

women's history, Ranger has built on his work of the 1980s and paid meticulous attention here to the rise and fall of the black Bulawayo landladies; to the eager young female migrants who suddenly became socially visible and desirable in 1940s Makokoba; to the redoubtable wives and mothers of the township. This is where his debt to Vera is most evident – in the telling of a story that has room for the swish of starched cotton as well as for the more familiar sweatiness of men at work and play.

The book would have benefitted from an eagle-eyed editor with a light touch. The name of Johannesburg's Alexandra Township is misspelled, and the bibliography does not list all the works cited in the footnotes. Paragraphs and pieces of evidence are occasionally repeated in separate chapters. In places one is reminded of a 1990s Robert Zemeckis film, photoshopping fictional characters into historical events – as, every so often, Vera's characters mingle quietly with Ranger's real people. The repeated invocation of men like Manyoba and Joshua Nkomo as heroes-in-the-making perhaps borrows overly from the conventions of fiction. Finally, although there are white men in the book there are no white women (other than the naming of the African women's hostel after McIntyre's wife Gertrude). But these aspects of the book throw its great strengths into sharp relief. It is a finely woven and beautifully calibrated portrait of urban struggles to make and remake lives and landscapes in tumultuous times. Ranger wrote that his great challenge was to make his historical mosaic move; he has succeeded.

As the publishing industry changes at the speed of light one final aspect of *Bulawayo Burning* bears mentioning. This is a book lover's book. It has footnotes which tease and delight and have not been cut to the cloth of financial expediency. It is printed on lovely, thick paper. It is therefore quite expensive. Lovers of as yet un-Kindled African history will have to ensure that the shrinking budgets of their nearest libraries are stretched to cover what is arguably Terence Ranger's *pièce de résistance*.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

TERESA BARNES

ELITE POLITICS IN MUGABE'S ZIMBABWE

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A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe. By DANIEL COMPAGNON. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. Pp. 333. \$39.95, hardback (ISBN 978-0-8122-4267-6).

KEY WORDS: Zimbabwe, economic, politics/political, postcolonial, state, violence.

Compagnon's book provides an account of elite politics for the tumultuous 1999–2010 period in Zimbabwe, covering political violence, the rise of an opposition to the ruling ZANU-PF, the subsequent attacks on the media and judiciary, the land reform 'charade', the 'plunder' of the economy by the state bourgeoisie, and the failures of the international community to respond effectively to the crisis. In one of the strongest sections, 'Factionalism and purges in ZANU since 1980' (pp. 15–22), Compagnon describes how Mugabe has kept the two main competing factions in the ruling party's succession struggle on their toes and at each other. Compagnon is equally clear on the factionalism within the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), such as the divide in 2005 over whether or not to

participate in elections, and the factional violence that followed in Zimbabwe and South Africa within the MDC. Compagnon is sceptical about the ability of Morgan Tsvangirai's faction of the party to overcome its differences with the smaller faction led by Welshman Ncube and Arthur Mutambara. The author also describes the violence within the MDC, providing examples of undemocratic decisions made by Tsvangirai and his 'kitchen cabinet' (pp. 113–16) and the difficulties the MDC has encountered more recently in the negotiations for a government of national unity (GNU) in 2008–10. Compagnon's careful reading of newspapers and the reports of many informed Zimbabwean civil society groups, and his listening to the views of key political observers such as Brian Raftopoulos and Norma Kriger, has allowed him to present a compelling chronicle of the past ten years.

Compagnon is a gifted writer, particularly in his ability to use vignettes and mini-biographies to illuminate his point. The case of elite businessperson Strive Masiyiwa and his failed attempt to fight ZANU-PF corruption in the telecommunications industry is one such story (pp. 205–7). Students will find this and other vignettes highly illuminating and instructive. Compagnon's well-crafted portrayal of the ruling party, as a self-serving, greedy, political elite who use the state and the crisis to enrich themselves in what he calls 'asset grabbing by every possible means' (p. 207), is very useful for those seeking a concise treatment of Zimbabwean politics. This book fills an important gap in the existing literature, bringing together details and behind-the-scenes negotiations previously only known to Zimbabwean participants and Zimbabwean specialists. Over the course of the book readers will become convinced of the ruling elites use of the state's repressive laws and of their mafia-style manipulation of the economy to create a situation that eventually spiralled out of control. Predictably, those at the top benefitted from the crisis and had no real interest in ending their use of the Reserve Bank and other institutions for personal profit.

