AMfecanERICA, 1650-1850:

What can Historians of Native America Learn from Southern Africanists?

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They came out of the east, spreading chaos and despair. With a more complex social organization than their rivals, and with effective military zeal, they returned in triumph, leaving behind a murdered land. Influenced by incipient capitalist markets percolating into the continent from the sea to the east, they bore a colonial taint. Nor were they alone. From points south, slave raiders, guns blazing, seized women and children, now destined for labor far from home—a terrifying shock wave of colonialism. I speak of stories told of Southern Africa in the early-nineteenth century: of Ndwandwe, Swazi, Zulu, Korana, Oorlaam, trekboere and many other shape-shifting assemblages of folk. I speak of stories told of Eastern North America in the mid-seventeenth century: of Iroquois, Huron, Petun, Eirie, Shawnee, Anglo-Virginians and other undulating social formations. Rearrange the compass points, and I might repeat North American stories of seventeenth-century through nineteenth-century Anishinaabeg, Chickasaws, Utes, Quapaws, and Osages, Comanches, Lakotas, and others. I speak not at all. I write, and mostly of unarmed people less likely to capture the imagination: of pen folk, historians, people of tweed. This paper offers historians of eastern, native North America an exploration of Southern Africanists' work on the half-century before 1840. The former have much to learn from the latter. The results could be methodologically invigorating and theoretically informative. They definitely form a story of the past.

The fields have been moving in parallel dimensions, with but very few anomalies in the time-space continuum to link them. Other such wormholes have been piloted: Norman Etherington did so in his analysis of European classicist treatments of such concepts as "tribes, barbarians, and mass migrations" for their relevance to Southern Africanists.¹ This essay takes up a similar challenge. Seeking lessons for Americanists, it focusses on Southern Africanist historians' efforts to reorient their pre-1840 field, to analyze new social formations,
to revise interpretations of indigenous catastrophe, and to expose the long and complicated reach of settler history.

In spite of some very influential work in comparative U.S.-South African history, a tradition still vital though not as vigorous as it was some decades ago(?), the early periods of the two fields are not much on speaking terms. Historians of race and frontiers once occasionally enriched their work through intensive mutual examination. Recently, a few historians of genocide and settler colonialism have made promising comparative contributions. But those who focus less on settlers and more squarely on indigenous peoples in either continent don't much regard one another. The signal contributions and debates in the one field go practically unremarked, even undetected, in the other. It may be for the best. Even the shared British imperial past only overlapped chronologically in what is now Canada, and few other common variables exist. Myriad problems from "false equivalence" to social evolutionary thought contaminate the very idea of comparing Native Americans with Southern Africans, although such comparison undergirds the entire enterprise of settler colonial or indigenous studies. This paper undertakes a comparative and transnational approach to scholarship, recognizing that the two subfields share a professional past, an imperial past, and a genealogy unfit for heraldry. Mostly, this paper looks to one historiography for lessons to provide another.

On Reorientation

Over the past half-century, scholars in both fields have turned their historiographies, like jeans for the wash, inside out. They have shoved colonizers to the periphery and centered indigenous societies. This has in recent times, especially for those writing on a grand scale, meant spatially shifting the geographic centers from the Atlantic ports of Cape Town or Charles Town to some point in the continental interior. The effort of this recent
"continental school" is in both places to look outward from the interior rather than inward from the coasts. Etherington's *Great Treks* (2001), an interpretive synthesis of early nineteenth century Southern African history, evocatively views the region through the eyes of an eagle rising over Platberg Mountain, in what is now Harrismith, a dorp in the Free State. With the *Platberg* below, the circling magical raptor's view encompasses about half of the current South African, Swaziland and Lesotho nations, along with good chunks of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This Etherington calls a "heartland," defining an indigenous center. In a later essay (2008) he quotes Christopher Saunders as having remarked, "it is as if an American historian of the frontier were to write from the perspective of, say, Kansas or Wyoming, rather [than] from the eastern seaboard or the Appalachians."\(^5\)

Amen. From the perspective of North Dakota, in a 2004 essay in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, Elizabeth Fenn offers us "a glimpse of the world from the center of the continent." She elaborated this in her Pulitzer Prize winning *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 2015, finding, parallel-universe style, another heartland. From the perspective of St. Louis, Missouri, now nicknamed "the gateway to the West," Daniel Richter chose (in 2001: simultaneously with Etherington) to reverse the direction, to reorient the American gaze by *Facing East from Indian Country*.\(^6\) None of these scholars claim to have originated the idea of reorientation, a metaphor little different conceptually from "revision," an effort central to scholarship since it adopted professional standards in the late nineteenth century. As epicycles in larger discursive wheels, these recent reorientations have much larger pasts.\(^7\)

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, historians of North America, even historians of the so-called colonial era, considered Native Americans as mere obstacles to national development, as objects of melancholy reflection, or as tragic elements in a larger national story (of the USA or Canada). Anthropologists writing history formed a critical exception.\(^8\) Imperial historians (many of whom were U.S. citizens) interested primarily in the
spread of British imperial institutions took more note of American Indians than did their whiggish rivals bent on delineating the origins of the democratic republic, but Indians mainly appeared mostly as complicating features to imperial rule and especially to war with France.9

Meanwhile in South Africa, the "leading professional historians" similarly understood that "precolonial history was appropriately the terrain of anthropology."10 British conservative Hugh Trever-Roper infamously saw African history as a contraction in terms, and he had counterparts below the Tropic of Capricorn. Those historians who took up elements of African history wrote not about the history of Africans directly but more, as in the United States, about such imperial institutions that bore on Africans as missions and the military.11 Since then, on both continents, the mid-twentieth anthropologists have weathered scholarly charges for having been wedded to structural-functional views of societies as discrete and clearly bounded, yet the anthropologists' constructions of kinship, governance, ceremonies, religious organization and economic life have proven utterly indispensable to the subsequent historical scholarship (much still written by anthropologists). Social (or cultural) anthropologists and historians have since the 1970s frequently allied; in our time we cannot always distinguish the field in which an author was trained by his or her work alone.12 Nor has the project of the imperial/institutional scholars been abandoned, though it has perhaps been hijacked by critics of empire. Not only did the early imperial scholars establish valuable chronologies and catalogue archives, they provided their figurative descendants with such extensive critical issues for examination as the law, humanitarianism, race and racism, metropolitan-settler-indigenous relations, to name a few.13

But if the fields have been to some degree moving in parallel, Southern Africanists have often anticipated developments later embraced by Native North Americanists, sometimes by ten or fifteen years. The Africanists of the decolonizing post-World War II era gained scholarly respectability long before American Indian historians. The Africanist field
seriously reoriented the center of study toward Africans and away from Europeans in Africa. Its adherents gained university positions, established journals and book series, and hooded doctoral students in such imperial centers as London and Los Angeles and in the multiplying African universities. Scholars drew on earlier anthropological and imperial research, but they deliberately sought new models of change and new historical methods, notably in the use of oral testimony. They actively stressed the agency (a word that would gain traction) of Africans in history. For all their often strident differences among one another, this was the signal reorientation of a lifetime.\(^\text{14}\) The materialists intervening in the field in the 1970s and early 1980s turned a critical eye on the colonial role in African history, but they, too, strongly advanced the effort to center African decisions and influence. Philip Bonner captured the balance in this introduction to his 1983 work:

"Around the unifying theme of Swaziland, or more specifically the development and functioning of this nineteenth-century African state, it attempts to show how thoroughly intertwined were domestic, political and economic processes with a whole host of forces from outside…. As Swaziland's experience quite emphatically attests, the white powers in the region were often no more than a secondary consideration, being consistently overshadowed in Swazi eyes by African states…. [I]t was often Swaziland itself around which the major developments turned."\(^\text{15}\)

Note the hub-like sense of center and periphery, here decades before Etherington's circling eagle. The effort dates further back to the 1960s. John Omer-Cooper's 1966 *Zulu Aftermath* would serve as a lightning rod in the thunderstorm that drenched "precolonial" Southern African history at the end of the twentieth century. Etherington followed many others in thoroughly revising or debunking most of the Omer-Cooper's arguments. But Etherington and those others generally share Omer-Cooper's effort to shift the hub of action from the colonial Cape to an indigenous point, to adopt "new historical perspectives," to study "the development of African societies rather than just the activities of Europeans on the continent." Etherington's eagle, high above the *Platberg*, has a yellowed copy of *Zulu Aftermath* in its talons.\(^\text{16}\)
Eastern Native Americanists have been behind the Africanists, but they are clearly catching up. The Bonner quotation, above, resembles arguments far more recently advanced by Americanist Michael Witgen that the emerging Anishinaabeg social formations of the Great Lakes, entangled as they were with colonizers from the seventeenth century, attended far more--and even into the nineteenth century--to their relations with other indigenous powers. As late as the 1830s in what is now Minnesota, says Witgen of peoples in contact with Europe for almost two centuries, "The Americans were tolerated, even welcomed in some places…. There were, however, only two powerful social formations of any consequence in the northwest interior and both were Native. The Dakota and the Anishinaabeg were the dominant military and economic powers in this region."\(^{17}\)

American Indian historians themselves have moved from the exotic (or unprofessional) periphery to the familiar core of the field called "Colonial America," a rich scholarship once centered on such matters as the Puritan New Englanders' notions of visible sainthood and half-way covenant.\(^{18}\) Native Americanists' works have won coveted prizes in the American field at large, and most (though not all) leading history departments today host Native Americanist history professors. A Native Americanist edits the leading journal of early American history and culture. This is a recent development. The 1990s saw the emergence of "the new Indian history," an effort to rewrite American and Canadian history by fully including Native Americans as shapers of the continent's past. More recently we the Etherington-like inversion of the continent. But it has taken a long time for historians to see the British North American colonies, let alone the nation-states that followed, not as European fragments in a howling wilderness, but as continuingly colonial societies grappling with indigenous neighbors who had their own concerns and histories.

Southern African historiography can assist eastern Native Americanists seeking to gain insights into method, argument, and understanding of historical processes or patterns.
Southern Africanist scholarship on the early nineteenth century rests on the broader and deeper Africanist field. In certain of its methods it is more rigorous, and its scholars reference one another's works with greater consistency, if only because they are today relatively few.\textsuperscript{19}

For both Eastern Native Americanists and Southern Africanists, the basic task of identifying and categorizing political and social units (chiefdoms, kingdoms, tribes, nations, villages, bands, clans, and so on) constitutes a major task. It remains a political problem. In both places, constitutional questions surrounding the standing of indigenous polities continue to buzz in the ears of the twenty-first century scholar seeking to represent accurately the situation in, say, 1800. The questions cannot be swatted away. Contemporary land claims, struggles over usufructuary rights, religious liberties, legal jurisdiction, artistic license, reparations, the treatment of human remains, and other contemporary issues both inspire and bedevil the scholarship. Historians in both places are aware that in identifying social formations they are, at very least, untangling the snarled nets of colonialism, colonial alliances with indigenous organizations, and European ideological impositions on the nature of indigenous societies. Historians cautiously approach their words: king, chief, clan, chiefdom, tribe, nation, people, state, village, country, territory, property, boundary, warrior, soldier, and race. This is even forgetting about such fraught concepts as religion and religious leadership, marriage and family, self and other.\textsuperscript{20}

Scholars of both places plunge ahead nonetheless. The risks have been higher for South African scholars working on Southern African History, especially in the long and sometimes violent run-up to the transformational election of 1994, when to question publically such matters as Zulu fixity or power was to assume more than mere scholarly risk.\textsuperscript{21} The contexts in the two places are dissimilar. The striking and obvious demographic differences aside, the political history of Native American "sovereigns" has since the early
Hybridity and Nationalisms

That indigenous North Americans and Southern Africans never inhabited fixed, unchanging political nations or tribes over long centuries is a historical truism. Americanists detect great changes before and on the eve of North American colonization, and Southern Africanists also view the situation as fluid, or better, historical—always. That nations are somehow organic entities that best unite linguistic ethnicity and political form in some kind of ethnic-nation-state is a peculiar understanding that has little convincing historical grounding however great its emotive appeal. Southern Africanist scholarship on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries investigates hybridity in a manner that multiply punctures such an understanding. One concern has been with the hybridity that accompanied and depended on colonization. A second has been with a deeper history of mingling, one that challenges claims to the historical homogeneity of particular African "peoples." Although most of the elements were long known to scholars, the past half-century has seen the systematic examination of new forms of community, rendering senseless such concepts as biological race, immutable cultural heritages, and solid, advancing, frontier lines.

