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Introduction: perspectives and place

Although this book is a case study of the minutiae of experiences and events in a dramatic period in the history of a limited area of colonial Southern Africa, it is the major reorientation of South African historical writing in recent years which provides its 'totalising' context. It is, to adapt another of Gwyn Williams' imaginative illuminations, an ear in other people's corn. One of the defining features of this field of contemporary South African social history is a central concern with the daily life and culture of those who have been oppressed and excluded by race and class in South African history. 'Whose story?' is the question which has animated the seminal essay collections on pre-industrial and modern South Africa edited by Shula Marks, Stanley Trapido, Anthony Atmore and Richard Rathbone, the peasant studies of William Beinart and Colin Bundy, the social history of the industrial-revolution Witwatersrand by Charles van Onselen, and the multi-essay volumes emerging from the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop.[1] The answer to 'whose story?' provided by these and other works too numerous to list here, is naturally not 'everyone's', but primarily that of subordinated, relatively voiceless classes and sectors

The common theme is that South Africa's black workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie need to be represented historically as self-aware and self-activating actors in their own right; not only structured by the historical process but partly structuring its shape themselves. From this perspective, it is the human achievement of men and women and their imbrication in innumerable conflicts and accommodations which contest or sustain the historical terms of social development under capitalism. In place of the cruder, more instrumentalist kinds of economic determinism in which, in the words of E. P. Thompson, people figured merely as 'vectors of ulterior structural determinations',[2] the 'new' social history has been exploring the story of social domination and struggle in South Africa as one undoubtedly bounded by changing relations of production but also conditioned by cultural, political and other factors located in class relations and social consciousness.

Largely gone is an interpretation of the South African past as the sullen or barely-comprehending capitulation of dominated classes to the harsh dominion of industrial or agrarian capital.[3] Instead, there is increasing attention to the class, cultural, ideological and other forces operating upon and around African peoples and other communities, to encompass classic 'clashes between real subjects, amid the heat and thun-

dering noise of cultural, political, and material production'.[4] While it is obviously not the purpose of this introduction to treat in any detail the full and diverse historiographical context which informs this book, it is the general significance of this conception of the historical experience of South Africa's plebeian classes which needs to be stressed.

Thus, the best recent work on the entrenchment of capitalist agriculture and the dispossession of peasant holdings comprehends the importance of the continuing 'struggle for land, as well as for better conditions of work', into the twentieth century. As Beinart and Peter Delius have observed, that struggle 'could become infused with changing local identities which recalled the former, more independent status of African people'; while 'scope for defensive responses remained open . . . the thrust of African defences' has had a formative impression upon the state segregationist order of post-Union South Africa.[5] Similarly, van Onselen's study of working-class activity and consciousness on the industrialising Witwatersrand carries an insistence on the significance of different class and cultural mediations of exploitative economic experiences. Fundamental to *New Babylon* and *New Nineveh* is a treatment of historical experience as 'the warm, vibrant and intensely human struggle of people seeking to find a place of dignity and security within a capitalist world' in a period in which 'mine owners did not always enjoy a free hand in their conflict with the subordinate classes'.[6] It is this approach, essentially derivative from the British History Workshop tradition of social history, which this book tries to incorporate and to extend in its analysis of a moment of particularly acute crisis in the everyday life of the Cape region. This book will have served some purpose if it helps to tell the history of how peasants, artisans or labourers made sense of their experience and grappled to act upon it, in one of the most energetic, creative and robust popular engagements in modern South African history.

