Representations of the “enemy” and of the allied levies in imperial and colonial texts of the South African Frontier Wars of 1834, 1846 and 1851.

Aim:

A primary focus of this research is to examine how imperial and colonial texts represented the Xhosa and Khoikhoi oppositional forces in the 6th, 7th and 8th Frontier wars in the Eastern Cape. As a unit of study, I shall focus on the three longest and most significant of the Frontier Wars, which took place between the years 1834 and 1853. Chronologically, however, the period under discussion will be less finite, as events preceding and succeeding these wars will be outlined to provide a frame for the central focus for the research.

I have several objectives in this research prompted by various scholarly debates about the nature of the frontier and of concomitant understandings of landscape; the impact of imperialism on the Cape; and the production and circulation of knowledge within the imperial context. I also intend to examine later historical works that have tried to capture the significance of the events on the Eastern Frontier in the early to mid 19th century.

What is novel about this research is the intention to engage with historical narrative as a way of deepening understanding of authorial intention and the often contradictory and complex perspectives that white settlers brought to bear on accounts of their society, the landscape and military encounters. Reflections on the Frontier Wars rarely raise notions of historical narrativity and the discursive production of identity. It will be argued that concessions to language and identity can enlarge and invigorate historical discussion and can provide opportunities to include metaphorical and figurative dimensions into historical interpretation. In general, liberal and neo-marxist interpretations have claimed that military and colonial narratives are implicitly racist and conservative. It will be suggested that revisionist narratives, such as those proposed by Hayden White, allow us to revisit historical texts with a more nuanced understanding of their prefiguration and their narrative elements.

White claims that history is a narrative discourse which combines known parts (events or traces of the past) which are then ‘imagined’ into ‘invented wholes’. (White, 1999) He suggests that all histories are articulated in some kind of narrative form and the choice of perspective (whether it is, for example, scientific or romantic) is ultimately an aesthetic or a moral rather than epistemological construct. To create such a construct, traces or data are organized and then reconstituted into an historical narrative. Historians need to use three types of explanation: argument, emplotment and ideology for a recognizable history to emerge.

White uses a very different register from a number of other historians and his theories have not met with unequivocal acceptance. One of his most stringent critics has been Marwick (1995) whose objections to White concentrate on what he considers to be an attack on the professionalism of historians and their commitment to ‘fact’ and to ‘truth’. He argues that the historian’s work is not fictive.
and it is their commitment to the truth that differentiates ‘historians’ from ‘novelists’. The realities of rigorous archival research are what set the historian apart from the spinner of yarns:

“History is about finding things out, and solving problems, rather than about spinning narratives or telling stories.” (Marwick, 1995: 12) and “What is ‘fact’ or not (at least provisionally) has to be established from the sources …” (Marwick, 1995: 21)

In his response to Marwick’s accusations of compromising historical truth and adhering to notions of ‘relativity’, White proposes that:

“It is not to say that there is no such thing as a historical event, that there is no possibility of distinguishing between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’, or that everything is ‘ideology’ or, beyond that, that anything goes, everything is ‘relative’, and nothing is ‘objective’. What it does mean that what counts as an event, as a fact, and as an adequate representation or explanation of a historical phenomenon must be adjudged to be ‘relative’ to the time, place and cultural conditions of its formulation.” (White, 1995: 244)

A more subtle and interesting analysis of colonial writing can emerge from this reading. I do not intend to adopt a ‘historicist’ approach, but I do wish to retain an understanding of the contingency and ‘cultural conditions’ that delimited the narratives within their century. White’s ideas about the production of historical discourse and the organizing principles of argument, emplotment and ideology provide a way into historical narratives which must surely contribute to a more complex account of these narratives than if I were merely examining them for ‘evidence’ of a material culture. The reason for the inclusion of military biographies is that they can contribute to an understanding of the colonization process of South Africa. Not only do they provide more texture and detail of the Frontier Wars, but also, as the observations of some of the narratives are perspicacious, they allow for a more multifaceted view to emerge in relation to a turbulent colonial society.

When examining the subject of representation in relation to the Frontier Wars, one is inexorably drawn into debates of race, difference and ‘othering’. Military and settler writings deliver a complex picture of the ‘enemy’, not only do they demonstrate varying forms of narrative, such as the dispatch and military memoir, but the events selected and their representation differ and are subject to shifts of emphasis contingent to the exigencies of a particular War.

Central questions necessarily will address issues of representation around the vilification and depreciation of the enemy. However, there are disjunctive instances in military texts which reveal admissions of admiration or portray certain commonalities of the soldiering experience which will be taken into cognizance. These commonalities are reminiscent of John Keegan’s (1999) notion of a ‘free masonry’ amongst soldiers. The implication is that soldiers, whether ‘friend’ or ‘enemy’, share similar experiences and this leads them to construct meanings of war, or battle, which differ from civilian understandings. Whether this construal is apposite to the Easter Frontier is debatable. However, it can be argued that the Frontier is not best represented dichotomously, nor can it be delineated as an indefinite interplay of the strategies of subjugation and resistance. Instead, it requires a more flexible reading which incorporates notions of shifting identities and intersecting imperial and colonial relations.
and knowledge systems. The study will attempt to make connections, and disaggregations, amongst official, colonial and military discourses within the context of the Frontier Wars. Official discourse frequently, and perhaps incautiously, has been conflated with military discourse; hence, the research aims to investigate what in fact differentiated military discourse from other imperial and colonial discourses.

An additional objective of this research is to investigate how the Cape Mounted Riflemen and the colonial Levies were represented in the military texts. Analyses of the role of the levies frequently do not feature in historical accounts of the Frontier Wars. This trend could be the result of the politically ambiguous and liminal role of the levies, but it also points to their underrepresentation in the historical record. Over the last decade, South African historiography has expanded to provide a more encompassing historiographical purview. In the 1970s and early 1980s, revisionist historians sought to place emphasis on the political economy of the 19th Century Cape and on analyses of resistance and opposition to colonization. These perspectives did not always provide nuanced understandings of the ‘complicities’ of certain groups in the Frontier Wars.

It will be suggested in the research that military discourse (which includes the narratives of soldiers) was by no means homogeneous and as such requires closer analysis and re-evaluation. Nor did it narrowly construe the notion of the ‘enemy’: a number of the narratives, for instance, include ideas about the racial composition and social status of people at the Cape and are not unmitigatedly prejudiced. One of the intentions of this research is to investigate and possibly revise the assumption that military and settler discourses were monolithically ‘militarist’ and ideologically conservative. Individuals in the army and in the settler community, at different times, demonstrated a number of political and ideological persuasions as well as conflicting understandings of their South African enemies and the country in which they found themselves. In addition, the regular army at the Cape was unable to remain aloof from metropolitan authority. The strictures they experienced due to the parsimoniousness of the British Government and the intervention from political lobbies such as the humanitarians in the British Government in the 1830s were just some of the limitations on the production of a unitary military discourse at the Cape. (Mostert, 1992, Le Cordeur, 1988, Lester, 1998)

Several contributory aspects to a more comprehensive understanding of military discourse rest on the following questions: How much was the army a ‘knowledge-based’ institution? What did soldiers do besides fight? Did their ‘expert’ knowledge lead to the “power to identify, pronounce and control South Africa’s indigenous inhabitants”? (Dubow, 2006:4). Hence, within the context of the preceding questions the research also will refer to knowledge systems and ideas prevalent in 19th Century texts and attempt to demonstrate how these ideas were sustained or shifted across the first half of the century.

Dubow points out that the “…relationship of knowledge to power, and its supporting claims to national identity went through four identifiable phases from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century”. (Dubow, 2006: 4) The emphasis of this research will be on the first phase of the 19th Century which was characterized by the establishment of a settler “middle class civic order” critical of autocratic, gubernatorial rule. (Dubow, 2006: 4) By 1834, the Cape was under the control of the British Governor (Sir Benjamin D’Urban) who was assisted by a Legislative Council. Although the Governors were to come
and go, this system was to remain intact throughout all the Frontier Wars in this study. In 1854, however, soon after the end of the 8th Frontier War, the Cape acquired a representative parliament underpinned by a qualified franchise.

The Cape’s close association with the British Government meant there was a strong metropolitan influence on the colonial infrastructure. But the colonies were not merely recipients of knowledge from the metropole, they also produced knowledge. (Dubow, 2006) Similarly, military experiences at the peripheries made an impact on imperial understandings of warfare, not least of all in relation to the strategy and tactics of guerilla warfare in the Colony and various adjustments had to be made in the face of the complex forms of resistance adopted by the Xhosa. Currently, in much the same way as the diffusionist model is regarded as an over simplification of imperial economics, so the circulation of knowledge has been reassessed. As Dubow (2006) points out, “...viewing the Empire as an interconnected zone constituted by multiple points of contact offers a significant advance on older, often economic-based theories of core and periphery.” (Dubow, 2006: 6)

Likewise, Thompson (2006) argues that “...the former notion of a metropolitan (or European) core and a colonial (or extra-European) periphery has lost its influence.” (Thompson, 2006: 43). This model is now considered to be an inadequate explanation for “...the complex interactions between Britain’s colonies and dominions...Instead, historians have been turning to the idea of empire as a species of global networking- a field of mutual influences and complex circuits of exchange. Whether one studies the circulation of people, ideas, discourses, texts or material objects, the growing consensus is that such mobilities have helped to define the colonial (and post colonial) experience of Britain and each of its former colonies.” (Thompson, 2006: 43)

The army, being peripatetic, was well-poised to play a part in the global web of exchange and it will be argued that a project which acknowledges such interconnectedness will be enhanced by extending its focus beyond parochial narratives. Concomitantly, more consciously transnational understandings can cast light on the patterns of social hierarchy and power within the seemingly close confines of the Colony. It is the contention of this research that by using evidence from 19th Century military discourses, a more complex picture will emerge pertaining to how, for instance, status was defined and how political power was demarcated at the Cape in the 19th Century.