Taking the last first, Martin Legassick's touchstone essays on the Northern Cape frontier zone continue to be relevant. Writing in the strong new-left currents that swept through South African "precolonial" scholarship, Legassick struggled to describe the workings of economic, political, and class relationships in a broad frontier zone. But the importance of his work lies less in its contribution to a specific theoretical model and more in its general destabilizing of the reigning conceptions of the relations of race, colonization, and the market in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Southern Africa. In his
investigations of the formation of the Griqua communities and their inter-societal relations, Legassick uncovered an indigenous Southern African dynamism that engaged deliberately with Atlantic markets while challenging the idea that the frontier singularly generated South African white racism. His frontier became "a fluid region of social transition, relatively autonomous from both colonial base and the indigenous social systems, but dependent on both." Fluidity and hybridity gave rise to admirable creativity, but they did not mean harmony. The people in his zone traded peaceably for cattle and hides, to be sure, but they also raided for cattle and slaves. If the Griqua formed a powerful, unintentional, and uncontrolled projection of colonialism, other social groups also emerged or reformulated—Kora, Oorlam, Bastaard, Haartenaar, and, in a different vein, for this was not a northward trending group, Thlaping. The Thlaping (with a town of 16,000), formed a Tswana-Sotho-Kora society that subordinated ethnicity to far more important concerns. Legassick provoked a Southern Africanist "tendency … to consider the importance of fringes and interstices between communities, and to question the centrality of ethnicity in the emergence of communities in the interior."24

Following up more recently on Legassick's work are, separately, Nigel Penn and Mohamed Adhikari, both of whom describe a more chilling world of violence, particularly by centering the experience of the Bushmen. Penn, writing of the late eighteenth-century Northern Cape Frontier, finds that the region proliferated with "non-productive, predatory and parasitic societies who preyed off each other and their weaker neighbors." Americanist Ned Blackhawk, soon after the publication of Penn's book, examined the reverberations of colonialism deep into the American interior. Blackhawk might almost have written Penn's lines: "shocks experienced in one section of the frontier sent percussion waves along the entire frontier zone." Blackhawk situates the Northern Shoshone by the early nineteenth century as an embattled people "living at one end of the expanding gun trade while enmeshed
in the horse trade,… enveloped in the pandemic relations of violence that characterized both the northern Spanish borderland and the northern Plains, where the colonial violence from French influences in the 1600s initiated cycles of trade and warfare."\textsuperscript{25}

There are sections of Eastern North America that still cry for work with similar emphases on hybridity and its association with markets and violence. While the eastern portions of what are now the United States saw few powerful Métis communities as such, many indigenous peoples powerfully resemble the Griqua and others, at least as they are being reconstituted by historians. This is particularly true in the Native American Southeast.\textsuperscript{26} Might it be possible, after examining the Griqua, to reconsider the planter elite that emerged among Southeastern American Indians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as a new social formation embedded within and integrated with the more indigenous society at large, even as it sought out and engaged with Atlantic markets?\textsuperscript{27} After all, these societies, like the Griqua and their forbears, shared histories of slave raiding, hide trading, and from the late eighteenth century into the 1840s they experienced frontier migration of their own into the drier country of other indigenous peoples, peoples whose histories for centuries had been every bit as dynamic.

By the time the Griqua adopted their name, the Southeastern Indian ruling elite contained those who wrote and spoke in English, knew of their British grandfathers (and bore their often Scottish surnames), engaged heavily in the Atlantic market, traded in cotton and persons, understood financial instruments, quoted Machiavelli and/or sang hymns to the glory of their Savior. They saw themselves, to be sure, as "Indian" and they for the most part resisted the assimilation of their lands and persons (without rights) into the U.S. republic, but some expressed republican principles. Like the Griqua, they faced rebellions and secessions even as they faced expansionist pressure from the rising colonial and imperial power toward the sea. Like the Griqua, some of their leaders sought legal (or legalistic) arrangements with
that imperial power. As they migrated (sometimes voluntarily) into more arid country, they both traded and fought with interior peoples. Such analysis might be extended from the Southeast to the Shawnees, Delawares, and Kickapoos of the Ohio Country. Such an exploration might reveal that the Griqua might form a typical rather than an exceptional social pattern.

Hybridity and Archaeology

The emphasis on fluidity and hybridity has surfaced in studies of Bushmen, who are more widely treated as the ultimate victims of colonialism. In a careful study of their rock art, Sam Challis revealed that in the Amatola Mountains, Bushmen, far from a stubbornly unchanging, homogenous remnant of the distant past, actively adopted material elements from their European, Khoikhoi, and Nguni-speaking neighbors, they also accepted immigrants from these communities. Armed with iron-bladed spears, on European horses, under Dutch hats decorated with feathers, they raided and traded with their neighbors. Such blending likely assisted their individual incorporation with neighbors at the time of their loss of independence. But for a time they represent a new society, one formed by colonization but apart from the will of the colonizer. Other studies reveal that the Bushman raider/Bushman victim model grossly neglects the relations of Southern Africa's hunter-gatherers with the African farming peoples, for whom they hunted large animals and supplicated supernatural forces, in exchanges both material and ideological. Here, too, ethnic permeability prevails.

Archaeological analysis yielded these interpretations, and archaeological analysis of material culture provides bedrock for much Native Americanist and Southern Africanist work. Historians of eastern Native North America, whose relationship with archaeology, while important, has vacillated between close collaboration and bitter estrangement, might examine Southern Africanist's debates about archaeological practice. There is a hitch.
At present, Native American governments regularly seek possession, for reburial, of human remains and associated funerary objects that have been exhumed from indigenous burials and housed in museums. Since 1990 these governments have had grounds to lodge claims under the U.S. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The world-wide controversy that led to the return of Sara Baartman's remains suggests that similar issues can arise in South Africa.\(^{31}\) The American Indian demands, the resulting law, and especially new guidelines in 2010, led to the formation of university committees that often (not always) divide colleagues roughly along disciplinary lines.\(^{32}\) A key feature of the 1990 law is that it allows Indian governments to claim the remains on the grounds (among others) of "cultural affiliation." The concept is fraught. While it is possible to affiliate a thirteenth-century burial with a contemporary federally-recognized "tribe," such affiliation entails assumptions about the descent through centuries of such matters as religious practice and material culture. Assumptions employed to demonstrate affiliation can of course also deny affiliation. American archaeologists tend to argue that such identifiers as ceramic style, burial practice, and DNA analysis, can establish or preclude a burial's cultural affiliation with an extant polity. Historians, however, bear witness to indigenous communities that had no hermetic boundaries, and whose porousness actually inhered in such cultural features as captivity, adoption, fictive kinship, trade, and extensive notions of reciprocity with others. A historian would be more likely than an archaeologist to doubt that marks on a potsherd found in association with remains decisively demonstrate or exclude an affiliation of those remains with an extant political group.

Historians and archaeologists each work in the traditions of their fields. Both often cooperate with Native American entities in treaty rights and land claims cases—I do not want to exaggerate the conflict. But conflict often surfaces in regard to NAGPRA, it is shaped by NAGPRA, and the law itself may be configuring each field's approach to the fixity and
fluidity of ethnicity. To be blunt, historians privileging the rights of Indians encourage a flexible understanding of cultural affiliation under the repatriation law; archaeologists privileging science more narrowly interpret cultural affiliation, limiting the removal of remains from museum preservation, maintaining future access to materials with potential to illuminate the past.

Southern Africanists are obviously free of the configuring power of that American law. But curiously, Southern Africanists' debates over archaeological practice are highly relevant to the Americanist conflict. Weirder still, those debates involve an American import. Shipped under the label, "processual archaeology," it has since the 1970s heavily influenced Southern African scholarship. Among other practices, it classifies ceramic styles according to space and time, classifies such styles again as markers of cultural affiliation (or ethnic identity), and it particularly insists that style will accord most regularly with language even when it is acknowledged that political identity is more ephemeral.33

The premise of cultural conservatism that undergirds aspects of processual archaeology has met Southern Africanist objections; these come from both archaeologists and historians. Critics of various forms of South African nationalist politics from the late nineteenth century to the present bristle at the fixing of stable ethnic identities, finding the practice redolent of such colonialist policies as indirect rule and separate development, among other more recent concerns.34 Southern Africanist materialists, who have not lacked for influence, have tended to be wary of notions of culture that suggest powerful ideological rules as determinants of behavior, even such behavior as the shaping of wet clay. Most historians do not regard culture as a bounded system seeking equilibrium above all. As historians Peter Delius and Shula Marks have put it, the work of processual archaeology has been "more concerned with enduring cultural patterns and the co-occurrence of ceramic typologies, ethnic identities and migrations than with the rather messier dynamics of interaction, blurred cultural boundaries
and significant processes of social, political and economic transformation that was—and is—the stuff of history.”

Delius has teamed with archaeologists and others to reexamine the Bokoni sites in Mpumalanga; these, established as early as 1500 and abandoned in the 1820s, form the "largest known terraced site in Africa," and they demonstrate a successful Southern African experiment with intensive agriculture. The extensive but now overgrown stone kraals and walled cattle paths provide no indication of ethnic homogeneity or central political authority. The material styles unearthed might correlate with ethnic identities here and there, but not with political affiliation. They are better understood, Delius and his collaborators assert, as forming regional rather than ethnic styles. The point for Native Americanists is that in Southern Africa, "the notion that specific pottery forms are necessarily markers of specific cultures or linguistic units has been challenged.”

From within the field, Amanda Esterhuysen launches another potential challenge to processual archaeology. Studying artifacts left behind by an embattled chiefdom desperately seeking defense in a Limpopo cavern, she finds that (at least at the cavern level occupied by elite members) "ceramic design did not function as an ethnic identifier…. the ceramics simply seemed to capture the heterogeneity of the chiefdom." She posits that the stylistic variety might stem from patterns of subjugation, intermarriage, or both. Historian Elizabeth Eldridge agrees that intermarriage led to a mixing of styles, particularly among patrilocal cultures into which the women who made the pots had come as new brides.

