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Annika Teppo. *The Making of a Good White: A Historical Ethnography of the Rehabilitation of Poor Whites in a Suburb of Cape Town.* Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2004. 274 pp. No price listed (paper), ISBN 978-952-10-1978-4.

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As South Africa entered democracy in 1994, the focus of social science research fell on the urgent task of reversing the effects of apartheid for the majority African population. Research on white South Africans seemed a little harder to justify in the context of that political moment. Since then, a small body of critical work on white South Africans has been published. A recent addition is Annika Teppo's published Ph.D. dissertation, *The Making of a Good White.*[1] It demonstrates that it is not accurate to separate out white South Africans as the "doers" of social engineering from other groups as the objects of this engineering. People classified as white were also subjected to a host of pressures designed to shore up the racial hierarchy. Those who did not conform easily to expectations, particularly poor whites, had to endure many interventions from the guardians of their "race." While these included certain forms of assistance, they also entailed a loss of community as they were removed from mixed residential areas, a loss of privacy as social workers invaded homes to manage personal lives, the removal of male household members to work colonies, and the removal of children to foster care. Failure to conform resulted in stigmatization and rejection from (white) society. This review sketches some of the key points of each chapter before identifying strengths and some of its unrealized potential.

The introduction maps out a background to poor whiteness, and in particular the production of an ideal white citizen who reinforced the civilized values which elites defined for their "race." In addition, the growing attention to poor whites was situated against the backdrop of industrial unrest in the 1920s, and in particular the way in which capital aimed to prevent black and white working classes from joining forces. In an effort to ensure the civilized status of whites, poor whites were targeted for "upliftment." Suburbs for poor whites were spaces constructed for the purpose of driving the civilizing process of poor whites. The focus of this study is one such suburb in Cape Town: Epping Garden Village. Teppo also uses the introduction to flag conceptual interests in social mixing in urban contexts, ideas of embodiment, and the construction of social ills as pathology.

Chapter 2, "The Poor White Category," opens with the history of white presence in Southern Africa from first settlement in 1652. Tensions between original Dutch settlers and English settlers, who arrived in the 1800s, culminated in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War, which ended in 1902. This produced a large population of poor whites who moved to cities. The growing popularity of eugenics meant that poor whites were seen as losing their civilization, as they were insufficiently distinct from what were considered "uncivilized" races around them. This was countered by attempts to physically separate races and to target poor whites for education and privileged access to jobs so that they could return to their proper station in the social hierarchy. Epping Garden Village was a neighborhood built in Cape Town for the purpose of accommodating those who might be responsive to such interventions. Social workers taught whites how to be good by, for example, keeping their houses tidy and managing their finances. While authorities initially overlooked the "racial impurity" of some residents, the advent of apartheid mid-century meant that those only recognized as white by the government could live there. Some of the initial generation moved up and out to middle-class suburbs. Those who failed to become self-sufficient and upwardly mobile were stigmatized and became part of the "uncivi-

lized other" against which middle-class whites defined themselves. Thus when the neighborhood's original purpose of being a site to promote white civilization failed, its focus shifted to one of quarantining persistently poor whites from the rest of civilized society. Since the end of apartheid, white residents have been joined by a number of upwardly mobile "coloured" residents, which has had mixed reception.

Chapter 3 is a short discussion on the research process. A combination of archival work and seventy-two interviews forms the base of the empirical material. Fieldwork was characterized by suspicion from many respondents. Teppo locates her study within other, relatively few, ethnographic and historical studies on whites in South Africa and the growing interest in whiteness abroad.

Chapter 4, "The White Body and its Boundaries," opens with Foucault's interest in the way governments tried to control the populations over which they governed, a control which had more coercive origins but was ultimately internalized and was enacted by individuals without having to be told to do so. To this review of Foucault, Teppo adds a summary of Douglas' interest in the symbolic power of the body in society, with fears of pollution, disease and boundary maintenance traversing both the literal and the social body. Thus attitudes to social difference in South Africa can be located in fears about the boundary between white/not-white, with particular pressure being applied to poor whites to conform to civilized standards and avoid miscegenation. Drawing then on de Certeau, Teppo goes on to suggest that of course poor whites were not just puppets but also engaged with these pressures in ways that suited their strategic purposes. Particularly striking in this regard were light-complexioned coloured who were able to pass for white.

Chapter 5, "Housing Schemes–A Perfect Solution," examines the advent of suburbs dedicated to the uplift of poor whites. The Epping Garden Village project was overseen by the "Citizens Housing League." Such was the optimism in the possibilities of the Citizens Housing League that various professors, members of the secretive *Broederbond*, and high-level business people served on its board, including none other than H.F. Verwoerd, who was later prime minister. Neighborhoods on the periphery of the city were seen to offer an escape from the pernicious effects of uncontrolled urban mixing in the slums. Influenced both by the garden city movement in the United Kingdom and the symbolic attachment of Afrikaans heritage to the veldt, they were designed to encourage wholesome activities such as gardening. Architecture aimed to avoid overcrowding and to prevent the wrong people from sharing the same sleeping space.