Whether military discourse had a direct or more tangential contribution to the construction of a ‘settler identity’ in the 19th century is an area worthy of consideration. It has been well-documented that there were economic and social ties between the colonists and the military and that the colonists depended heavily on the military for protection. In effect, the military and the settlers have been conflated into a single subjugating body by a number of historians. (Stapleton, 1994, Elbourne, 2000) It will be argued that this commingling of identity does not address the complexity and antagonisms of the colonial interface. Insufficient care has been taken in the discussion of colonial and military societies and their component parts, their antipathies and their different self-interests. It would appear that the relationship between the imperial military sector and the settlers frequently was disputatious and one of distrust rather than cooperation. (Mostert, 1992, Milton, 1983) Likewise, assumptions of political sympathy and social cohesion between the groups have slipped into modern historiography. As Dubow
points out,” ...recent generations of historians have tended to lose sight of the salience of tensions between imperialists and colonists.” (Dubow, 2006:5)

There has been a growing interest in the construction of colonial and settler identities. (Dubow, 2006; Beinart, 2005; Lester, 1994) In these studies, the notion of settler identity has emerged as more elastic and notions of contradiction and diversity have replaced the essentialisms and binaries that previously haunted notions of settler identity. Furthermore it has been suggested that not only unambiguous tendencies to oppress and to dominate culturally the colonized existed amongst settler discourses. Some colonial narratives displayed a consistent antipathy towards the colonized, whereas others were less coherent in their opprobrium or inclined towards sympathetic insight into the dilemmas that sprang from the colonial project. These sentiments are evident in the writings of colonial soldiers and settlers such as Stretch and Stockenstrom, who although controversial, were generally more sympathetic towards the condition of indigenous peoples. (Le Cordeur, 1988; Stapleton, 1994)

It will be argued that notions of identity can be applied constructively to the military context as to the civil, and I shall attempt to investigate this strand by using a number of in-the-field military journals and memoirs. A further range of texts will be used in the research: texts emanating from military structures which comprised specific reports about maneuvers, commissariat reports and dispatches. Officers were trained to write reports which took a specific form and had their own rules of discourse. (Keegan, 1999; Holmes, 2001) The texts had authority within the army especially when they were concerned with tactics and numbers of the enemy sighted, but the question remains whether they transcended their context and became informative or influential in ‘public’ discourse. Foucault proposes that every mode of thinking involves implicit rules which materially restrict our train of thought. (Gutting, 2005) This notion is particularly evident in military reports which contain explicit rules that ‘discipline’ the texts and produce dispassionate, ‘factual’ disquisitions.

In fact, because of their formality, military reports often demonstrate a dearth of representational material and it is for this reason, amongst others, that the research intends to include personal correspondence and a number of journals which provide a far richer metaphorical seam. On one level, the analysis of these texts will rely on the self-presentation of the protagonists to provide understandings of identity and ideological orientation. At another, the research also sets out to demonstrate that theories of representation and discourse analysis can be of assistance in analyzing the texts and the encoded messages within them. By using narrative theories, such as Hayden White’s, it is hoped that figurative and tropological elements will be deciphered within the biographical texts, thus enabling a more nuanced interpretation of their intentions.

Notions of the frontier will also be of thematic interest to the research for a number of reasons. Firstly, despite shifts in nomenclature the term ‘Frontier Wars’ has persisted in current historiography and as such understandings of the ‘frontier’ constitute an important component of any discussion of the Frontier Wars. Secondly, interpretations of the frontier have varied over time. Lester (1994) suggests that the Governors at the Cape between 1806 and the 1830s tended to see the frontier as a ‘strategic boundary’ which had to be accurately delineated so as to provide something visible to protect; essentially it was seen as a line of defence. The idea of the Frontier has been expanded in a number of
20th and 21st century studies and an aim of the research is to provide an overview of these analyses. Notions of the frontier are pertinent to this study because of the ‘real’ and the symbolic centrality of the frontier in military strategy and imagination. In addition, the frontier held significant symbolic power over the settler population, it delimited their power, but because it was subject to alteration it came to represent the promise of acquisition and expansion. Although the consequences of frontier transmutation for the Xhosa were to be significantly dissimilar from those of the settlers, the frontier was to become inextricably tied to Xhosa experience and dispossession.

Limitations

This thesis does not pretend to provide an inclusive survey of the Frontier Wars. The most obvious inadequacy is the marginalization of the ‘voice’ of Xhosa in the Frontier Wars. There are a number of reasons for this: the research focus is on the deconstruction of texts mainly written by military personnel, hence the perspectives of the ‘enemy’ will be seen through the prism of dominant, lettered, anglophone discourses. However, as the objective is to provide a critical analysis of the texts and to demonstrate an awareness of the positionality of the narratives, the intention is not to justify dominant discursive endeavours nor is it intended to defend subjugating practices.

Where pertinent, theories of masculinity will be considered in relation to narratives of ‘soldierly’ behavior, and Victorian understandings of masculinity. Although officers’ wives such as Harriet Ward left memoirs, women, by and large have been relegated in the discussion.

Note on terminology

Racial nomenclature has had a long history of revision in South Africa. I shall attempt to use current, academically acceptable terminology of peoples and geography. However, I shall retain extant terminology when quoting from original sources. There has been some debate around the use of the word ‘indigenous’, with certain historians suggesting that the preferred usage should be ‘autochthonous’. (Dubow, 2006) I have tended to use these two words as synonyms rather than substitute the one for the other.

Rationale

South African history has been characterized by a long tradition of military incursion and resistance throughout the nineteenth century. Much of South Africa’s historiography bears testimony to this conflict and yet the attention given by historians to the Frontier Wars has fluctuated over the years. This formative period in South African history has often been circumvented and later periods concerned with urbanization and the growth of capitalism in the north of South Africa have gained prominence. It will be proposed that the 6th, 7th and 8th Frontier Wars present a relatively neglected area in the history of the Cape in the nineteenth century. Yet, notions of the Frontier still hold emotive sway. Arguably, discourses emerging from military texts have a longer reach than the 19th century and penetrate into the 20th and 21st centuries. Motifs found in Frontier histories still emerge in current discourse and find their way into understandings of land distribution, social justice and social relationships in South Africa. In the same
way, land claims often bear witness to shifting frontier boundaries and the colonial acquisition of land which resulted in the displacement of indigenous peoples.

This enquiry into the Frontier Wars has a number of different junctures: firstly it is a discussion and overview of analyses of the 6th, 7th and 8th Frontier Wars; secondly, it is an enquiry into the narratives and documents emanating from the military sector and of what can be found in these ‘traces’ concerning the relationships among the military, the ‘enemy’ and the levies; thirdly it is about the wider implications of military discourse as a knowledge-based phenomenon and its interventions into colonial and imperial discourse.

At the level of content, although there are a number of histories concerning aspects of the Frontier and the Frontier Wars (ranging from Godlonton (1965), Theal (1913), Mostert (1992) and Peires (2003)), there is a paucity of research covering the army and its functioning in the 19th Century South African context. An additional area that has been underrepresented in the historiography of the Frontier Wars is that of the relationships among the regular, imperial army, the colonial forces and the Xhosa and Khoi oppositional forces. My justification for pursuing this focus is that an examination of the role of the military in South Africa could lead to insights into the practices and conflictual interests of the regular and colonial forces and into the discursive significance of military reports and their influence on the social fabric of the Cape.

Limited research has been conducted on the representation of the levies within contemporary narratives. It will be argued that this area requires further investigation to assess the complex social relationship between the levies and the other forces. Socially, levies occupied liminal positions on the Eastern Frontier. As Howe (2002) points out, it frequently was the “division and diversity” amongst the colonized populations that provided a crucial factor in the maintenance of power by the numerically small number of imperial forces. (Howe, 2002:95) In addition, Howe (2002) proposes that the exercise of imperial power was not due only to superior technology and more efficient and disciplined troops, it also rested on local recruitment. Indeed, if colonial conquest relied heavily on the enlistment of fighting men from among the colonized populations themselves, as Howe suggests, then the levies’ role was critical to the colonial project and demands far more attention than it previously has been accorded.

Reasons for conducting the research are not merely predicated on the paucity of content, but also on the requisite to pursue more recent theoretical insights. Many of the ideas selected in this study will be similar to those investigated by historians who have engaged with theories of narrative, representation and identity construction. Until recently, the relative neglect of histories to engage with these notions has been fairly pervasive in the historiography.

There are a number of reasons for this, in the first half of the 20th century, histories were dominated by anglophone, ‘liberal’ historians such as De Kiewet, Walker and Macmillan and a number of Afrikaner historians such as Coetzee. The majority of these historians fell out of favour with the emergence of the revisionist paradigms in the 1970s and early 1980s. In the first instance, revisionist histories were deeply critical of the tendentious nature and apologist tendencies of histories sympathetic to the apartheid government. Secondly, in opposition to both segregationist and liberal discourses, revisionist historians
tended to stress class over race relations and to focus on the social and economic interdependence of South Africans within a fundamentally conflictual and unequal society. (Worden, 2007)

A number of the histories written prior to the 1970s were methodologically empirical and reliant upon the meticulous collection of data and ‘facts’ pertaining to the historical endeavour. In contradistinction to this, revisionist historians focused on analysis and interpretation using methods developed from Marxist and neo-Marxist insights. The subject matter of these studies tended to focus on the mineral revolution and its effects on capitalist formation and concomitant racial and class stratification. Chronologically, these studies often began in the 1860s and were projected into the 20th century. (Keegan, 1996, Worden, 2007)

During the revisionist period, the debate widened to provide opportunities for critiques of histories that were deemed to over-emphasize state power and the damaging effects of oppressive state structures. This led certain historians, influenced by the social history movement, to focus on histories of resistance and the experiences of the ‘under classes’: workers, women, the marginalized and those designated as socially ‘deviant’. (Worden, 2007) As Dubow comments,

“For at least a quarter of a century the most innovative directions in South African historiography have focused on history “from below” and, in particular, on recovering the voices of the forgotten and the dispossessed. The history of resistance to white power, whether expressed directly or indirectly, has been of central concern.” (Dubow, 2006: 12)

What broadly could be described as a ‘social history’ movement grew significantly during the later 1980s and the 1990s. More emphasis was placed on ‘micro-histories’ and narratives, hence, diaries, iconography and oral testimony became important sources for the historian. The new emphasis on ‘subjectivities’ led to critiques of empirical methodologies. Not only were methodological perspectives challenged but there were epistemological shifts in what constituted history. The debates around what constituted knowledge were fuelled by positions (broadly post modern) that were antithetical towards the empiricism and mimeticism seen to be redolent in earlier interpretations. (Worden, 2007; Jenkins, 2007)

Although the notion of ‘history from below’ has not been completely submerged, recent South African historiographical trends have made certain departures from social history perspectives. Evidence of these diversions can be seen in the work of Dubow (2006), Beinart (2003) and Lester (2002). Through their work, histories of ideas, globalization and histories of settlers, ecology and agriculture also have gained impetus. Work on the British Empire such as that of Wilson (2002) has focused on the notion of the empire as a global network in which social relations and cultural exchange networks existed between the metropole and the colonies. Furthermore, Wilson (2002) suggests that studies of the empire have become more inflected and encompass notions of identity and performativity, as well as of global networking. More complex understandings of the colonial process are emerging from these studies. Hence, a further reason for doing the research is to demonstrate that responses to imperialism were “not simply polarized between imitation and rejection, collaboration and resistance”. (Howe, 2002: 98) An attempt
will be made in this study to investigate the area of ‘complicity’ and to provide fresh insights into the contention that roles were not always fixed and that alliances shifted.