Native Americanist historians might engage archaeologists in discussions of such Southern Africanist scholarship. Prominent Southern Africanists have long engaged, though hardly resolved, the debate over processual archaeology. This is not so much the case among eastern Native Americanist historians, where the 1990 NAGPRA law makes such debate more politically pressing. The Southern African debate is particularly illuminating as it is
uncontaminated by the repatriation law. Importantly, too, as the work of Delius, Esterhuysen and others demonstrate, the debate has implications for our understanding of the transformations colonization brought in its early years to the continents it touched.

**Colonization, Social Formation, and "Aftermath"**

Like Southern Africanists, historians of eastern Native North America have delved into the fluidity of identity and the complexity of indigenous social formations. Witgen has examined how, in the early years of French contact, Anishinaabeg speaking peoples of the Northern Great Lakes formed—quoting a Jesuit missionary—an "infinity of nations," whose identities and even alliances were highly situational. A single person's identity might within limits "shape shift" from context to context. Indigenous peoples speaking radically different languages might exhume their ancestors' bones, and rebury them together in a common grave, and unite as fictive relatives for the purposes of exchange and alliance. For Witgen, the "Native New World" brought on by distant colonization did entail social reorganization as the continent's interior saw the creation of new, more powerful social formations, but these followed indigenous forms, were misunderstood by the French missionaries, traders, and officers who witnessed them, and have not been properly understood since.\(^{39}\)

Southern Africanists' investigating the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have also increasingly recognized "the intense fluidity, mobility and interconnectedness of African societies, … the multiplicity of southern Africa's internal frontiers, and … the consequent hybridity or mixedness of its indigenous cultures over this period."\(^{40}\) Even John Omer-Cooper, writing toward the beginning of the Africanist movement, saw the chiefdoms of the early nineteenth century as "forming political units out of originally separate peoples."

To be sure, where Omer-Cooper saw this assimilation as "one of the most striking features" of the period, scholars have since identified antecedents, and to such a degree that some
eschew the very idea of "peoples." They have suggested greater historical depths, by centuries, to these phenomena of mutability, exchange, and reorganization. The emergence of the Zulu, Swazi, and Basotho polities, once seen as revolutionary, now appear more conventional.\textsuperscript{41} At the same time, in several cases, scholars have chosen either to drop ethnic labels or to use them in such a swirling hailstorm of shifting difference as to call for the most assiduous reading. This last approach, difficult as it is, may be the most honest and accurate. It diminishes the fixity of ethnicity without denying it altogether. It has Americanist analogues in the works of historian Witgen and anthropologist Robbie Ethridge.\textsuperscript{42}

The Americanist work, however, lacks the kind of focal point for intense debate that was provided by Omer-Cooper's work on the disruptions of the 1820s astride the Drakensberg—disruptions for a time known to historians as the \textit{Mfecane}, a word few Americanists know. The debate divided scholars into several shifting camps from the 1980s through the 1990s, and the aftershocks continue to register in this decade.\textsuperscript{43} According to various scholars, the word \textit{mfecane} came into use when in 1928 historian Eric Walker defined it (using a mathematical equal sign) as "crushing." An apparent neologism, many scholars recommend its deletion.\textsuperscript{44} By \textit{mfecane}, Walker meant the indigenous internecine violence that, in the view of scholars and writers in English going back to the 1830s, made certain lands north of the Cape Colony ripe for European settlement. Since the mid-1960s, by which time most professional scholars had rejected that colonialist interpretation of the disorders, the word has still been widely understood by Southern Africanists to refer to an early nineteenth-century period of migrations and warfare that unevenly rocked lands spanning the Drakensberg and north of the Orange River.

Omer-Cooper reframed several old notions into a new, Africanist perspective. He maintained the conventional wisdom that Zulu action drove events. But where other writers had posited that European example inspired the rise of a powerful Zulu empire, Omer-Cooper
insisted that the movements toward this and other new states "were independent of European influence in origin." The processes, which included dynamic population growth, were "internal to African society." The new polities "show no distinctive resemblance to European patterns." The "new type of state" was "radically different in structure and spirit from the prototypes from which it had grown." It brought "warfare on a scale hitherto unknown," "accompanied by carnage and destruction on an appalling scale," forcing some areas, including today's KwaZulu-Natal, to become "almost deserted," as people died, fled, and concentrated into "centres of dense population." Overall there was "a drastic reduction of population in Natal, much of the Orange Free State and large areas of the Transvaal," while the nearby mountains became "unnaturally overcrowded." This "revolution," this "genuine process of nation-building," owed much to "Shaka, the military and political genius of the Zulu," though he had counterparts in "Moshesh," "Zwangendaba," and "Faku," among others. Writing in 1966, Omer-Cooper hoped that the events, in which leaders rose above narrow allegiances to govern dynamic new societies, boded well for a decolonizing Africa.45

Every point has been contested, most refuted in detail, but some remain alive in broad outline. All serious scholars join Omer-Cooper in scoffing at the idea that a cunning Shaka (or his Mthethwa predecessor, Dingiswayo) borrowed European blueprints in drafting a new nation. But scholars dispute the idea that these events, from militarization and violence to the increasing centralization of power, radiated primarily out of the realm of Shaka.46 They point to the equal or primary importance of non-Zulu polities, even well beyond today's KwaZulu-Natal.47 Unlike Omer-Cooper, most scholars now admit some colonial influence on (but certainly not inspiration for) events.48 They disagree over the degree to which internal forces, including environmental factors, contributed to the rise of new social formations.49 Disagreement extends as to which external, colonial forces were most critical: those spreading out of the Northern Cape frontier,50 where new raiding societies brought fear and
instability even to the interior plateau north of the Orange River,\textsuperscript{51} or those rippling out of Delagoa Bay, where a trade might be had in ivory, cattle, and sometimes, slaves.\textsuperscript{52} Scholars agree with Omer-Cooper that the African polities of the period were indigenously configured without reference to European form, but they disagree with one another over the novelty of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century institutions.\textsuperscript{53} No one doubts that enslavement for export to colonial labor markets represented a departure from indigenous patterns, but (like Americanists) Africanists have taken some steps toward the exploration of the history and persistence of indigenous forms of captivity and extreme coercion.\textsuperscript{54}

There is a mild consensus that the 1820s and 1830s (or at least the early 1820s) saw upheavals (no longer confidently called the \textit{mfecane}) exhibiting increased "degrees of conflict and disruption in the north-western, central and southern highveld, but estimates of people killed are highly speculative."\textsuperscript{55} Scholars debunk the thesis that the violence entirely emptied vast landscapes. This they now recognize as a vestigial settler myth that rendered Africans as "virtually self-extirminating peoples" whose internecine warfare both cleared the way for and justified colonization.\textsuperscript{56} Yet scholars argue over the relative degree of violence that can describe the period.\textsuperscript{57} Along with reducing the Zulu impetus, scholars have generally busted Shaka from genius emperor leading vast conquests to briefly powerful paramount; remarkably, his historical importance remains the subject of debate.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{The Iroquois "Explosion," 1650-1701}

Long dead and un-mourned are the settler historians' ideas that some combination of Providence and the Zulu nation stripped the land of its inhabitants to open the way for Trekkers. Respectable scholars no longer write of Shakan/Zulu-inspired violence radiating outward from that single core to murder all ages and sexes on both sides of the blood-strewn escarpment. Eastern North Americanists should take careful note. For Americanists have
generally maintained for three hundred years a gory story of the American interior, although they have for the past century placed the violence in colonial as well as indigenous contexts, and they have recently if unknowingly joined Southern Africanists in questioning the notion that one indigenous people held overweening power. In the light of Southern African historiography, I suggest, Americanists might further reconsider the seventeenth-century Iroquois Wars.\textsuperscript{59} As we shall see, the story of these wars bears a melancholy resemblance to the \textit{mfecane} tale; but that is not all: the Iroquois Wars may be the mother of all \textit{mfecanes}.

We might, with a nod to KwaZulu-Natal, call this the story of the Iroquois explosion. The Five Nations Iroquois League, North Americanists maintain, early obtained guns from Dutch traders operating largely out of Fort Orange (now Albany, New York). Turning in the late 1630s against lesser armed groups to the north and west, they swept, firelocks thundering, serially into the villages of the Hurons, Petuns, Neutrals, Wenros and Eries, killing men, capturing women and children, and driving refugees far away. They further attacked Ojibwas as far west as Lake Superior and the peoples of the Ohio Country as far southwest as Illinois.\textsuperscript{60} By the 1680s, forests had reclaimed former fields and towns across the Ontario peninsula and the Upper Ohio country. "And so" the Ohio Country "remained until settled by whites," said the major textbook on American Indian history in the mid-twentieth century.\textsuperscript{61} This was an error, as scholars knew even at that publication's time. Scholars had generally come to accept, and generally still agree, that early in the eighteenth century Shawnees and a few others with ancestral ties to the Ohio region returned to it, to be joined as well by Delawares, Mahicans and other Native American newcomers from the eastern seaboard, decades before white settlers crossed the Appalachian Mountains. But even with this correction, in \textit{mfecane}-fashion, the alleged Iroquois conquests—with their alleged horrendous violence, the alleged abandonment of the country by the victims, and the alleged immigrant status of those who later returned to or entered the region under alleged Iroquois
australes—amounted in the late British colonial and early republican periods to a colonial alibi for rejecting Shawnees' and others' claims to possession of Ohioan lands. What Etherington writes of lands spanning the Drakensberg could be said of lands astride Lake Erie: "Early settler historiography grossly exaggerated the scale of the conflict in order to advance the colonists' claims as bringers of peace and occupiers of an empty land."62

Americanist scholars have debated the causes of the Iroquois assaults, arguing variously that the Iroquois sought to muscle in on profitable Huron trade with France63; that the Iroquois sought fresh hunting grounds having depleted their own beaver reserves64; that vast epidemics had left the Iroquois in a state of depopulation and mourning that practically and culturally required captive-taking on a massive scale65; that the wars were a paradoxical function of Iroquois efforts to extend their philosophy of peace through, for example, the embrace of captives as adopted kin66; that the wars were a primarily a quest for these adoptees who would materially augment the strength and especially the spatial, linguistic, and economic knowledge and power of the Iroquois.67 All these increasingly sophisticated arguments reject an older hyper-colonial conventional wisdom that violence was simply embedded in Iroquois nature.68 What is more, scholars have recalibrated the Five Nations' successes in these conflicts, demonstrating that many of their enemies skillfully assembled the weaponry and diplomatically worked alliances to repulse, contain and discipline the Five Nations, forcing them to make peace by 1701.69 Scholars have also exposed British colonial exaggerations of Iroquoian power, exaggerations meant to achieve for British New Yorkers a modicum of regional domination, yet another pattern with Southern African analogues.70

But Americanists still widely accept the notion that perhaps six thousand men, under no controlling authority, never in a single army, armed with flintlocks but with limited ammunition, had the capacity, even abetted by virgin soil epidemics and against lesser-armed peoples, to drain of humanity for generations the vast region from south of the Ohio River to
Americanists might consider the question raised by the spearhead against the *mfecane* idea, historian Julian Cobbing, long ago in a place faraway from old Ohio: "What physical means did the Zulu have to depopulate such a huge area?" That question needs an American counterpart. Richard White in his justly acclaimed *The Middle Ground*, concurs that the Iroquois drove many peoples out of their homelands, producing "refugee centers that occupied a strip running north-south between the western Great Lakes and the Mississippi." These exiles left behind "a huge area between the Ohio River and the northern shores of the Great Lakes emptied of inhabitants by the Iroquois." A least partly true: there were refugees; they did coalesce into new groups. White's project revealed their creative remaking "together with Frenchmen" of their broken world. He provided a sound analytical model that proved enormously productive for the field. The depopulating chaos in his work's early pages forms the backdrop, not the main action, for White's argument. Still, I cannot resist quoting his arresting metaphor for these wars: "the Iroquois hammer striking Algonquian glass." Had any South Africanists known to pay attention, I suspect the shattering metaphor it would have raised their eyebrows even in 1991, during those giddy and dangerous transition years, when the *mfecane* debates were cresting along with the contested politics of Zulu ethnicity. Recall Walker: *mfecane*=crushing.

