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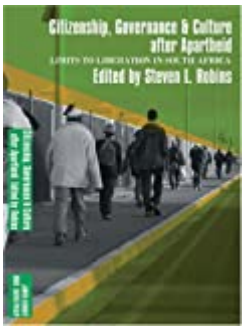

Steven L. Robins, ed. *Limits to Liberation after Apartheid: Citizenship, Governance and Culture.* Oxford: James Currey, 2005. x + 246 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8214-1665-5; $28.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8214-1666-2.

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Published on H-SAfrica (April, 2008)

Politics of the "Multitude" in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Like many of its predecessors, this book about the post-apartheid period begins with the celebratory moment of Nelson Mandela's release from prison in February 1990. A more apt image would be the assassination of Chris Hani outside of his home in April 1993. A symbol of the violence and future anxieties that preoccupied the early 1990s, Hani's premature death in retrospect has foreshadowed trends of recurring political intolerance and marginalization that have characterized the post-apartheid period. Taken as a whole then, *Limits to Liberation* is an edited volume that inhabits a now familiar declensionist narrative of auspicious political change in 1994 followed by a steady decline of optimism concurrent with an escalation of new feelings of political, social, and economic uncertainty over the past fourteen years.

However, to call this sensibility familiar is not to call this volume unnecessary. Edited by Steven L. Robins, an associate professor of social anthropology at Stellenbosch University, this compelling collection of essays focuses on the transformative limits of the post-apartheid period by situating these boundaries not within realms of economic or social policy assessment, but instead within the more commonplace complexities that South Africans face on a day-to-day basis. As Robins suggests, locating solutions to many of South Africa's problems does not rest solely with party politics or economic reform, but through engagement with "specific, concrete realities and everyday struggles" in order to understand the local "negotiations and pragmatic compromises" in which South Africans participate (p. 2). Given the involvement of a set of contributors who are mostly, if not all, anthropologists, a central touchstone is the role of culture and cultural spaces vis-Ã -vis such questions of citizenship and social change. The interplay between a new South African state predicated on liberal principles of universal rights and a vibrant, culturally diverse civil society consequently forms the key dynamic of this text. The book is divided into three sections that include twelve essays in total.

The first section–entitled "Culture and the Limits of Liberalism"–consists of four essays, the first of which lays out the problems of South Africa's democratic transition and the contributions that South Africa might offer to contemporary understandings of democratic theory.

Bettina von Lieres, a political scientist at the University of the Western Cape, argues that political marginalization, rather than inclusion, has been the central theme of South Africa's new democracy. Although rights have been universally granted and citizenship status is assured by law, the experience of citizenship suggests that more attention must be granted to the ambiguous politics of incorporation. Von Lieres works against center-periphery notions of political assimilation–that inclusion is merely a matter of bringing communities previously marginalized during the apartheid era back into the system–to propose that the post-apartheid political system itself has produced new situations of marginalization. The meaning of "consensus" over political ideas, values, and state practices remains a fraught realm of definition and negotiation, with South African communities periodically entering and retreating from such debates in such a way that fragmentation has become the norm.

The second essay of this section by Jean and John Comaroff–entitled "Reflections on Liberalism, Policulturalism and ID-ology: Citizenship and Difference in South Africa"–further explores why the category of "citizenship" has preoccupied contemporary scholarship in a fashion similar to the notion of "civil society" during the late 1980s. Observing a broad tension between "right-bearing individuals" and "identity-bearing subjects," they contend that the ambiguities produced by such distinctions, through the fact that individuals have had to inhabit and negotiate both, are the exact reason why "citizenship" and "community" have become contested abstractions. The centripetal tendencies of past ideologies have been replaced by the centrifugal motion of contemporary "ID-ology," an expression referring to the identity struggles that have defined day-to-day life. A "policulturalism"–signifying both the plural and politicized nature of cultural practice–has subsequently taken hold, pointing to the limits of liberalism as counterbalanced by the "Kingdom of Custom" (p. 52).

Suren Pillay's essay, which follows, explores another case study of such ambiguities by focusing on the status of Afrikaner identity, underscoring how the re-assertion of this identity both approximates the nation-building project underway but has also raised the specter of white privilege. Pillay therefore questions the universalism of the liberal democratic model, by evincing the complexities that can unfold when this abstract set of ideas intersects with a particular history. The final essay by Thomas A. Koelble and Edward LiPuma focuses on a separate intersection, that between contemporary global capital and the African National Congress (ANC) government. Returning to themes touched upon by the Comaroffs, their approach to the resurgence of customary authority outlines how the lack of economic autonomy vis-Ã -vis the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other forms of international finance has constrained the South African state such that it has had to make overtures to chiefs and other local authorities to achieve political and economic legitimation. The consequent continuity between apartheid and post-apartheid states in their co-optation is striking.