Notions of identity and ‘othering’ also have been re-evaluated. In this regard, Dubow (2006) proposes that Foucauldian and Saidian studies tend to elide colonial and imperial knowledge. He argues that the ‘western gaze’ does not always deal with the intricacies of colonial power relations, nor with the complexities of these societies. Simply to refer to the ‘other’ is an over-simplification, in that the “urge to know about ‘others’ is “closely bound up with the process of identity formation.” (Dubow, 2006:14) In this sense, colonial knowledge was not just an instrumental resource, but also a way of demonstrating one’s worth to one’s “peers”. (Dubow, 2006:14) Recent representations of the regular army at the Cape still tend to over-generalize the role of the army as monolithically oppressive and to conflate imperialist or official discourse with military discourse. Whether military representations of the enemy were more pejorative than civilian renditions is open to examination. In either event, military discourse often ends up being marginalized or ignored as an important component of 19th century knowledge systems.

My argument is that the development of ideas around identity, representation and narrative constitutes a neglected field in the history of the frontier. The utilization of narrative theory, such as White’s, will provide a fresh interpretation of the military journals and 19th century histories of the Frontier Wars. Narrative theory allows for a discussion of these texts as ‘verbal constructs’, that is, as constructs which use ‘ordinary language’. As expressions of ordinary language, they include the ‘fictive’, and are embellished by literary artifacts such as metaphor. Understanding the literary sensibilities of the text can, according to Jenkins, assist us to “…recognize and make explicit the fictive in our histories”. (Jenkins, 1995: 177) A number of military journals may well contain some accurate delineations of ‘factual evidence’ but they are also ‘ideological’ and they are ‘emplotted’ as, for instance, comedic or tragic narratives. The reason for adopting this interpretation is not only to provide a less deterministic history of the Frontier Wars: it will be argued that narrative theory has been underutilized in Frontier War historiography and that its inclusion will offer a novel perspective in a field often dominated by social, economic and political concerns.

The journals and memoirs of soldiers on campaign in South Africa are fairly numerous. This in itself is a good reason for conducting the research, but there are further implications. Because of the heterogeneous composition of the army, the sources are multifarious. On the one hand they emanate from a dominant lettered class who contributed to the intellectual climate of the Cape, on the other hand written narratives have emerged from the lower ranks of the army and oral evidence from a variety of sectors has been collected by historians such as Cory. Thus the study will not make use of literate middle class texts solely; it will also assess representations of the ‘enemy’ and notions of identity from the vantage point of less prominent members of society. An important component of the research will be an attempt to assess the role that the narratives played in the cultural condition of the time and whether they can be interpreted as influential in relation to social configurations at the Cape.

Recently, scholars have addressed the exchange of knowledge and the interaction of different knowledge systems between the metropole and the colonies. (Dubow, 2007) The question is whether this notion has relevance to military history. There are a number of reasons to suggest that it does. The
adoption of military strategy and tactics is a particular case in point. The British army was often on the back foot because it was not always able to adapt to the guerilla tactics of the Xhosa. Likewise, the Xhosa started using a noticeable number of guns in the 6th frontier War and were using them in quantities during the 7th and the 8th Frontier Wars. (Peires, 2003) Conducting such research can demonstrate links between military knowledge and other knowledge systems. For instance, ‘knowing’ the topography and the people who inhabited it was central to the military project and to warfare. Another neglected area is the study of the process of gathering and preserving military knowledge during the period. Intelligence gathering generally involved interviewing prisoners, women and children and there are intriguing instances of direct speech and transcriptions of conversations between soldiers and the indigenous population in the narratives.

If the armed forces in South Africa indeed were influential in the knowledge circuits of the first half of the 19th Century, they also had another contribution: central to the army’s project was, and is, violence and killing. South Africa historiography has long considered violence as the sine qua non of the colonial project and graphic descriptions of violent incidents have appeared in later histories of the Frontier. (Mostert, 1993, Stapleton, 1994, Maclennan, 1986) However, this centrality often has been assumed and scant attention has been paid to the ideas and practices which informed, sanctioned and constrained acts of violence in the army. As Keegan writes, there are ‘rules of procedure’ in the army which define violence as appropriate or as ‘improper’. (Keegan, 1999)

That there were any number of acts of ‘improper’ violence and instances of dishonourable conduct by the military on the Frontier is without question. What has been neglected in a number of studies, however, is the recognition that notions of violence need to be complicated and more finely described. It could be argued that in some historical commentaries there are ill-formed understandings of the differentiation between ‘battle’ and ‘soldiering’ which could result in misleading assumptions and a limited understanding of the role of the army at the Cape. More refined questioning needs to be introduced around the intrinsic system of violence in the army and how this was negotiated.

**Literature Review**

The following overview is not chronological instead it has been constructed thematically. Rather than clustering theoretical interpretations (such as liberal, Marxist, post modernist) of the Frontier Wars, the themes will reflect content as well as the theoretical persuasions of the authors.

**Military History**

This section has been included to position the research within the parameters of military history. As pointed out previously, the study is not intended to be narrowly construed as a military history but it will have aspects in common with some of the identifying features of the genre.

In his overview of military history and its ‘deficiencies’, in *The Face of Battle*, John Keegan (1999) argues that the extensive grasp of military history makes it liable to any number of emphases and interpretations. One such emphasis is the history of generalship, such as histories of Wellington. Other
histories focus less on the ‘man’ and more on the accoutrements, ordnance, weaponry and the regiments of war.

Military history, according to Keegan, is also the ‘study of institutions’ that is of the armies and navies, strategies and the ethos under which they fought. (Keegan, 1919:29) It has been the view of a number of historians that battle history or campaign history has “primacy over all other branches of military historiography”. (Keegan, 1999:30) Within the ambit of this view, the ‘battle piece’ has a long and venerable history from antique, classical renditions to more recent developments. How one approaches the battle piece is subject to historiographical tendencies: the battle piece can be a ‘featureless’ and sparse description of events, or it can be an exposition of the feelings and experiences of those who participated in its turmoil. How emotion, imagination and sentiment are represented in narratives of war has become one of the central tenets of 20th and 21st century military history. Military histories have become more inclusive of the view ‘from below’: the private and the able seaman are now considered not only worthy of the historical record but are often central to it. As Keegan points out,

“Allowing the combatants ‘to speak for themselves’ is not only a permissible, but when and where possible an essential ingredient of battle narrative and battle analysis.” (Keegan, 1999:30)

Keegan’s deconstruction of famous ‘battle pieces’ starting with Napier and going through to the 20th century, are particularly illuminating as they demonstrate a remarkable consistency of emplotment and of the use of figures of speech (the iron tempest, regiments staggered like sinking ships and so on). In addition, they frequently demonstrate an inertia amongst enemy companies which is contiguous to the vivid and animated descriptions of one’s own heroic and rallying troops. Fear, running away and the improbability of the leadership’s heroism become occluded in the formulaic structure of the piece. The narrative becomes plausible and ‘natural’ because it is so frequently repeated. It becomes part of the cultural mythoi of a society because it uses a recognizable and emotionally gratifying structure. Keegan is suggesting something important, which is that military history texts are prone to narrative conventions, repetition and to the familiar use of accepted metaphors. (Keegan, 1999)

A further overview of military history has been provided by the American historian, Sherry Smith (1998). She demonstrates how military historiography has broadened to encompass “...echohistory, social history and New Western History [the American ‘West’] to elicit a nuanced understanding of the power dynamics that accompanied conquest in the West.” (Smith, 1998:149) Her historiographical overview demonstrates certain parallels with South African ‘Frontier’ history and her overview of recent directions in military history is useful. Smith questions why historical investigations concerned with the military are frequently overlooked:

“Why the relative absence of soldiers, the army, or the Indian [American] wars in the latest synthesis of scholarship in the West? Is there nothing new to say about such people and events? Is the material hopelessly irrelevant to current concerns about the past? Are those people who are drawn to writing and reading about such topics consequently old fashioned, insensitive to contemporary issues and interests and, and inclined to be pro -military and anti-Indian? ...Obviously the answer to all these questions is no.” (Smith, 1998:150)
As Smith argues, to disregard the importance of an inclusive history results in the abnegation of a crucial aspect of ‘Frontier’ disputes: that they are characterized by relationships which extend further than the conventional government/army/official intersections. More recent correctives to the historical record have included studies of “the relationships among various ethnic groups and between the genders”. (Smith, 1998:154) She argues that, a survey of the preceding relationships can elicit more refined understandings of power. As Smith points out, “Categorizing historical figures or groups as winners and losers or victims and victimizers is powerful - and problematic”. (Smith, 1998: 155)

It is problematic because it reduces and oversimplifies complex experiences. It also undermines certain questions around whether the colonized were completely overwhelmed, whether they had some control over their circumstances, or whether they merely responded to events. In the case of the Xhosa, there are clear indications of control even if their attempts to resist and conquer the British forces and the settlers failed. They used a number of different strategies besides military resistance which took a variety of forms ranging from verbal negotiation, threats and passive resistance.

Smith also suggests that the “racial and ethnic dynamics and complexities of the multi-cultural and multi-class army” in the American west need to be investigated further. (Smith, 1998: 158) She identifies a number of research questions which are concerned with the “status and outlook” of black soldiers and with their relationship to white officers. (Smith, 1998: 162) These are relevant questions and can be applied with some modification to the South African context, especially in relation to the role of the Cape Mounted Riflemen (CMR) and the levies and their motives for enlisting in the army. Not all people volunteered, most Khoi and Mfengu levies were rounded up at times of war, but the CMR men enlisted voluntarily and a glance at the rolls seems to indicate that joining the CMR ran in families. (Everson, 1978)

Notions of the Frontier

I have focused on Legassick’s article on the Frontier in some detail for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was influential: Worden (2007) argues that it was so persuasive that Legassick “almost single –handedly destroyed revisionist historical interest in the early colonial Cape for almost a generation”. (Worden, 2007: 4) Secondly, while rejecting liberal interpretations, his discussion of ‘early’ liberal historians provides a useful overview of some of the major debates concerning the frontier in the 1920s and 1930s. Thirdly, from the point of view of this research it is interesting that a number of the ‘frontier’ tropes that Legassick discusses appear to remain in place in the more recent research covering the area. This is not to suggest that earlier historiography necessarily anticipated recent concerns, even though they were often prescient, but that the frontier dyads of ‘good’ or ‘bad’; economically exclusive or inclusive; segregationist or integrationist seem to have remained pervasive in the face of recent attempts at providing discursive interpretations of the frontier which explore symbolic and imaginative constructions of the Frontier.

