

Review Article

-

Besprekingsartikel

-

Nicky Falkof, *The End of Whiteness: Satanism and Family Murder in late-Apartheid South Africa*

Jacana Media, Sunnyside, 2016

ISBN 978-1-431-42327-9

242 pp

R231.00

Irikidzayi Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions in Zimbabwe*

Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2016

ISBN 978-1-86888-825-2

152 pp

R310.00

White on white: Real and imagined crises in white Southern Africa

*Rory Pilosof**

Abstract

This review article looks at two recent books on white voices in South Africa and Zimbabwe, by Nicky Falkof and Irikidzayi Manase respectively. Together they offer insight on how different historical contexts affected white fears of belonging in the colonial and post-colonial state. For Falkof, the final death throes of apartheid caused a range of moral panics among white communities. This panic expressed itself largely in moral terms with the issues of Satanism and family murder becoming paramount. Manase's book, however, focuses on a very different historical context. Manase investigates the outpouring of accounts written by white Zimbabweans since 2000 and the start of the fast-track land reforms. He seeks to answer questions about why so many books were produced at this time; how they portrayed the land reforms; and how they narrated questions of race, belonging and politics. Ultimately, Manase notes, the long contestation over land in Zimbabwe still dramatically affects recent and current accounts of belonging and victimhood. These publications raise some interesting questions about conducting research into whiteness in southern Africa

* Rory Pilosof is a member of staff in the Department of Economics, University of the Free State. His main interests are histories of settler state in southern Africa, and changing labour relations in the region since 1900.

How to cite this article: R. Pilosof, "White on white: Real and imagined crises in white Southern Africa", *Historia*, 62, 1, May 2017, pp 92-106.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-8392/2017/v62n1a5>

Copyright: ©The Author(s). Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.

and the different ways of undertaking such studies. While there are points of issue in both books, they utilise a range of methodologies and approaches that should stimulate further research and facilitate critical engagement on histories of whites and whiteness by a broader community of scholars.

Keywords: Whiteness; apartheid; South Africa; Zimbabwe; fake news; propaganda.

Opsomming

Hierdie bespekingsartikel behandel twee onlangse publikasies oor wit ervaringe in Suid-Afrika en Zimbabwe, deur onderskeidelik Nicky Falkof en Irikidzayi Manase. Saam bied hierdie twee boeke insig oor hoe wit vrese oor behoording binne die koloniale en post-kolonial staat deur verskillende historiese kontekste gevorm is. Volgens Falkof het die doodsnikke van apartheid 'n verskeidenheid van morele panieke binne die wit gemeenskap veroorsaak. Die historiese konteks wat in Manase se boek onder die loep kom, het egter heelwat hiervan verskil. Hy ondersoek vroeër rondom die vele boeke wat in hierdie tyd geproduseer is; hoe hulle grondhervorming voorgestel het; en hul narratiewe oor ras, behoording en die politiek. Uiteindelik, meen Manase, oefen die voortdurende twis oor grondbesit in Zimbabwe steeds 'n dramatiese invloed op onlangse en hedendaagse narratiewe rondom behoording en slagofferskap uit. Die boeke bring interessante vrae in verband met witheidsnavorsing in Suider-Afrika, en verskillende benaderinge daartoe, na vore. Alhoewel albei boeke 'n aantal probleme openbaar, word 'n verskeidenheid van metodologieë en benaderinge benut wat verdere navorsing sal stimuleer. Dit sal hopelik ook daartoe lei dat 'n breër akademiese gemeenskap hul krities met die geskiedenis van wittes en witheid sal bemoei.

Sleutelwoorde: Witheid; apartheid; Suid-Afrika; Zimbabwe; fobnuus; propaganda.

Introduction

Two of the most surprising political events of 2016, the election of Donald J. Trump and the Brexit referendum, confounded the expert opinion of many pollsters, analysts and observers. In both settings, the rise of (white) right-wing fears of immigration, job security and racial purity, were fed by increasing volumes of “fake news” and “false” information, much of it disseminated on various social media platforms. A great deal of this content was created by anonymous users and spread on websites of ambiguous origin, while some of it was created on a range of “alt-right” (read conservative, racist, xenophobic, fascist) online outlets, such as the Breitbart News Outlet (www.breitbart.com). Candidates such as Trump actively drew on this material in public and online engagements.

