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Barbara Harlow, Mia Carter, eds. *Archives of Empire, Volume II: The Scramble for Africa.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003. xix + 821 pp. $99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-3152-0; $34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-3189-6.

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A Curate's Egg

The pedagogical value (not to mention respectability) of collections of selected texts has been a matter of discussion and dissention in the academy for as long as this reviewer can remember. What disturbs many is that this form of selection inevitably entails a degree of personal choice that serves the editor's particular agenda even more transparently than is usual in academic writing; while at the same time the process wrests the texts from their sustaining context. Unless the editor actively intervenes to provide an explanatory commentary, the student or general reader is set adrift without bearings. Yet, should there be an accompanying commentary, then there is always the risk that it will guide the reader down a preordained interpretative path lacking adequate signposting to alternative routes, and fenced in to shut out distracting vistas. *The Scramble for Africa*, which constitutes the second volume of *Archives of Empire*, exemplifies these perils since its main target readership must surely constitute university students and their instructors. The series is an ambitious project of four edited volumes of primary source materials in English relating overwhelmingly to nineteenth-century British imperialism, and in which it is planned to maintain a coherence of purpose and format (though each volume is intended to stand by itself).

Volume 2: The Scramble for Africa focuses on the European powers' carve-up of Africa in the period between the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. It is divided into four main parts: 1. "The Berlin Conference 1885: Making/Mapping History" in which the documents highlight the international rivalries and politicking which characterized the actual partition of Africa; 2. "The Body Politic: Rationalizing Race" which has sections on "Slaves," "Species," and "Self-governance," and in which contemporary theories of race are emphasized; 3. "The Political Corps" with sections on Sir Frederick Lugard and the Royal Niger Company's administration in West Africa, and Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company's administration further south, all focusing on the explorers, missionaries, administrators, and capitalists who framed colonial Africa; and 4. "Crises of Empire" which includes General Gordon at Khartoum, the Anglo-Boer War and King Leopold's rape of the Congo, and which plays up the voices of those increasingly critical of the imperial venture and which fore-

shadow the concerted anti-imperialism of the second half of the twentieth century.

The two editors, Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter, who are both professors of English at the University of Texas, Austin, make no secret of how they would have us read imperialism. In their general introduction, we are told that their intention is not to celebrate "the riches of empire" but rather to sample "imperialism's documentary history" in order to seek out "the richness of the substantial critical resources and the substantive grounds for the critique of imperialism" (p. xviii). True to their stated agenda, the majority of selected texts (wide and varied in their range) are critical or condemnatory of the imperial project, though others do indeed reflect the viewpoint of supporters of imperialism in Africa since, as the editors make clear, imperialism "was by no means an uncontested or unargued enterprise, but a much-debated one, even among its putative participants and apparent adherents" (p. xviii). This was indeed so. However, what is of concern is the extent to which the editors have not in practice felt themselves bound by this truism in their commentaries, which accompany the selected texts. To take only the introduction to the section on the Anglo-Boer War, the commentary opens with the statement that it was "perhaps the last of the major imperial wars" (p. 629). Note that on page 2 of the book it is more unequivocally called "the last" of Britain's colonial wars. Neither of these statements engages with what is now a considerable debate concerning the nature of the war, and whether it would not be more correct to consider it one of the very first of the modern wars of the twentieth century, especially since it evolved into a horrific total war against the civilian population of the two Boer republics, and shared with the Philippine-American War of 1899-1904 the earliest extensive use of concentration camps.[1] A few lines down we have this statement: "While prosecuted in the name of British empire in southern Africa, the war effort served no less the interests of international capital and monopoly trade" (p. 629). It is no coincidence that there is a repeated and closely related reference on the following page to J.A. Hobson (as there is in the volume introduction on pp. 7-8), for Hobson's theory that attributed the origins of the war to the machinations of a small international oligarchy of Jewish mine-owners and speculators clearly resonates with the authors, though there is a strong streak of anti-Semitism in Hobson's writing which is not exposed in their commentary. Yet although today, Hobson's fixation on monopoly capitalism as the explanation for imperialism is questioned every bit as rigorously as is Lenin's, there is no intimation of that in the editors' commentary.[2]

Since this book is about the Scramble for Africa, and since reference was made early on to Hobson's work, this reviewer searched the introductory material for specific reference to the "New Imperialism" of which Hobson's was one of the first and most enduring critiques, and of which the imperial powers' partition of Africa in the late nineteenth century was the prime exemplar. No specific reference was found. Theories and counter-theories concerning the "New Imperialism" have waxed and waned over the past century, ranging from economic to political, strategic and diplomatic explanations, and have moved away from the monocausal to the multicausal.[3] Here is an extraordinarily rich and lively field of debate, one that continues to exercise historians of imperialism and of Africa. That it was not directly addressed in a book devoted to the Scramble for Africa is disconcerting.