In spite of the perpetuation of certain frontier binaries, current perspectives which examine representations of the frontier and of ‘landscape’ have made important contributions to how the idea of the frontier held an emotive sway over the settler imagination and came to represent and justify land
appropriation. Whereas previously, the frontier often was defined in terms of its spatial and temporal limitations, recent studies of landscape have provided more ‘triangulated’ analyses of place, space and power.

One binary which has had considerable currency is that of the open and closed frontier, (which includes the notion of the closing frontier). Gilomee (1989) argues that a closing frontier is a zone in which a certain amount of colonization and settlement has taken place, but the authority over the area is weak both politically and militarily. The zone is ‘closing’ because despite the weakness in administration, the settlement process is fairly advanced and the balance of power is tipped in the direction of the colonizers. Processes of closure include economic closure characterized by a scarcity of land, a shift from pastoral to commercial farming, growing social stratification and an increasingly authoritarian political structure. (Gilomee, 1989) A ‘closed’ frontier means that the issues of subjugation, inequality and exclusion are a central concern for most of the indigenous population and, as Saunders (1981) points out, compels them to adjust to the exigencies of the colonial regime.

In his overview of frontier historiography, one of Legassick’s (1982) central contentions was to dispute the notion that white South Africans’ antagonism towards black people and the segregationist and discriminatory policies of the 19th and much of the 20th century had their origins in the Eastern Frontier. He considered the post-1867 period, which saw the rise of industrial capitalism, as being more formative of racial identity and division. In his critical discussion of understandings of the frontier, Legassick suggests that, over time, the frontier has been construed as both a universal and a protean concept, adjustable depending on the ideological propensities of the narrator:

“It is indeed the influence of the frontier on racial attitudes which has been its most persistently argued effect: the frontiersman regarded the non-white only as a servant or an enemy. It was the frontier tradition which was responsible for the job-colour bar in industry, for opposition to the common non-racial but qualified Cape franchise, for hostility to African ‘squatters’. In addition, the frontier became to be associated with the Boer’s land hunger, poor agricultural methods, wastefulness and avarice.” (Legassick, 1980: 41)

These ‘traditions’ were connected to other myths clustered around the character of the frontier and the ‘frontiersmen’ who inhabited it in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The original ‘trekboers’ have been variously represented as conservative, Calvinist, isolated and purveyors of an ideology that remained doggedly uninfluenced by the cultural and political climate of the metropole or of the Western Cape. ‘Romantic’ versions of the myth also proliferated and the ‘frontier’ became symbolic of a particular ‘spirit’ which incorporated rebelliousness, suspicion of authority and individualism.

Legassick (1982) points out that these attitudes were not necessarily adopted in their entirety by historians, many of whom qualified and corrected some of the more outlandish assumptions. Historians such as De Kiewet, Macmillan and Macrone, while not immune to a number of the influential assumptions about the frontier, also developed their historiography to provide counterpoints to ‘pro-frontier’ historians such as Theal and Cory. Not all liberal historians concluded that the Dutch trekboere were the only culpable protagonists on the frontier. Walker (1968), for example, places all settlers (both
English and Dutch) under the rubric of “land hungry”. Likewise, most settlers were seen to play a role in the subjugation of indigenous peoples in the area. However, there were important exceptions: missionaries, certain government officials and a number of rational, liberal minded colonists who provided oppositional discourses to the racially prejudiced and anti-modernist ‘frontier’ perspective were excluded from the mass of settlers. Both Macmillan and De Kiewet attempted to provide alternative and sympathetic representations of the ‘missionaries’ in their histories.

The more obviously emotional and ideological components of ‘settler’ historiography were considered particularly unpalatable. Liberal historiography was largely ‘empirical’ and concerned with social and economic aspects of history. For example, De Kiewet, by providing what he saw as a necessary corrective to the romanticism inherent in many pro frontier accounts, comes close to bathos when he downplays any affective and partisan leanings that historians might have about the frontier. Violence, antipathy and trauma were reduced to survival and to conflict over natural resources. The social relations that emerge out of the fracas are indicative of the interdependence of black and white people in the frontier region, but as De Kiewet’s sobering conclusion demonstrates, there are tragic consequences for the dispossessed:

“In the writing of South African history, it was long customary to believe that the chronic conflict of the... frontier was the result of spontaneous hostility of a savage and treacherous people to the presence of as superior race. Actually the conflict of black and white was fed more by similarities than differences. The opposing lines of settlement struggled for the control of the same natural resources of water, grass and soil. It was not a romantic frontier like the American West or heroic like the North-West frontier of India. ...The stuff of legend is not easily found in the process which turned Ama-Xhosa, Zulus or Basuto into farm labourers, kitchen servants or messengers.”(De Kiewet, 1972: 48)

The frontier was viewed as conflictual by the ‘early’ liberal writers, but it was also portrayed as ‘stage’ of immense importance. It was there that the central players unwittingly were “...engaged in the formation of a new society and the establishment of new economic and social bonds.” (De Kiewet, 1972: 49). Hence, there emerged a reworked notion of the Frontier which emphasized its adaptability in relation to labour practices and its economic integration, particularly through trade and commodity production although these practices were acknowledged to vary along the continuum of domination. Legassick himself was to renarrativise the past, by shifting the centre stage from the frontier to the mineral revolution of the north and to focus on the growth of capitalism and the relations of production that were to emerge from the late 1870s onwards.

Contemporaneously with Legassick’s analysis of the frontier, Lamar and Thompson (1981) published The Frontier in History which provided a comparative view of the American Western and the South African frontiers in a collection of paired articles which covered aspects such as economic and religious interventions on the frontier. Lamar and Thompson positioned their use of the comparative method within the historiographical tradition of the Annales historians and that of 1970s histories of slavery, by such authors as Foner and Genovese (1969), Davis (1966). The preceding works extended their purview beyond a history of slavery in America to include the disparate forms that the institution assumed in other societies such as Africa.
Lamar and Thompson justified their use of the comparative method by positing that the approach challenged parochialism and provided “a counterpoint to narrow specialization” (Lamar and Thompson, 1981: 12) By transcending parochial and regional concerns, they hoped “to raise questions about our individual regions that we might otherwise have ignored” and contribute to “an enrichment of understanding of both regions”. (Lamar and Thompson, 1981: 13) However, attempts to structure the book as a “series of systematic comparisons” were not practicable because historians did not have sufficient “control” over the histories of both frontiers to apply this method efficaciously. (Lamar and Thompson, 1981: 13)

Lamar and Thompson expanded on their understanding of the comparative method by drawing out ‘similarities and differences’ between the American and South African frontiers. Here the comparison of variables such as disasters (disease), demography, economic conditions came under scrutiny. A number of limitations of the method emerge from the text: over generalization, a litany of ‘similarities and differences’, and an adherence to the classification of events. All of which contribute to an attenuation of the explanatory power of the method.

Jenkins (2003) suggests that ‘in all types of histories’ historical concepts are encountered. These concepts are frequently referred to as the ‘heartlands’ of history. Jenkins does not dispute that historians do, and should, ‘work’ certain concepts, but he argues convincingly that these concepts are not ‘timeless’ and do not necessarily “constitute the universal building blocks of knowledge”, nor are they free of ideological influence (Jenkins, 2003: 19). If they are ‘historicised’, it becomes apparent just how temporal and contingent they are upon their decade. Jenkins refers to an article by Steele (1989) in which he identifies the ‘heartland concepts’ of the 1960s as: time, space, sequence, moral judgment and social realism. In the 1970s these were reworked and refined, and consequently, concepts such as time, evidence, cause and effect, continuity and change and similarity and difference emerged as ‘heartland concepts’. Lamar and Thompson’s quest for similarity and difference situates their method within the 1970s and early 1980s tradition. This is not to suggest that because these concepts are no longer fashionable that they should be dismissed as useful constructs. Instead, new ways of looking at the problem of the frontier and colonialism have emerged which arguably make it possible to refine some of the more traduced comparisons made by Lamar and Thompson.

Although the notion of the frontier has not retained the prominence it held in earlier historiography, there have been a number of recent forays into its contested terrain. Current versions have focused on the language and representation of the frontier and its metaphorical constitution. In his article, the Fish River Bush and the Place of History, Anderson (2005) discusses representations of the Frontier Bush and argues that landscape should be understood ideologically and should be recognized as an ‘idea’ that has become embedded in the historiography of the frontier. The ‘Fish River Bush’ and the ‘Frontier’ have been represented as static, timeless, natural and absolute in a range of historical texts. Hence the idea of the ‘eternal landscape’ actually obscures the ‘reality’ which lies beneath such imperturbability: the ‘reality’ being the contestation and violence inherent to the Frontier. The idea of ‘eternity’ also conceals the opposing ideologies and social systems that played themselves out in this area.
Anderson’s (2005) article suggests that in many colonial texts the Xhosa were represented as synonymous with the ‘Bush’ and they were associated the ‘natural’ rather than the ‘human’. His recognition of symbolic representation is a useful adjunct to this study, however, Anderson’s use of Althusser as a theoretical authority impairs his argument for a number of reasons. It is misleading because it infers that there is a social and economic ‘base’ concealed within the ideology. Would the articulation of this concealed ‘base’ be free of the metaphors that seem to crowd in on the imperial texts? White (1999) argues that ideological propensities are unavoidable and should be consciously acknowledged before one falls into a fresh ideological quagmire.