New work on South African history appears today with the pace and regularity with which the 1980s regime renewed its State of Emergency rule. A few of these chronicles and reinterpretations which are relevant to Cape history, such as those on the development of Coloured politics and the 'making' of Coloured identity,[7] provide settings to which the war experience explored here provides a concentrated contribution, providing greater depth to part of the historical puzzle. Others, taking their cue largely from Warwick's overall revision of the South African War, have sought to accord appropriate recognition of the position of blacks in the conflict as active participants who struggled, suffered and were disillusioned by its dismal outcome.[8] Albert Grundlingh's most recent exploration of black South African involvement in the First World War represents a slim but lively elaboration of that experience in terms of 'war and society' analysis.[9] Grundlingh's book confronts the difficulty of conceptualising and demonstrating the military connections between society, economy, politics and ideology. And it does so in a context in which there are few directly relevant African 'war and society' models available to show how to clarify and assess linkages.[10] At another level, South Africa certainly provides little confirmation of the validity of the now ageing concept of the military participation ratio first developed by Stanislav Andreski.[11] The presumption that participation in war can lead to an improved market position and other benefits for previously subordinate or 'underprivileged' groups in society would come as a considerable surprise to veterans of the South African Native Labour Contingent.

In terms of adding knowledge of the interrelationship between war and black South African society to the overall historical map, there is a link between social-historical work on the South African War and contributions on the experiences of black auxiliaries in both the First and Second World Wars.[12] But it is more the contrasts and discontinuities between the 1899 to 1902 conflict and the later wars which need to be stressed, rather than any discernible similarities and continuities in the attitudes and behaviour of various communities. The world wars brought inflation, shortages, intensified industrial class conflict and labour-contingent recruiting drives for service abroad, but they did not bring warring imperial and settler troops marching and counter-marching through the countryside. While social tension was present, these wars were essentially external and distant happenings. Moreover, the parameters of African service were uniformly set by a consolidated settler state which had acquired political control over its own destiny; for its rulers, the political force of the imperial connection was limited and growing increasingly negligible. For white dominions, co-operation in wartime did not, as Bernard Porter has put it, 'necessarily signify that they wished to be shackled in peace'.[13] These factors rooted the terms and texture of black war experience in a universe of power and structure of national life which have very little in common with the consciousness and discourse which governed popular life in the earlier South African War.

For the movements of this war were located and fought out deep *within* the formations of settler and black societies of Southern Africa; though international by definition as an imperialist war, its ramifications were profoundly local, grounded in colonial relations of conflict, division and association. As a South African – as distinct from an 'Anglo-Boer' – war, it received some of its sharpest civil expressions in the conquered Boer states.[14] But, if 'civil war is the continuation of politics – internal class politics',[15] then it is the Cape region which slithered into it most meaningfully. It is in the lived experiences of black people in the Cape Colony that a sense of the complex actualities, course and meanings of this civil war between black communities and a fractured settler population can best be grasped.

While I have tried to include all important material relevant to fundamental themes and issues of the Cape war experience, there are inevitable omissions and biases. In some cases, the decision to pass over topics has been eased by the availability of works by other scholars which have made pointless any further retelling here. Thus, there is no discussion of the Cape's celebrated sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking; the latter engagement is probably among the best researched examples of how a community of African and Coloured civilians weathered the strains and bore a good deal of the destructive costs of conventional warfare.[16] On the same ground, despite the significance of African dockers' position in a key strategic supply sector, I have little to say about dock labour; there are informative contributions on relations between workers and port employers, and on strategies of labour containment and control in the early 1900s, which are relevant to the war period.[17] These, then, are the intentional omissions. There is one other limitation to my subject. Largely because black women rarely if ever figure in South African War records, but undoubtedly also because of my conditioning in the traditional mould of social or labour history, women's war experiences are noted only fleetingly at some points in this study. I hope that any further

analyses of the impact of the war upon black communities will be able to incorporate a greater sense of the position and activity of women, possibly drawing on local oral tradition.