The fallout from Brexit and Trump's election has illustrated the power these radical voices and concerns enjoy in times of crisis, economic malaise and uncertainty. The two books in this review, while wholly disconnected from Trump or Brexit, show how various groups of whites in southern Africa have narrated their

own traumas and contestations, with healthy doses of fake news, alternative facts and warped readings of the past and present. Nicky Falkof's book, *The End of Whiteness* focuses on Satanism and family murders in South Africa at the end of apartheid, while Irikidzayi Manase's book looks at Zimbabwean novels and memoirs of the land occupations in Zimbabwe from 2000 onwards.¹ In both books, the fears and threats – real or imagined – to place, belonging and future are central and both authors examine how these threats are constructed, narrated and disseminated.

Despite their different analytical foci, these two books both offer important conclusions about how such events are related and studied. Together they raise questions of forms of fake news, particularly for those of us who are historically minded. As Jelani Cobb has noted on the current rise of fake news in contemporary politics, is not a new phenomenon: fake news, which in the past most accurately described stories in supermarket tabloids, with references to celebrities' infidelity, and intergalactic life forms, is an inadequate term for the remarkable prevalence of disinformation in our political landscape. "Propaganda" is perhaps a more accurate term.² South and southern Africa are no exception to this observation. Propaganda has been a part of the information landscape in the region throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. There have been periods of mass misinformation, whether propagated by the apartheid state, such as in South Africa, or by so-called "independent" newspapers, magazines and political parties in the region. These two books give very different insights into how these processes take place, what motivations drive them, and how propaganda is and can be manufactured over time.

What these two books also illustrate is how different historical contexts have affected white fears of belonging in the colonial and post-colonial state. For Falkof, the final death throes of apartheid caused a range of moral panics in the white community. This panic expressed itself not only in direct fears of black rule (though Falkof does not address this), but in moral terms too. These late-apartheid fears of Satanism and family murder were, for Falkof, "symptoms of popular white responses to social and political upheaval".³ In such uncertain times, the looming threat of majority rule, intermixed with concerns about the spread of communism, violence, racial conflict, and the mismanagement of independent African states neighbouring South Africa, appeared to pose direct danger to white ways of life. As such, the

-
1. Nicky Falkof is a senior lecturer in the Media Studies Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. Irikidzayi Manase is lecturer in the Department of English at the University of the Free State.
 2. J. Cobb, "Protecting Journalism from Donald Trump", *New Yorker*, 29 November 2016. Also available online: http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/protecting-journalism-from-donald-trump?mbid=nl_161129_Daily&CNDID=35086044&spMailingID=9957766&spUserID=MTQyODAxNTY1ODAxODAwS0&spJobID=1042297647&spReportId=MTA0MjI5NzY0NwS2 (Accessed 30 January 2017).
 3. N. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness: Satanism and Family Murder in Late Apartheid South Africa* (Jacana Media, Pretoria, 2016), p 188.

changes afoot were perceived as not only threatening white power and control of the state, but the foundations of white civility, or “whiteness” itself.⁴

Manase’s book, however, focuses on a very different historical context. In Zimbabwe, similar concerns about the future existed in the white community during the liberation war in the 1970s. However, the negotiated settlement and Robert Mugabe’s messages of reconciliation, convinced many whites to stay. For those whites who stayed, life carried on in much the same way. They remained affluent, privileged, and largely successful in economic terms. However, that stability shifted in the late 1990s, when whites came under attack from the state, that accused them of being racist and colonial hangovers that need to be undermined. The nadir of this process was the well-documented farm invasion during the fast-track land reform programme where white farmers were directly targeted and attacked by the state and their proxies. The worst fears of black rule came true, despite the two previous decades of relative security for white people. These events in Zimbabwe, unsurprisingly, resulted an increase of talk of genocide and ethnic cleansing in white communities in South Africa.

Reading Falkof, it is clear how misplaced so many of the fears of white South Africans were in the 1980s. White society did not cease to exist. The transition to majority rule, facilitated by a negotiated settlement, largely resulted in white people at large retaining their wealth, affluence and economic status. However, this reality did not stem the growth of white fears over their future, as the expansion of victimhood narratives in white communities in South Africa demonstrates.⁵ Falkof’s book, while it offers fascinating reading and stimulating contributions with regard to fake news and white fears at the end of apartheid, also has some serious flaws, which centre on its contextualisation and use of media sources. It is presented as a single project on the role and impact of whiteness during the 1980s. However, it is essentially two main case studies shoehorned together. The first examines the “Satanism scare” from the mid-1980s to 1992, where Falkof unravels how a “coalition of media, politicians, evangelical Christians, teachers and police ... fostered a belief in an organised and international cult” that was threatening to undermine Christianity and (white) civilisation in South Africa.⁶ The second part focuses on the apparent “epidemic” of white family murders, and the associated family murder-suicides, taking place in South Africa during roughly the same period, and how these were discussed in public.⁷

While there is a slightly different analytical focus on each topic, Falkof puts forward that both moral panics were seen by many contemporary white South Africans as undermining the very core of their society. For Falkof, these sentiments were largely responses to the social and political turbulence of the time, namely the end of apartheid and the increasing likelihood of black majority rule. In proclaiming

4. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 3.