Shattering is not exactly crushing. Shards may survive the pulverization. But shattering and crushing are conceptually close enough to merit a look, especially since shattering has since 1991 only gone from strength to strength in the Native Americanist tradition, in whose hands it is oddly enough more anti-*mfecane* Julian Cobbing than pro-*mfecane* Omer-Cooper. In a series of essays and volumes since 2006 (most recently in 2014), historical anthropologist Robbie Ethridge has evocatively and carefully recast the entire North American Southeast—just south of the Ohio country—as a "shatter zone." This zone consisted of a "large region of instability in eastern North America" that "existed from the
late sixteenth century through the early eighteenth century.” Like historians who study the Iroquois wars, Ethridge and other students of the Southeast agree that the violence stemmed from both indigenous and exogamous causes, stressing the latter. From the outside came the "introduction of Old World pathogens and subsequent serial disease episodes and loss of life,” a pattern that Africanists find more in Khoisan history than for peoples to the north and east. Joining other recent Americanist interpretations, Ethridge agrees that these epidemics were less natural than they were historical events. Southeastern colonizers did not deliberately circulate disease, but their actions did create physical conditions that increased indigenous susceptibility. Ethridge understands the epidemics in terms of direct, dislocating, colonialist blows: "the inauguration of a nascent capitalist economic system by Europeans through a commercial trade in Indian slaves, animal skins, and guns; and the intensification and spread of violence and warfare through the Indian slave trade and especially through the emergence of militaristic Native slaving societies that sought a larger share of the European trade."

That litany might have been written by Cobbing if the word African were substituted for Indian and if the word "Native" were shunned altogether.

Shattering, for Ethridge, means destruction on a scale that would be weirdly familiar, parallel-universe style—to scholars studying Southern Africa's several decades before 1840. It included the widespread elimination (as opposed to the intensification) of complex chiefdoms and the onset of "general cultural and social malaise," both with origins in "colonial oppression." Ethridge and Americanists generally and rightly accept a steep population decline (over centuries not decades) that Southern Africanists rightly remain skeptical of for their own region. Shattering, for Ethridge, also deeply involves a European-mediated world economy as "the final hammer." But her shattering was not the end of the story. In a pattern South Africanists of the past generation would recognize, the shattered pieces coalesced into new mosaics. First there arose short-lived slaving societies,
reformulated interior polities that attenuated the more towering hierarchies of the late chiefdoms. The social descendants of chiefdoms that had once erected enormous earthen pyramids, these reformed groups now practiced more egalitarian ceremonies in large but level village squares. They were neither democrats nor pacifists, and they were violently joined in the Southeast by northern refugees from the aforementioned Iroquois wars, who had perforce also become slavers. These collapsed, reformulated chiefdoms anxiously traded deerskins, along with captured women and children, for the European flintlocks and black powder on which their survival depended. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the "whole of the American South was now a brutal network of slave raiders, slaving, warfare and instability." From 1670 to 1720, at the port of Charles Town, 25,000 to 50,000 indigenous individuals who had recently felt the grip of the indigenous slave collar, clanked in iron bonds under flapping canvas aboard English ships bound for New England or the English West Indies. Then in 1715, the South exploded in warfare, and indigenous southeastern slaving came in a few years to a (not quite full) stop.

In the Yamasee War (1715-roughly1717), a cobbled coalition of Native Americans practically eradicated the colony of South Carolina, and it demonstrated the idiocy of enslaving one's neighbors. It also capped a generation that saw the regularization of the British overseas trade in African people, the expansion of tobacco, rice, and indigo as slave-worked crops in the South, and the sharp rise in the colonial preference for imported African over indigenous enslaved labor. As the indigenous slaving societies disappeared, the modern indigenous nations unevenly coalesced in the interior; maintaining their arms by trading deerskins with the British, returning escaped enslaved persons to the colonies, and allying with rival European powers (Spanish, French, or British) in exchange for arms and trade. Although British and later U.S. American colonizers regularly referred to the South's Indians as occupying a wilderness and wasteland, indigenous populations largely stabilized in the
eighteenth century, and began to increase toward its end. Ethridge's shattering should not be mistaken for annihilation.

Her panoramic view does not stop at the mighty Ohio River or the invisible Mason-Dixon line; it reaches north. She too considers the seventeenth-century scattering of peoples by the Iroquois. Those Eries who managed to escape the Iroquois headed south and shape-shifted into Westo slavers. A similar story with less shape-shifting could be told of Shawnees, some of whom left their Ohio Country homeland for the South in apparently well-organized groups. There they also took up slave collars, acquired muskets, and went after women and children.

Stephen Warren has emerged as the premier scholar of these Shawnees. Warren leaves intact the idea of vast seventeenth-century depopulation in the Ohio Country, but he rejects the idea that an Iroquoian explosion is alone, if at all, responsible. Until Warren, scholars generally held that an Iroquois mallet shattered the Shawnees before knocking the fragments both southward across the Kentucky bluegrass and eastward across the Appalachian Mountains. Warren sees other forces at work. "Iroquois warriors were just one of several different invaders who assaulted the villagers of the Middle Ohio Valley." Some of these invaders were Ethridge's slavers from the south. These were both a threat and an example. Rather than fall victim, Shawnees decided to follow. Facing "grave trade imbalances, the proliferation of the Indian slave trade, and devastating epidemics," Shawnees deliberately packed up and moved, some toward the colonizers and others toward their more "ancient trading partners," largely in quest for arms. At most, the Iroquois "contributed to this decision to leave." No Iroquois explosion drove Shawnees from home. There was no Iroquois conquest, and no pell-mell flight. Gone by 1680, "American Indians would not return to the Middle Ohio Valley for another fifty years."
Americanists then, while continuing to accept the idea that the late seventeenth century saw vast migration out of the depopulated lands, now begin to doubt the singularity of the Iroquois "big bang," much as Southern Africanists doubt the Zulu or more narrowly Shakan explosions. Like Africanists, Americanists now argue that a colonialist quest for cheap labor drew attackers from the south into the troubled lands. Like Southern Africanists, they wonder if historians have overdrawn the desperation of the refugees: Warren's orderly Shawnee emigration toward colonial markets is more deliberate than reactive.

The Iroquois explosion thesis bears another resemblance to the old mfecane idea: it contains a colonial alibi for western expansion. At one point in the nineteenth century, it was exactly the alibi of the mfecane: that the Iroquois explosion was largely self-generating or indigenous, its casualties were largely non-colonial, those casualties surpassed in mad savagery those that were ever inflicted on Indians by colonists, and therefore all the lands it vacated lay ripe for righteous sensible colonial taking. As the early historian of the Iroquois Cadwallader Colden first put it in 1727, the Five Nations Iroquois League, "being now amply supplied with Fire-Arms and Ammunition, give full swing to their War-like Genius, and therefore resolv'd to Revenge the Affronts they had at any time receiv'd from their Neighbours….They carried their Arms… over a vast Country… and entirely destroyed many Nations…." In 1836, Albert Gallatin put a finer point on the Iroquois conquests:

"The history of the Five Nations is calculated to give a favorable opinion of the intelligence of the Red Man. But they …. conquered only to destroy, and, it would seem, solely for the purpose of gratifying their thirst for blood. Towards the south and west, they made a perfect desert of the whole country within five hundred miles of their seats. A much greater number of those Indians, who…have perished by the sword in Canada and the United States, have been destroyed by that single nation, than in all their wars with the Europeans." On the eve of the convulsive South African War, the foundational South African historian George McCall Theal (1837-1919) echoed Gallatin's sentiments as he described the "Wars of Tshaka," which left behind a "wasted land": "Compared with this, the total loss of human life
occasioned by all the wars in South Africa in which Europeans have engaged since first they set foot in the country sinks into insignificance." Gallatin's echo may be no coincidence.

Another long-held Anglophone view was less cosmic and more transactional. Since the Iroquois League had conquered the Ohio Valley, which the Iroquois did not much use, the British could legitimately purchase at least a segment of those vast lands from the Iroquois, who did not much use them. A bargain for both parties, the British purchase took place at Fort Stanwix (New York) in 1768. Unsurprisingly the agreement ignored the "objections of the resident Indians," who had been in the valley for close to fifty years, not to mention the possibility that some had never left it. 

This was yet another mystification of the Iroquois relationship with the Shawnees, who never accepted Iroquois domination. Carried out by treaty, with the legalistic pen—the Stanwix fraud anticipated a great deal of the future of American Indian land loss within the continental United States through what one scholar has called "pen and ink witchcraft."

TextualiZing TextualiSed Oral Traditions

The people of tweed are pen and ink folk. But what can they say about those who did not write? Southern Africanists and eastern Native Americanists, particularly those with continental rather than imperial vision, seek to write the history, from the interior of the continent outward, of those who did not themselves leave abundant written documents, let alone organized archives. Both have developed methods, both have raised questions about dominant narratives. So far, I have suggested that Native Americanists might study the "aftermath" debates for flaws in their own narratives; they might learn from Southern Africanists' methodological disagreements over archaeology; and they might look to the Northern Cape frontier for models that might elucidate the history of those westward migrations that preceded and accompanied the forced Indian removals of the 1830s. Further,
they might also look to an area in which Southern Africanists clearly have done harder and more systematic thinking. This is in the handling of "oral traditions." The academy's disrespect for indigenous productions of history would seem to be stronger among eastern North Americanists than among Southern Africanists.86

South Africanists, to be sure, share no consensus over the use of "oral" materials. The major published set of such materials, *The James Stuart Archives*,87 makes available an extensive, turn of the twentieth century compendium of oral testimony. It has drawn strong scholarly argument ranging from the value of the materials to, more commonly, fundamental questions of method. Cobbing has doubted their value to historians; Elizabeth Eldredge is most prepared to take them almost at face value; Carolyn Hamilton finds them highly useful but only if treated intertextually.88 Similarly, as Hamilton reveals, differences among those Africans who testified to James Stuart around the turn of the twentieth century reveal both strong divisions "inside the Zulu Kingdom" and the contested nature of the popular memory of Shaka and other leaders. Cutting against the grain of such oral testimony, examining it against European sources without privileging the latter, Hamilton reveals that the various "texts" actually "influenced each other." Seeking information about Shaka, she finds that these kinds of entanglements, African with African, African with European interlocutor, imperial mission with scholarly interpreter, establish a limited spectrum of possible representations of the man, and they subvert what Hamilton calls the simple "we-they dichotomy" that has dominated much scholarship on European representations of the other.89

But for all their disagreements, Africanists have been developing something of a shared language on the topic of oral testimony since the early 1960s. Not so Native Americanists. Take again White's *The Middle Ground*. Early on in that important 1991 work, (which to be fair has 523 pages of text and notes), White gives us just over one page in small print of gratuitous violence: featuring the impaling and eating of children among other bloody
bits. This story rests, quite simply, on a very bad source for the purported 1680 event described. The source we might call an oral tradition, textualized in 1824-1825. White paraphrases the filtered testimony as if the events happened exactly as recalled about 145 years later, when an American banker and Indian agent hurriedly formed a narrative from hurriedly recorded notes that he had earlier taken as a Miami elder explained his people's history to him. There is a further "backstory," to borrow from Hamilton, involving a questionnaire sent to the agent by his superior. But from White we learn none of this. And we need more. Jon Parmenter, an advocate for the use of such "textualized oral history," recently rejected this particular narrative's veracity as contrary to the Iroquois goals and practices. I suspect that many Southern Africanists would also reject the episode without necessarily rejecting the document. Peter Delius, reading similarly graphic Pedi oral accounts, does not accept them at face value, but he insists nonetheless that, handled carefully, they are suggestive of the actual historical "experience of being taken prisoner." 90

But I choose White because he, in his next book, brilliantly observes the relationship of history and memory. Remembering Ahanagrān: Storytelling in a Family’s Past, draws on his Irish-born mother’s stories, and it overflows with thoughtful commentary on the often antagonistic relationship between memory and history, oral tradition and written text; it fields none of these under the banner of uncloaked truth. 91 Ahanagrān drew much attention and praise, but, despite its author's field-changing earlier work, it has not much dented the history of native, eastern, North America. Scholars remain very shy of oral tradition.

