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Contents and additional (or book) references

The review should summarize what is important in the book, and critique its substance. The reviewer should assess the extent to which the author achieves the stated aim of the book. It is important that the reviewer should engage the material instead of simply reporting the book's contents. For this reason, the reviewer should try to avoid summations of book chapters or the separate contributions in an edited collection. Instead, the reviewer should assess the ways in which chapters and contributions are relevant to the overall context of the book. Reviews should be written in a style that is accessible to a wide and international audience.

Any use of references or additional references from other sources must be informed on in footnote style.

Format

The review should generally be between 800 and 1 200 words, and should include as little bibliographic data as possible. When necessary, use page references for quotations in the text of the review and provide complete bib-

liographic details of the source. The review should begin with a heading that includes all the bibliographic data. The elements of the heading should be arranged in the order presented in the following example:

The early mission in South Africa/Die vroeë sending in Suid-Afrika, 1799-1819. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2005, 272 pp., map, chronology, bibl., index. ISBN: 1-9198525-42-8. By Karel Schoeman.

Do not indent the first line of the first paragraph, but indent the first line of all successive paragraphs. Use double spacing for the entire review. Add your name and institutional affiliation at the end of the review. Accuracy of content, grammar, spelling, and citations rests with the reviewer, and we encourage you to check these before submission. Reviews may be transmitted electronically as a Word file attachment to an email to the review editor. If you have additional questions, please contact the Book Review Editors.

These oppressions won't cease: The political thought of the Cape Khoesan, 1777-1879, An anthology

(Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2017, 288pp. ISBN: 978-1-77614-180-7)

Robert Ross

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The way most of us participate in politics today is by voting. But before 1994, of course, that was only true for a subsection of South African society. Before 1930, it was only true of men. And before 1910, it was only true for those men with certain qualifications, even in the liberal Cape Colony. If we equate political participation with the right to vote, then, politics was the prerogative of the elite.

But political participation, of course, is not only about the right to vote. Petitioning is a mechanism through which citizens can communicate with their government. It is a system that has existed for centuries. In South Africa, petitioning dates to as early as 1675 with the petition of a few small farm-

ers to the Political Council of the Fort of the Dutch East India Company.¹ Petitions, Würgler explains, enable a study of “ordinary people as historical actors”.² Robert Ross in “These oppressions won’t cease” provides a window into the political participation of one such group of ordinary people: the Cape Khoesan.

Published by Wits University Press in 2017, “These oppressions” is an anthology of 98 texts by Khoesan individuals that relate to their “political, social and ecclesiological” thought during the middle of the nineteenth century, from roughly Ordinance 50 of 1828 to the end of the 1960s. The book is divided into three parts: part one focuses on the incorporation of the Khoesan into the colonial body politic (ca 1828-1848), part two on the colonial crisis and the establishment of a new order (1848-1852) and part three on the post-rebellion politics (1852-1879). Part one is further subdivided into eleven chapters, part two into four and part three into three. The book also has a very useful introduction, extensive notes, bibliography and index.

A standard critique of any anthology is text selection. Ross addresses this issue comprehensively in the introduction by answering seven questions: Who counts as Khoesan? What counts as Khoesan intellectual production? What counts as social and political thought? Are there categories of material that have been systematically excluded? Were there geographical and temporal constraints on the selection of material? In what language were they written? Where are the materials to be found, and how did they survive? It is a textbook example of transparent selection criteria, explaining not only why texts were included but also why some were not – and how this curated choice provides a counterweight to existing (oral) histories of the Khoesan. One missed opportunity, perhaps, is to relate these texts to other transcripts of Africans during the same time. Some of the petitions provide surprising parallels (and contrasts) – on the role of missionaries, to name one example – to Bergh and Morton’s transcription of the 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour.³

Then there are the texts themselves. They range in size, scope and theme. At a meeting held on the 5th of August, 1834 at Philipton to discuss the proposed Vagrancy Act, Frans Mager stood up to tell a very personal story: “When I was

1 R Kilpin, *The romance of a colonial parliament* (London, Longmans, Green Co, 1930), pp. 10-11.

2 A Würgler: “Voices from among the ‘silent masses’: Humble petitions and social conflicts in early modern central Europe”, *International Review of Social History*, 46(9), 2001, p. 12.

