectifying individual choices and actions. Moreover, they believe that

despite the important place of writings...that suggest that the events surrounding the genocide and a war can be understood by careful historical reconstruction and disciplinary analysis that is rationally understood, our point of departure is that many of the individuals whose stories we heard reflect the fundamentally irrational and incomprehensible nature of war, on the part of both those who were involved in it and those who observed it from the outside....Therefore there is a need to listen to the voices to examine the many complex ways that rationalities and irrationalities interact in the lives of individuals, their communities and their families.[2]

Secondly, the authors do not just focus on people's experiences during the war, the genocide and life in the refugee camps, but have opted for broader life histories. As such, they are able to grasp Rwandan and Burundian society in all its complexity and contradictions. A stereotypical and overly simplistic Hutu vs. Tutsi approach was purposely avoided, which constitutes a laudable accomplishment making for a refreshing read. Finally, simply recounting testimonies is not the main aim of the book. Instead, the stories are used to gain deeper insight into topics such as the role of ethnicity, healing, reconciliation and justice (which are further elaborated in part II).

The book is written with clarity and academic seriousness, giving careful thought to methodological questions and ethical dilemmas with respect to fieldwork. The material is presented in an extremely accessible manner that is bound to appeal to a much wider audience beyond the often small circle of academics directly concerned with Rwanda and Burundi. It is richly illustrated with drawings and photographs, including for instance a section on drawings of children and their visual memories of peace and war. Unfortunately, the book only includes one general map of the region. It would have been helpful to reconstruct the route the Janzens took during their research in Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi. Those who are interested in grand theories or the final explanation for the Great Lakes tragedy will be disappointed. Readers interested, however, in the reflections of ordinary characters in this unfolding drama and the realistic options for post-war healing and social reconstruction at the local level will find a wealth of material to ponder. Despite the focus on Rwanda and Burundi, those working in different (post-) war zones on the African continent will undoubtedly find relevant material for comparison in *Do I Still Have a Life*.

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Notes

1. For example, African Rights, "Rwanda, Death, Despair and Defiance," London: African Rights, 1994; Phillip Gourevitch, "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda," New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1997.
2. John M. Janzen & Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen, "Do I Still Have a Life? Voices from the Aftermath of War in Rwanda and Burundi", Publications in Anthropology N°20, Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2000, p.3.

State, Civil Society and Apartheid: An Examination of Dutch Reformed Church-State Relations. Tracy Kuperus. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. Pp. 211.

State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa: An Examination of Dutch Reformed Church-State Relations, a dissertation that has been turned into a first-rate book, will appeal to both political scientists and historians of religion, especially those interested in South Africa. Although Kuperus' primary conclusion that institutions of civil society do not necessarily prompt greater democratization of the state is hardly a surprising one, the way she carefully analyzes the changes within the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, or the NGK) and its influence on the South African government over a sixty year period (1934 to 1994) is a welcome contribution to the scholarship on church-state relations in 20th century South Africa.

In analyzing possible church-state relations, the author constructs a theoretical model that outlines six potential typologies that characterize this relationship. At one end of the continuum resides extreme cooperation, while at the other is extreme conflict. The main points identified by Kuperus in her model are cooptation/collaboration, mutual engagement, balanced pluralism, coexisting conflict, conflictual resistance and enforced disengagement.

Kuperus argues that the period from 1934 to 1947, when the United Party controlled the government, was one of coexisting conflict beween the government and the NGK. When the National Party came to power in 1948, this relationship shifted in tone to one of mutual engagement. Collaboration marked the period from 1962 to 1978 when official interaction and collusion between the state and the church was so strong that the two institutions "became almost indistinguishable" (p.154).

The relationship that existed between the church and state from 1979 to 1994 was typified by mutual engagement. Contrary to the conventional view, which holds that the church

pressured the state to dismantle apartheid legislation, lift the ban on the ANC and other political organizations and release Nelson Mandela, Kuperus argues that the church lagged behind the state with regards to liberalization during this period. She writes,

in the end, the church's position differed from positions held by state leaders who were willing to revise the directives of separate development for the purposes of white survival and economic prosperity. This situation revealed the NP-dominated state moving ahead of a societal institution like the NGK on reform and democratization (p. 151).

Her explanation is that the NGK "could not easily distance itself from the moral and biblical underpinning of apartheid that it helped to construct" (p. 129). However, there were also pragmatic reasons behind the NGK's resistance to change. When the National Party embarked on reforms in 1982, conservatives within the organization broke off to form the Conservative Party. In an effort to avoid a schism within its denomination, the NGK "took a more moderate stance on the issue of reform than state leaders were promoting" (p. 132). Despite this effort to maintain unity, there was a breakaway of conservative parishioners from the NGK to the newly formed Afrikaanse Protestante Kerk in 1986.

Kuperus concludes with some remarks on the progress the NGK has made in the last 15 years to distance itself from the "theology of apartheid" it created, to apologize for the pain it caused millions of people and in its attempts to seek more inclusive arrangements within Reformed institutions (p. 159). Having read this book after following the testimony of the NGK at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) faith community hearings, I do not draw the same sanguine conclusions as the author does about the NGK's sincerity of apology or its commitment to greater church unity with nonwhite congregants. For example, the NGK still has not united with the "daughter," or Coloured and African churches. Unfortunately, Kuperus only refers briefly to the TRC (see p. 159) and not at all to the faith hearings, which are rather large gaps in the book's account of events. Given the lag time necessary for academic publishing, however, it is possible that these hearings (November 1997) came too late to be included in this book. Despite the absence of the TRC and faith hearings in Kuperus's analysis, the book still presents an interesting and compelling account of the NGK's role in the overturning of South Africa's apartheid state.