5. M. Steyn and D. Foster, “Repertoires for Talking White: Resistant Whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31, 1 (2008), pp 25–51.

6. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 3; and the section pp 15–96.

7. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, pp 103–179.

this, Falkof echoes Charles van Onselen who, in studying the hysteria on the “black peril” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, noted that “public hysteria coincided with periods of stress or acute tension within the political economy of the Witwatersrand as a whole”.⁸ The rise of Satanism and family murder, Falkof observes, and “their patterns of flare-up and response to social pressure echo the process of the black peril panics, and of other cultural hysterias that sweep across societies only to vanish again”.⁹ The comparison of Satanism and family murders makes a neat contrast between “real” events and “fake” news. While the family murders certainly happened, the reports of what happened between members of Satanic cults (human sacrifice, murder and rape), were never supported by hard evidence. (I shall return to this discussion of “real” *versus* imagined below, with the discussion of farm attacks in Zimbabwe.)

In her book, Falkof opens a new terrain in how to write and study whites and white society in South Africa at the end of apartheid; yet there is a surprising dearth of scholarship on how whites interacted with the end of minority rule, and how they dealt with the changes taking place in the region in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Falkof’s focus on how these bizarre and gruesome topics of Satanism and family murder were discussed and responded to provides important insights that should spur more academic focus. For example, she illustrates that certain cultural anxieties were present in white societies before the end of apartheid and that white victimhood and vulnerability, a key focus of post-colonial whiteness studies, often has roots in the events that pre-date the end of colonial or settler rule.

While there are number of issues with the *End of Whiteness* that other reviewers have noted,¹⁰ there are two pressing ones I want to focus on here: methodology and sources; and connection to the literature on “whiteness”. Falkof states that most of the material in the book comes from “mainstream” print media, as well as popular “family magazines” such as *Personality* and *Huisgenoot*, which, she claims, “have solidified so many white South Africa cultural myths since the early 20th century”.¹¹ These family magazines, per Falkof, “incited as well as reported on the panics. They called for action and vigilance and encouraged their readers to become more involved, usually by harassing the government officials into ‘doing something’”. In addition to magazine material, evidence was “also taken from local

8. C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, Volume 2: New Nineveh* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982), p 45.

9. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 3.

10. On repetition and grammatical errors, especially in the Afrikaans quotations, see G. Kemp, available online at <<http://city-press.news24.com/Voices/book-review-the-curious-case-of-whiteness-satan-and-family-murder-20160608>> (Accessed 30 January 2017). On questions regarding the extent of the panic in relation to the very real concern over black majority rule and the onset of democracy, see K. Barris, available online at <<http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2016/08/15/the-devil-wears-safari-suits-ken-barris-reviews-nicky-falkofs-the-end-of-whiteness/>> (Accessed 30 January 2017).

11. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 3.

and national newspapers, both English and Afrikaans, that gave the scares extensive coverage, suggesting that editors and journalists believed they held significant weight with the reading public”.¹²

These few sentences are the sum total of her methodological overview, and as such they reveal a careless attitude towards the nuances of media-based research and its implications. Firstly, there is a magnitude of difference between what she calls “family magazines” and “national newspapers”, not just in terms of how content is presented and put together, but also with how issues such as intended audience, editorship, distribution and readership are dealt with. Throw into the mix that these sources are then further divided into different language groups, English and Afrikaans, and we are in even more of a quagmire that is left unaddressed. This is all glossed over with no disclaimer or justification. There is no discussion of editorial policy, newspaper approach and method, or the role of propaganda *versus* investigative journalism. Falkof presents the material she has collected as representative and authoritative. And yet, the various narratives are interlaced, cobbled together and cherry-picked from a range of disparate and incongruent source material, with no discussion of how it was created, for whom or why.