Chapter 6 elaborates on the period immediately following Epping Garden Villages' establishment in 1938. This period was characterized by the Citizens' Housing Leagues' close attention to the selection of the occupants of the first 700 houses, with the aim of accommodating the deserving poor rather than the undeserving poor. Once inside, residents gained considerable assistance on various fronts but this came at the cost of a controlling regime of conduct implemented by social workers. Different expectations of each gender were instilled. While men were evaluated on their ability to earn a living, women were discouraged from working and their worth was determined according to the presentability of their homes, their children and themselves. A host of tensions were exposed during this period. Social workers taught residents to avoid conspicuous consumption beyond their means, but obviously this was in tension with expectations of upward social mobility. Live-in maids were forbidden but, again, this was in tension with pressure to be neat and clean. Tensions between different authorities also emerged: the pragmatic decision by the Citizens Housing League to ignore the racial impurity of some residents clashed with the eugenicist objectives of the school principal, who wanted all "pass whites" pupils removed.

Chapter 7, "The Era of Stagnation and Disintegration 1950-1990," examines the period during which orthodox apartheid notions of racial purity were consolidated and subsequently began to unravel. Racial classification was no longer dictated at the level of local organizations such as the Citizens Housing League, but was now centralized by the state. The possibilities of turning a blind eye to the racial impurity of some promising pass whites were shut down. As a result, prospective tenants who showed little potential and would previously have been turned away were now accepted only because they were white. Social workers feared that they were becoming institutionalized and were not using the advantages given to them to advance themselves. These persistently poor whites were no longer the object of developmental optimism, but rather became stigmatized as evidence of failed whiteness. Attempts to jump-start their development included attracting previous tenants back into the area by selling some of houses, but this did not prove popular. In this chapter, Teppo also elaborates on the gendered aspects of work. Men were expected to earn the

household's income. If they failed to do so, they were called work-shy and sometimes sent to work in colonies (for which their wives' signatures were required). While women were never called work-shy, their ability to develop careers was constrained. Finally, obesity became an aspect of the stigmatization of poor whites, and resulted in diet clubs in the community.

Chapter 8, "The Era of Renegotiation: Ruyterwacht after 1990," explores the fate of a poor white neighborhood once the ideological scaffolding that kept it in place had come down. After the first democratic elections of 1990, there was neither enthusiasm nor resources for the poor white project, with the welfare of larger numbers of poorer black people now taking priority. Old strategies of survival become redundant or even debilitating, and new modes of getting by were constructed. There has been little in-migration of African families. The arrival of thousands of African school children in 1995 to attend the primary school was met with well-publicized resistance from residents. Desegregation of the suburb took the form of upwardly mobile coloured families moving in and often gentrifying the neighborhood. These coloured newcomers were generally an acceptable or welcome presence according to many of the established white families, although this did not mean that they dispensed with notions of racial hierarchy or of requiring conformance to established norms. In particular, attempts to erect a mosque have resulted in much consternation.

Chapter 9, "Conclusion: A Category and its Boundaries," spends just four pages addressing overall conceptual themes. Key amongst these is the way in which the shift from more pragmatic approaches to whiteness earlier in the twentieth century to more hard-line approaches exposed the contradictions of the category and made it less viable.

The primary value of Teppo's contribution is that it examines the way in which white elites socially engineered other white people to conform social reality to their understandings of racial hierarchy. The unwitting effect of this process was to concede to a glaring contradiction in white supremacist ideology: that whites were not inherently good, but had to be *made good.* If whites were more civilized, as supremacists understood the category, it was because they constructed the group to fit the definition, which was ultimately not based on any innate goodness of whites. This was explained away at the time through the idea that white people's innate superiority needed to be facilitated by a conducive environment, but not to recognize that the leg up received by these poor whites placed them at a significant advantage over other groups would be self-delusion on a grand scale. White supremacy was not a received reality but a produced reality.

While white South Africans, as a legacy of their own racial ideology, are often lumped under a single label, this study not only shows that the group is heterogeneous–split not only along language, and class–but also differentiated in terms of the various ways poor whites responded to attempts to uplift them. Furthermore, the analysis of the different ways men and women were treated shows that being white meant different things to different genders.

Much of the research done on white South Africans has been highly critical of the group. While Teppo is equally critical, the power of this piece is to erode the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy between white and black. This is not a stated objective of the book but it is a powerful effect of reading it. As I suggested above, the book provides a real sense of the way in which white people were subjected to racial expectations and a host of extreme and sometimes tragic interventions.

A further strength of the text is the case study itself. Epping Garden Village is an excellent site for exploring the way in which poor whites were became objects of concern and projects for "upliftment." The story was waiting to be written and the text does a valuable job of doing just that. Teppo built up a comprehensive body of archival and oral material, which is presented in an accessible narrative. The historical span of three quarters of a century allows for the detailed exploration of the trajectory of this suburb which reveals itself to be conflicted and shifting. While the idea that "whiteness is constructed" trips easily off our tongues today, Teppo does the detailed work of showing how this actually happened.