3 JS Bergh and F Morton, *‘To make them serve...’: The 1871 Transvaal commission on African labour* (Pretoria, Protea Boekhuis, 2003).

a boy, my Baas spoke to me in the Hottentot language, he would not teach me to speak the Dutch. I got only a few 'semels' to eat, and my Nation then was in a miserable states, so much so that I even rubbed myself over with white clay to try to gain acceptance with my master".⁴ In other cases, such as in the remarkable rebel orders scribbled in a stolen notebook, matters of national importance are discussed.⁵

It is not a war which the Government have wanted, otherwise the government would, as usual, have commanded us for the war, and have supplied us, at the first outbreak, with guns and gunpowder. It is a war which the settlers have caused, and thus the government must keep itself out of it as much as possible; let the settlers stand up for their own case, which they brought thus far. They have become prosperous and rich in our mother country and we poor Hottentots perish from poverty, having been the means of bringing them to such prosperity, by assisting them as servants and underlings, in various capacities for which we have little reward, and that with much difficulty. Let them now stand up for themselves!

These two examples not only demonstrate both the personal and public nature of these texts, but also point to something else: they provide wonderful insights into the economic histories of the Khoesan, a topic that, based on new statistical evidence, is attracting renewed attention.⁶ While Ross stresses the political, social and ecclesiastical contributions of these texts, to me, as economic historian, they seem fertile ground for future research. Perhaps this is also one minor shortcoming of the book: while the introduction (or "back-story") provides an informed if succinct overview of Khoesan and settler interactions, it neglects to attach numbers to this history. What, for example, was the size of the Khoesan population in 1828 or its share of the total population? And in 1865 and 1875, both census years? And do we know anything about their literacy rates, or occupational status, or family structure, or home or land ownership? Knowing this would help to give the pleas in the petitions better context.

But let us return to the political. Most of the texts are petitions to the Cape government or transcriptions of political meetings. This "politics from below" is an exciting area of research. Interest in political petitions is at an all time

4 R Ross, *These oppressions won't cease* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2017), p. 34.

5 R Ross, *These oppressions won't cease*, p. 125.

6 C Links, J Fourie and E Green, "The substitutability of slaves: Evidence from the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony", *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 2020 (In press).

high.⁷ In 2019, *Social Science History* dedicated its entire third issue to “The transformation of petitioning” with articles examining petitioning practices in nineteenth-century Spain,⁸ in Early Colonial India,⁹ and in chartist petitioning in Britain,¹⁰ for instance. Two decades earlier, the *International Review of Social History* similarly devoted a supplementary issue to the potential of petitions as a social history source.¹¹ This is facilitated by new digital history tools, from Optical Character Recognition software to statistical packages and textual analysis.

To give one example, quantification can bring meaning to the nature of political interactions. Mass petitioning campaigns, as Maartje Janse has shown, involve thousands of signatories and have been linked with historical revolutions and social movements.¹² Quantifying the numbers of signatories to these petitions could shed light on Khoesan political coordination and participation.

South Africa has been largely excluded from these exciting developments. As Kelsey Lemon remarks in a recent investigation of nineteenth-century petitions in the Cape Colony, secondary literature on petitioning in a South African context, remains thin on the ground.¹³ But change is underway. Kara Dimitruk at the University of Stellenbosch is combining transcribed petitions and statistical tools to investigate labour coercion in the late nineteenth-century Cape Colony. Jonathan Schoots at the University of Chicago is using innovative network analysis tools to investigate the birth of proto-nationalist political ideologies and the rise of new forms of African political and intellectual practice in the Cape between 1860 and 1910. Two teams of scholars at Chicago and the London School of Economics are looking at Cape Colony voters’ rolls, a source I have used recently too.¹⁴

7 H Miller: “Introduction: The transformation of petitioning in the long nineteenth century (1780-1914)”, *Social Science History*, 43(93), 2019, p. 409.