As a result, the reader is left with very little sense of how widespread and potent the Satanic panic actually was and what different narratives were presented on the family murders. Falkof’s statements like, “press material about Satanism ... [remained] fairly constant between 1987 and 1993, despite the police’s failure to encounter or arrest any ‘real’ Satanists”,¹³ offer no indication of measurement, how this conclusion is arrived at or what process of identification she has put in place to make this statement. By failing to discuss her sources in any depth, Falkof is unable to placate questions that arise from looking at the actual sources quoted. For instance, in the Satanism section, hardly any Afrikaans sources (newspapers, magazines) are listed. The only one is on page 91, footnote 316, which refers to an interview with two protagonists in *Huisgenoot* in the 3 July 1986 issue, but the actual interview is not discussed in any way. How are we to gauge potential, and surely very real differences in how Satanism would have been discussed by different sectors of English and Afrikaans society? The second section has much greater Afrikaans representation, but reading the list of newspapers consulted, there is such a vast range of sources supposedly perused, that it seems Falkof employed no more than a scattergun approach to her sources and listings of family murders. Alongside *The Star*, *Cape Times*, *Argus*, the *Beeld*, *Transvaler*, and *Die Vaderland*, there are the *Aida Parker Newsletter*, and magazines such as *De Kat*, *Tempo*, *Rooi Rose*, *Huisgenoot*, *Sarie* to name but a few. Looking through the notes and trying to locate the arguments put forward, and the implications of the various conclusions, is made highly problematic for the reader and any scholar trying to locate the exact narratives that Falkof presents.

12. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 3.

13. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p. 21.

In 2013, the journal of *Media History* put together a special collection on journalism and history, focusing on how language, genre, discourse were important areas of concern for scholars who were looking at magazines and newspapers as sources. The editors noted that, “newspapers and periodicals play a significant role in articulating, reinforcing and challenging political and social identities”, but in order to utilise them properly, scholars need to be very specific in how these dynamics are studied, analysed, and extracted from periodicals.¹⁴ Such methodologies and approaches are well established in many academic settings. Better clarification on the use of sources would enhance Falkof’s work and the stories related there.

The lack of contextualisation of the sources bleeds over to other problematic contextualisations within the book, specifically with regard to time and period, and the themes and points of discussion. There are also some glaring and rather elementary mistakes that have troubling implications. For example, in the section titled “Mapping the occult timeline”,¹⁵ she states that the first major Satanic incident that aroused public fear was in 1985, over a fundraising magazine at the Afrikaans-medium Potchefstroom University. Female students refused to sell it because they believed it promoted Satanism. The next major episode was August 1985, where a 16 year-old Bloemfontein girl was arrested for shooting her family and an unspecified Satanic cult was deemed responsible. This apparently led to Bloemfontein being seen as the country’s Satanist headquarters. Falkof then states, these rumours gained what she calls “new levels of veracity in July that year, with the specialist conference on the issue held at Unisa”.¹⁶ Only by reading the footnotes do you realise she means July 1986. Now this example may be a simple mistake, yet if she means the events did take place full eleven months later, it would hardly seem that the ‘rumours’ were that pressing at all.

Throughout the book there is no adherence to chronology, and paragraphs or sentences that start with “in November that year ...”, for example, provide no indication of what year is being discussed. The history is jumbled and constructed to suit the narrative. Case in point: Falkof states that Satanism outbursts happened in 1970s, but these were only “a series of small, localised satanic panics”, but the late 1980s the panic was far more widespread and related to political events.¹⁷ A few pages later, she comments that “white fear of occultism and the supernatural long predate the apartheid era”, then concludes that “white occultism barely raised its head in southern Africa until the Satanism scares in the Anglophone West met the pressures of late- apartheid and combined into a mess of parental paranoia and voter

14. A. Bingham and M. Conboy, “Journalism and History: Dialogues”, *Media History*, 19, 1 (2013), p 1.

15. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 38.

16. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 39.

17. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 16. Proof of this is a quote from one Gavin Ivey, and his paper in the *South Africa Journal of Psychology* (Ivey is only mentioned once more in the text on page 88). Once again, there is no way to verify Falkof’s claim that the scare was more “widespread” or “related to politics”. This the core of her argument and thus needs better substantiation.

outrage”.¹⁸ Firstly, to claim occultism played no part in white society before the mid-1980s either relies on a very narrow definition of occultism or a rather simplistic version of white society pre-1980. The lack of any engagement with white prophets, deviant religious practices or activity for centuries up to this point is a troubling omission.¹⁹ Secondly, the book is mostly focused on internal discussion with these two panics, yet large drivers such as the international scares and parental fears of the new generation are brushed aside in favour of a convoluted narrative about politics, the end of apartheid and subconscious “white” fears of loss of control.