It is not that eastern Native Americanists scrap oral traditions as sources or are incapable of using them productively. Parmenter could be a Southern Africanist when he writes of his method that he "compares multiple European accounts of the Iroquois during this period, draws on the physical evidence of the archaeological record, and then casts all this information through the sieve of textualized Iroquois oral traditions (the only versions
accessible to those outside contemporary Iroquois society)." But eastern Native Americanists do not often engage the topic of method in oral tradition, and they have no rich genealogy of discussion of the topic, as do Africanists. Over a decade ago, Patricia Kay Galloway, polymath Americanist and trained anthropologist, summoned that Africanist genealogy as she praised it for taking "oral sources as seriously primary, a recognition that has not obtained in mainstream American history or archaeology." Despite Galloway's observations, and despite White's *Ahanagran*, the situation has not much changed in the North American East.  

Southern Africanists have argued further for promising fusions of archaeology and oral history. Philip Bonner suggests that rich Swazi oral traditions should help archaeologists pinpoint suitable locations for exploration, an argument consistent with some Native Americanists' observations that place rather than time is the coordinate of most interest to such Native American traditions. Delius, Tim Maggs and Maria Schoeman find examples of textualized oral testimony that reinforce and help explain archaeological findings.

Southern Africanists have juxtaposed various collections of oral testimony against one another, and the friction has helped to separate out the chaff of the compiler's agenda from, if not the wheat of truth, at least the grain of greater plausibility. As scholars like Hamilton and Wright explore the "contradictions and discrepancies within and between accounts," they consider the "political processes underlying the reconfigurations of cultural inheritances" and "claims of affiliation." Heritage, ethnicity and politics become contingent and estranged.

Any increase in attention to oral traditions raises the question of access to those records. The publication of *The James Stuart Archives* provides one kind of access. But oral histories continue to be taken and oral traditions continue to be recorded in various media in our own time. Scholars have raised the question of monopoly: who gets to view these records? Bonner and Hamilton, like many other Africanists, have provided one solution by
establishing a public repository, in this case the Swaziland Oral History Project at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.  

**Frontier Wars among the Tweedish**

This paper has explored not so much comparative history as comparative historiography, a high country where the air thins. It has explored the Southern Africanist work on the period before 1850 for lessons to bring to eastern North American Indian history. The two subfields have more than problems in common. They are also closely related, and not merely as archival spaces sticky with the cobwebs of the British Empire. At the risk of adopting an unseemly American imperialist pose, I suggest, with some trepidation, that while Americanists have more to learn from Southern Africanists than the reverse, Southern Africanists have deeper roots in North America than they generally realize (or might wish to acknowledge, especially once I elaborate them).

There is one widely recognized North American root to the Southern African historiography of colonization as a process. Southern Africanists for as long as Americanists have engaged Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 view of "the frontier" as a prime determinant of national history. Turner's view of the frontier as generative of democracy went stale by the 1970s. But one of the richest running South Africanist debates has been whether, in Nigel Penn's words, the "frontier zone" remains "a prime suspect when it comes to accounting for the development of a racially stratified, unequal and divided South Africa." Penn and the preponderance of scholars appear to argue that the frontier indeed remains in the docket. An Americanist tradition agrees that the frontier was a place of exploitative and divisive racial formation. Indeed the most lively comparative work in South African/United States history to 1840, some of it very current, examines settler frontiers as formative of both racism and its most extreme manifestations (such as ethnic cleansing and genocide).
Other scholars find racial hierarchies as largely European in origin, as borne to South Africa on the sea winds in wooden bottoms. Even where local conditions demanded cooperation among peoples in the frontier zone, even where resources more than race determined conflict, racist hierarchies quickly snapped into place whenever the settlers achieved hegemony. No Turnerian, Herman Giliomee borrowed Turner's notion of the closing of the frontier and added the concept of an "open frontier," which describes the space before hegemony, where no power established dominance, where among the many parties (for there were rarely but two) "members of different groups attempted to find a footing on which they could base their relationship." But sharp chauvinisms remained. A third, continually intriguing argument is that such hostilities were for generations contextual. In particular, in Martin Legassick's "frontier zone," that "fluid region of social transition," full blown racial ideologies awaited the arrival of industrial capitalism. Never a simple line of white advance and black retreat, it was a complex and hybrid if often violent place.

These broad ideas reflected, if lightly, on Americanists, largely through the device of Howard Lamar's and Leonard Thompson's introduction to their edited collection, The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared. They defined the frontier "not as a boundary line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration." American historians did not much embrace Giliomee's terms of an "open" frontier, but they quickly spoke, especially in the 1990s, of frontier zones, contact zones, or, borrowing from the literature on the American southwest, of borderlands, where one area of land sustained overlapping populations and where the question of power remained at issue. The recognition that Native Americans held and in multiple cases even dynamically gained power in such zones has led historians to calibrate native grounds, middle grounds, and settler colonies. The frontier was at times not a line but an "exchange economy." It was not advanced; it was navigated, and by "culture brokers." Among both Southern Africanists and, here to a greater degree
among Americanists, the relationship between dynamics of gender and the fluidity or rigidity of the frontier environment has drawn attention. This work has demonstrated that as much as any other factor, patterns of kinship and especially of marriage and family formation most fundamentally determine the fluidity of frontier relations.¹⁰⁷

Turner, an early professional historian, argued in terms of processes. He paid little serious attention to Native Americans, whom he roughly equated with the wilderness itself. South Africanists have thought more, and for a much longer time, about the implication that the frontier might define their society in terms of race. Understandably, much of this revised Turnerian work had little influence on those Africanists who would center Africans. Although it made room for new social formations such as the Griqua, this frontier scholarship was still fundamentally about the relationship among metrapoles, colonies, and the segregated states that lasted into the twentieth century.

Epilogue: The Tory and the Bostonian

It was instead another North American, far less known in South Africa, whose work I suspect influenced both Southern Africanist historiography and its eastern North American counterpart. It is quite possible that the Bostonian Francis Parkman (1823-1893) helped draw the outlines of what became known as the "mfecane," though he did not know a highveld from a Roosevelt. I see his influence in the work of the Canadian-born George McCall Theal (1837-1919). Theal's published work forms a major foil for much that followed; his published records continue to be of high importance to scholars. Chief among others, he widely disseminated not only South African history, but the very ideas that: first, Africans had destroyed one another so thoroughly in the "Wars of Tshaka" that the fields were cleared for colonizers; second, that the wars belonged at root to Shaka; and third, that "Bantu" peoples were as about new to the subcontinent as Europeans, among other racial myths.¹⁰⁸
Theal grew up in New Brunswick, Canada. A Canadian of United Loyalist heritage, he knew well that his ancestors had settled in New England and New York, and he took pride in their support for the Crown during the American Revolution. Three of his four grandparents were such loyalists. Christopher Saunders suggests that Theal had familiarity with the writings of the Bostonian Parkman, an equally conservative and deeply racist foundational American historian of British and French North America. Saunders’ suggestion is worth further pondering. Theal visited the United States at seventeen years; he arrived in South Africa at twenty-four years in 1861; he kept in steady touch with Canada throughout his life, revisiting his homeland in 1894. It is easy to imagine young master Theal absorbing in New Brunswick the first, 1855 edition of Parkman's history of an American Indian war, which describes the seventeenth-century Iroquois as a scourge to a wide arc of the continent.\(^\text{109}\) Their particular national traits, Parkman wrote, spread desolation beyond the frontiers of English settlement:

"Foremost in war, foremost in eloquence, foremost in their savage arts of policy, stood the fierce people called … by the French the Iroquois…. They extended their conquests and their depredations from Quebec to the Carolinas and from the western prairies to the forests of Maine….On the north, they uprooted the ancient settlements of the Wyandots; on the west, they exterminated the Eries and the Andastes, and spread havoc and dismay among the tribes of the Illinois…. the blood-besmeared conquerors roamed like wolves among the burning settlements….\(^\text{110}\)

Theal's Zulu triumphs echoed Parkman's widely circulated interpretation of the Wars of the Iroquois as frenzied attacks that left the region north and south of Lake Erie a veritable desert ripe for the taking. Theal compared Zulus with "hyenas,\(^\text{111}\) indigenizing Parkman's wolves. Where Parkman titled a chapter on the Iroquois wars, "The Destroyers," Theal has a chapter on the wars of the early nineteenth century titled "The Destruction of the Bantu Tribes.\(^\text{112}\) Theal echoed Parkman's sense of a fatal Iroquois flaw: the Zulu under Shaka had talent, Theal noted, but not enough to realize that, having but one chance to stop the impending Anglo-Saxon triumph, they impulsively, violently, tossed it aside.\(^\text{113}\) Theal's
Tshaka brilliantly reformulated his people into a war machine, but he committed the grave error of spreading "Bantu" destruction, not "Bantu" unity, at a time when it was most needed:

If the tribes there had united for defence, they might have succeeded in holding their own; but combination in time of danger, apparently so natural, is seldom resorted to by barbarians. Frequently, on account of some petty jealousy, they rejoice at the downfall of neighbours, and lack foresight to see that their own turn will come next.\(^\text{114}\)

Parkman had sixteen years earlier said much the same thing, in his more bloated prose:

It was well for the European colonies, above all for those of England, that the wisdom of the Iroquois was but the wisdom of savages. Their sagacity is past denying…but it was not equal to a comprehension of their own situation and that of their race. Could they have read their destiny, and curbed their mad ambition, they might have leagued with themselves four great communities of kindred lineage, to resist the encroachments of civilization, and oppose a barrier of fire to the spread of the young colonies of the East. But their organization and their intelligence were merely the instruments of a blind frenzy which impelled them to destroy those whom they might have made their allies in a common cause….\(^\text{115}\) The bloody triumphs of the Iroquois were complete. They had 'made a solitude, and called it peace.'\(^\text{116}\)

Parkman did believe it possible for the rare Native American genius to envisage Indian unity against the British, and he found it in the Ottawa Pontiac, who "commanded a wider range of intellect than those around him." But he insisted that it "would be idle to suppose that the great mass of the Indians understood, in its full extent, the danger which threatened their race." Theal, who thought Africans superior to American Indians, applied the same lesson to them nonetheless, in some of the same language: "on occasion individuals are capable of rising to a high standard," but the "great mass shows little aptitude" for, in this case, Europeanization.\(^\text{117}\)

For Theal as for Parkman, indigenous peoples formed a great mass of inferiority, while nature massively stood with the Anglo-Saxon. Massively, in Theal's time as after, Africans and many others have refuted this view of nature. Southern Africanists have in the past half-century revised and have shredded Theal, much as North Americanists have disposed of Parkman's vision of the Iroquois wars. But for North Americanists and Southern Africanists together, the transnational nature of our deep historiography is more than a matter
of relatively progressive Frederick Jackson Turner and the frontier. It is not just a matter of contemporary settler-colonial studies. It is also a matter of the romantic racism of a Bostonian elitist and the more Darwinian racism of a North American migrant to South Africa. These men elaborated what appear to be transoceanic myths of indigenous history. The fictive descendants of tyrants and rebels, Southern Africanists and Native Americanists do not inhabit parallel universes; they belong to an unsettled cousinage of strangers.