Anderson’s approach to language alerts us to the ideological intentions within the texts. But do the descriptions of the bush only sanction the presence of empire? There is little reference made in the article to how the Xhosa would have described the Bush. A number of revisionist historians in the late 1970s and the 1980s mounted critiques of Althusserian interpretations as they frequently obscured the role of resistance and tended to focus on dominant structures and their ideologies. The experience of the Xhosa and the Khoi and their relationship with the Frontier and to the bush would have been considered crucial by the purveyors of such an approach. Another aspect that the notion of the ‘eternal Bush’ does not take cognizance of is that of the Saidian concept of adjacency (Said, 1993). The Bush might have been eternal and untamed but if one considers that adjacent to the primal bush was another manifestation of the British Empire: the erection of a panopticon provost in Grahamstown, a more complex picture of the ‘empire’ can be developed and one that complicates the natural connotations of the bush by demonstrating that the colony also bore the marks of Benthamite reason as well as those of ‘chaos’ and the ‘natural’.

Other interpretations of the landscape have provided more nuanced views of the theme. In his preface to Landscape and Power (2002) Mitchell suggests that vernacular understandings of landscape tend to emphasize its ‘indeterminacy’ and its exertion of a subtle emotional power over people. This imbues landscape with a sense of passivity and of ‘setting’; the abiding quality of landscape is that of ‘gestalt’, and as such, it largely remains unspecified. This observation occurs not only in commonsense understandings, but also within phenomenological and historical materialist positions which designate ‘place’ and space’ as being the primary analytical constructs over more amorphous understandings of ‘landscape’.

Drawing on De Certeau, Mitchell intimates that ‘place’ is associated with stability, the specific, the particular, with the law and prohibition; whereas ‘space’ is the “practiced place”: a street is a (planned) place in a city but it is “transformed into a space by walkers”. (Mitchell, 2002: viii). However, Mitchell argues that De Certeau’s analysis perpetuates a constraining binarism and he turns to Levebre for a more nuanced and triangulated understanding of space and place. Levebre uses the terms “perceived, conceived and lived space” (Mitchell, 2002: ix). ‘Perceived’ space is similar to De Certeau’s notion of spatial practices; ‘conceived’ space is planned, administrated and, finally, ‘lived’ space is ‘representational space’ which has been conceptualised symbolically. None of these three concepts can be considered as taking priority over the others, nor are they derivative of each other. Rather they are expressions of interconnectedness. The ‘place’ is where an event occurred, it becomes a ‘space’ through the practice of tourism, pilgrimages. The imaginary and the representational are to be found in the
postcards, souvenirs, memories and narratives surrounding the place and the practices which are inscribed on its surface. The imaginary landscape hence becomes woven into the “fabric of real places.” (Mitchell, 2002: xi)

Although notions of landscape have been influential in art history and literary criticism for some time, Beinart and McGregor, (2003) argue that the study of landscape has not had a long tradition within historical discourse. It is “…only recently that this topic has been explicitly addressed in African social and environmental history.” (Beinart and McGregor, 2003:4). They attribute this reluctance, in part, to the associations that ‘landscape’ has with European aesthetic traditions and property ownership and their irrelevance to African contexts. However they suggest that when it has been used:

“… by defining ‘landscape’ broadly, as an imaginative construction of the environment, new areas were opened up for Africanists. The notion of landscape has provided a valuable means of bringing together discussions of material changes in the environment, with imaginative interpretations – a combination that should stand at the heart of environmental history.” (Beinart and McGregor, 2002: 4)

Ideas about landscape have contributed to notions of ‘nation and identity’ both in relation to how Africans categorized themselves (e.g. as river people) and also in relation to settler identity. Settlers united around notions of the veld, the wilderness and invocations of the landscape were intended to appeal to an inclusive settler identity. But, of course, such ‘unity’ also implied ‘divided realities’: it also excluded certain people from the landscape.

Bunn (2002) provides an exposition of landscape, travellers and the ‘politics of representation’ by referring to two writers: Le Vaillant who was in South Africa in the late 18th century and Thomas Pringle in the early 1820s. Pringle is of interest in the context of this study because of his connections with the Eastern Cape. Bunn’s (2002) exploration of landscape and power in relation to text and illustration provides a direction which I consider to be of significance to my research. Much of the usefulness of this article lies in the discussion of representation and how written and pictorial images are assertions of empire and of South Africa’s distinctive social relations. However, there are aspects of the analysis which are less applicable and which run counter to some of the theoretical underpinnings I have selected for the research.

Bunn (2002) uses Pringle’s poem ‘Evening Rambles’ as a route into a consideration of “…how landscape, an aesthetic and material practice, helps to naturalize the settler subject and to establish a local version of the bourgeois public sphere.” (Bunn, 2002: 138) To become ‘naturalized’ into a landscape, means that the colonial subject is has to position himself or herself somewhere ‘between two worlds’: the metropole and the colonial. Thus, Bunn argues, the colonial writer has to invent a ‘transitional object’ which spans these two worlds. Pringle’s “Evening Rambles” is a “…topographical poem that attempts to situate the colonial subject in a prepared and controlled landscape.” (Bunn, 2002: 138) Hence attempts are made by the poet to introduce colonial imagery into the structures and aesthetics of British poetry writing so as to negotiate these two worlds. According to Bunn, ‘rambling’ is a ‘massive presumption’ for it suggests an ‘aristocratic control’ of ‘leisure time’ which is inconsistent with the intensive labour practices of indigenous people on the Frontier.
A number of more recent interpretations of the ‘colonial subject’ are at variance with this interpretation and suggest that the economy and the will to subjugate were not necessarily the determining factors in the constitution of subjectivities. Dubow (2007) for instance, argues that amongst certain Cape liberal intellectuals the impulse was not to subscribe to the rhetoric of subjugation. Nor can simply being in a colonial context be considered a presumption. The inclusion of ‘South Africanisms’ (Pringle’s poem is redolent with these, such as the Dutch words, spekboom and duiker) in colonial discourse does not necessarily indicate an attempt to dominate and control the environment. In fact these inclusions could be indicative of nascent forms of ‘patriotism’ or more specifically of a ‘South Africanism’ which demonstrates an affiliation to the new, colonial context rather than exhibiting a disdain for it. (Dubow, 2007)

Recently there has been a reworking of notions of periphery and empire and an acknowledgement of the importance of the colonial influence in the understandings ‘empire’. There are also fresh interpretations of identity and difference, as Wilson points out, “...identity is seen as less of a ‘thing’ than a historical relation whose very existence depends on temporally specific ideas about the self and its social context.” (Wilson, 2005: 194). To some extent this is a different project from Bunn’s. Bunn does ask questions about performativity and does engage with issues of identity concerning the naturalized subject within the transitional landscape, but these notions are circumscribed by his adherence to theories of political economy. Bunn’s commentary on Pringle is not always suggestive of the ambiguities and inconsistencies of liberal thinking at that time.

A number of accounts covering the Frontier region, such as the Kat River settlement, have been published over the last two decades. Although none of these articles is specifically concerned with the Frontier Wars, they do make reference to them and it is for this reason they have been selected.

In her examination of the period 1850-1858, Elbourne (2000) focuses on the Khoi Rebellion in the Kat River area. This Rebellion had a crucial impact on the nature and duration of the 8th Frontier War and Elbourne argues it was influential in altering understandings of ‘race’ at that time. According to Elbourne, the 8th Frontier War has been portrayed as a ‘redemptive moment’ in relation to ‘class and race unity’ by a number of historians. (Elbourne, 2000: 17) While acknowledging the alliance between the Xhosa and the Khoi, she identifies a number of other “…interlocking areas of concern: ‘manliness’ and honour, the role of narrative in ‘self understanding’ and the relationship between religion and politics.” (Elbourne, 2000: 17) The conscious ‘unity’ of Khoi and Khosa against the British and the settlers was an exceptional development in this war, although Elbourne is at pains to separate the ‘redemptive moments’ from the less triumphalist aspects of this cooperation. She endeavours to understand the reasons behind the splintering of the Khoi community between ‘loyalists’ and rebels. She also makes reference to the ‘loyal’ levies: the Mfengu and the Khoi who remained in the Cape Mounted Riflemen (CMR).

The reason Elbourne’s article has been selected for closer attention is that there are certain limitations to her article which I think lie in the incomplete attention given to military history. A richer understanding of “manhood” (Elbourne, 2000: 30) could have emerged if Uithaalder’s (a prominent Khoi rebel leader) former role in the CMR had been discussed in greater detail. Eye witness accounts from
officers in the CMR describe the eerie feelings evoked when overhearing replications of their drill and the reveilles echoing from the rebels’ camp. (Mostert, 1992) The CMR rebels, who were well-drilled soldiers, persisted in performing the diurnal routines of their former regiment. Much of Uithaalder’s ‘koninglik’ behavior (Elbourne, 2000: 31) in fact replicated that of the officers in the Victorian army and were not just as an expression of his ‘manliness’ and honour as suggested by Elbourne. Loyalties to one’s regiment as well as loyalty to the church would have also played a role in the “divided self of colonialism”. (Elbourne, 2000:31)

An additional theme that emerges from the writing of Ross (1999) and Elbourne (2000) is that of shame and respectability. There were assertions of manliness in the personal letters between Khoi rebels and also calls for unity and nationhood in attempts to restore honour. (Elbourne, 2000:33) Here too, one can contend that the inclusion of military discourse at that time and an overview of the subsequent military histories will provide a more nuanced understanding of these themes. Firstly, shame and ‘divided loyalties’ amongst the Khoi were compounded by ‘disloyalties’ towards the military. Not many soldiers from the CMR rebelled, they were well -drilled and many of them were seasoned campaigners. Elbourne (2000) does not always explain the reversal of loyalties sufficiently. Mass desertion (in this case about 25%) from a regiment was fairly rare: loyalty to a regiment, internalized discipline and fear of court marshal usually kept soldiers in their place. The landless and the indigent formed the majority of the rebels in the 8th Frontier War, but there were also ‘respectable’, mission educated rebels whose motives for desertion require closer scrutiny. (Elbourne, 2000)

Keenan’s (1996) book, Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order, provides a broad overview of the Cape Colony in the first half of the 19th century. His focus is on imperial and colonial ‘structuring forces’ and as such is not primarily concerned with the minutiae of people’s lives or with their resistance to colonization. He argues that the first half of the 19th century was fundamental in the shaping of present South African society. As is evident from the title of his book, his major concern is with the origins of racial stratification of South African society. He attributes later patterns of racial differentiation in South Africa to mercantile and early capitalist relations of production that existed in the first half of the 19th century. He is at pains to distance himself from economic reductionist understandings of the 19th Century, however, his emphasis on the economy and its impact on the imperial and colonial inroads into South African society means that in fact his thesis does return insistently to the ‘economic base’ of society. However, there is much that is useful for this research in that he provides information concerning paths of trade into the Eastern Cape as well as providing an economic overview of the Eastern Cape in the 19th century. His research on gun-running in the Eastern Cape is of particular relevance to this study.

