I have a few criticisms. The first half of the book examines concepts and contexts at length, but works at a level of abstraction and generality that is frustrating for the reader. The second half, where Mitchell examines different family stories drawing on a variety of colonial sources, is far more satisfying. And, for a book whose bedrock is an agrarian society, the reader unfamiliar with the Cedarburg is left a bit adrift as to the actual process of land use. One wishes that Columbia University Press had included a basic map; the reader needs to go online to feel oriented. We are told that these settlers were primarily stock farmers, but references to wheat crops and plows sit oddly with the assertion that the average rainfall in this area is 40 mm a year, and irrigation is not discussed. Finally, although Mitchell repeatedly asserts that violence was the backdrop to this story of colonial consolidation, and indeed determined its pace and shape, there is astonishingly little violence in the otherwise fascinating and textured stories of these families. The reader is left wondering about the relationship between frontier violence and domestic life in the enactment of European conquest.

Mitchell is at her strongest when she is integrating her conceptions of frontiers and colonial society with the evidence that she uses to good effect. This rich study of a particular place within an expanding imperial system offers not just compelling stories but also new ways of thinking about the processes of conquest and the transformation of frontier societies into colonial societies.

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COMPARING CULTURES OF RACIAL VIOLENCE

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Cultures of Violence: Lynching and Racial Killing in South Africa and the United States. By IVAN EVANS. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. Pp. x+310. £65, hardback (ISBN 978-0-7190-7904-7).

KEY WORDS: South Africa, comparative, race/racism, violence.

The field of US–South African comparative history remains evergreen. Even as the broader field of comparative history has dwindled in popularity, scholars interested in the two countries have produced books and articles comparing and contrasting everything from the frontier experience and segregationist ideology to education and eco-policy. The field even has its own online journal, *Safundi*, which (according to its website) 'analyses the United States and South Africa from an international, transnational, and/or comparative perspective and seeks to understand each country in relation to the other'.

Given the profusion of works, one might imagine that there was little new to say. *Cultures of Violence*, the latest book by Ivan Evans, a South African historical sociologist now teaching in the United States, puts that notion quickly to rest. As the title suggests, the book examines what is at once an obvious similarity between the United States and South Africa and one of their most telling distinctions: their cultures of racial violence. Both societies generated appalling levels of physical violence against black people, yet that violence manifested itself in quite different ways. South Africa, for example, produced not only the state-sanctioned, structural violence of segregation and apartheid but also a robust culture of what Evans calls 'private violence' – the routine 'trashing' of black mineworkers, flogging of farm labourers, and casual cuffing and kicking

that characterized innumerable worksites. Yet South Africa never developed the tradition of 'extra-legal communal violence' that characterized the American South. Most importantly for Evans, it did not produce 'lynch culture' – the public, ritualized, often carnivalesque murder and mutilation of black bodies that was such an inescapable part of African-American life in the age of Jim Crow.

Evans seeks to explain this difference. His answer, at risk of oversimplifying a richly nuanced and carefully qualified argument, has to do with the fundamentally different relationships that came to exist between white citizenry and the state in the two countries. In the case of the American South, he shows how a convergence of factors – the relative homogeneity and harmony of interests within the southern ruling class; the distinctly punitive strain in the pre-millennial theology embraced by southern evangelicals; the limitations of the federal system; and, most importantly, white southerners' abiding distrust, born of memories of the Civil War and Reconstruction, of any 'government interference' in relations between whites and blacks – produced a society in which controlling and punishing black people became the responsibility, virtually the sovereign right, of private citizens. As W. E. B. Du Bois observed in 1925, 'Every white man became a recognized official to keep Negroes "in their places"'. Negro-baiting and even lynching became a form of amusement.

In South Africa, in contrast, 'keeping the native in his place' remained primarily the province of the state. Over the course of the twentieth century, an elaborate official bureaucracy developed to control the movements and bound the economic horizons of Africans, including pass laws, job reservation, labour bureaux, bantustans, compounds, and so forth, none of which existed – none of which was remotely conceivable – in the American South. Of course, this vast administrative machine was far from frictionless. It inflicted grievous violence on generations of black South Africans, while sparking intense political and economic conflict between whites. Mine-owners, farmers, and factory-owners competed for cheap labour; unionized white workers resisted, sometimes violently, any attempt to erode their privileged positions. But such conflicts, as Evans notes, did not produce the wholesale rejection of state authority that undergirded southern lynching culture; on the contrary, they typically revolved around appeals to the state, with different groups of whites demanding that the state defend their interests against other white interests.

Anticipating an obvious objection, Evans rejects any suggestion that South Africa's 'culture of violence' was somehow milder or less horrific than that existing in the Jim Crow South. The book's final chapter, on racial violence and South African law, offers a harrowing catalogue of quotidian, often murderous violence, including beatings, floggings, shootings, and stabbings, some of them prompted by perceived impertinence, some of them random, all of them utterly arbitrary. Evans explicates the circumstances of each case, most of which ended with perpetrators receiving token sentences – sometimes as little as a £5 or £10 fine. But the very fact that such cases found their way into courts of law offers a compelling contrast with the American South, where one can literally count on one's hands the number of whites convicted for their participation in any of the more than 5,000 lynchings that occurred in the half century between 1880 and 1930.

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