This brings us to by far the most troubling lack of contextualization: Falkof’s framing of “whites” and “white society”. At the beginning of the book, she states that she wants to tell “stories that are largely forgotten and to counter common understandings of apartheid-era whiteness as a non-differentiated mass”.²⁰ However, as jumbled and unclear as Falkof’s sources are, so too is her handling of who are and were “white”. For instance, despite her insistence that she will disaggregate whiteness and whites, Falkof does exactly the opposite in the text. In the introduction, she states that the moral panics examined pointed to the possibility of a “sickness within white society”.²¹ The family murders, and the soul-searching that ensued,

... gave these events a politicized power that reveals the troubled effects of the era on white consciousness that ... had not had to question itself too publically before this period, despite the fractured and divisive effects that language, class and history had had on the possibility of a homogenous South African whiteness.²²

I contend that there was never and could never have been a “homogenous” whiteness in South Africa, as the diverse histories of settlers in South Africa indicates. Furthermore, the thought of a “white consciousness” is as troubling, considering the divisions, differences and partitions in white communities in South Africa. Yet, the book is filled with references to a white society that was in some sense unified. Falkof writes about “conservative and traditional white people”, who found the idea of “a peaceful shift to democracy quite literally unthinkable”. She believes in a “late-apartheid white South African culture”, and how these two panics illustrated “popular white responses to social and political upheaval”.²³ Falkof pays lip-service to the idea of differentiating whites and who they were, but fails to do so in the research chapters. English and Afrikaans sources are mixed together (or left out completely) and there is no sustained engagement with how these topics were discussed in different sectors of the white population.

18. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 29.

19. For example, the activities of the “Boere Nostradamus”, Nicolaas “Siener” van Rensburg and his influence on Anglo-Boer War generals, such as De la Rey.

20. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 13.

21. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 3.

22. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 109.

23. Falkof, *The End of Whiteness*, p 21–22; 23–24; and 188.

For a book with whiteness as a primary focus, there is remarkably little engagement with well-established scholarship on whiteness in South Africa. While many of the leading international scholars are referenced throughout the text, the way whiteness has been adapted, used, discussed and debated in the South African context is absent. A definition of whiteness from Melissa Steyn, one of South Africa's leading proponents of whiteness studies, is only provided on page 190.²⁴ A great deal of existing and newly emerging whiteness scholarship is focused on colonial and post-colonial Africa, including a special collection in *Africa* which includes papers on South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.²⁵ Much of this work seeks to make the study of whiteness comparative. It looks at how practices of whiteness differ across the continent and what lessons can be drawn from how white communities have juggled issues of privilege, citizenship and belonging in diverse settings. For the most part Falkof misses the chance to engage with this body of work.²⁶ Ultimately, while the topic is fascinating, the execution in this case is, unfortunately, rather poor and leaves more questions than answers.

In Zimbabwe, the violent and chaotic land reforms there after 2000, which largely targeted the country's white commercial farmers, laid the platform for a host of explorations into white narratives of belonging and place. The most widely read of these was David McDermott Hughes' *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, but other authors such as Kalora, Fisher and myself have also contributed to the discussion.²⁷ Some of this scholarship, however, has fallen into the trap of essentialising the white experience in Zimbabwe and Rhodesia. Farmers, and mainly those of English descent, were

-
24. The whiteness literature in South Africa is extensive and growing apace. See for example, M. Steyn, "White Talk", in A.J. López (ed.), *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 2005); M. Steyn and D. Conway, "Introduction: Intersecting Whiteness, Interdisciplinary Debates", *Ethnicities*, 10, 3 (2010), pp 283–291; Steyn and Foster, "Repertoires for Talking White"; N. Roos, *Ordinary Springboks: White Servicemen and Social Justice in South Africa, 1939–1961* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005); I. Niehaus, "Anthropology and Whites in South Africa: Response to an Unreasonable Critique", *Africa Spectrum*, 48, 1 (2013), pp 117–127; L. de Kock, "Blanc de Blanc: Whiteness Studies: A South African Connection?", *Journal of Literary Studies*, 22, 102 (2006), pp 175–189; C. Verwey and M. Quayle, "Whiteness, Racism, and Afrikaner Identity in post-Apartheid South Africa", *African Affairs*, 111, 445 (2012), pp 551–575.
25. See a forthcoming special issue of the politics of whiteness in Africa, in *Africa*, 87, 4 (2017?) edited by Danelle van Zyl-Hermann and Jacob Boersema.
26. N. Roos, "South African History and Subaltern Historiography: Ideas for a Radical History of White Folk", *International Review of Social History*, 61 (2016), pp 117–150; D. van Zyl-Hermann, "Baas or Klaas? Afrikaner Working-Class Responses to Transformation in South Africa, c. 1977–2002", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 86 (2014), pp 142–158.
27. D.M. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010); J. Fisher, *Pioneers, Settlers, Aliens, Exiles: The Decolonisation of White Identity in Zimbabwe* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 2010); L. Kalaora, "Madness, Corruption and Exile: On Zimbabwe's Remaining White Commercial Farmers", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 4 (2011), pp 747–762.