8 DP Cerezales, “Re-imagining petitioning in Spain (1808-1823)”, *Social Science History*, 43(3), 2019, pp. 487-508.

9 JA Jaffe, “The languages of petitioning in early colonial India”, *Social Science History*, 43(3), 2019, pp. 581-597.

10 M Chase, “What did Chartist petition for? Mass petitions in the British movement for democracy”, *Social Science History*, 43(3), 2019, pp. 531-551.

11 “Supplement 9: Petitions in Social History”, *International Review of Social History*, 46, 2001.

12 M Janse, “What value should we attach to all these petitions?”: Petition campaigns and the problem of legitimacy in the nineteenth-century Netherlands, *Social Science History*, 43(3), 2019, pp. 509-530.

13 K Lemon: “No sex in citizenship: Investigating women’s petitions to the Cape parliament, 1873-1902” (Honours dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2019).

14 F Nyika and J Fourie, “Black disenfranchisement in the Cape colony, c. 1887-1909: Challenging the numbers”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2020 (In press).

Ross's anthology of Khoesan political thought, sprinkled with his comments informed by a lifetime of work on the topic, not only provides an invaluable resource to political scientists, sociologists, linguists and economists, but sets an example of how a master historian should practice their craft. In a time of underfunded archives and empirical scepticism, we need more historians willing to dig in and dig up.

Cradock: How segregation and apartheid came to a South African town

(University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, 2019, 256 pp. ISBN 9780813940588)

Jeffrey Butler

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Local history is the stepchild of South African historiography. All too often it is a product commissioned by a committee to commemorate the founding of a town and the role of the community leaders in building up the place from a humble settlement to a prosperous town or city. Invariably the white community and civic leadership enjoy most of the attention. Much work is still to be done on the coloured or black communities confronted various crisis in the places they lived.

In 1977 Jeffrey Butler, just retired from the post of Professor of History at Wesleyan University in Middletown Conn., undertook a trip to Cradock in the Eastern Cape. The task he set himself was writing the history of the town that he left shortly after the Second World War. The focus would be on the way in which segregation and apartheid impinged on a South African town.

Butler's Quaker grandfather came from Britain to South Africa in 1876 and settled in Cradock where he and a younger brother founded the local paper *Midland News and Karoo farmer*. It carried the Reuters wire service and often published articles propagating better treatment of Africans and coloured people. Butler's uncle was the mayor of the town in the late 1930s and his father sat on the town council when the Group Areas Act was imposed on the town. His aunt was a nurse in the African township.

Butler joined the South African armed force that fought in the Second World War. Soon after the war he left South Africa, first to obtain a doctoral degree and then to embark on a career in academe, which culminated at Wesleyan University. His book on the Liberal Party and the South African war was acclaimed but Butler became primarily interested in the development of segregation and apartheid. The book that he wrote at the end of his career was one that he had long dreamed about. This book is a remarkable case study of how segregation and apartheid came to the town of Cradock where he grew up and of which he retained many fond memories.

Approaching Cradock in 1977 to embark on research for the book, Butler noticed two townships, one was for coloured people and the other one for blacks. Both were new to him: they were products of the apartheid order.

Near the centre of town he came across the “old location” which he remembered so well from the days of his youth. Inhabited by coloured and black people and a few poor whites, it was earlier an integral part of Cradock. He remembered it as “a dusty warren of small houses and huts, covered in the early evening by a fog of smoke and emitting a genial hubhub”.

In 1977 the old location was silent – “an empty ruin of mud plastered brick walls without doors or windows or a roof. It reminded Butler of photographs of French and Belgian villages that had been bombarded during the First World War.

What happened was that the city council, acting in terms of the Group Areas Act, had relocated all the coloured and black residents living together in the old location to newly established coloured and black locations”. They are situated quite a distance from the white town of Cradock. Subsequently the city council allowed those who were forced to leave received permission from the city council to remove doors, windows and timber from their old homes for re-use in their new houses.