The nature of South Africa towards the end of the nineteenth century has been adequately, indeed abundantly, explored by modern historiography:

> In the 1870s at the beginning of the mineral revolution, South Africa was a geographical expression. Precapitalist and capitalist modes of production existed side by side, as did state forms of varying size with their own ruling groups and systems of exploitation. There were two British colonies, two ostensibly politically independent republics and numerous still autonomous African polities. All of these were multiethnic and multilingual . . . Colonists of British and European descent lived side by side in the colonies with large numbers of indigenous peoples . . . African kingdoms were equally heterogeneous entities, composed of people of different origin.[18]

Marks and Trapido's recent succinct characterisation moves us from introductory perspectives to a brief consideration of place. It was the post-1870s carapace of capitalist growth, quantitative and qualitative, which was transforming human relations in this patchwork of regions, against which the ferment of war constituted a critical eruption. The Cape, as one of those British colonies, was riveted to the engrossing core structure of capital accumulation resting on the Witwatersrand goldfields. But, as Alan Mabin has noted, 'the effects of the gold discoveries' were not 'almost instantaneous on the whole economy of Southern Africa'.[19] For if Cape economy and society were an interconnected part of South Africa's 'distinctive historical mesh', they were a far from fully *integrated* part. The unevenness of the development of capitalist social forces was reflected in uneven development not only between urban and rural areas and within classes,[20] but between the discrete social and cultural ecologies of regions. Most prominent was a profound divergence between the historical experience of the northern hinterland and the self-conscious British inheritance of the south.

Of no less significance is the fact that, as Beinart and Bundy have stressed, 'the intensity and pace' of local change under colonial domination in a large area like the Transkei region was limited rather than breakneck; the vaulting thrust of 'thoroughgoing industrialisation took place in a restricted zone'.[21] Kimberley, of course, imposed its own brutalising style upon African workers racked by the uniformity of compounds and by wage reductions.[22] But in the Cape's peasant territories and also elsewhere, in rural villages, on mission lands or among tenant communities on white farms, an inherited sense of independent identity, community and tradition provided a common rural frame of reference for modes of thought and action.

While social development here was relatively slow and molecular in character, this region was also the oldest and much of it the most deeply colonised settler area of Southern Africa. By the turn of the century, the Ciskei was solidly incorporated country under colonial authority; even the partially excluded Transkeian Territories, consolidated and administered separately from the Cape Colony itself, were experiencing the tightening embrace of the colonial state, expressed through the depreciation of client–patron relations of control in favour of the 'harder coin . . . of bureaucratic magisterial authority'.[23] Periodic panicky rumour and disaffection continued to send minor

tremors through the stomachs of local Cape officials, but by the end of the 1890s no further decisive challenge to the 'peace' of colonial pacification was anticipated.

This had implications for the role and status of Cape allies and collaborators as irregular auxiliaries or 'loyalist' levies in the service of British strategies of conquest or confiscatory methods of reprisal against intractable communities. With a stable and confident colonial state enjoying the fruits of 'a full transformation from conquest to control',[24] the need and opportunity for mobilised and armed Bhaca or Mfengu 'loyals' had evaporated. Stressing the vastly superior firepower with which even small colonial forces could overawe or, if need be, overcome mostly unarmed peasants, Beinart has quite correctly argued that the military dominance of the colonial state rested in its 'capacity . . . to subdue any challenge', rather than in 'the number of troops and police in the districts'.[25]

Yet the practical significance of this was that the Cape's defences rested on a very small professional military establishment which was better suited to routine policing than the fighting of any major colonial war. The Cape Mounted Rifles, which in the guise of the Cape Regiment or Cape Mounted Rifle Corps (known more commonly as the Cape Corps) had embodied Khoi horsemen and other 'mixed race' regulars early in the nineteenth century,[26] was reconstituted in 1894 as a 1,000-strong settler cavalry squadron. This force was posted to keep guard over East Griqualand and the Transkei generally. Augmenting the Cape Mounted Riflemen was a Native Affairs Department Police Force of some 600 men and small local constabularies of white and African police. To these fell 'the day-to-day policing of the farms and locations'.[27] Able-bodied colonists took a healthy interest in rifle associations and the like in rural areas, with bodies like the East Griqualand Mounted Rifles becoming a useful adjunct to standing forces in the event of any local disturbance; by 1894, there were an estimated 6,000 volunteer riflemen in the colony.[28] All this was fine if things went well. It was the thought of them going badly which provided occasional cause for concern. Thus, in May 1899, the British military tactician J. F. Owen remarked that, 'the forces of the Colony are now evidently no more than sufficient to cope with isolated disturbances on the frontiers . . . should it be faced with invasion from without, and major tribal unrest from within, the dangers will be very great'.[29]