Crais’s White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape, 1770- 1865 (1992) endeavours to circumvent liberal and Marxist debates by providing a ‘post modern’ account of the 19th Century Frontier. In the first part of the book his account focuses on 18th Century preindustrial relations at the Cape. The second part concerns British colonialism from 1806, and it is this section which addresses issues of settler identity and the increasing dependency of the settlers on indigenous labour. The third section focuses on the denigration and ‘othering’ of the Xhosa by the settlers. He provides a discussion of the 8th Frontier War, in which he argues that the War
was fuelled by Xhosa resistance to new developments in capitalism. In the aftermath of the War, Khoi and Xhosa became drawn into the colonial labour economy and became the subjects of an imposed colonial system of government.

Crais provides a self-acknowledged ‘post modern’ account of the 19th Century Frontier and uses theorists such as Lacan to explain settler identity. His work is at its most interesting when he discusses shifts in settler attitudes and the permutations and complexities of settler culture. However, as Duminy (1993) points out, he does not explore the part played by fear and rumour in the constitution of settler identity. Nor does he sufficiently discuss increasing ‘intercultural’ contact between white settlers and indigenous peoples. (Duminy, 1993)

The following section provides a brief overview of books and articles which were written specifically on the Frontier Wars or included substantial sections on these Wars. The most prominent authors in this field have been Milton (1984), Stapleton (1994) and Mostert (1992). Peires (2003) has provided influential histories of the Xhosa. Compared to the literature covering the Zulu War and the Anglo Boer War, a very slender number of volumes have been published on the Frontier Wars. As Peires (2003) points out the Xhosa Wars have been considered far less glamorous than the Zulu War. However, the books under review have been influential, and have influenced our understandings of the Frontier Wars and their significance in respect of social relationships at the 19th Century Cape.

Milton’s (1984) *The Edges of War* is a concise and well-informed account of the Frontier Wars. Peires (1989) describes Milton’s book as “clear and accurate but rather light on analysis”. (Peires, 2003: 395) In concurrence with this, the author claims that he is not an historian and has not written “academic work”. The book is described as being suitable for the “general reader” and presents “a new and entertaining account of the long struggle between Europeans and Africans that took place along the eastern frontier of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.” (Milton, 1983, Frontispiece) In some respects the book is more than this. His assessment of the Frontier Wars provides a sympathetic perspective of the Xhosa. However, it is a ‘balanced’ account, as is expected of ‘liberal’ explanations, and he does not lose sight of the considerable hardship the British soldier underwent during the campaigns.

Mostert’s (1992) *Frontiers*, has been dismissed by historians such as Stapleton as being “journalistic” and as accepting “…much of the settler mythology which has been incorporated into most schools of South African history.” (Stapleton, 1992: 190) But his work remains important, it has popularized the history of the frontier and, despite its putative journalistic status, it has been cited by a number of reputable historians. *Frontiers* remains distinctive for its use of a variety of primary and secondary sources and for its imbrications of local and global events. Admittedly, Mostert’s prose can be florid, but his work provides a number of fruitful pointers to primary sources and can be used judiciously as a source, particularly in relation to internal settler politicking.

In his biography of Maqoma, Stapleton (1992) expends much effort in attempting to resurrect and rescue his subject from colonial disapprobrium. His work is distinctive in that he makes use of oral sources accrued through interviewing the descendants of Maqoma in the 1990s. His methodology could
have set him apart from historians who rely primarily on archival material, but, curiously, the inclusion of oral testimony does not seem to have expanded his analysis of the history of the Frontier significantly and he himself relies heavily on ‘setler’ texts for information. Problematically, his reading of settler material is often one-dimensional and they are dismissed as being produced primarily to justify colonial expansion. Even though, undeniably, this is a strong element in colonial writing there are other ways to read texts: they can be read against the grain, as providing context, or detail.

Despite Stapleton’s putative rigour in relation to his sources, his brief overview of the literature betrays more than a modicum of subjectivity. For example, he considers the historian Samuel Mqhayi as more or less having successfully escaped “…the settler dominated history of his mission education”. (Stapleton, 1992: 12) But did Mqhayi really ‘escape’? Because we also learn that he was influenced by the “writings of nineteenth century humanitarians such as Pringle.” (Stapleton, 1992: 13) This seems central to what is problematical about Stapleton, there are essentially ‘good’ sources (or people) or there are ‘bad’, and this Manichean version provides little understanding of the contradictions and ambiguity attributable to most discursive endeavours.

Peires’ *The House of Phalo* (2003) and *The Dead Will Arise* (2003) both contain information on Xhosa historiography and their material culture. Although there were frequently raids and counter raids amongst antagonistic groups, wars were rare amongst the Xhosa. When there were wars they were relatively “bloodless” (Peires, 2003: 155). The question that this elicits is why the Xhosa were prepared to go to war with the colonial and imperial forces on such a catastrophic scale and with such ensuing devastation? Peires attributes much of this determination to the erosion of land rights and to the loss of honour. *The House of Phalo* (2003) covers precolonial history and the colonial period up to 1850, both and the 6th and 7th Frontiers Wars are discussed in the book. *The Dead Will Arise* (2003) investigates the 8th Frontier War in some detail but its primary focus is the Cattle Killing of 1856 which falls outside of the scope of this study. Peires, however, does examine the major theatres of the 8th Frontier War and his discussion points to the implications of the escalation of brutality and atrocities committed on both sides in the 8th Frontier War.

Peires provides an overview of the Xhosa ‘side’ which could become obscured by too great an emphasis on colonial texts. He includes insertions in both his books on Xhosa fighting techniques, the ‘warrior’, the strategy and tactics and the adoption of technology during the Frontier Wars. The Xhosa proved to be remarkably adaptive in their tactics and their early use of firearms. Peires’s discussion of the political economy of the Xhosa provides insight into the material base of the Wars. For instance, both Peires and Saunders (1981) attribute the achievements of the imperial forces to superior technology and to the capacity of the Army Commissariat. Peires highlights the inability of the Xhosa to sustain their forces in the field without regular supplies of food, a dearth that was further undermined by the systematic burning of crops and homesteads by the imperial forces.

A number of books and articles specifically of colonial ‘military interest’ have been published in the 20th century. Some are concerned with medal rolls such as Gordon Everson’s *The South Africa 1853 Medal* (1978). Whereas, others have focused on areas such as British Kaffraria (Burton, 1969) or on specific regiments such as *Boots and Saddle* which is a ‘history’ of the Cape Mounted Riflemen. Articles such as
Hulme’s in the Military History Journal of South Africa provide lists of irregular units. Malherbe has also provided information on the Khoi levies in his articles for the Military History Journal. Most of these books include short histories of the Frontier Wars and most of the accounts are heavily reliant on Theal or Cory for their information. Hence, despite their indispensability in relation to notes on the irregular forces and despite providing a bedrock of empirical evidence, the information they contain needs to be filtered carefully.

In relation to 19th century journals and narratives, Peires (2003) writes that the “War of 1834-1835 is exceptionally well documented.” (Peires, 2003: 283) However, he argues that there “is no good account of the war of Mlangeni or the 8th Frontier War.” (Peires, 2003: 283) He acknowledges that a number of memoirs by soldiers have been published, but only King, Mackay and Stubbs “have any substance” and only Lumley Graham “shows even the remotest sympathy for the Xhosa.” (Peires, 2003: 395)

On the other hand, authors such as Lester (1994) maintain that biography as a genre has value in that it provides a route into broader social understandings and analysis. Penn (2003) argues that often the lives that do not subscribe to the social mores of the time, the marginalized and the miscreants, cast light onto the historical social fabric. Biographies can also reveal the complexity of identity and the paradoxes and inconsistencies that can be manifested in one person’s life separated by time and space or by shifting events. (Penn, 2003) I do not wish merely to provide empirical evidence from the narratives and diaries under scrutiny. I intend to try to elicit a sense of the cultural identity and the constraints and prohibitions imbricated within these discourses. I also wish to demonstrate the divergence and connectivity of settler, military, metropolitan and colonial discourses.

The following journals and published narratives of the Frontier Wars constitute some of the more prominent sources: Buck Adams (1941), John Bisset (1875), Thomas Bowker (1970), T. Lucas (1975), Charles Lennox Stretch (1988), King (1853), and Lumley Graham (unpublished). There are accounts of the Wars in the settler journals of Goldswain (1949), Baines (1961), Krebs (1970) and Dugmore (1958). Godlonton’s Irruption of the Kaffir Hoards (1965) is also an important source not least of all because it has been cited so regularly and Godlonton himself has been considered influential in the shaping of settler attitudes in the Eastern Cape.

**Methodology**

My organization of the texts will be primarily chronological, because most of the journals refer to specific Frontier Wars, although some, such as Bisset’s, span all three Wars. The Wars require some distinction because they were specific in their ‘origins’, length, and the progress: Xhosa and imperial army strategy and tactics took different paths and ‘new’ settler attitudes emerged in the aftermath of the Wars. A significant proportion of this thesis will consist of the discursive analysis of a range of historical texts. A number of theoretical approaches will be drawn on, such as theories of narrative, textual analysis and theories of identity. The following section will examine the narrative theory of Hayden White and the commentary on his work by Keith Jenkins.

In his book *Rethinking History* (2007), Keith Jenkins suggests that historical narratives require internal coherence and consistency but whether strict methodological rules can be established is dubious and
misleading if one hopes that these rules can lead to the ‘truth’ concerning the past. In effect, history as a discipline is subject to reordering and is a contested rather than a fixed discourse. Recent developments in historiography, described by Jenkins (1995, 2007) as “post modern”, open up possibilities of resisting ‘certaintist disciplinary procedures’ in the writing of history and provide historical approaches which are more concerned with discontinuity and difference. (Jenkins, 1995) For example, reading against the grain of narrative modes such as the ‘liberal mode’ can lead to a critique of the narrative’s representation of the ‘truth’. Instances of disjuncture in the 19th century narratives about the Frontier could manifest themselves in romantic or in humanitarian representations of race or in examples of irreverence and ironical positioning towards the army and its seemingly immutable structures.