In 2001 Butler suffered a debilitating stroke from which he did not recover in the seven years that remained of his life. The extensive, heavily documented work did not need any additional research but was far too long and dense to submit to a publisher. Two people stepped in to get the manuscript ready for publication. The one was Jeannette Hopkins, who was director of Wesleyan University Press and other was Richard Elphick, Butler’s colleague Wesleyan

and author of the outstanding study *The equality of believers: Protestant missionaries and the racial politics of South Africa*.

In his Introduction Butler poses the question that confronts the historian of any town or city in South Africa. To what extent was the problems connected to the delivery and management of municipal services in a way that was similar to those of countries not affected by a racial problem, and to what extent did the racial issue caused and compounded the problems?

Butler briefly compares Cradock to Indianola in Mississippi, whose history is the subject of John Dollard's, *Caste and colour in a Southern town* (1937). He notes the similarities, but George Fredrickson in his comparative study *White supremacy* (1981) rejects the comparison between apartheid South Africa and the order of segregation in the Southern states of the US. In the Southern case the essence of segregation "was not geographical or even spatial but rather an effort to maintain hierarchical social distance between racial groups that were too much involved with each other to be separated by sharply drawn territorial, cultural and economic boundaries".

Comparing the experience of the coloured people in Cape Province to the blacks makes much more sense than to compare the historical experience of the black in South Africa with the one in the US. Butler's chapter on the politics of liquor and beer shows the degree to which the interests of white people and coloured people corresponded and the extent to which blacks formed a more alienated community.

The Cradock town council treated people from the two communities living in the old location in a similar fashion. In compliance with the Native (Urban Areas Act of 1923 the town council established a Location Advisory Board made up of three blacks and three coloureds. The book opens with a chapter on an incident in 1925 when eighty men (41 African, 18 coloured and 17 "Hottentot") were arrested for spending the night with a resident in the location without a permit requiring a monthly fee of 1.5 shillings. Some of them were young adults visiting their parents. It created a storm of protest especially from coloured people.

Butler's *Midland News* supported the protestors' objection to the taxing of sons living at home with their parents and their resentment of the "gross indignity" inflicted by being arrested in their parents' home on a wet Sunday morning. This incident a revealing conflicting one. It shows the white

authorities groping for ways to control the location's residents and fumbling attempts to increase the council's revenue. The farming lobby put pressure on the town councillors to find ways of channelling labour to farms. But wages of farm labour were shockingly low – an *aalmoes* one official described it.

In the breaking up of Cradock's old location in the era of apartheid the white leadership was intent on preventing any possibility of coloured and black people forming a common front against whites.

In the final chapter of the book Butler dwells briefly on a burning issue in South Africa. Did apartheid as a policy radically differ from the pre-1948 order of segregation? Butler sides with those that believe that it did but does not go deeply into it. In 1948 the NP introduced what can be called communal apartheid of which the introduction of race classification and segregated residential areas were the most important acts.

Before the election of 1948 the United Party government had begun to establish townships for coloured people and it is an open question whether, if victorious in 1949, would have reversed this policy or would have travelled further along this road. It is difficult to see the party of Gen. Jan Smuts imposing racial classification on coloured people.

The other part of apartheid was homeland apartheid. After the 1948 election the Dutch Reformed Church took the lead in identifying the homelands as forming the solution for addressing the issue of black political rights.

In 1950 the federal council of the Dutch Reformed Church sent a resolution to DF Malan, the Prime Minister stating that no nation would ever be satisfied without a voice in the government of its country. The DRC's Federal Council declared that to deprive the black people of South Africa of this right was a policy destined to lead to serious conflict. The resolution concluded with the view that the only solution lay in the ultimate total separation of whites and blacks. Malan's replied in sober terms: "If one insists on total apartheid then everyone would admit that it is an ideal situation... but this is not the policy of our party. It is not achievable, and it does not help any party to try and accomplish the impossible".

The New Year's message that Malan, sent out in 1954 almost represents the antithesis of apartheid. It declared that South Africans of all groups had a duty to accept each other's right to exist and continued: "South Africa is our common heritage and belongs to us all". Two years later the ANC's 'Freedom

Charter voiced the same sentiment that South Africa belonged to all its peoples and made the phrase its own.