If Mfengu and Bhaca groups no longer had the liberties of service and action as 'native levies', for Africans generally there was an additional important curtailment of other ordinary liberties of weapons ownership. In the 1870s, white anxieties over the accumulation of firearms in black hands, mainly through transactions on the Griqualand West diamond fields, led the Cape administration to curb a process which 'clearly raised the potential stakes in any future war between black and white'.[30] In 1878, the promulgation of the Peace Preservation Act enforced the disarmament of Cape blacks and sparked off the 1880 to 1881 'War of the Guns' with Basutoland, in which the colonial authorities were forced into a humiliating withdrawal by a resistant Sotho polity. 'It was', as Marks and Atmore have suggested, 'both the new abundance of firearms, and the skill with which Africans were now using them, that led to the increasing clamour in the Cape Colony that Africans be totally disarmed.'[31] Henceforth, the legitimacy of gun ownership was to be a settler monopoly; with it went protection and the ultimate sanction for enforcing colonial authority and control.

If the defences of the Cape colonial state ensured peace and stability, that security was seen to rest in part on the free soil of bourgeois liberal ideology, or 'Cape liberalism'. Its ideal was the incorporation of a narrow base of 'respectable' black citizens into the colonial order: a settler-dominated and directed colonial class consensus, with rough proletarians or traditional tribesmen controlled on its edges. For the Cape's liberal leadership, as well as for its 'progressive' peasantry, educated elites and better-off artisanry, the virtues of this social and political order were quite clearly displayed when they looked northwards. The contrast there was chilling, and seen as greatly to the credit of the liberal Cape's obvious moral superiority over neighbouring settler-state systems. For instance, from the point of view of the Western Cape Coloured elite at the turn of the century, as portrayed by Gavin Lewis, in 'stark contrast to both the principles and practices of the neighbouring Boer Republics . . . which from the start had excluded all blacks from franchise and citizenship rights and duties, Cape liberalism bore some reality'.[32]

For those who met literacy and property standards, the best measure of that reality was not just the rule of law in a Victorian, liberal capitalist free society, or formal common equality before the law, which was not nearly so equal for black citizens as the foremost liberals liked to pretend; it was the non-racial franchise. Conceived in a mid-1850s period when the ideological dominance of liberal merchant capital and its convergence with the interests and purposes of missionaries and colonial officials made the incorporation of a free peasantry and independent artisan class the preferred option, the basis of the franchise did not survive the next four decades intact. The class logic of the non-racial franchise was as much differentiation and exclusion as incorporation; to ensure the continuing minority character of the black vote in the composition of the colony's electorate, qualifying levels were raised in 1887 and 1892. African voters, who had comprised 25 per cent of the electorate in 1892 saw their representation slump to some 15 per cent by the late 1890s, although their votes still carried some weight in one-third of pre-war constituencies.[33] Urban and rural Coloured voters were estimated to comprise around 11 per cent of the electorate in 1893.[34]

While, for most of the nineteenth century, British imperialism assumed the incorporation of the Boer settler population into the Cape colonial order, this binding was always partial; identification and willingness to work within its framework of relations and values tended to be limited to wealthier landed farmers in highly commercialised areas like the Western Cape and the established merchant bourgeoisie. But for other Boer interests beneath and around this strategic marriage, such as poorer farmers and squatters, there was discrimination rather than accommodation. The introduction of responsible government speeded up political organisation among settlers, with Cape Boers 'the first to form organisations beyond simple pressure groups'. The 'first political organization with a nationalist programme', the Afrikaner Bond, was formed in 1880, ending a period when Cape politics had been free of party-political divisions. Drawing together different sections and organisations of the Cape Boer population, the Bond pursued 'a parliamentary existence based on pragmatism, patronage and the development of Afrikaner nationalism within the British Empire'.[35]