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Textual Politics from Slavery to Postcolonialism: Race and Identification. Carl Plasa. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 172pp.

Carl Plasa specifies in the introduction to *Textual Politics* that the book focuses on a wide variety of literature: works from diverse cultures, historical periods and "racial" perspectives. He states that the breadth and diversity of the source material is both deliberate and important because "the inscriptions of racial crossing with which the book deals themselves participate in larger networks of transhistorical and cross-cultural dialogue, revision, interchange and

contestation" (p. 3). With this in mind, Plasa developed a study that crosses a wide range of cultures. He interprets work such as *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* by Olaudah Equiano (1789); *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen (1814); *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (1847); *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys (1966); *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison (1970); and *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988).

Some readers, however, might consider the almost two hundred year span to include too many literary and historical time periods to adequately cover. Others might take issue with the way Plasa moves from Iboland (in present-day Nigeria) to England to the Caribbean to the United States and finally to Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, this discursive approach notwithstanding, the theoretical perspective and the focus on identity and cultural identification unify the text specifically and strategically to render the ambitious scope manageable.

Plasa draws extensively from Homi K. Bhabha and Frantz Fanon for the postcolonial theoretical perspective to unify his analysis of the texts, with excursions into the fields of feminism, deconstruction and psychoanalysis which help him develop more thorough readings of the texts under discussion. Because Plasa is dealing almost exclusively with novels written by women, one wonders why he has not chosen the works of postcolonial feminists such as Gayatri Spivak, Hortense Spillers and Amina Mama as additional works for his analysis. However, identity and identification have historically been associated with the male persona. Thus, when Plasa contextualizes both the works under study and his analysis of them, it is within the larger political arena of male identity that all must operate.

Indeed, Plasa configures this male identity from the beginning, with his initial essay about Olaudah Equiano and his search for identity and the power of self-definition. In this chapter of *Textual Politics*, Plasa provides the reader with an analysis of the literary discourses available to Equiano through which he could construct himself and the narrator of his text, which is simultaneously a slave narrative, an autobiography, a political treatise, a coming of age story and a picaresque adventure-quest. In crossing all these genre "boundaries," just as he crosses multiple political, economic and religious markers, Equiano presents himself, argues Plasa, as "a black subaltern who figures himself as a white colonizer/imperialist," while at the same time exploring his essence as a Christian convert (p. 31). Equiano uses this crossing-over technique, he further suggests, to blur the binary oppositions (such as white-black, colonizer-colonized, and master-slave, among others) that were the foundation of Western peoples' notions of themselves and the world. In this process, Plasa points out, Equiano demonstrates "the inessentiality of race as a marker of difference," driving home the fact that European fortunes, European notions of world order and European political systems were built on illusions.

In his four middle chapters on the development of female characters and female identity in *Mansfield Park*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Bluest Eye*, Plasa spans over a hundred years and three different areas of the globe. However, all of these places and time periods are connected by the Atlantic Ocean, the slave trade and the colonizing forces of European males. Plasa's analysis of the construction of the identity and self of the women characters are necessarily intertwined, since periods of history are never discrete. Moreover, the various cultures that these books represent can never be "hermetically sealed off from one another"; instead, they must be analyzed and absorbed as "elements in a constantly shifting network of relations, responses, crossings and hybridities" (p. 99).

In the final chapter, Plasa draws together the texts and eras under discussion (and others such as *Coriolanus* by Shakespeare) in an analysis of the relationship between Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), and Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* (1849). He indicates in this chapter that, not only does Dangarembga position her text within a Fanonian frame of reference, but she also "extends and revises [it] from a black feminist perspective" (p. 122). Plasa also specifies that both Dangarembga and Bronte locate the ability to control and define self in the heroines of their novels in the women's control over their bodies. Dangarembga forces this issue of control and self-definition one step further, though, when she presents a young Zimbabwean girl as anorexic.

Women's identity, then, in the face of the Fanonian male frame of colonialism and the colonial powers' dictation of what and who their colonial subjects could be, is developed and explored as a reaction to control. Because women are valued in male systems only for their reproductive and nurturing functions (that is, because they can produce and take care of families), the locus of their identity rests in their bodies—body, not mind, spirit, or soul, establishes who and what a woman is. Nyasha, one of the main characters of *Nervous Conditions*, like Caroline and Shirley of *Shirley*, define themselves by controlling the only aspect of their identities that they thought open to women—their bodies. As Plasa points out, though, Dangarembga is crossing boundaries with this depiction of an African girl with anorexia, for she thus "challenges the Western feminist consensus that anorexia is a disease typically afflicting the white middle-class female subject," (p. 130). Such crossings, as Plasa has so aptly demonstrated, have been a mainstay in the literature of women and the colonized for two centuries.

Textual Politics from Slavery to Postcolonialism: Race and Identification is a valuable addition to the growing body of secondary literature centering on slavery, colonialism and postcolonialism as they are evidenced in literary texts. Although he is using sophisticated, sometimes dense literary and cultural theory to analyze diverse works of literature, Plasa is eminently readable and always thought-provoking. This text is appropriate for advanced undergraduates, graduate students and other scholars in postcolonial and literary studies.

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