

BOOK REVIEW

Duncan Money and Danelle van Zly-Hermann, eds. *Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa 1930s–1990s*. Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Africa. New York: Routledge, 2020. v + 242 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$160. Cloth. Free Open Access. ISBN: 978-0367376420.

Applying insights from the study of class, development, and modern management techniques, the essays in *Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa 1930s–1990s* (edited by Duncan Money and Danelle van Zly-Hermann) revise our understanding of white societies in southern and central Africa. Subaltern or “non-hegemonic” individuals rarely rejected the privilege of being white, but they did challenge the discursive foundations of whiteness. Writing against a historiography that often lumps whites together, the authors argue that poor and working-class whites were not absorbed into a generalized white group. Instead, they were surveilled and managed by the state to ensure that they would conform to the image and expected behavior of white citizens. As these chapters demonstrate, claiming the privileges of white identity was contingent on time, place, and class.

The editors’ introduction and Jonathan Hyslop’s chapter provide a model for studying whites across a regional and international canvas. The narrative nuance of the individual chapters springs from the volume’s overall themes of mobility, indocility, and surveillance. Contingency is another theme that runs through and connects the chapters. As Hyslop notes, the social question of who was white “was a matter of extremely arbitrary historical contingency” (27). The remaining chapters are ordered chronologically (1930s through the 1990s) and cover a range of topics, including juvenile delinquents, undesirable immigrants, peasant farmers, striking workers, bureaucrats, and workers as citizens in Southern Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, Northern Rhodesia, and South Africa.

Poor and working-class whites were heavily surveilled by their governments. As Ivo Mhike writes, in 1930s Southern Rhodesia, state officials saw in juvenile delinquents a possible future of white decline if their behavior were not corrected by intervention and reeducation. But these delinquent youth showed little interest in farming and such activities at state-run institutions designed to rejuvenate their racial pride. Likewise, chapters by George Bishi

(Southern Rhodesia) and Caio Simões de Araújo (Mozambique) underscore official concerns over whites who fell outside the discursive and material conditions officials deemed necessary to recreate British and Portuguese societies, respectively. These whites were poor, ignorant, and haughty, and they attracted the derision of officials and other whites.

Cláudia Castelo (Mozambique and Angola) and Bill Freund (South Africa) analyze white societies through the lens of development. Castelo's chapter recounts the failure to recreate Portuguese peasants on African soil. These would-be settler farmers were poor; they abandoned the settlements and were judged by whites and Africans alike as anything but superior. Freund highlights how indolent workers eroded the ideals of Apartheid planners who built a model city for state-employed workers, complete with gardens, trees, recreation centers, and the like. But the environment did little to uplift the workers, who complained about their conditions, drank too much, and traded with Indians and Coloureds, while their African servants crisscrossed the segregated city to attend church.

The chapters by Nicola Ginsburgh and Duncan Money return to the importance of mobility. Ginsburgh argues that workers in Federation-era Southern Rhodesia expected an elevated social status along with their paychecks and protected jobs. The most radical strikers violated white norms, such as polite language, deference to hierarchy, and distance from Africans, and used their transgressions as a cudgel against their foes. Ginsburgh argues that the workers' behavior represented class-shaped "competing claims" over white identity (147). Money asks why Northern Rhodesian white workers did not rebel against the end of white rule like their Southern Rhodesian counterparts. Northern Rhodesian workers identified white managers, rather than African workers, as a threat to their prosperity, and therefore they focused on their struggles with mining industrialists, not with supporting the white-dominated government.

Neil Roos and Danelle van Zyl-Hermann examine the apex of race-making by subaltern whites and its "un-making" in Apartheid South Africa. Roos focuses on workers who enjoyed job security but endured low professional status as state officials. They were heavily surveilled at work under scientific management "quality control" systems; however, their embrace of "efficiency" gave them a way to avoid any ethical reflections about their role in Apartheid. In a fitting close to the collection, van Zyl-Hermann traces white trade unionists' rejection of 1970s labor reforms as a manifestation of the history of citizenship and race in South Africa. Workers rejected labor reforms because, they argued, they were "good citizens" who had earned the protection of the Apartheid state. Africans, they added, should seek labor protections in their own sovereign nations.

This brief review cannot adequately convey the empirical and thematic richness of this book. Thankfully, the open access publication of this important book ensures its availability to a wide readership.

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For additional reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:

- Nuttall, Sarah. 2001. "Subjectivities of Whiteness." *African Studies Review* 44 (2): 115–40. doi:10.2307/525577.
- Posel, Deborah. 2001. "Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth-Century South Africa." *African Studies Review* 44 (2): 87–114. doi:10.2307/525576.