The original fears of English-speaking colonists at the time of the 1853 Constitution, that they might be swamped by an alliance of Boer and Coloured voters, were never

realised. Instead, there were new anxieties by the 1880s that the Afrikaner Bond would be excluded from influence by an electoral coalition between English-speaking settlers, Coloured men and Eastern Cape peasants.[36] The Bond had its own defenders of the entitlements of the Cape franchise and liberal rights of private ownership and legal equality; as it moved up in the scales of influence, interest and patronage it also cornered some African support, notably in the shape of the Mfengu journalist and political agent, John Tengo Jabavu, and his newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*. But it also had vociferous and increasingly powerful farming elements implacably opposed to the Cape order. As Trapido has shown, the emergence of a Boer nationalist movement was a major factor 'which hastened the undermining of the franchise'. Since this meant that the 'very existence of an African peasantry was under attack', a consequence was that peasants became involved in electoral politics with a greater feverishness than ever before.[37] With the Afrikaner Bond popularly acknowledged as the greatest institutional threat to liberal political rights, African protests against settler politicians' moves to tamper with the franchise in the 1890s were inseparable from a hardening of sentiments and attitudes towards Boer political activities. In defence of their threatened position, enfranchised citizens made full use of whatever lean political muscle their vote afforded them. And, by and large, it was English-speaking white politicians who gained their preferment; in the words of Trapido, 'the defence of the franchise was closely related to the defence of the peasantry, and although only a minority of English members of Parliament were involved in this dual defence, the conflict was portrayed as being conterminous with a rigid English–Afrikaner divide'.[38]

And yet the posturing of the Bond was not the only, nor necessarily the most 'illiberal' factor endangering the class texture of patrimonial liberal political and social relations. The 'civilising' mission in Cape high politics was also waning 'because the demands of monopoly capital, first on the diamond fields of Kimberley, then in the gold mines of the Witwatersrand, for vast quantities of unskilled, cheap labour, and the speed with which that labour had to be conjured up, conquered, and coerced left little room in the long run for an enfranchised black peasantry and artisan class'.[39] Or, in Saul Dubow's summation of the ideological shift in the late-nineteenth-century Cape, 'the combination of administrative difficulties and the new conditions occasioned by the mineral revolution, combined to rob the classical liberal vision of its practical force'.[40]

Under the spur of industrial capitalism, new social, political and ideological relations began to make the running. With mercantile capital being 'shouldered aside by industrial capital, it was increasingly labour, rather than agricultural produce, that was required from African "reserve" areas like the Transkei'.[41] Accordingly, the attachment of Transkeian societies by the Cape colonial state came to be conceived not in terms of liberal incorporationist strategy, as the moving of an independent peasant sector into paternalist political structures, but as the management of controlled proletarianisation in a segregated bloc of rural reserves. The 'useful safety valve' of drawing peasant producers into the colony's representative institutions was not an appropriate mechanism for the control of a mass African labour force.[42] By the turn of the century, according to Martin Legassick, 'while defending what it had achieved, Cape liberalism had moved from a concern with equality before the law and with the non-

racial franchise, to a study of the means of . . . administration of Africans who would not be incorporated on equal terms in the common society'.[43]

Yet, while the material basis and content of liberalism in the late-Victorian Cape was undergoing social reformation and ideological realignment, classic colonial liberal ideology and rhetoric lived on as an article of faith within subordinate black communities. The forces of Southern Africa's advancing industrial capitalist transition were now dominant, but its segregationist social relations within political and civic life were far from fully articulated; older practices and styles associated with the hegemony of merchant capital's liberal political culture persisted. In subjective spirit, if not in objective reality, a conserving liberalism continued to provide a fund of legitimating beliefs for Cape African and Coloured inhabitants to draw upon. Its roots, and the thinking and emotional responses to which it gave rise, forged the moral imperatives of being a Cape citizen and a British subject around which classes formed a regional identity.