In his theory of historiography as metahistory, White argues that any historical work is manifestly a ‘verbal’ structure which takes the form of a narrative prose discourse. (White, 1999) The theoretical import of this statement lies in White’s recognition of the prefiguration of histories by historians into argued, ideological and encoded narratives. He argues that, “...we cannot regard the historical text as an unproblematic, neutral container of content, supposedly given its entirety by a reality which exists beyond its confines.” (White, 1999:25) Even though White’s narrative theory is concerned with histories (secondary sources) rather than with journals and personal narratives, it will be argued that the 19th Century narratives under review attempted to provide ‘histories’ of their times and that White’s theories can be applied to these works with some modification.

According to White, historians begin with ‘traces’: records, data which are then interwoven into a ‘story’ which becomes a narrative. Historians work on their explanations by argument, ideology and emplotment. White proposes that there are four narrative elements of argument used by historians, those of formism, organicism, mechanism and contextualism. White also suggests that historians need to be ‘culturally resonant’. In this sense, historians, by necessity should draw on “culturally provided mythoi within their social formation” so that the history resonates with its readers. In order to do this a history tends to be emplotted or encoded by making the narrative consistently and sufficiently ‘archetypical’ to enable it to be grasped by its readers. (Jenkins, 1995: 160)

The ‘poetic act’ of prefiguration by the historian includes the following devices: elements of emplotment (modes of romance, comedy, tragedy and satire), ideology (anarchy, conservatism, radicalism, liberalism) and tropes (metaphor, synecdoche, metonomy and irony). (Jenkins, 1995) The four most familiar plots found in western culture are romance, which is characterized by a triumph of good over evil, for example, the defeat of Hitler by the Allied forces; satire: people are captives of the world and have little or no agency, death is the universal nemesis; comedy: there are trials and tribulations in the world but these are overcome and there is a happy ending - after all society is a better place for these tribulations; and finally, there is tragedy: things invariably go wrong, there will always be greed and corruption and aspirations are circumscribed by human frailties. (Jenkins, 1995)

Ideologies are of four different varieties: liberal, conservative, radical and anarchist. Each position has specific views on change and the pace of change. Conservatives are the most suspicious of social change and allude to “natural rhythms in the texts”, liberals focus on social rhythms and piecemeal change and radicals and anarchists favour cataclysmic and rapid change. Conservatives seek the elaboration of
existing structures, liberals look to reform and the last two ideologies wish to revolutionise and change the future. “Ideologies can be classified according to whether they are “situationally congruent” that is they are satisfied with the establishment or “situationally transcendent” in that they are critical of the status quo.” (Jenkins, 1995:164)

Finally, there are the four tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Tropes are used by historians because ‘events’ of the past cannot describe themselves and their ‘relationships’, it is the historian who has to make the unfamiliar familiar through figures of speech. While metonomy, synecdoche, irony are all types of metaphor they also differ from each other and are used to different effect in the writing of history. Therefore, “Metaphor is essentially representational, Metonymy is reductionist. Synecdoche is integrative, and Irony is negational.” (White, 1973: 34)

Whitean explanations could seem to present a litany of incontrovertible quadruples and this raises certain difficulties and limitations in White’s theory, as he is adamant that all narratives contain examples of or compounds of at least some of these traits.

In fact, if one thinks within the orbit of White, one is going to encounter any number of criticisms. The major objections directed against White’s approach to historical discourse are the following. Firstly, the theory commits historians to linguistic determinism and to being trapped within the confines of language. Secondly, the focus on the figurative aspects of language relegates history to ‘fiction’, hence the ‘objectivity’ of the historical study is undermined in that there can no longer be an appeal to the ‘facts’ to justify or criticize an historical interpretation. (White, 1999) Thirdly, “…in suggesting that a story can only be a construction of language and a fact of discourse, appears to undermine the legitimacy of the claims of scientificity, the tropological theory of historical discourse also dissolves the traditional narrative historian’s claiming to have provided a story that is true rather than imaginary.” (White, 1999: 15) Fourthly if all discourse is figurative, then surely so is the discourse of the tropologist? Hence it cannot be taken seriously and has no theoretical weight and cannot provide responsible criticism.

In countering these criticisms, White argues that an acknowledgement of the fictive, instead of undermining the theory of tropology, points to the significance of engaging with contested notions of the truth and with providing a critique of the positivism, mimeticism and empiricism which are evident and often taken for granted in historical narratives. He suggests that,

“If we recognize there is a fictive element in all historical narrative, we would find in the theory of language and narrative itself the basis for a more subtle presentation of what historiography consists of than that which simply tells the student to go and “find out the facts” and write them up in such a way as to tell “what really happened.”” (White, 1978: 99)

In addition, tropological theory does not collapse the difference between fact and fiction but redefines the relations between them within any given discourse. We are cautioned by White not to confuse facts with events: “events happen, whereas facts are constituted by linguistic description.” (White, 2005:18) In relation to the historian, White writes that the “only instruments” the historian has “for endowing his data with meaning, of rendering the strange familiar, and of rendering the mysterious past
comprehensible, are the techniques of figurative language. All historical narratives presuppose figurative characterizations of the events they purport to represent and explain. And this means that historical narratives, considered purely as verbal artifacts, can be characterized by the mode of figurative discourse in which they are cast.” (White, 1978: 94)

How is White ‘useful’ in relation to my research? Firstly, his approach assists in the positioning of secondary sources and, it will be proposed, 19th Century ‘military’ narratives. White’s ideological tropes help to clarify the intentions of the texts as many historians tend to ‘hide’ their ideological affiliations. (Jenkins, 2007) Jenkins (1995) also argues that the ‘use’ of White lies in his ideas around narratives and around how histories are made, that is his metahistorical insights. The historian extracts “traces” from the archive and that is where the ‘ideological work’ starts. It is the ideology that attracts the historians to certain tropes.

Many historians who do not subscribe to White’s methodology/theories also are keen detectors of ideological propensities in other historians; so what really is novel about White? It will be argued that White provides a density of theoretical engagement which provides a way into reading historical texts on a number of levels. He assists with the interpretation of narratives with particular reference to their positioning, their emplotment and the argument of the narrative. Furthermore, his work will assist me to understand my own writing and my own ideological underpinnings.

Even though White and Jenkins provide influential insights and a theoretical framework, I do not wish entirely to confine myself within Whitean parameters. The research also will be informed by approaches that are concerned with notions of representation, disjuncture, identity and ‘othering’. For these insights, I shall incorporate theorists such as Foucault, Connolly and selected theories of identity and masculinity. Some of the more useful of Foucault’s works for the purposes of this research are *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The Order of Things* (1991).

Jenkins (1992) suggests that if one needs practical examples of ‘historical discontinuity’ and ‘rupture’, then perhaps Foucault is of more use than White. But Foucault’s work has been regarded as problematic and has been described as allegorical rather than historically sound. Scull describes *The History of Madness* as “a provocative and dazzlingly written prose poem, but one resting on the shakiest of scholarly foundations and riddled with errors of fact and interpretation.” (In Gutting, 2005: 39) Gutting argues this misses the point of Foucault, for Foucault avoids making “empirical generalizations” about people and societies. Rather, he attempts to construct the episteme that lies behind the diversity of practices and thinking of the period.

Foucault’s point, drawn from *The Order of Things* (1991), is that in any period and domain there are constraints on how people are able to think. There are syntactical and logical constraints, but a further ‘set of constraints’ exists: what we currently consider as ‘natural’ and as ‘necessary’ are, in fact, contingent and transient and not the sine qua non of existence. In a 19th Century British colony it would have been seen as a ruling class necessity to be Christian, to hold a superior position over ‘non-Christians’ and to justify certain actions against the ‘heathen’. Some of these actions might be evident within the ‘benign’ establishment of institutions to convert the ‘heathen’.
Foucauldian concepts such as ‘hierarchical observation’ and the ‘normalizing judgment’ are of particular relevance to this study because they are reflective of many army practices. Hierarchical observation is predicated on the assumption that we can control people by observing them (we are watched from the outside and also we watch ourselves from within, hence Foucault’s notion of ‘panoptical self surveillance’). The second concept of the ‘normalizing judgment’ or ‘normalizing gaze’ ranks people not in relation to their morality but to a ‘scale’ in which they are compared with others. For example, the army system of rank controls the men as well as embedding roles and practices appropriate to their rank. Other forms of control took the form of enclosure: army barracks were similar to monasteries they were often walled and separated from the rest of the community. Discipline revolved around timetables, signals, reveilles and attendance and absences were monitored.

In Burton’s (1969) *The Highlands of Kaffraria*, there is an 1875 plan of the ‘Military Reserve’ in King William’s Town which is interesting precisely because the area is enclosed, monastic, self–sufficient (it had its own hospital, gardens, store and provost). It is hierarchical in relation to space: the infantry barracks are like dormitories whereas officers’ quarters and mess are compartmented and set away from the rank and file. Such sites could be described as the epitome of control and social exclusion, but they were also ‘useful’ spaces and could save peoples’ lives if well–organized and they provided a measure of social security.

**Identity**

In *The Order of Things* (1991) Foucault analyses how cultures “make manifest their order” and how within the modalities of order, laws, constraints and words all have their sequence and their representational value:

“The fundamental codes of a culture – those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques and its values, the hierarchy of its practices – establish for every man from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home.”

(Foucault, 1991: xx)

Foucault’s examination of “codes of culture” (and their disruption) is of considerable value to this research, but the study also requires explications of the notions of ‘difference’ and ‘othering’. The two latter concepts are of central use to interpret instances of categorization and distantiation recurrent in colonial and imperial texts. They are also integral to a number of recent interpretations of identity and for these one has to turn to authors such as Rattansi and Connolly.

In his overview of the notion of identity, Rattansi (2007) proposes that identities are predicated on recognition of difference, thus ‘sameness’ can create a barrier between those who are elected members of the group and those who are excluded. So the creation of identity becomes imbricated in notions of belonging and non-belonging and those who do not belong are assigned certain characteristics by those who do belong. As Rattansi suggests:

“The fact that any identity also requires identifying what it is not, means that identity is potentially open to being threatened and destabilized by identities that are being denied.” (Rattansi, 2007: 115)
In contradistinction to notions of essentialised identity, Rattansi argues that identities are fluid and are provisional, temporal and “open to transformation.” (Rattansi, 2007: 116) Likewise, identities involve multiple rather than singular meanings and “individuals have multiple roles and a number of subject positions” (Rattansi, 2007:116). Hence identities are rarely coherent and consistent and they are subject to contradiction.