This publication is a published Ph.D. dissertation. The author may be interested in developing the work further and the follow remarks are intended in that light, rather than to devalue what is a useful publication. Some of the unrealized potential in this piece can be linked to the unrealized potential in "whiteness studies" generally, where a particularly constrained remit fails to take account of theoretical developments in relation to postcolonialism and identity studies and other key fields beyond whiteness studies. I remember a speaker at a conference on postcolonialism in South Hampton in 1998 railing against the lack of attention to the construction of the category of whiteness, this after two days of papers on

colonial-critical themes which were fundamentally concerned with whiteness but sought to locate it within the colonial process. By no means does Teppo limit the work to whiteness studies; there are productive engagements with a range of theoretical positions, but the excellent work done on understanding the production of whiteness in and of itself would be greatly enhanced with reflection on broader historical processes.

Key to this would be the process of colonialism itself and engaging with postcolonial studies as a critical framework for understanding social difference the context of imperialism. Another broad framework, which may prove useful, would be literature that has been critical of modernism. Modernism encapsulated optimistic notions of the potential of progress through technology, planning and development. It perceived social ills in every place that did not to conform to the template of modern society, and aimed to achieve social order. A housing scheme established in the 1930s, which attempted to solve social ills through good urban design, strikes me as a classic example of modernism (as would be the broader framework of segregation and apartheid itself). As such it could be contextualized within other projects around the world such as welfare systems in Europe.

Another area for further conceptual development might be identity theory. I feel that the text set up, but did not capitalize on, the analytical interest of the way poor white people were so troubling for the racial project in South Africa. For example:

"The closed white spaces of apartheid were the cosmic effect or equivalent of the white race as a closed social category. The fears in respect of the poor whites reflected the fears in respect of the vulnerable boundaries of whiteness. The willingness to discipline the white social body, to close access to it, and quite concretely, to keep the Other away from it by condemning any miscegenation were attempts to control this category. After 1948, as the category White became more strictly defined, the control of the social body grew stronger. During apartheid the poor whites became a minority, and no longer fitted the category of a good white. Consequently, they–together with their areas–were reclassified as anomalies, or dirt–*die slegmense*" (p. 103).

I feel Teppo is on to something truly fascinating here but does not really close the argument. Persistently poor whites are problematic not only for being ethnic anomalies, but for challenging the very basis of white claims to racial superiority. If whites have secured their sense of (civilized) self on the basis of not being (uncivilized) black, then evidence of failure to civilize amongst whites threatens the entire racial project. This returns us to the theme of transgression, and dirt, which in Douglas' framework signifies *matter out of place*. Black people are not the problem as such, when kept in "their place"; they are in fact a very necessary part of white identity structures. Urbanized "detribalized" black people were a problem as they were transgressing their proper place. Likewise, poor whites are a problem because they disturb these structures and are out of place. High becomes low and low becomes high; the hierarchy is rendered meaningless. Thus, poor whites were problematic not only because they didn't fit, but because their not fitting was a threat to white notions of their supremacy and the terms on which they sought to engage the African continent became untenable. The white middle classes made a disturbing realization: "if these poor white people are not civilized, and they are like me because they are of the same race, then I have the capacity not to be civilized." This is a possibility which the middle classes could not acknowledge, which is why they initially poured in vast resources, culminating in apartheid itself, to underwrite the civilized status of whites and which Teppo does a great job of documenting in this particular site. Those who still escaped the correct definitions despite the one of the most concerted efforts in history to "correct" this now threatened to undo this entire endeavor at its seams. Thus, the ultimate cutting loose of poor whites by middle-class whites later in the twentieth century represents a fundamental psychic moment: the adaptive switch to a deracialized notion of otherness. This throws up further questions, for example, how do poor whites-as-other relate in the minds of the middle classes to black people-as-other? These themes surfaced in the text but not fully developed and there is a great deal more that can be done with them theoretically. Not the least it would be necessary to revisit the race-class debate to properly deal with this.

A final concern that I had was the way Teppo makes uses of ideas of the body and embodiment. This can be a productive analytical route, and was used to good effect in many parts of the text. At times, however, it was not clear what was particularly "bodily" about the topic under discussion. For example, on page 141, "work was seen as the best bodily technique for upliftment of poor whites." Bar a short literature review on the body, the text tended to repeat the words "embodiment" and "bodily" in lieu of actually building up an argument of what this might mean. I agree that there is potential in this line of thinking but it was left largely unsatisfied.

Overall, however, this publication is a very useful account of a fascinating case study told through valuable conceptual lenses. It will be of interest to those working on race, gender, whiteness, and apartheid/post-apartheid urban planning.

Note

[1]. PDF file available at `http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/val/sosio/vk/teppo/`, ISBN 952-10-1979-4.

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