**Teeny Appendix 1: Action Plan:**

Native Americanists might study the "aftermath" debates for flaws in their own narratives, recognizing that they have for decades shared concerns with Southern Africanists.

They might explore Southern Africanists' methodological disagreements over archaeological interpretation, engaging archaeologists in frank discussions of processual archaeology.

They might look to works on the Northern Cape frontier for models with which to reinterpret the westward migrations that preceded and accompanied the forced American Indian removals of the 1830s.

They might especially look Southern Africanists' work on the handling of textualized oral traditions. There is a great deal of material for American Indian history that might both be better understood and better catalogued with the understandings that Southern Africanists can provide.

Native Americanists and Southern Africanists might recognize their shared histories.
Brief Appendix 2: The Cob Thesis

The long reach of colonial trade even into such regions as eighteenth-century KwaZulu-Natal may be best seen in the long ears of maize that waved on the breezes off the Indian Ocean. Unknown in Eastern Hemisphere before Spanish and Portuguese overseas expansion, maize was first cultivated by indigenous Americans who over the centuries so thoroughly hybridized the crop that its many cultivated varieties require human hands for reproduction. Maize agriculture cannot spread alone or by nature; it can only spread through trade and instruction—the presence of maize, in other words, is an indicator that knowledge has been gained from others. The women who cultivated maize in Southern Africa adapted practices developed over centuries by American Indians, most of them women as well.

This detail remains underplayed by those who nonetheless look to maize as they debate such phenomena as the rise of powerful chiefdoms after 1700 or the disturbances of the early nineteenth century. It is worth noting that scholars who eschew colonial trade as an important factor in regional African social change in the period nonetheless often point to the adoption of maize agriculture. But maize, much more American than apple pie, marks definite (if remote) African engagement with the colonial world. Native Americanists have parallel debates about the degree to which non-human life forms raced, like maize in Africa, ahead of actual colonizers or colonial adventurers. In the American case, the focus is on microbes that might have embattled indigenous societies. But few professional Native Americanists are inclined, as some Africanists apparently have been, to seek purely endogenous explanations for major developments. That American Indians adopted the horse and the gun, the kettle and the cow, even the cross and the printing press, on their own terms, on essentially native ground, and far removed from colonizers is standard Americanist fare. That such adoption could lead to revolutionary change: ditto. Management of the direction of change, not change itself, is the issue.
Notes


But for the pattern overall, note that in the full run of the journal, Ethnohistory, from 1954 to the present, there are only two articles that include the word, mfecane, a word essentially unknown to Americanists. Both articles deal with Africa (today's Mozambique and Uganda). Google Scholar lists no published article on American Indian history, out of several hundred articles as a whole, that cites Julian Cobbings, "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Ditakong and Mbolompo," Journal of African History 29 (1988) 487-519. Cobbings is even missing (this is no accusation—the notion of alibi does not belong to Cobbings) in Robin Brownlie, Mary- Ellen Kelm, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi?" The Canadian Historical Review 75:4 (1994) 543-556. At the same time, in the full run of the Journal of Southern African Studies since 1997 there is one reference to Richard White's The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1850 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Luise White uses it as her dominant analytical framework in "Students, ZAPU, and Special Branch in Francistown, 1964-1972," Journal of Southern African Studies, 40:6 (2014), 1289-1303. There is no citation to The Middle Ground (at least until 2010, I have not checked since) in the Journal of African History. Norman Etherington shows an awareness of the book's importance (but does not engage its content) with an unpaginated reference to The Middle Ground in "Is a Reorientation of South African History a Lost Cause?" South African Historical Journal 60:3 (2008), 331. An electronic search of that journal, undoubtedly incomplete, yielded no other references to Richard White's volume. What shaped one subfield is absent in the other.


Johns Hopkins University trained Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932), perhaps the most cited American historian and the most influential in South Africa, did not consider Native Americans worthy of history, but he was doing nothing if he was not seeking to spatially reorient American history westward from the Atlantic ports. Etherington, "Is a Reorientation of South African History a Lost Cause?" 331.


Lawrence Henry Gipson, The British Empire Before the American Revolution, 13 vols (New York: Knopf, 1939-1956) has much on Native Americans, is reliable but this American is best read at attention in a pith helmet. The Wits Library has the full run. A more critical example is Jack Sosin, Whitehall and the Wilderness, The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).


For Trevor-Roper see J.B. Peires, "Paradigm Deleted: The Materialist Interpretation of the Mfecane," Journal of Southern African Studies, 19:2 (1993), 310. A fine example of this institutional imperial school is the unfortunately titled, W. M. Macmillan, Bantu, Boer, and Briton: The Making of the South African Native Problem (Oxford: Clarendon Press, revised ed., 1963 [1929]). The emphasis is on "Briton" and on policy. The subtitle I take (hope?) to be ironic. In 1961, a Chicago gathering that has been credited with speeding on the Native American militancy of the coming decades issued a "Declaration of Indian Purpose," observing: "the Indian problem is the white man." James Stuart Olson and Raymond Williams, Native Americans in the Twentieth Century (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), 159. Christopher Saunders notes that Macmillan broke decisively with Theal and debunked several of the reigning myths. But he did not anticipate an Africanist tradition that would examine the dynamism of African societies or the contributions of Africans to history. Saunders, The Making of the South African Past, 71, 73.
To take two examples, Carolyn Hamilton held a professorship in anthropology at the University of the Witwatersand in the 1990s, and since 1988 there has been a doctoral program in History and Anthropology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.


In a brief introductory essay penned in 1965, K. Onwuka Dike notes that since the "late 1940's," as independence movements gained strength, there had been a growing demand for an "African history" that was "the history of Africans, not of Europeans *per se* in Africa." He stressed the importance of "Oral Traditions," resort to which has certainly been a distinguishing feature of the field. See his "Introduction to the Idaban History Series," in John Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth-century Revolution in Bantu Africa* (London, 1966), xiii- esp., xiv.

Philip Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionairs: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-Century Swazi State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 4, see also 52-55, 84.


I mean not to denigrate the attention to the Puritans. English New England is as good a place as any to study history. What's more, elements of that extensive and deep scholarship have influenced Native American history, in ways Africanists, particularly those of a materialist bent, might find mystifying: witness such small legacies of "the saints" as the Americanist emphasis on supernatural beliefs and our strange obsession with the word, "declension."

Philip Bonner noted almost a decade ago, and the situation has not much changed, that "Surprisingly little concerted or sustained attention has been paid to the precolonial African histories of the 18th and early 19th centuries in South Africa since the early 1980s." This is particularly true of the region outside the Cape (Western and Eastern, less so Northern). But "little" is a relative term. There has been intensive scholarship, and it has surrounded a key set of issues. An outsider to the field can achieve a sense of the key issues. Philip Bonner, "Swazi oral tradition and Northern Nguni Historical Archaeology," in *Five Hundred Years Rediscovered*, 239.

Pointing to the ways in which "the excessive reliance on 'race', 'class', 'tribe', etc. as organizing categories of identity" can obscure the past is Hlonipha Mokoena, "The Cambridge History of South Africa vol. 1: From Early Times to 1885" *South African Historical Journal* 66 (2014) 721.


Examples abound. Concerns with stratification, "capitalist penetration," and the "mechanisms of surplus appropriation" appear right from the start in Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, 4. Writing of "primitive accumulation," and a "pastoral production" model, is Nigel Penn, *Forgotten Frontier: Colonists and Khoisan and the Cape's Northern Frontier in the 18th Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 14, 15. The goal of the British state in the age of Wellington was the "transformation of social relations to those of capitalism," in Martin Legassick and Robert Ross, "From Slave Economy to Settler Capitalism: The Cape Colony and its Extensions, 1800-1854," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, 1: 257. "The sharpest debates have been over the extent to which a slave community evolved distinct from, or incorporated with, the masters; the degree to which Khoesan resistance to the Dutch was driven by the experience of the Khoesan as farm laborers and was thus a form of class struggle; and, more generally, the degree to which the forms of stratification to be found in the Cape were essentially racial, and thus the origin of later South African patterns," in Robert Ross, "Khoesan and Immigrants: The Emergence of Colonial Society in the Cape, 1500-1800," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, 1: 169. This is a major difference with Native North American history, where a great deal of attention is paid to ideological dimensions of culture. A superb example of this kind of work is Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford, 2005).


28 For Cherokee expansion and Osage resistance, see for example, DuVal, *The Native Ground*. See also note 25, above. For complex Eastern Indian interactions on the Plains, see, for example, Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 147, 153-154.

29 Challis observes that "The construction of new identities, or ethnogenesis, is in direct opposition to the previously accepted world systems model of acculturation—the assimilation of native peoples and the adoption of European (or others') artefacts through force, which denies people the ability to adapt to changing situations on their own terms." Sam Challis, "Creolization on the Nineteenth-century Frontiers of Southern Africa: A Case Study of the AmaTola 'Bushmen' in the Maloti-Drakensberg," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38:2 (2012), 265-72, esp. 271. Acculturation does not, however, mean force.


32 To oversimplify, one side sees science at risk, and the other, civil or human rights. Many archaeologists regret that much potential history and knowledge are being literally buried, and they insist that any returns be made with a high degree of certainty, based on archaeological understandings, that an individual's remains go to that individual's cultural affiliates. Student activists ask why there are more indigenous individuals represented among remains in the university museum than there are live indigenous students in the university classroom. Some historians wonder at the differential treatment of American Indian remains from those of eighteenth-century colonists buried, say, in the shadow of Princeton University. The National Congress of American Indians in 2012 adopted a new resolution on seeking the repatriation on human rights grounds of "the 1-2 million Native American ancestral remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony [that] currently exist in international repositories." NCAI Resolution # SAC-12-008, October, 2012.


37 Delius, Maggs, and Schoeman, "Bokoni," esp. 400, 401. Archaeologist Simon Hall, while defending processual archaeology—pointing out that it does recognize historical fluidity—agrees that political units and ethnic units do not necessarily coincide. He nonetheless reminds Delius that when the various peoples of Bokoni eventually found their way into the emerging Pedi polity in the nineteenth century, they tended to adopt a singular ceramic style, and they did so under circumstances in which the historical record can verify affiliation. Hall, "Identity and Political Centralisation in the Western Regions of the Highveld, c. 1770-1830," 304-305. To historians, that is in itself an admission of the unreliability of style as a clear marker of ethnic identification, for some of the Bokoni styles disappeared as Bokoni descendants merged with others into a new social formation, the Pedi, during and after the 1820s.