With a title that implies a link to classic Greek theatre, it is worth noting that there are many tragic heroes in this story. The oppositional parties are either complicit with the tragedy through their own self-serving agendas, or tragically unable to overcome their own inherent weaknesses and factionalism in the face of ZANU-PF's wide range of repressive measures. The international actors, from the British and Americans to the South Africans, lack sufficient will or means to move beyond their own self-serving agendas, which allows Mugabe to manoeuvre between South Africa's 'African solutions' and the old 'anti-imperialism' argument used to discredit the opposition. Members of ZANU-PF elite, many of whom are unable to escape their own murderous pasts, remain locked in logic of authoritarianism and violence that tragically cannot be broken. In a classical sense, then, no one in this story can escape the tragic dimensions of this recent struggle. Compagnon goes to great effort to argue against Mugabe as the lead or only tragic hero, and leaves no political elite untouched by the misfortune that is the Zimbabwean tragedy, and the book succeeds in creating the requisite amount of pathos.

If there is any weakness to Compagnon's approach, it is that his decision to write the narrative as a 'predictable' tragedy missed an opportunity to explore the possibilities for alternative and non-elite political trajectories. The support for an oppositional movement originated from the grassroots and continues to come from the urban high density areas (former townships), small towns, and rural villages where people endure beatings, torture, and the killing of their loved ones to stand up to corruption and greed. The stories at the grassroots, along with the role of the many Zimbabwean churches in providing support and care for the thousands of Zimbabweans who risk their lives for a better future, are left off the stage in this

narrative. By focusing on interpersonal rivalries among leaders, the grassroots origins of opposition politics and ‘militant civil society’ introduced in Chapter 3 falls to the wayside in the later chapters and the predictability of the tragedy of elite politics becomes the overarching theme. These grassroots efforts did not end with the formation of the MDC, nor with each successive stolen election, so shining more light on these non-elite actors in recent years might offer a less predictable, and hopefully less tragic, analysis of participatory politics that may not always be confined within previous patterns of political violence and factionalism.

Kent State University

TIMOTHY SCARNECCHIA

THE TRAJECTORIES OF YOUTH IN EAST AFRICA

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Generations Past: Youth in East African History. Edited by ANDREW BURTON and HÉLÈNE CHARTON-BIGOT. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010. Pp. viii + 301. \$64.95 hardback (ISBN 978-0-8214-1923-6); \$29.95 paperback (ISBN 978-0-8214-1924-3).

KEY WORDS: East Africa, demography, masculinity, youth.

The study of generation and youth in Africa, as the editors to this volume note, has had its ebbs and flows. With a deep history in African studies (particularly in anthropology), as well as a relative slump in the 1970s and ‘80s, it has re-emerged in the past decade and a half as a burgeoning subfield across the disciplines. This being so, it is somewhat surprising that more collections devoted explicitly to the history of youth in Africa have not to date appeared. Despite the regional and temporal limits to its scope (East Africa in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries), Burton and Charton-Bigot’s volume is the first to do so within the discipline of history. Born out of a 2006 conference, *Generations Past* brings together some of the leading scholars of youth in East Africa, both junior and senior, in a varied and nuanced collection of essays.

The volume opens with an introductory piece by Burton and G. Thomas Burgess that works both to situate the collection thematically within a broader, Africa-wide field and to present an overview of the trajectories of youth over the past century or so in East Africa. In both tasks the authors are largely successful, displaying impressive nuance and care in presenting a compelling case for generation as a key factor in contemporary and historical crisis, while avoiding the temptation to view youth as perpetual agents of rupture and epochal change. With so much attention in the contemporary moment on the often violent effects accompanying the intersection of a demographic ‘youth bulge’ and the weakening (to the point of collapse in some cases) of a certain form of the late-colonial and early-postcolonial state, these concerns hover over the introduction. And yet, in bringing to bear a perspective informed by histories of East Africa, where the pairing of youth and violence in images of contemporary politics are perhaps less iconic than some other sites on the continent, Burgess and Burton are able to steer clear of a simple version of a youth crisis narrative. To take one example, they on the one hand develop a persuasive argument that, given the relationship between the pressures on the fulfillment of (male) youth aspirations and post-Cold War political crisis, ‘the crisis of the postcolonial state is at least partly a crisis of