

knowledge that the TRC's scope was based on a negotiated settlement with de Klerk's party, and Heinz Klug attributes the TRC successful proceedings to an avoidance of a civil war, to a robust formal democratic apparatus and to adherence to the constitution; such resilience of constitutionalism is not apparent in many post-colonial nation-states (p. 302).

The book is helpful for all those who study apologies, reparations, and reconciliations. There is a tendency in most chapters to condone the retributive arm of penal administration. Arguably, it is a missed opportunity to query the meaning of the "rule of law", which also has colonial legacies, and prisons were never an African invention. On the other hand, Sindiso Mnisi Weeks make clear that Ubuntu has been instrumentalized as harmony ideology (p. 67), which may have led to more impunity by the state and its actors, shown in recent state capture corruption cases and egregious state violence. All case studies offered give a nuanced perspective that apology narratives do not amount to a "zero-sum reading [...] as either all or nothing" (p. 11). Furthermore, this book will provide a valuable compass for policy-makers, legal scholars, and activists elsewhere in the post-colony in order to grapple with questions concerning the meaning of apologies, forgiveness, and substantive fair reparations.

Notes

- 1 G. Kemp/W. Nortje, Prosecuting the Crime against Humanity of Apartheid: The Historic First Indictment in South Africa and the Application of Customary International Law, in: *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 21 (2023) 2, pp. 405–430, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqad023>.
- 2 Holy Sea Press Office, Joint Statement of the Dicastries for Culture and Education and for Promoting Integral Human Development on the "Doctrine of Discovery", 30 March 2023, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/03/30/230330b.html>.
- 3 N. Smith, *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apologies*, Cambridge 2008.
- 4 J. Tarusarira, The Anatomy of Apology and Forgiveness. Towards Transformative Apology and Forgiveness, in: *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 24 (2019), pp. 206–224.
- 5 J. Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, Cambridge 1989.

Faeeza Ballim: *Apartheid's Leviathan: Electricity and the Power of Technological Ambivalence*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2023, 167 pp.

Reviewed by
Ulf Engel, Leipzig

At a time when South African state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are still at the centre of a process of "state capture" – that is to say, the looting of state assets by factions of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and their national and international cronies – this monograph is a timely account of the local history of the state's relation to two key SOEs: the Electricity Supply Commission of South Africa (Eskom, established in 1923) and the Iron and Steel Corporation (IsCOR, 1928–2005). The book takes a case study approach, focusing on Eskom's 4,800-megawatt Medupi power station in the small town of Lephalale

and Iscor's operations around the Grootegeluk coal mine, near Ellisras. Both sites are in the Waterberg area, located somewhat halfway between Polokwane, in the Limpopo province (in South Africa), and Gaborone (in neighbouring Botswana).

Apartheid's Leviathan: Electricity and the Power of Technological Ambivalence is based on the author's 2017 PhD dissertation, which was written at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER), University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The dissertation was supervised by Keith Breckenridge. Hence, it is no surprise that the text follows a perspective based on science and technology studies (STS). The author is currently a senior lecturer and the head of the Department of History at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. She has previously published two articles on cooperative farming and racial segregation, respectively. She is also the co-editor of a five-volume series entitled *Translating Technology in Africa* (co-edited with Richard Rottenburg and Bronwyn Kotzen, with a first volume on "metrics" to be published in 2024 with Brill, Leiden).

This short book (the main text is just 130 pages) is split into six chapters. The first two chapters investigate the operations of Iscor in the small town of Ellisras, Waterberg. The third chapter zooms in on Eskom's arrival in the Waterberg area in the 1980s and the Matimba power station, which was constructed near Iscor's coal mine in the Waterberg area. In the fourth chapter, the author analyses what she refers to as the "neo-liberal" debate of the 1970s and 1980s on the privatization of Eskom (which did not happen, though Iscor was finally privatized). In the following chap-

ter, the history of the increasingly powerful National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in the Waterberg area is reconstructed. And the final chapter focuses on the coal-fired Medupi power station, which is discussed as a technopolitical intervention that absorbed "shifting alliances and imaginaries in the democratic era" (p. 22). The construction of the power station was started in 2008 and only completed in August 2021.

Parts of the historical analysis are based on archival work (from the National Archives of South Africa and the Eskom Corporate Archives), the analysis of parliamentary debates, and a close reading of media reports of the time. With very few exceptions, the literature referenced in this book has not been updated beyond the spring of 2019, which is a pity, given the very dynamic development around "state capture" and Eskom since (it is only in the conclusions that some of the latest developments are examined – still before the early exit of André de Ruyter, Eskom's chief executive officer).

Employing Bruno Latour and Michel Callon's conceptualization of the relationship between micro- and macro-structure as "Leviathan" and utilizing Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer's reasoning on "boundary objects", Faeza Ballim situates her study at the intersection of historiography and STS. Her basic argument is that the institutional autonomy of both Eskom and Iscor made it difficult for the apartheid state – which, according to the author, in the 1970s closely followed James Scott's notion of "authoritarian high modernism" – "complicated the apartheid government's ability to enact its will" (p.

23). She details how the two SOEs passed through different technopolitical regimes, from the apartheid state to the ANC-led government, which – after an initial period of fiscal austerity – also put an emphasis on infrastructural development. Inter alia, this account is narrated through the changing perspectives of race and labour relations.

In 2004, the Anglo-Dutch steel producer LNM Holdings N.V. acquired a majority stake in Iscor. The following year's trading was commenced under the name Mittal Steel Ltd. Nevertheless, Eskom remained a SOE. Since 2007, there have been regular power outages in the country, to which the government euphemistically refers to as load shedding. Today, and depending on the region and time of the day, there is no electricity for between 7 and a half and 10 hours a day. This situation affects not only private households but also companies, for example the catering industry, as well as – particularly alarming – 80 per cent of the public healthcare system. Rural areas and townships tend to be hit harder than middle- and upper-class suburbs. Last year, in 2022, there were 200 days without stable power supply (48 days in 2021). Moreover, almost 30 years after the first democratic elections in 1994, a good 15 per cent of people in South Africa still have no access to electricity at all. Ballim's revised PhD research offers a detailed and solid account of the complicated relationship between the South African state and the semiautonomous SOEs, which contributes to a better understanding of the mess the country is in today.

Silke Hackenesch (ed.): *Adoption across Race and Nation: US Histories and Legacies*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2022, 229 pp.

Reviewed by
Benedikt Stuchtey, Marburg

Child adoption is an example of how a social phenomenon is losing its numerical importance in the present day, but it is nevertheless attracting more and more attention from researchers. There are many reasons for this. Critical adoption studies pay much more attention than did earlier studies to factors such as race, gender, social inequality and poverty (social class), and political and economic interests. These more comprehensive studies have opened up a simple understanding of adoption based on the value of caring and love, together with a certain focus on adoptive parents (which is due to the source material and fiction) to include other perspectives that shed a very critical light on the adoption process and the adoption scene. Thus, the classical phrase “in the best interests of the child” has been reformulated for research purposes into a special concentration on the child and its birth parents. The legal development and the institutional framework, which have traditionally received much attention, are now more in the background of the research. The adoption issue has thus become more deeply rooted in social reality. When it acquires a transnational dimension, as it does in this excellent volume, it directs our