identified as the archetypal white Zimbabwean. The experiences and realities of other whites – such as urban dwellers, those from different ethnic backgrounds, or those with different social, sexual or religious orientations – have been ignored. This is problematic considering that white farmers were only a small percentage of the total white population and that urban whites have outnumbered their rural counterparts throughout Zimbabwe's history. Many have responded to this essentialisation, including myself, by pointing out that more needs to be done to understand the different dynamics and responses to events like the land reforms or the coming of independence.²⁸ There are different forms of whiteness and privilege that need to be better understood to get a much fuller picture of white interactions with political, social and economic changes in Africa.²⁹

It is into this climate that Manase introduces his book on the post-2000 land invasions as depicted by white writers. Manase focuses on the outpouring of accounts written by white Zimbabweans since 2000 and the beginning of the land reforms. He seeks to answer questions about why so many books were produced at this time; how they portrayed the land reforms; and how they narrated issues of race, belonging and politics.³⁰ The range of books Manase examines mean that there are multiple answers to these questions and research avenues. However, throughout the book several themes constantly come up. Manase outlines that the politics of ZANU-PF, encompassing exclusion, military style confrontation and out-dated nationalist discourses, influenced ideas of belonging, identity and place in the white communities of Zimbabwe. This in turn makes many of the books very reactionary. Furthermore, many of the authors and protagonists had problems taking on the historical burden of land and land ownership.³¹ Many writers found convenient explanations for the current situation that did not implicate themselves or their ancestors. Furthermore, many whites had no ways of contemplating multiple versions of belonging and claims to land and place. The discourse of belonging by war veterans, land occupiers and rural peasantry were dismissed as political gerrymandering prompted by the ruling party and were not legitimate sentiments worthy of consideration. Throughout the book, Manase is drawn to how the land reforms/invasion were perceived, understood, narrated and what solutions to the land problem are presented. Ultimately, Manase notes, the long contestation over land in Zimbabwe still dramatically affects recent and current accounts of belonging and victimhood. He is

28. R. Pilosof and J. Boersema, "Not All Whites are Farmers: Privilege, the Politics of Representation, and the Urban-Rural Divide in Zimbabwe", *Africa* (forthcoming 2017); R. Pilosof, "Reinventing Significance: Reflections on Recent Whiteness Studies in Zimbabwe", *Africa Spectrum*, 49, 3 (2014), pp 135–148.

29. K.V. Law, *Gendering the Settler State: White Women, Race, Liberalism and Empire in Rhodesia, 1950–1980* (Routledge, New York, 2016); R. Pilosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe* (Weaver Press, Harare, 2012); A. Hammar, Book review, "Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape and the Problem of Belonging", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39, 1 (2011), pp 216–221.

30. I. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions in Zimbabwe* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2016), p 1.

31. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, p 3.

surprised at the extent to which “contemporary (white) narratives draw on the past”.³²

The farm invasions and the violence experienced by white farmers, largely concern events that actually happened, however these were then narrated, related and accentuated by writers and novelists. Unlike the moral panics examined by Falkof, these invasions were state-driven campaigns to remove white people from rural homes and properties. The attacks were real and the consequences often dire. This sets up some interesting discussion points about the spaces between these two works. Falkof’s focus on the 1980s, before the inception of black rule shows some of the fears in the white community, however, not those relating to direct attack and targeting by the coming new black government. However, it must be remembered that South Africa had accepted Belgian and Portuguese refugees from Zaire and Mozambique in the 1960s and 1970s, and white Zimbabweans who did not want to live under majority rule in the 1980s. What impact did the experiences of these people have on the discourse and fears of black rule in South Africa? Certainly, after the farm invasions started in Zimbabwe, similar fears of what land reform could become swept across South Africa white farmers’ genocidal fears increased. Farm murders became portrayed as a form of ethnic cleansing and have generated a great deal of public concern, driven by public figures like Steve Hofmeyr. What would be interesting to see would be comparative studies looking at the spaces such observations open up. Firstly, what, if any, were the moral panics of whites in Zimbabwe before independence? Were they similar or was the anxiety more focused on the actual threat of white rule? Secondly, did the violence in Zimbabwe, and the associated rise in discourses of white genocide and ethnic cleansing, result in new forms of moral panic in South Africa, or once again, was the focus more on the “real” threat of events, with the images of white victims in Zimbabwe being so widespread? In both cases, how the past affects contemporary discourses would be an important aspect to consider, and would no doubt make fascinating studies.