It should go without saying that editors, when they supplement their selected documents with explanatory commentaries for readers not overly familiar with the historical context, should be meticulous in getting their information right. Unfortunately, Harlow and Carter have all too often been remiss in this regard, as have their editors at Duke University Press in not catching and correcting the errors. To take the volume introduction as an example, the "cape" (p. 1) referred to at the strategic southern tip of Africa is not a geographical feature, and should be the Cape Colony, Britain's vital coaling station on the sea route to India. Diamonds were discovered at Du Toits Pan near the present-day Kimberley in September 1870 and not in 1867 (p. 1). It is true that gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1884 (p. 1), but the discovery of the Main Reef gold-bearing series which heralded the deep-level gold-mining industry was only made in 1886, and that is conventionally taken as the significant date. There was no such thing as the "Anglo-Zulu Wars [plural] in 1879" (p. 2) since this was a single campaign and on no other occasion did the British fight the Zulu kingdom. Moreover, that war had nothing to do with the Scramble for Africa as the editors suggest (p. 2) but preceded it, and was intended to make possible a British confederation of their long existing colonies in southern Africa in order to *limit* their military and financial commitments in that part of Africa. Why Baden-Powell (later of Boy Scouts fame) should in particular be credited with characterizing the Anglo-Boer War as a "white man's war" (p. 2) is unclear since at the beginning of the conflict both Boers and British authorities agreed it should be precisely that, and the African chiefs were informed of their decision.[4] Besides which, regardless

of whatever Baden-Powell might have wished to believe, the war became anything but a white man's war and Africans were employed extensively by the Boers and British alike both in support and military roles, and were active on their own account against white colonists.[5]

Again, it is perplexing that John Colenso, the first Anglican Bishop of Natal, should be mentioned especially for having incurred the "ire" of Matthew Arnold as a result of empathizing with his Zulu flock, and for having "translated into Zulu the books of the Pentateuch" (pp. 3, 328). In fact, while Colenso published Zulu grammars and a Zulu-English dictionary, he also translated the whole of the New Testament and several books of the Old Testament into Zulu. As part of a rather different venture, he also published scholarly commentaries on St. Paul's Letter to the Romans and on the Pentateuch, expressing unorthodox theological views which had arisen out of his missionary work among the Zulu. These ideas decidedly aroused the disapproval of the ecclesiastical establishment and led to his excommunication for heresy.[6] Why the editors should have decided to include Arnold's long article on Colenso (pp. 328-350) at all in this collection is puzzling, because it engages with esoteric theological criticism of Colenso's biblical commentaries that hardly further our understanding of the Scramble for Africa.

If we continue through this introduction we see Cecil Rhodes called "governor of the Cape Colony" (p. 3), when in reality he was the elected premier of the Cape (1890-1896), a very different position of authority. Alfred Lord Milner (and not "Lord Alfred Milner" [p. 76], which would have been his courtesy title had he been the son of a peer instead of being created a peer in his own right in 1901 as Lord Milner of St. James's and of Cape Town) is credited with having been one of South Africa's "governors-general" (p. 4). In fact, that post only came into being after South African Union in 1910; when Milner retired in 1905, it was as High Commissioner and Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. Milner's "kindergarten," which he recruited to oversee the reconstruction of the Transvaal following the Anglo-Boer War, can hardly be described as being made up of "recent public-school graduates" (p. 4). Many had indeed once been at public schools (socially prestigious independent high schools), but most were exceptionally gifted–if unpleasantly arrogant–graduates of (primarily) Oxford University who were in the early stages of their exceptional careers, and were not a set of callow schoolboys.[7]

It would serve no additional purpose to proceed further in this vein, for the point has surely been made. While the documents included in this volume will be of use and interest to students and instructors, they should read the editors' commentary with a wary and critical eye.

Notes

[1]. Ian Beckett, "The South African War and the Late Victorian Army," in *The Boer War: Army Nation and Empire*, eds. Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000), pp. 31-44.

[2]. See, for example, Alan Jeeves, "Hobson's *The War in South Africa*: A Reassessment" in *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race and Identity in the South African War, 1899-1902*, eds. Greg Cuthbertson, Alan Grundlingh and Mary-Lynn Suttie (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), pp. 233-246; and Iain R. Smith, "Capitalism and the War" in *The Impact of the South African War*, eds. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 56-75.

[3]. See the well established student text, M.E. Chamberlain *The Scramble for Africa*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1999).

[4]. See L.S. Amery, ed., *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902*, Vol. 2 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1902), pp. 138-9.

[5]. There is an extensive literature on black participation in the Anglo-Boer War, but for a recent contribution see Bill Nasson, "Black Communities in Natal and the Cape" in *The Impact of the South African War*, eds. David Omissi and Andrew Thomspon (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 38-55.

[6]. See <http://www.oxforddnb.com>: Peter Hinchliff, "Colenso, John William," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[7] See John Benyon, *Proconsul and Paramountcy in South Africa 1806-1910* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1980), pp. 285, 305-306, 360.

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