The great value of Butler's books lies in the portrayal of a town grappling with numerous issues for which there were few if any simple solutions. The resources were far too limited and the choices too few. Although no one identified it at the time the finding of constructive solutions was impeded by an electoral system that did not reward parties and leaders seeking moderate solutions and broad-based economic growth.

Jeffrey Butler was the ideal person to write this history of his hometown. The book illuminates the quality that made Butler such a unique person, colleague and historian: compassion. Richard Elphick in cooperation with Jeannette Hopkins have performed a magnificent service in editing and abridging the manuscript in such a way that it now stands as the best model of the kind of history of a town that our complex society truly needs.

Ralph Haynes: Godfather van die Wes-Rand

(Kaapstad: Penguin Random House, 2018, 171pp. ISBN: 9781776092734)

Izak Du Plessis

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Ralph Haynes was 'n bekende Suid-Afrikaanse misdaadsfiguur uit die Wes-Rand. Hy is veral bekend vir die lang lys van misdade waarby hy betrokke was. Vandaar die waarskynlik motivering vir die boek oor *Ralph Haynes: Godfather van die Wes-Rand* deur Izak Du Plessis.

Ralph Haynes... is nie Du Plessis se eerste publikasie nie. Eintlik vloe hierdie boek uit die laaste hoofstuk van sy vorige boek getiteld *Boereverneukers*.¹⁵ Du Plessis argumenteer dat Haynes 'n soort "Godfather" figuur van die Wes-Rand was wat 'n ondergrondse, georganiseerde misdaadstruktuur saam met ander ondergrondse misdaadsfigure bestuur het. Hul hoofdoel was om

15 I Du Plessis, *Boereverneukers Afrikaanse swendelaars, swierbolle en swerkaters* (Penguin Random House, Kaapstad, 2017).

beplande “knocks” op ander sakemanne of sakevroue uit te oefen. Wanneer hierdie sakemanne of-vroue ’n spesifieke produk of diens wou hê het Haynes en sy trawante hulle geswendel deur groot beloftes oor die produk of diens te maak, en dan niks te lewer nie wanneer die betaling vir die produk of diens gemaak is. Indien enige persoon by die polisie wou gaan kla oor Haynes se bedrog was hulle geïntimideer en selfs met die dood gedreig. Dit blyk ook dat Haynes sekere polisiemanne aan sy kant gehad het deur middel van omkoopgeld.

Haynes se kinderjare as ’n arm seun wat in Randfontein groot geword het, word kortliks in die derde hoofstuk beskryf. Hy het nooit skool klaar gemaak nie en dit lyk nie of hy enige ambag gaan leer het nie. Haynes het glo van kindsbeen af geleer hoe om intimidasie te gebruik om sy sin te kry en hoe om sy sjarme te gebruik om naïewe mense uit hul geld te rokke. Volgens Du Plessis het Haynes een doel in die lewe gehad: Om nooit weer arm te wees nie. Armoede lewer ’n dryfveer vir enige persoon om hulself te verbeter. Gewoonlik word dit gedoen deur ’n hoër amp te bekom met tersiêre opleiding, jarelange diens of die bou van ’n suksesvolle besigheid. Dit was nie Haynes se plan nie. Nadat die enigste manlike figuur wat ’n positiewe rol in sy lewe gespeel het, ene Gideon van Niekerk (ook bekend as Lama), deur ’n polisieman, voor ’n 13-jarige Haynes, doodgeskiet is, het dit Haynes verder vasberade gemaak om nie verder te sukkel nie en om vinnig ryk te word (al moes dit deur misdade gedoen word).