Manase illustrates how much of the literature post-2000 is based on particular readings of the past. He reveals how “past and present historical, ideological, social and spatial divisions in the definition of experiences” create conflicts and ambiguities.³³ However, I think Manase could have pushed this observation further. If he had done so, he could have explored in more depth how the works of memoir produced by white farmers (and their relatives), while presented as “fact” and “true narration” of events, are forms of propaganda. They project visions of the past and future that are subjective and highly contested. The stories and life trajectories constructed in these books are themselves means of re-writing the past to affect how contemporary audiences view not only the land reforms but “white” people themselves (and farmers in particular). Manase’s analysis of post-2000 white narratives in Zimbabwe provides very real lessons for historians, namely, that narrations of events are often shaped by earlier readings of the past and place. In

32. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, p 28.

33. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, p 4.

order to understand them correctly, we need to take heed of how the past is understood and digested by the writers of memoir and autobiography, and the impact this has on their work. Particularly for something like the post-2000 land reforms, which were highly charged and emotional, how the past is understood, reshaped and imagined has important bearing on the works of memoir and autobiography produced.

Catherine Buckle is a key figure in the narration of the land reforms and her work is widely referenced and consulted. Buckle can be seen, in the Gramscian sense, as an “organic intellectual” of the white farming community.³⁴ In addition to her books she has a personal website on which she publishes a weekly letter from Zimbabwe. These letters are serialised in several newspapers and the first 5 years of her letters have now been released as a book.³⁵ Accordingly, Manase gives her adequate coverage. Chapter 3 is dedicated to her first two books, *African Tears* and *Beyond Tears*, which detail the force of her work as well as her place in shaping post-2000 white narratives of the land reform process. Chapter 7 examines her third book, *Innocent Victims*, which is a literary diarisation of Meryl Harrison’s diaries. Harrison was an officer with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and she kept a log of her activities looking after animals on occupied farms from 2000–2004.

Manase describes *Beyond Tears* and *African Tears* as books of “personal witness”, in which Buckle seeks to present “true events”, as they took place.³⁶ The main themes Manase focuses on are those of loss of the farm being taken away, the emotional and physical toll on her, her family and the wider farming community, and the violence enacted by the state in the name of land reform.³⁷ Through her writings, Manase notes, Buckle is able to “subvert the overarching black nationalist discourse that categorised white commercial farmers as a group of cold and exploitative racist masters”.³⁸ In particular, Buckle’s earnest writings on her staff, labourers and the losses they suffered illustrate this point. Landscape and the attachment to nature are also prominent themes in Buckle’s work, particularly in her *Innocent Victims* book. This has long been a theme that has been central to white Zimbabwean writings.³⁹

The other books studied by Manase include Graham Lang’s novel *Place of Birth* (chapter 4); Christina Lamb’s *House of Stone* (chapter 5); and Douglas Rogers’s *Last Resort* (chapter 6). There is a useful contrast between books written by white Zimbabwean’s in Zimbabwe (Buckle); white Zimbabweans who have left (Rogers, Lang) and outsiders trying to present white narratives of events (Lamb, a British

34. P. Ransome, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, 1992), p 188.

35. C. Buckle, *Can You Hear the Drums? Letters from Zimbabwe 2000–2004* (The Litany Bird, Marondera, 2013).

36. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, pp 30, 51.

37. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, pp 46–48.

38. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, p 49.

39. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*; A. Chennells, “Settler Myths and the South Rhodesian Novel”, PhD thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1982.

journalist). In doing so Manase juxtaposes narratives of belonging and illustrates how various groups have struggled to capture the sense of dislocation white farmers have suffered in Zimbabwe. Usefully, Manase is able to show how there were competing levels of discourse and propaganda, aimed at different audiences in these works. As he notes of Lang's novel, there is a sense within it that there was a deliberate process of:

remaking of family and other alliances within a larger social, historical and psychological space where all whites with a stake in and linkages to any farmland, have to re-evaluate their views of the self and belonging in post-2000 Zimbabwe.⁴⁰

These different writers all did so in different ways. Multiple histories and backgrounds resulted in a range of stories of the present. These in turn affected ideas and beliefs about belonging and citizenship.

