

An excellent anthology with a measure of quirkiness

Clifton Crais and Thomas McClendon (eds), *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*

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A populist cover emblazoned with an image of Bafana Bafana supporters blowing vuvuzelas and the quirky inclusion of recipes for biltong and bobotie (accredited to one of the editors) might inspire a certain cynicism, but this is an excellent anthology. Most likely aimed at an undergraduate audience in the United States, the editors emphasise “ordinary voices” rather than scholarship, with the work of

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professional academics very much in the minority, though each excerpted text is succinctly contextualised by the editors and there is a guide to further (more scholarly) reading at the back of the volume. The variety of material across the more than six hundred pages is quite remarkable: hymns; mine worker songs; the transcript of a political funeral at the height of apartheid; struggle songs; journalistic reportage; historical fiction and a photo essay (by Patricia Hayes, on Santu Mofekeng) all feature.

Historians will certainly recognise a number of the texts included here from more conventional primary source anthologies. The same doubtless applies to literary scholars. The real value of the anthology lies in the fact that it brings together such a variety of important texts – the rich, discordant tapestry of South African intellectual history – under a single roof for the first time. Readers unfamiliar with the details of the post apartheid era to date also benefit from the inclusion of material covering Thabo Mbeki's AIDS denialism, xenophobia, LGBTI struggles and Jacob Zuma's rape trial; even Julius Malema makes an appearance. The volume is handsomely illustrated and will prove invaluable for school and university teaching.

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