Sy lewe as ’n bendelid en “Godfather” figuur het vir hom weelde en rykdom gebring maar dit het glo teen 2011 te veel vir hom geword en hy het spoorloos verdwyn.¹⁶ Dit is nie duidelik wat presies met Haynes gebeur het nie. Sommige mense glo dat Haynes steeds lewe, en net iewers skuil. Ander weer glo dat Haynes vermoor is. Wat moontlik met die “Godfather” van die Wes-Rand gebeur het, kan ’n ieder en elk net oor bespiegel. Uit Du Plessis se weergawe van *Ralph Haynes...* het Haynes se jarelange swendelary, intimidasie en afpersing hom teen einde-2010 ingehaal. Du Plessis vertel dat te veel mense Haynes wou sien val. Haynes is beskou as ’n gevaarlike man onder die gevaarlikes en teen die laat-20ste eeu as een van die mees onwelkome misdadpersoonlikhede in die Wes-Rand.

16 ’n “Godfather” figuur binne-in misdaadskringe kan basies gedefinieer word as iemand met uitvoerende gesag binne-in die gesagstruktuur van ’n misdaadorganisasie. Goedkeuring vir enige beplande misdaad moet eers by die “Godfather” verkry word indien die beplanning nie van die Godfather self kom nie. So’n persoon lewer ook beskerming aan sy lojale vriende, familieleden en organisasieleden. Hy maak ook seker hulle word goed vir hul dienste betaal.

Du Plessis verwys na sekere van hierdie gevaarlike mense in sy boek. Dawie Lötter, Mannetjies Geyster, Charlie Landman, Gert Marais, Corrie Goosen, Frikkie Lutzkie en Ferdi Barnard (wie David Webster en Mark Francis vermoor het) het Haynes geken en het saam met hom of as gevolg van hom misdade gepleeg. Dit is ook insiggewend om te lees van die Haynes vriendskappe met bekendes in Afrikaanse-geledere, soos die bekende sanger en akteur Steve Hofmeyr en die gewese Springbok rugbyheld Joost van der Westhuizen aan wie Haynes glo geld geleen het. Blykbaar was spoggerige partytjies met 'n oorvloed van drank en dwelms gereeld by sy spoghuis in Chancliff, Krugersdorp, gehou. Haynes se laaste jare in lewe as die "Godfather" wil laat deurskemer dat Haynes sy vrees vir armoede bes moontlik oorwin het.

Elke "Godfather" figuur het sy eie "Domina", sy vrou wat by hom staan en nie enige iets sal verklik nie al loots die polisie 'n klopjag op hul huis. In hierdie geval is die Domina: Jacky Haynes. Haar verhouding met Haynes word in die sewende hoofstuk bespreek. Ralph het haar ontmoet by haar vorige man se paneelkloppers en toe sy hom los vir Ralph, het sy stelselmatig verander in die blonde diva wat Ralph wou gehad het. Volgens Du Plessis is Jacky hoogs-intelligent. Sy het die spel waarin Hayes as't ware 'n hoofrol gespeel het goed verstaan en as resultaat het sy 'n elite lewenstyl saam met Haynes geniet wat teen 2010 inmekaar gestort het. Du Plessis eindig nege uit die tien hoofstukke met uittreksels van Jacky se dagboek (en ook Ralph se kort briefies aan Jacky) wat haar geloof, vrese, geluk, brokkies intimiteit met Haynes en angstigheid aandui.

In *Ralph Haynes...* is verwys na ander interessante, maar onbekende misdaad-sake wat in die toekoms verdere aandag behoort te kry. Hieronder tel die moord op Charl Marais en die raaisels rondom Enoch Mazibuko en Phillip Thabane. Du Plessis se boek verduidelik ook kortliks hoe die motorfietsklub van Mannetjies Geyster, genoem die Macs, gefunksioneer het: 'n navorsingsterrein van 'n ander aard, wat selfs aansluiting kan vind by navorsing oor persoonlike beskerminingsdienste. Du Plessis se studie oor Ralph Haynes... is omvattend. Verskillende sake waarby Ralph Haynes betrokke was, is bondig bespreek en dui aan die leser die motief en *modus operandi* van elke saak. Du Plessis se moeite gedoen om die inligting te versamel, is duidelik. Etlike onderhoude is gevoer met kern kennis van Heyns, naamlik Jacky Haynes, Luke Enslin, Peet Viljoen en (die "gevreese") Dawie Lötter. Die afwesigheid van 'n bibliografie is een van die grootste leemtes in *Ralph Haynes....* Tog sal hierdie boek se waarde vir Suid-

Afrikaanse misdaadhistorici en selfs kriminoloë verhoog soos wat die jare ná Haynes se verdwyning dekades en eeue word.