43 Eldredge criticizes Hamilton for questioning the stability of key oral traditions that lend credence to extreme violence, and she criticizes Wright for crediting the possibility that Portuguese-oriented slavery as a factor in
developments (1750-1823), in Eldredge, Kingdoms and Chiefdoms of Southeastern Africa, 51-53, 151-152, and Eldredge, Creation of the Zulu Kingdom, 9. John Wright, in, “Political Histories of Southern Africa's Kingdoms and Chiefdoms,” Journal of Southern African Studies (2016), 4-6 finds her volumes of 2014 and 2015 to fall back, largely through an inadequately critical reading of sources, on distorted views of an expansive Zulu state and an inflated role for such individuals as Shaka. I thank John Wright for this reference.


45 Debunking, implicitly Desmond Morris's Washing of the Spears: A History of the Rise of the Zulu Nation under Shaka and its Fall in the Zulu War of 1879 (1965) London: Pimlico, 1994), 41-43, and other assertions of a European model for the Zulu kingdom, is Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath, 169. For "independent" see ibid., esp. 2, also 22, 37; population, ibid., 169-170; "internal," ibid., 168; no "resemblance," ibid., 169, "new type," ibid., 5; "radically," ibid., 3; "warfare," ibid., 3; "carnage," ibid., 4; "deserted" ibid., 4; "overcrowded" ibid., 176; "revolution" ibid.,5; "nation-building," ibid., 6; Shaka and Moshesh, ibid., 6; Swangendaba and Faku ibid., 7; prospects for Africa, ibid., 180.


47 Wright, "Rediscovering the Ndwandwe Kingdom,” 217-238; Wright, "Turbulent Times,” 213, 218, 244-48.

48 Wright, "Turbulent Times,” 212.

49 Emphasizing environmental conditions operating fairly independently of colonial markets are Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, 5-7; Jeff Guy, "Ecological Factors in the Rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom,” in Shula Marks and Athony Atmore, eds., Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa
alarers, and
Highweld/Southern Kalahari c. 1750
of Conflict in Southern Africa,
Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth
"Beyond the Concept of the 'Zulu Explosion
other seafarers encouraged centralized social formations, competition, and warfare. In its favor, if only among
other factors encouraged centralized social formations, competition, and warfare.


For drought and other such factors as insufficiently explanatory see Etherington, Great Treks, 113, 125. For the question as unanswered see J. B. Peires, "Paradigm Deleted," 295-313.

Discounted in Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, 169.


Eldredge, Kingdoms and Chiefdoms of Southeastern Africa, 292-294, acknowledges the raiding but thinks internal causes of violence—drought, famine, ambition—among the African communities to be more important. Debunking Cobbing's argument that missionaries sought slaves for the Cape in 1823, and skeptical that Griqua raiding much contributed to regional violence before 1823 (but not after) are Margaret Kinsman: "Hungry Wolves': the Impact of Violence on Rolong Life, 1823-1836," in The Mfecane Aftermath, 390; Guy Hartley, "The Battle of Dithakong and 'Mfecane' Theory," in ibid., 397-400, 410, 415.

The trade in captives toward the Cape, though real, was not corporate, notes Timothy Keegan, Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 175-178.

Although any colonial influence out of Delagoa Bay is discounted in his 1966 book, he accepted it on the basis of subsequent scholarship in a 1995 essay, Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, 21-22, 37; J. D. Omer-Cooper, "Has the Mfecane a Future? A Response to the Cobbing Critique," Journal of Southern African Studies, 19: 2 (1993) 280-283. One argument is that a trade in ivory (requiring well organized hunting parties) cattle hides, and/or meat (encouraging chiefly chiefly control of herds) with Portuguese colonizers. American whalers, and other seafarers encouraged centralized social formations, competition, and warfare. In its favor, if only among other more indigenous causes, see: Bonner, Kings, Commoners, and Concessionaires,12-13, 20-20; Wright, "Beyond the Concept of the 'Zulu Explosion,'" 109; Wright, "Political Transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," 166, 175, 181; Wright, "Rediscovering the Ndwandwe Kingdom," 214, 220, 224; Cope, The Years of Conquest, 31; Eldredge, "Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa, c. 1800-1830," 123; Andrew Manson, "Conflict in the Western Highweld/Southern Kalahari c. 1750-1820," in The Mfecane Aftermath, 351-358.

44 Please do not cite this draft
Skeptics range from those who doubt the connection, such as Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 15; to those who agree the trade was influential, but note that it is insufficient to explain political centralization, Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, 13, 18, 19; echoed in Etherington *Great Treks*, 31.

That a seaborne trade in persons destined for Brazilian slavery out of Delagoa Bay encouraged centralization and warfare forms a related debate. Advancing the argument is Cobbing, "The Mfecane as Alibi," 504-05, 507, 509, 517, 519; Cobbing, "A Tainted Well" 136. Cobbing exaggerates the impact of the slave trade, but it should not be utterly discounted even if its impact on chiefdoms in KwaZulu-Natal is unclear, suggests Wright, "Beyond the Concept of the 'Zulu Explosion'" 109; Wright, "Rediscovering the Ndwandwe Kingdom," 227; Wright, "Turbulent Times," 220, 224, 230, 231. Observing that W.M. Macmillan anticipated the argument is Saunders, "Pre-Cobbing Mfecane Historiography," 26. The disruptive impact of the slave trade and its encouragement of chiefdom formation in the early eighteenth century are suggested in Delius, Maggs and Schoeman, "Bokoni," 404-405.

Denying the possibility (from the late eighteenth century until the mid-1820s) are: Omer-Cooper, "The Mfecane Survives its Critics," 280-283; Hamilton, "The Character and Objects of Chaka," 189-90; Cope, *The Years of Conquest*, 32, Eldredge, "Sources of Conflict, c. 1800-1830," 129; Eldredge, *Creation of the Zulu Kingdom*, 9; Eldredge, *Kingdoms and Chiefdoms of Southeastern Africa*, 151-152, Etherington, "Barbarians Ancient and Modern," 33; Etherington, *Great Treks*, 114, 120. The last three scholars agree that after 1823 slavery had an impact on the region, but that was after the Zulu kingdom had formed.


An enormous literature exists on captivity narratives by settlers who had lived as captives among Indians (as well as Britons in other places). An unusual take is Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).


Omer-Cooper responded (largely to Wright and Cobbing) that, if depopulation has been exaggerated, there was nonetheless during the period great resettlement leaving some areas unsettled and others dense. Omer-Cooper, "The Mfecane Survives its Critics," 279, 288.
57 Martin Legassick points out that foundational South African historian George McCall Theal dreamed up two million deaths for the country's interior. Legassick, "The Great Treks," 284. Etherington points out that Hannah Arendt, in Origins of Totalitarianism, repeats the idea that Zulus were responsible for a million deaths in the period. Norman Etherington, "A False Emptiness: How Historians May Have Been Misled by Early Nineteenth Century Maps of South-eastern Africa," Imago Mundi 56:1 (2004) 68. Examining the only place where he thinks the records are good, he follows Wright in doubting the high levels of violence, admitting that an uncertain stance might be the only honest one, given the paucity of actual evidence. Etherington, "A Tempest in a Teapot?", 203-219; Wright, "Political Transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," 175; Wright, "Turbulent Times," 232. Etherington further points out that the so-called mfecane has no firm dates, and while one well-documented region does seem to have had exceptional violence in 1823-1824, in other years the levels of violence seem fairly typical from 1825 into the 1830s, Etherington, Great Treks, 17, 124, 130.

Accepting that settler historians long greatly exaggerated the levels of violence, other scholars find the 1820s and 1830s to have been violent indeed east and west of the Drakensberg. See Kinsman, "Hungry Wolves," 363-393; Delius, The Land Belongs to Us, 24, 27, 29, 30; Delius and Schoeman, "Revisiting Bokoni, 151-154; Ackson M. Kanduza, "Mfecane mutation in Central Africa: a comparison of the Makololo and Ngoni in Zambia," Five Hundred Years Rediscovered, 257-258; Eldredge, Kingdoms and Chiefdoms of Southeastern Africa, 224-226, 334-338; Eldredge, Creation of the Zulu Kingdom, 9.

58 In the 1980s, advancing the argument (while acknowledging Cobbing) that the narrative of Shaka's cruelties, power, and devastation of Kwa-Zulu Natal advanced settler interests was John Wright, "Political Mythology and the Making of Natal's Mfecane," 275-278. That the myth (along with others regarding Shaka) developed over time, within certain contexts, and, most interestingly, in conversations among Africans and British interlocutors that actually limited its mere service to political aims, is made clear in Hamilton, Terrific Majesty, 22-28, 35-36, 54, 59-60, 70. Nodding to mythic "alibis" developed by African chieftains (taking a different tack from Hamilton in that these are similar in intent to the myths of colonizers) is Etherington, "Tempest in a Teapot," 203. Most scholars continue to concentrate more, however, on the settler myths alone. Etherington, Great Treks, 84, 123-124, 151-152; Cope, The Years of Conquest, 29; Wylie, "White Myths of Shaka," 82-86; Wylie, Shaka, 9.

Acknowledging that Shaka hardly created the first large Southern African chiefdom and that he adopted techniques from his predecessors, one historian very recently revives his power as more effective than that of his opponents, as highly military, and as cruel and vengeful, Eldredge, Creation of the Zulu Kingdom, 9, 77, 85, 87, 293.Wondering if Eldredge reverts to "Big Man" history is John Wright, "Political Histories of Southern Africa's Kingdoms and Chiefdoms," 5-6. The debate continues in important places.


60 See, for example, in addition to works on the Iroquois cited below, Dean R. Snow, The Iroquois: The Peoples of America (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 114-116; Francis Jennings, Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744 (New York: Norton, 1984), 84-112. I borrow the blast from John Wright, "Beyond the Concept of the 'Zulu Explosion,'" 107-121.

61 Clark Wissler, Indians of the United States: Four Centuries of their History and Culture (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1940), 114. Walker, History of South Africa, 210, conventionally (for his time) stated that for the Boers of the late 1830s, having migrated into the region, a "very few decisive battles [against
Zulus] were enough to make trekkers [settlers] masters of open country which had been cleared of most of its inhabitants by either death or displacement during the Mfecane."

62 Etherington, *Great Treks*, xxi. He locates an early expression of the idea in an 1837 newspaper, 261. In "A False Emptiness," 67-8, he notes that a common cartographic error, fictively relocating the headwaters of the Limpopo toward the east, fictively eliminated tens of thousands of people. Following John Wright's work on what is now KwaZulu-Natal, but to question the levels of violence in the Caledon Valley, and concluding that we must remain "agnostic" on such judgements, is Etherington, "A Tempest in a Teapot?" 219. Legassick, "The Great Treks," 284, agrees that early historians exaggerated the violence (to as many as two million deaths) as a rationalization for their own expansion at African expense. John Wright, "Political Mythology and the Making of Natal's Mfecane," 276-277, emphasizes that mythological levels of violence as well as fictive depopulation formed key settler rationalizations.