White Narratives is a thin volume, and the writing is dense and difficult to penetrate at times. Some of the historical background provided is lacking in substance and nuance, while the distinction between the differences inherent in his sources is not addressed in enough detail. There is some discussion on the role of “personal witness” and memoirs; the use of diaries; and novels.⁴¹ However, more needs to be highlighted here, particularly in how issues of editorship, intended audience and place of publication affect the final output. Furthermore, with regard to Lamb's book, Manase asks questions of it, such as it being “unbiased”, or a “true reflection” of events, or whether it offers “solutions to race class and ideological divisions”, in Zimbabwe,⁴² that he does not of the other works analysed. There are jarring differences in engagement that make the chapters sit uneasily together. Manase is able to show a range of white understandings and reactions to the land reforms in Zimbabwe, but does not really engage with the notion of multiple white communities, and how differences within those groupings might contest notions of place and belonging in Zimbabwe. Hopefully, however, this book is the beginning of broader engagement with whiteness studies in southern Africa that is desperately needed. So much of the whiteness literature falls into the trap of navel gazing, self-indulgent analysis with little substance. The widening of the field and critical engagement by a broader community of scholars would be a welcome development.

Scholarship on white communities in southern Africa, whether directly associated with the field of whiteness or not, is fast growing. More of this work is now devoted to disaggregating the term “white” and showing how within the “white” society there is a range of voices and narratives about the past and the future. Both of the works in this review attempt to show this, and at least pay lip service to presenting more nuanced accounts of “white” voices and experiences. Both works

40. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, p. 55.

41. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, pp 30; 108–110; and 52–53 respectively.

42. Manase, *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions*, pp 71 and 74.

also show how much of these narratives of the past, present and future are highly constructed and rely on various readings of the history. They also present particular agendas, and both Manase and Falkof illustrate how various intentions saturated the books, memoirs, newspapers and magazines under examination. The resulting insights reveal a range of “white” forms of “propaganda” and how they are manufactured, how they evolve over time and how much impact they had on white communities across the region.

REFERENCES

- Bingham, A., and M. Conboy, “Journalism and History: Dialogues”, *Media History*, 19, 1 (2013).
- Buckle, C., *Can You Hear the Drums? Letters from Zimbabwe 2000–2004* (The Litany Bird, Marondera, 2013).
- Chennells, A., “Settler Myths and the South Rhodesian Novel”, PhD thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1982.
- Cobb, J., “Protecting Journalism from Donald Trump”, *New Yorker*, November 29, 2016. Also available online, see footnote
- De Kock, L., “Blanc de Blanc: Whiteness Studies: A South African Connection?”, *Journal of Literary Studies*, 22, 102 (2006).
- Falkof, N., *The End of Whiteness: Satanism and Family Murder in late-Apartheid South Africa* (Jacana Media, Pretoria, 2016).
- Fisher, J., *Pioneers, Settlers, Aliens, Exiles: The Decolonisation of White Identity in Zimbabwe* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 2010).
- Hammar, A., Book review, “Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape and the Problem of Belonging”, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39, 1 (2011).
- Hughes, D.M., *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010).
- Kalaora, L., “Madness, Corruption and Exile: On Zimbabwe’s Remain White Commercial Farmers”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 4 (2011).
- Law, K.V., *Gendering the Settler State: White Women, Race, Liberalism and Empire in Rhodesia, 1950–1980* (Routledge, New York, 2016).
- Manase, I., *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions in Zimbabwe* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2016).
- Niehaus, I., “Anthropology and Whites in South Africa: Response to an Unreasonable Critique”, *Africa Spectrum*, 48, 1 (2013).
- Pilosof, R., “Reinventing Significance: Reflections on Recent Whiteness Studies in Zimbabwe”, *Africa Spectrum*, 49, 3 (2014).
- Pilosof, R., *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers’ Voices from Zimbabwe* (Weaver Press, Harare, 2012).
- Pilosof, R., and J. Boersema, ‘Not all Whites are Farmers: Privilege, the Politics of Representation, and the Urban-Rural Divide in Zimbabwe’, *Africa* (forthcoming 2017).
- Ransome, P., *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, 1992).

- Roos, N., “South African History and Subaltern Historiography: Ideas for a Radical History of White Folk”, *International Review of Social History*, 61 (2016).
- Roos, N., *Ordinary Springboks: White Servicemen and Social Justice in South Africa, 1939-1961* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005).
- Steyn, M., “White Talk”, in López, A.J. (ed), *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 2005).
- Steyn, M., and Conway, D., “Introduction: Intersecting Whiteness, Interdisciplinary Debates”, *Ethnicities*, 10, 3 (2010).
- Steyn, M., and Foster, D., “Repertoires for Talking White: Resistant Whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31, 1 (2008).
- Van Onselen, C., *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, Volume 2, New Nineveh* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982).
- Van Zyl-Hermann, D., “Baas or Klaas? Afrikaner Working-Class Responses to Transformation in South Africa, c. 1977–2002”, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 86 (2014).
- Verwey, C., and Quayle, M., “Whiteness, Racism, and Afrikaner Identity in post-Apartheid South Africa”, *African Affairs*, 111, 445 (2012).