Jan Smuts: Son of the veld, pilgrim of the world

(Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2019, 571 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4853-0816-4)

Kobus du Pisani, Dan Kriek, and Chris de Jager

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Jan Smuts: Son of the veld, pilgrim of the world, is undoubtedly a pervasive and comprehensive review of the life and times of Jan Smuts (1870-1950). The primary question, however, is whether it is indeed a reappraisal of Jan Smuts the scholar, politician, and militarist as suggested by the sub-title. Reappraisal implies that a new, contending interpretative narrative is juxtaposed with previous knowledge. As a scholarly endeavour, a reappraisal insists on adding the continuity of time to interpretation. Events and narratives are filtered through the confluence between new knowledge and interpretation. It cannot merely be a complete review of an existing narrative.

The book is divided into four themes. The first theme, written by Ockert Geyser, Pieter du Toit, Dalene Heyns, Hennie Pieterse, and Bronwyn Strydom, deals with Smuts the intellectual. A remarkable diversity of scholarly disciplines, which include botany, evolution, archaeology, religion, and literature, inspired the academic curiosity of Smuts. The second theme deals with the military career of Jan Smuts. Fransjohan Pretorius and André Wessels interpret the evolution of Smuts' role in three wars as a natural intellectual progression from republican to political reconciler, and eventually as an international statesman and vocal supporter of the British Empire. The third theme of seven essays authored by Gert van den Bergh, Kobus du Pisani, Pieter Labuschagne, Dan Kriek, Ockert Geyser, At van Wyk and HDG Viljoen reviews the party political contests of the time, as well as Smuts' role as prime minister of South Africa. The final theme authored by James Barber, Dan Kriek, Christof Heyns, Willem Gravett and Deon Geldenhuys deals with Smuts in the international political arena and the strategic role he played through war and peace.

Curiously, the authors expressed the desire for the text to introduce younger scholars to Smuts. While the book is compiled in such a way as to provide extensive historical detail, it is not clear in which way the text will distinctly appeal to younger scholars. An interesting revisionist context to the book, however, has emerged with the revolt of the rather youthful Black Lives Matter movement in during 2020. This revolutionary “reappraisal” of historical figures which originated in the death of American, George Floyd, has embedded revisionism as an unavoidable feature of how the founding fathers of modern democracies, the slave traders of labour migration, and explorers of new frontiers will in the future be understood and explained.

Martin Legassick similarly expressed the urge to reappraise “Smuts the man” in a revisionist context. He rightly asks, what legacy is left by a political and military leader that “presided over the bombing of the Namibian Khoekhoe (115 killed in 1922), the slaughter of the Israelites at Bulhoek (163 killed in 1921) and the bombing of white mineworkers (81 killed in 1922)” and “brutally crushing two strikes by black mineworkers, in 1920 and 1946”.¹⁷ This book, a rather capacious scholarship, however, is not aimed at reviewing the moral context in which Smuts lived and worked, and will certainly not satisfy the urges of Legassick, the Marxist activist and historian, as it might not necessarily expose Smuts for “who he was”.

The question of whether history should be viewed in the moral context of its time is not uncontroversial (cf. Steyn, 2015). If history is a descriptive task, the question is settled, but history shapes whatever follows. Most, if not all, historical policies, institutions, conflicts, settlements, and agreements contributed to varying measures to the South Africa in which we live today. Avoiding scrutiny of heroes and villains in the context of the contemporary ignores the continuity of consequences and evade judgment of malevolence. It is a valid question to ask whether Smuts was an exponent of the moral dispositions of his time without the free will to question the justifications for repressive systems.