We now know an increasing amount about the ascendance of segregationist theories, the hardening of the colour line and the increasing application of racially discriminatory measures in administrative practices in the post-1870s Cape.[44] But the striking point is that these displacing pressures coexisted with other settled modes and realities of living as a Cape inhabitant. While there were segregatory codes of law and administration for the Transkei, there were no racially differentiated Cape Colony laws, with the minor exception of restrictive liquor legislation. It is important to recall that there was no pass law for Africans. And non-racial male suffrage, fixed individual property rights and the axiom of equality before the law represented constitutional liberties which, while trampled upon, were still standing in 1899. 'There is little doubt', as Trapido has shown, 'that the Cape's political system brought non-whites a wider range of civil liberties and a larger share of the Colony's resources than that which accrued to the African and Coloured populations in the other territories of white settlement in South Africa.'[45] The self-image which this generated produced a 'freeborn' mentality; carrying its popular resonance from Cape civil society's liberal 'moment of consent', it drew a frontier across the northward face of the colony.

General consideration of the ticklish questions of ethnic identities and class formation and consciousness obviously falls outside the scope of this book. Here it is merely appropriate to point out that many strands of consciousness, stemming from an array of work situations, differing experiences of exploitation and levels of social expectation and cultural realisation went into the 'making' of classes or other social forces in Cape colonial black society. There was little approaching homogeneity of condition or experience. A spread of colonised communities, ranging from proletarianised Coloured labourers and servants in the west to African accumulators in the northeast, were pursuing livelihoods in their own particular environments, which could be anything from the 'small master' micro-economies of workshops to the rural pattern of mission families yoked to the agricultural cycle and having varying degrees of migrant participation in labour markets.

Each realm of social life, within its own terms of domination, authority, resistance or acquiescence, was finding its own way to cope with the relations of the colonial era. To this process people brought traditions, acquired or inherited social identities, prac-

tices and skills, and whatever they could marshal from their native cultures and the colonial cultures to which they were now continuously exposed.

In their interactions with the dominating classes, African and Coloured inhabitants invariably found that 'the majority of settlers made little distinction between colour and class'.[46] Goldin, for instance, has noted a stratification of the Cape population by 1900, 'in a manner which entrenched an ethnically hierarchical ordering of social status and employment'.[47] The lines of racial domination, subordination and exclusion moulded social consciousness in a bewilderingly complex set of transactions and evocative meanings; there is only space here to hint at one or two substantive variants. In Cape Town, white artisans kept skilled Coloured workers at arm's length, while on the docks, a 'Cape Boy' minority could usually count on holding down skilled jobs, with African migrants consigned to the heaviest, unskilled labour. In the agrarian sector, impoverished colonists who, as *bywoners* or roving proletarians, were distressingly short of 'a status commensurate with their colour',[48] confronted the nightmare of a breed of middling-to-comfortable African competitors. Bested by the productive capacity of peasants and looked upon with disdain by Coloured artisans or mission-school-educated African constables or skilled transport riders, the white labouring poor in the countryside increasingly gave racist expression to their class discontents over 'subsidiary economic struggles'.[49] Traces of racial fluidity among the Cape underclass poor were present, as Bundy has illustrated.[50] But in general, racial enmity and social distance between white and black labourers was widespread. These tensions were to be exacerbated by the competitive pressures of war conditions.