Part 2, entitled "Rethinking Citizenship and Governance in Urban South Africa," takes a more focused turn to venture into the meanings of political change and status in urban areas. The first essay–"Nodal Governance, Denizenship and Communal Space: Challenging the Westphalian Ideal" by Clifford Shearing and Jennifer Wood–makes the basic, but important, point that the generic Westphalian model of the nation-state and its citizenry is not analytically useful for interpreting contemporary South Africa. With the devolution of state power and a concurrent rise of alternative institutions and bodies providing security and other social services, a Foucauldian nodal form of governance has taken hold, with "denizenship"–defined as a status of inhabiting a particular social context–supplanting conventional definitions of citizenship. Understanding what it means to be a "denizen" serves to locate the multiple spaces through which identities are constituted–whether as consumers at shopping malls or dwellers in shantytowns–in addition to the webs of power that intersect and constitute such spaces. Denizenship consequently enables visions of power beyond the state to capture better the everyday negotiations that contemporary South Africans face.

The chapters that follow embrace a similar appreciation for de-centering conventional notions of power and multiplying definitions of belonging. For example, Edgar Pieterse's examination of City Development Strategy discourse in Cape Town argues for an organic, rather than top-down, approach to understanding South Africa cities, one that is cognizant of a "multiplicity of struggle" that "moves across formal/informal and insider/outsider binaries" (p. 130). Building upon a bio-political notion of the state, Ivor Chipkin contends that contemporary citizenship is being determined via ethnical norms seeking to construct "moral communities" and "the good subject" (pp. 135, 137). This "moral-ethical disposition" is an overlooked dimension, one that could inform how the contours of "development" are determined (p. 142). As Chipkin writes, "Development, therefore, is not simply about meeting the needs of citizens. It is about capturing resi-

dents to a life-ethic defined by the state so that they can be citizens! It is about making ethical beings. It is about holding people in relations that make them governable by the state" (p. 154).

Sean Jacobs and Ron Krabill carry this theme of construction further to underscore the role of the media in determining the visibility and consequent representation of people and their concerns. The problem of "mediated citizens" is particularly acute for township residents as they demonstrate in a case study of Manenberg, where people "are treated [by the media] at best as unfortunate victims, if not ungrateful criminals, without ever addressing their more profound claims for structural change, made as citizens" (p. 171).

These shifting contours of the public sphere are equally explored in part 3, "Cultural Plurality and Cultural Politics after Apartheid." Elaine Salo, for example, looks at the ways in which youth in Manenberg have renegotiated urban space and opportunity by redefining notions of masculinity and femininity through access to and appropriation of the material and media resources of a global public sphere. Adopting a slightly more insular method, Andrew Spiegel traces the various meanings of the expression "spaza"–which range from adjectives such as "informal," "imitation," "fake," and "unreal" to the verbs "bewilder" or "eyeblind"–to identify the contours of a critical urban discourse centered on how people interpret situations and power via this term. Shannon Jackson similarly excavates the "civic-mindedness" of Coloured South Africans by locating its historical roots through practices of memory, domesticity, and urban belonging, thus challenging what she perceives as more present-focused, instrumental views of this identity, and others, as of late. Rafael Marks concludes the collection with the spectacle of Cape Town's Century City, arguing that this "city within a city" represents a new level of privatizing and commodifying public life. When ideas of equitable development and global capital confront one another, the latter typically wins out. As Marks writes,

"The city is beholden to private developers and democratic planning processes have been marginalised. Far from attempting to rectify the inequalities and spatial patterns of the apartheid city, the free market has intensified existing divisions. The rich retreat into their well-serviced laagers, protected by fences, private security and nostalgic fantasy, while the poor are locked outside, battling with decreasing public services. The apartheid legacy of (urban) segregation continues to intensify with differing access to goods and services" (p. 241).

These lines in many ways summarize the volume as a whole, underscoring the ineluctable manner in which post-apartheid politics and social life have intersected with the variegated pathways and demands of global capital, to compromise many of the ideals of anti-apartheid struggle. This convergence of political autonomy and economic entanglement appears to link South Africa's transition with that of other African countries, which experienced similar binds earlier, albeit with tangible socialist options that the Cold War once provided. Nevertheless, a key strength of this text is its effort to identify the critical ways in which South Africa's "multitude" has intervened in this ongoing process, to challenge policies and perspectives that would have them remain passive.[1] As with many edited collections, there are some imbalances and areas for further consideration. For example, the case studies presented are almost exclusively urban in focus. The popularity of researching peasants and rural areas that existed from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s has waned dramatically. Among urban areas, the collection is tilted decidedly toward Cape Town. Durban and Johannesburg receive little attention. On another level, there is too, at times, a rhetorical quality to many of the arguments presented, with descriptive keywords such as "discourse," "contested," "struggle," and "fluid," for example, standing in for ethnographic detail. Furthermore, from a conceptual standpoint, the three sections blend into one another for the most part, rather than maintain the distinctions suggested by their titles. Still, these critiques stem from the observable strengths of this collection. Robins and his contributors have added new perspectives and ideas to an important research agenda, one that will no doubt preoccupy scholars–and activists–for some time to come.

Note

[1]. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

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Citation: Christopher Lee. Review of Robins, Steven L., ed., *Limits to Liberation after Apartheid: Citizenship, Governance and Culture*. H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews. April, 2008.

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