What exactly was the “context” in which Smuts held his expressed political views of the ‘native question? Science historian, Michael Shermer, argues, “... the theological and philosophical defences for slavery were rationalisations for what they [slave traders and politicians] knew was an immoral act”. Smuts knew his abhorrent anthropological views of blacks as “... barbarians, who

17 M Legassick, “Review: Jan Smuts: An illustrated biography”, *Kronos*, 22, 1995, p. 141.

[...] cannot possibly govern themselves” were immoral.¹⁸ He knew or should have imagined that the repressive, segregationist policies of South Africa were morally reprehensible. The most obvious question would be if Smuts was aware that black South Africans found their exclusion from a human rights regime to be unfair, unjust, immoral, and repressive.

At Versailles in 1918, ignoring the expressed wishes of his close confidant, US president Woodrow Wilson, Smuts refused to acknowledge the presence of the ANC’s Solomon Plaatje, dismissing him as unrepresentative. Similarly, when Smuts and Alfred Xuma, President of the ANC, arrived at the same press conference in New York in 1946, Xuma remarked, “I have had to fly 10,000 miles to meet my prime minister. He talks about us but won’t talk to us”. Given where we are today, is it still appropriate to appraise Smuts in a context that assumes universal moral justifications?

Smuts’ secularised understanding of the religious orthodoxies typical of South Africa’s national politics at the time is an indication that he managed to distance himself, at least intellectually, from the dominant narratives of his contemporaries and political adversaries. Historian, Saul Dubow reminds us that “... while operating on horseback behind British lines, [Smuts] carried a copy of Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason” and the New Testament (in Greek) in his saddlebag”.¹⁹ The political and intellectual contradictions of the Cambridge educated Smuts remains a mystery to non-revisionists.

In the essay on Evolution, Holism, and Religion, Heyns, like so many previous biographers of Smuts, states the obvious, “... as an intellectual he was ahead of his time and most of his contemporaries”.²⁰ His complex operationalisation of holism might well be a conceptualisation of his secularisation, which is an indication that religion itself most likely did not provide for his views on humanity. Smuts’ political philosophy was to some extent sculpted by the influence of American poet, Walt Whitman. Smuts suggested that Whitman’s conception of freedom is embedded in pantheism and human potential and not in religiosity.

Smuts’ son, ironically, describes his father’s views on Christ as remarkably revisionist: “He certainly did not believe in a supernatural being [...], but

18 M Shermer and M Twitter (available at: <https://twitter.com/michaelshermer/status/1259137919035424768>, as accessed on 24 June 2020).

19 S Dubow, “South Africa’s racist rounding rather was also a human rights pioneer, *New York Times*, 30 June 2020.

20 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts – Unafraid of Greatness* (London, Jonathan Ball, 2015), p. 77.

he did believe in some deity, some overall holistic personality, some supreme law. That Christ had lived he had no doubt, but he thought of him as a very remarkably gifted young man, rather than as the Immaculate Son of God”.²¹ Smuts, indeed, was not an orthodox Christian, and it is highly unlikely that he found justification for his views on black people – as did the National Party government and the apartheid regime – on biblical grounds.

Adding new information to a historical narrative might not necessarily qualify as a reappraisal. University of Oxford physicist, David Deutsch, in reference to the ideas of Karl Popper, postulates that information has to evolve into new knowledge and such knowledge needs to provide “new explanations”, for a contemporary text or narrative to constitute a reappraisal of history.²² This voluminous work of 571 pages may well be the complete periodical on Smuts the statesman, militarist, and intellectual. The question that lingers is whether the book reappraises the historical events and “Smuts the man” sufficiently to “revise” our understanding of one of the most important military leaders and statesmen in South Africa’s history.

Knowledge is the understanding of the relational tissue between facts or postulations of any number of realities. This relational tissue might not always be apparent and is dependent on interpretative reasoning (new explanations) to transform information and facts into new knowledge. Most of the authors of this reappraisal are senior scholars and attempted to reimagine the relational tissue between known facts and/or information. The master-narrative, or revisionist context, within which Smuts lived his remarkable life is examined, to some extent.

21 JC Smuts, *Jan Christian Smuts – by his son* (London, Cassell, 1952), p. 292.

22 D Deutsch, *The beginning of infinity: Explanations that transform the world* (London, Penguin Books, 2012), p. 78.