71 As Christoph Strobel recently put it in a work that does, in a very different manner than is attempted here, compare the American Ohio Valley with a South African region, the violence had "led to a further population decline and a partial de-settlement of the region." Strobel is careful to note the limits to Iroquois success, but he
states that "their efforts did drive many Indians out of the Upper Ohio Valley into surrounding areas to the south, northwest, and west." Strobel, *The Testing Grounds of Modern Empire*, 20-21.

72 Cobbing, "A Tainted Well," 144; A more recent critique is Wright, "Turbulent Times," 232.


80 John Wright, "Beyond the Concept of the 'Zulu Explosion,'" 107-121.


A worrisome use of the archive is Mahoney, "The Zulu Kingdom as a Genocidal and Post-genocidal Society, c. 1810 to the present 1," 251-268, who seems to mistake what he plausibly calls "the record of popular debates among Natal Africans over the meaning of their own history," from the history itself, 253. Cobbing, in "A Tainted Well," 134, calls for historians to use the collection, but only with "extensive and energy-consuming interrogation," constantly keeping the researcher's objectives, "defective interviewing habits," and "historical fantasies" in mind. Carolyn Hamilton, "Backstory, Biography, and the Life of the James Stuart Archive," History in Africa, 38 (2011) 319-341, adds that scholars must consider the archive as a "complex product of a simple set of encounters"(330) between interviewees bringing "carefully crafted intellectual and political interventions" and the interviewer seeking "sources for administrative decisions."(327) John Wright, "Political Histories of Southern Africa's Kingdoms and Chiefdoms," 2-5, like Hamilton, sees oral traditions as contextual and changing, subject to group discussion, to the vagaries of memory and to political or historical context. Importantly, these not only make for change in the "traditions" over time, they also impose limits on such invention. Here he draws clearly on Hamilton, Terrific Majesty, 26-27. He disagrees with Elizabeth Eldredge's view that such arguments both underestimate the durability of such traditions and overestimate the role of intention or calculation in such changes as do occur. Eldredge, Kingdoms and Chiefdoms of Southeastern Africa, 14 for change, 51 for durability, 53 for intention.

By contrast with the literature on this single Southern African collection of testimony, there is little real discussion in Native American history, especially in the East for the period before the late nineteenth century. Writing of Dakota oral traditions (a term she does not uncritically accept), Angela Cavender Wilson (Waziyatawin) decades ago prefigured Eldredge, insisting that scholars accept the rigor and accuracy of stories told by indigenous people whose traditions of memory involve "rigorous and extensive training," in "Grandmother to Granddaughter: Generations of Oral History in a Dakota Family," American Indian Quarterly 20, no. 1 (1996), 9. That argument met resistance, mostly in silence. She also raised another critical question, aimed at the distinction between oral history and tradition, but it also went undeveloped. When does an oral history involving personal experiences can become a received oral tradition? 8.

Around the same time, Guy Hartley, writing on Southern Africa, observed that Cobbing, in a separate essay, tends so to discount oral traditions as to "dismiss wholly African versions of the past," and his own examination of such traditions and the record leaves him to conclude that "oral reports need to be taken more seriously and cannot be dismissed lightly." Hartley, "the Battle of Dithakong and 'Mfecane' Theory," 413, 414. Hamilton and Wright have clearly shared these concerns for at least as long as Hartley and Cobbing. John Wright, "Beyond the Concept of the Zulu Explosion" 113; Hamilton, "The Character and Objects of Chaka" 186, 205-210.

Hamilton, Terrific Majesty, 'inside"54, "influenced" 24, "we" 28, see also 71, 99. Wright, in his preface to volume 5, states that it is a mistake to seek a "fixed 'core' of facts" in the oral testimony, which instead consists of "fluid narratives whose content could vary widely according to the social and political circumstances in which they were made." John Wright, "Preface," The James Stuart Archives 5: x.

White, The Middle Ground, 3-5; C.C. Trowbridge, Mearmear Traditions: Occasional Contributions from the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan, no. 7, ed. Vernon Kinietz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), esp. 76. Trowbridge, although he did serve as an Indian agent, was no James Stuart, the mighty interpreter of indigenous history in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. It appears that his entire Mearmear Traditions (90 pages), comes from his interviews with one Miami elder, Le Gros. Trowbridge presents the Traditions in narrative form—he presents no discrete interviews, and we do not know what questions he asked, in what language, or who translated (if Le Gros did not speak English or French). It appears that he conducted the interviews at Fort Wayne, Indiana. See vi, 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 39, 40, 44, 53, 62, 64, 88, 90. He admitted that he


93 Patricia Kay Galloway, *Practicing Ethnohistory: Mining Archives, Hearing Testimony, Constructing Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 22. She not uncritically praises "Africanists who were concerned to define how oral history materials could be used to write European-style positivist history," 21. Here she refers largely to the foundational work of Jan Vansina, particularly as elaborated by David Henige. She is mildly critical of the effort to "correct" oral narratives so that they may comport with "a naturalized, positivist, Western practice," while at the same time she is impressed by Vansina's early recognition that the hypotheses embedded in an oral source may be superior to the historians' own, 22. An even earlier call for North Americanists (and scholars of indigeneity elsewhere in the former British Empire) noted the record of Africanists in the use of oral traditions. A.G. Hopkins, "Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History," *Past and Present* no. 164 (Aug 1999) 216, wrote, "I would also avoid the needless duplication of effort whereby to take just one example, historians of First Nations discover for themselves the pitfalls of oral tradition without referring to the very considerable literature on this subject produced by specialists on Africa during the last forty years." Yet not much has been done. A leading journal for scholars in eastern North American Indian History is *Ethnohistory*, and therein Native American pieces predominate. But since the journal is as concerned with method as it is with topic, it publishes occasionally in African history. I take it as a sign of the absence of serious discussion of oral tradition within my subfield that, according to a search I undertook on Google Scholar in February 2017, no piece on eastern North American Indian history appears among the seventy nine pieces that reference David William Cohen's 1989 "The Undefining of Oral Tradition," in spite of its appearance in that journal, which, figuratively at least, sits on most Native Americanists' shelves. David William Cohen, "The Undefining of Oral Tradition," *Ethnohistory* 36:1 (1989) 9-18.


95 Delius, Maggs and Schoeman, "Bokoni," 402-403.


differences that might attend such work in Native American studies see Donald Fixico, The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge (New York: Routledge, 2003), 125-140, esp.129.

98 Odd as it may seem now, it was plausible enough to make the Turnerian case in undemocratic South Africa at the height of apartheid that Herman Giliomee debunked it in "Democracy and the Frontier: A Comparative Study of Bacon's Rebellion (1676) and the Graaff-Reinet Rebellion (1795-1796)," South African Historical Journal 6 (Nov. 1974) 46-50. But then, Turner himself made the case in the face of the onset of racist legislation throughout much of America.

99 Penn, Forgotten Frontiers, 9-10, quotation 291, n.34. Saunders, in The Making of the South African Past, 82, 87, 92, 114-115, 174-175, and Penn separately observe that writings of Leo Fouche reveal Turners' influence in South Africa as early as 1909, and that Eric Walker and C. W. De Kiewiet drew in the 1920s on Turner for their distinctive frontier interpretation, which held, unlike Fouche's, that South Africa's distinctive racial politics stemmed predominantly from its frontier history.

This interpretation, still robust, has faced challenges since 1970 by the late Martin Legassick, who had familiarity with American attacks on Turner, among others. Martin Legassick, "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography," in Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa, 44-79; and Roger Wagner, "Zoutspanberg: The Dynamics of a Hunting Frontier, 1848-1867," in ibid, 313-349. Both point to settler cooperation and alliance with Africans—often to be sure in contexts of violence—that trouble a simple frontier line as primarily formative of racial ideologies.


100 A key work here is Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery-American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: Norton, 1975), and see a South African engagement with early iterations of Morgan's argument in Giliomee, "Democracy and the Frontier," 30-51.

101 This view is forcefully supported for both South Africa and the United States in Fredrickson, White Supremacy, 3-53; Strobel, The Testing Grounds of Modern Empire; Mohamed Adhikari, "We are Determined to Exterminate Them," 1-31; Sidney L. Harring, "Dispossession, Ecocide, Genocide: Cattle Ranching and Agriculture in the Destruction of Hunting Cultures on the Canadian Prairies," in Genocide on Settler Frontiers, 232-258; Nigel Penn, "The Destruction of Hunter-Gatherer Societies on the Pastoralist Frontier: The Cape and Australia Compared," in Genocide on Settler Frontiers, 159-184.

102 Herman Giliomee, "The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812," in The Shaping of South African Society, esp. 300, esp. 307, 325-328. In this interpretation, the elements of racial and cultural prejudice that obtained from the seventeenth century might be ignored from time to time on the frontier, but in general they only hardened over time, and "conflict was pervasive. Because it had both a racial and a class dimension, negotiations were less effective in resolving disputes than is often the case in purely economic conflicts," esp. 328. A modification of this argument injects potent, racist, metropolitan stimulation. Its advocates tend to focus on the Eastern Cape, where the word "frontier" was perhaps most widely in use, and it pins the entrenchment of racism in South Africa at least partly on a reactionary phase of early nineteenth century British rule. Keegan, Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order, 35. Keegan, while acknowledging settlers' accommodations with Africans, does not doubt their violent bigotry. Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People (London: Pimlico, 1992) leans toward this solidly anti-imperial interpretation, emphasizing the blundering and bullying of British officials in the colony, though he is sensitive to divisions among them. See also, similarly, Ben Maclellan, A Proper Degree of Terror: John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1986).

51 Please do not cite this draft

Lamar and Thompson, "Comparative Frontier History," 7.


Theal arrived in South Africa in his early 20's in 1861. Parkman, one of the best known Anglophone historians of his day, was in mid-career. Assuming that the Canadian-born Theal kept up with his works he might have read his volumes in South Africa. As many were published in London as well as in North America, and as nineteenth-century volumes of Parkman can still be found in major libraries in South Africa, and as Theal returned at least once to North America and more often to England, it seems likely. On Theal’s identification
with loyalists, but also on his deep if often self-subversive racism (which seems less cosmic than that of Parkman), see Sam Naidu, “Three Tales of Theal: Biography, History and Ethnography on the Eastern Frontier,” *English in Africa* 39: 2 (2012) 51-68.


118 Oddly considering environmental change to be largely distinct from colonialism, they note that maize presented critical advantages over the traditional crops of sorghum and millet, particularly in terms of its productivity per acre. They also note that maize neither stores as well nor resists drought as robustly. Southern Africanist scholars debate maize's role, perhaps by abetting a population rise, in the elaboration of chiefdoms in the eighteenth century. This bears on its role in the instability that followed the onset of repeated droughts in the early nineteenth century. See Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 7; Gump, "Ecological Change and Pre-Shakan State Formation,” 60-61. Gump does not deny that the overseas trade had by the mid eighteenth century reached what would become “Zululand,” but he contrasts such trade with agricultural change, particularly the adoption of maize. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke*, 35-37. My point is that the two are the same: maize is a marker of exchange with the colonial world.

Also laying out the environmental argument, while expressing doubt, are Cope, *The Years of Conquest*, 30; and Landau (who notes that maize is "American 'Indian corn") *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa*, 36.


For a recent argument that drought, particularly in 1824-1829, contributed to suffering and probably to violence, see Hannaford and Nash, "Climate, History, Society over the last Millennium in Southeast Africa," 370-392; Garstang, Coleman, and Therrell, "Climate and the Mfecane," 110.