As the 1890s drew to a close, the Cape was in transition. For its ruling bloc, the integrating ideological integument of evolutionary liberalism was breaking up under the pressure of new forces. Beneath its shrinking shadow could be found the vexing, unresolved question of producing labour to meet the intensifying needs of mining and agrarian capital. With an estimated 45,000 men leaving the Transkeian Territories by 1899, labour migration was established as an element of increasing importance in the economic life of the region.[51] But if the cheap labour requirements of mining and settler commercial agriculture dominated, they did not yet fully confine the lives and allot the roles of all communities of working-class Cape citizens. Thousands of Cape migrants were still able to give the low wages and long, regimented hours of mine work a wide berth; and they likewise strove to evade the miserable terms of farm wage employment. Railways, roads, transport work and harbours continued to provide preferred employment options for workers. Historically, the Cape colonial state as employer had always paid better than the settler sector. And even where remuneration was not substantively greater, in these services a crucial consideration was awareness that 'workers were likely to be able to maintain greater control over their life at work'.[52] Mine owners and commercial farmers were still fuming over labour scarcities on the eve of war, with the outbreak of that conflict about to provide further aggravation.

The outbreak of the South African War on 11 October 1899 saw a Coloured and African population which outnumbered settlers by over three to one, tipped into a crisis whose resolution was to be of pivotal importance for the development of South Africa in the twentieth century. While they had a common interest in keeping the Cape black population contained and peaceable, English and Boer settler factions were

bitterly divided, a sure sign that power and legitimacy would be a contested area. At first, the trajectory of the war remained unclear. On the morning of 12 October there were few obvious and reliable portents of things to come, particularly that for the people of the Cape the war's dislocations were to be so severe. Meanwhile, from farms, missions, mines, homesteads, artisan villages and offices, blacks entered the war with their own distinctive aspirations, resentments and social visions. For dominant settler-class forces and the colonial state, there was an early shiver of apprehension at the thought of war-induced discontinuity and instability jeopardising structures of control. With Africans viewed as potential predators and aggressors, the mood at the outbreak of war was one of uncertainty and anxiety.

A brief word on the organisation of this book. The structure adopted is a thematic, analytical narrative with chronological threads. This seems to be the most useful form in which to depict immersion in the war experience as a *process*. For that reason, rather than cramming all post-war perspectives and concerns into the conclusion, I move beyond the war years in some earlier chapters, in order to touch on issues which flow naturally from a particular wartime focus.

And a last reflection or two on the material which follows. A central purpose of the book is to examine the ways in which the momentum of war swung towards an imperial incorporation of the labour, services and products of black communities and individuals on generally favourable terms. In approaching this human engagement, a basic question has been: how did the Cape's inhabitants respond to, make sense of and act upon unprecedented conditions of colonial crisis? The domestic impact of the war generated a spirit of assertion from below. Its broad, swirling dimensions were indicative of the depth of underlying social antagonisms and fears stirred by the shock of Anglo-Boer confrontation; while its challenges and resolution significantly shaped the order of wartime relations and the restoration of peace in 1902.

Particularly important for the actualities of common life and struggle was peoples' sense of gaining footholds for collaboration in the operations of the colonial state and tactics of British imperial forces in the region. Town guards, district militia and regular army auxiliaries emerged in many instances as instruments of popular allegiance and popular will, affirming an identity and place all their own. Their incorporation raised a dilemma for authority: how could they engage in armed activity without becoming dangerously entangled in already brittle relations between imperialist and nationalist settler populations? For the consciousness and enthusiasm of bodies of armed African and Coloured men not only gave pause to rampaging Republican guerrillas; it also made rural colonists queasy. A proliferation of Cape 'specials' of various kinds ushered in a rough period of confrontation between themselves and colonists, and between colonists and military authority, over subversions of customary relations of hierarchy and obedience.

Other groups with pride in their skills or the capacity to market their product also had reason to cheer; ample work and good wages augured well for skilled migrant workers as transport riders and enlarged opportunities for others as ancillary workers. New favourable short-term conditions breathed life into labouring associations, solidarities and cultural idioms of self-esteem. Greatly expanded local commodity markets enabled favourably located African peasant producers to make a killing. For the Cape's