In his exposition of liberalism and difference, Connolly (2002) provides a more extended and nuanced discussion of the notions of identity and difference. He suggests firstly that the solidity of an identity rests upon its ability to define itself in relation to differences and to coexist with differences. Secondly, the ‘distinct’ identity has a tendency to become ‘congealed’ into ‘fixed forms’ which become part of ‘reality’ and provide the ‘truth’ of that reality. The paradox that one needs to define one’s identity in relation to ‘difference’ results in tensions and pressures on identities which could lead to the transmogrification of ‘difference into otherness’. In fact Connolly argues that an identity has to include hostility towards the ‘other’ in order to maintain its coherence. ‘Otherness’ can lead to the re- construal of the other as ‘evil’. Thus,

“Identity is thus a slippery, insecure experience, dependent on its ability to define difference and vulnerable to the tendency of entities it would so define to counter, resist, overturn or subvert definitions applied to them. Identity stands in a complex, political relation to the differences it seeks to fix.” (Connolly, 2002: 64)

The ‘complex’ and the ‘political’ dimensions of identity provide a riposte to notions of an inert, monolithic ‘colonial identity’ and provide a corollary to theories that acknowledge the flexibility and transience of identity, but which do not always engage sufficiently with the ‘political dimensions’ of difference that are invariably associated with relationships of power. Connolly makes the point that the political dimension does not always have to suggest a negative construction of difference:

“The bearer of difference may be one open to your appreciation or worthy of your tolerance, or an other whose claim to identity you strive to invert…” (Connolly, 2002: 65)

Thus Connolly’s insights provide an understanding which does not fix identities in binaries and also counters the intrinsic ‘us and them’ that is so prevalent in historical writing on the Frontier. Likewise, colonial identities are not always excrescences of domination and imperial will.

Alan Lester’s articles (1998 and 1998) are of interest because they focus specifically on notions of representation, ‘othering’ and settler identity in 19th Century South Africa. In these analyses, his intention is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of “official, settler and humanitarian discourses within the Cape Colony”. (Lester, 1998: 2) He also examines the interrelationship between the metropole and the colonies on the imperial margins and their interactive construction of racial ‘otherness’. In this instance he distances himself the notion of an unmediated and dominant metropolitan discourse and proposes that there was a significant interconnectedness between the metropole and the colonies and that the periphery played a crucial role in the construction of ideas beyond its parochial confines.
Edward Said has been used as a major theoretical source in Lester’s (1994) article and his notion that not only physical force maintained the empire but also powerful representations of the ‘other’ in a variety of discursive endeavours is central to Lester’s argument. (Lester, 1998) However, as Lester points out, ‘postcolonial approaches’ have certain limitations. The first is the tendency to abstract conceptions of ‘otherness’ without providing sufficient contextual understanding and the second is to generalize about imperial activities and intentions. He argues that,

“Imperialism appears as a kind of metanarrative in which Western approaches and, to a certain extent, the responses of the colonized are both viewed as monolithic opposing forces.” (Lester, 1998:2)

Hence, if imperialism is projected as a ‘metanarrative’ it becomes a notion that embraces the attendant perils of essentialisation and fixity in relation to issues such as identity. In addition, certain postcolonial texts tend to “conflated texts written in a variety of very different periods and places for very different audiences.” (Lester, 1998:2) But there is more to it than merely attempting to be inclusive and comprehensive: cultural constructions generated in the colonies play a critical role in terms of knowledge and how the metropole thought about things. It was largely because of the interaction between the metropole and the periphery that racial identities became more coherent. What is important is how the colonies helped to shape metropolitan thinking and practices. (Lester, 1998: 3)

What is useful for my research is that Lester’s article examines the “connections between official, settler and humanitarian discourses within the Cape Colony” (Lester, 1998: 2) and how these intersected to contribute to the construction of a settler identity. Lester argues that the ‘cultural constructions’ generated by those on the peripheries of the empire are crucial to understandings of both ‘peripheral and metropolitan thought’. These intersecting ideas, he argues, have a particular pertinence to the construction of racial representation and racial stereotyping. His article is also germane for its emphasis on the question of settler identity, the coalescence of which Lester attributes to a number of factors: the invention of the notion of settler unity and ‘character’, the capitalist expansion through trade and stock farming, anxiety evoked through the Frontier Wars and fears of being abandoned by the metropole on whom they were dependent for protection. The notion of settler identity is important because a component of this research is to investigate whether military discourse did/did not influence its construction. Unfortunately, Lester elides over this possibility and military discursive influence, which he conflates with a rather opaque and totalising ‘official discourse’.

In a second article Lester (1998) argues that the Graham’s Town Journal (edited by Robert Godlonton in the 1830s) was central to representations of Xhosa ‘otherness’ and of the construction of settler identity. What is central to my research is not only the influence of the Journal, but also the role it played in representing the War (1834-35) and how it might have influenced military players on the Frontier. Likewise, Godlonton’s narrative of the 6th Frontier War, The Irruption of the Kaffir Hordes, is an important text and requires a closer analysis of its role in the creation and perpetuation of the cultural mythoi surrounding the Frontier. Cape society was convulsed by debates around the wars and the conflicting rights of the settlers and the Xhosa (particularly in the 1834 Frontier War) and about the proper nature of dealing with the crisis. The discussions were intensified by shifting ideas of race and the transforming labour relations of the first half of the 19th century. Rhetorical journalism such as
Godlonton’s may have played a significant role in the constitution of colonial identity, but even though Lester (1998) cites him a central force, exactly why he was so significant is not always apparent. We know that Goldonton’s Journal was used to fill lacunae in a number of journals and the newspaper was used as a source of information. (Stretch, 1988, Goldswain, Baines, 1961). Perhaps one way into assessing the influence of Godlongton is to view his writing differently: through a more thorough textual analysis and, in a Whitean sense, to consider his texts as narratives. Possibly, Godlonton’s set pieces of skirmishes and of ‘tragic’ colonial deaths resonated with many settlers because they were so recognizably emplotted.

A number of strategies and concepts that are useful for the analysis of texts are provided in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Janks (1997) refers to Fairclough’s (1989, 1995) model to expand her own understanding of discourse analysis. Fairclough’s analysis is useful for historians because it depends on three interrelated processes: the object of analysis (verbal, visual texts); the processes by which the object is assessed (reading, writing) and the socio-historical context of these processes. Fairclough suggests that these processes require three different types of analysis: text analysis which entails description, processing analysis which involves interpretation and social analysis which incorporates explanation. As Janks points out,

“What is useful about this approach is that it enables the analyst to focus on the signifiers that make up the text, the specific linguistic selections, their juxtapositioning, their sequencing, their layout. However, it requires that the social determination of these selections is recognized in order to understand that these choices are tied to the conditions of possibility.” (Janks, 1997:329)

Fairclough’s approach means that all three analytical areas require inclusion in a discourse analysis but they are not sequential and this means that points of entry into the discourse are more varied and the interconnections produced are less linear and predictable. Janks (1997) points out most texts portray a ‘hybridity in the lexicalization’, that is, the text can adopt contradictory positions: signifiers shift. The notion that texts are ‘hybrid’, in tandem with problematised notions of identity and understandings of the emplotment of narratives, could provide a more composite way of examining military and colonial narratives.

Masculinity

Although I do not wish to make gender, specifically masculinity, a central component of the research, it is a constitutive part of identity and if one is examining the military one needs to recognize that comportment, styles of demeanour and masculinity all played a role in the composition of status and identity. Theories of gender such as Connell’s (1995) and gendered studies of travellers such as Pratt’s (1992) provide important insights into notions of social and masculine status.

In his article, *Men, Science, Travel and Nature in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Cape*, Beinart argues for a “more fluid approach to masculinity and science.” (Beinart, 1998: 775) While acknowledging the contributions of Pratt (1992), Merchant (1990) and others have made to understandings of male domination in natural science, he contends that scientific endeavours at the Cape were not only extractive and exploitative and that masculinity expressed through travel writing was more complex,
various and alternative than is sometimes portrayed in the work of such authors as Pratt. Beinart also reevaluates Pratt’s contention that travelling naturalists omitted to include ‘indigenous voices’ in their records and by referring to the journals of Sparrman and Burchell amongst others, he argues that Pratt’s claims are ‘exaggerated’ and that naturalists in the 18th and 19th centuries frequently named and described the indigenous people they employed or encountered.

He concludes that even though “masculinity, scientific enquiry, exploitation of nature, European expansion and colonial domination have a complex interconnection”, one needs to complicate understandings of masculinity as some of the writings contain elements of alternative, disjunctive discourses such as humanitarianism and anti-colonialism and provide expressions of vulnerability and informality. (Beinart, 1998: 799) There are certain parallels between the travel writing to which Beinart refers and the military journals which will be considered in this study. Firstly, the familiar tropes of the ‘adventure story’ and the ‘hunting yarn’ permeate both these genres. However, military journals also exhibit more complex renditions of masculinity than expected: some journals are emotive and self-depreciating. Nearly all of them express appreciation of nature and without exception they make consistent reference to the Xhosa. These references are not always extensive nor are they insightful, they are most frequently about ‘sightings’ or of quantifications of the ‘enemy’. One finds renditions of conversations between combatants; the examples of direct speech found in a number of diaries seem to denote that ‘conversations’, or perhaps more accurately ‘exchanges’, between colonizers and colonized during times of combat were not unusual.

Enquiries into the narratives will be driven by a number of research questions concerned with issues of identity and masculinity, representation of the enemy and aesthetic responses to the environment. The focus of this research also will be on the representation of the enemy and on the form and emplotment of 19th century military narratives. Attention to the form of a text could be construed as a means of avoiding the many-headed hydra of evidence. That is, by examining the lineaments of a text one does not have to engage in battle with the ‘facts’ and their authenticity. However, the use of research questions, such as: Was there a diversity of attitude towards the colonized in the army? could draw one ineluctably into using the texts as ‘evidence’.

Therefore the nineteenth century sources (or ‘traces’) will be approached from a number of different perspectives. Apropos their discussion of environmental historiography, Beinart and McGregor (2003) point out that prior histories relied on archival research and oral history field studies, but the contemporary historical field has become more interdisciplinary. There has been a growing engagement with ideas emanating from cultural studies and literary criticism and as a consequence sources and methods are combined with ‘explorations’ of texts such as literary narratives, myths and pictorial imagery. Finally, a defining aspect of the 19th Century army was that it is a global enterprise: troops at the Cape might have emanated from Britain, but they were often seasoned by encounters in other countries such as India and Madagascar. Thus the Cape will be construed within its global context, characterized by interconnectivity and ‘webs of exchange’, in an attempt to reconfigure its conventional portrayal as an isolated colony with an attenuated relationship with the British imperial government.
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