

deformed democracy. Other deserving elements and frame of analysis including gender (or women), the youth and the educational institutions and systems have been left untreated. But, by-and-large, this book provokes a deep reflection on the utility of liberal democracy and its nuanced manifestations in different socio-political environments. The success (or otherwise) of democracy in Nigeria has a profound implication for the continent. Despite the negative trends observable in the democratic practices in the last twenty plus years, *Democracy and Nigeria's Fourth Republic* offers a glimpse of hope. According to Larry diamond 'The only option to save Nigeria from catastrophe is to transform the Fourth Republic into a real democracy' (p. 339).

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Apartheid's Leviathan: Electricity and the Power of Technological Ambivalence

**by Faeza Ballim,
Athens, Ohio 45701: Ohio University Press, 2023. Pp. 159.**

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In her first book, *Apartheid's Leviathan*, Faeza Ballim has not written a conventional history of socio-technical development under apartheid and democratic era. Instead, Ballim uses the development of a coal mine and two coal-fired power stations to explore the complex relationship between the state and state corporations, and how this relationship influenced and shaped the development of the Waterberg region. Ballim's analysis starts with the premise that the state and state corporations have an ambivalent and contradictory relationship that can be described 'as both autonomous and immersive' (p. 2). The two state corporations under the spotlight are electricity utility Eskom and steel manufacturer Iscor.

The book is divided into two distinct periods and unfolds over six main chapters, excluding the introductory and concluding chapters. Starting from the 1960s, the relationship between state corporations and the state are explored throughout successive governments with distinct political goals and priorities. In her exploration of this relationship, Ballim highlights the single most enduring feature of state corporations, their flexibility and ability to adapt and reflect the unique socio-political demands (Clark 1994).

Chapter 1 analyses Iscor's exploitation of the Waterberg coalfields, which occurred at a time when the supply of coking coal required to meet its

expansion plans was in question. Chapter 2 examines the development of the small town of Ellisras, which was renamed Lephalale in 2002 and became significant during both the apartheid and democratic eras. Chapter 3 explains Eskom's rationale for building the Matimba power station in Lephalale instead of the Eastern Transvaal, now known as Mpumalanga. To understand the developmental path-dependency that coalesce around coal, Ballim draws on the term 'Leviathan' to 'describe the irreversible alliances created by the entanglement between human and nonhuman agents' (p. 10).

Chapter 4 discusses the start of the neoliberal era, which South Africa entered a decade late due to sanctions imposed on the apartheid government. Ballim conceives of this era as a point in time when countries around the world reduced their reliance on government spending and adopted neoliberal economic orthodoxy. In South Africa, this period began in the 1980s with debates on the privatisation of state corporations. The key question for the government was how to privatise the vertically integrated monopoly without preserving its monopoly status – in the absence of competitors. Ballim outlines the reasons why Eskom was not privatised but its management restructured and why Iscor was privatised. I have argued that state corporations presented a dilemma for the African National Congress (ANC)-led government, as they were seen as part of apartheid's bureaucracy but also critical for extending socio-economic benefits to historically disadvantaged groups in a context of neoliberalism and democracy (Malope 2022). To keep politics out of the 'engine room', Eskom offered the democratic government a social compact in the form of low tariffs and rural electrification.

The construction of Medupi (and Kusile) power station which was marred by corruption and cost overruns is covered in chapter 6. While there is no new information presented for those familiar with the developments around Medupi, the chapter has two interesting points that underscore the adaptability of state corporations to their socio-political environment. One, in chapter 3 the reader is made aware that during the construction of Matimba, the apartheid government mandated that Eskom support local manufacturers by awarding them equipment supply contracts. Similarly, the ANC-led government used Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies to support local manufacturers and businesses. However, in the implementation of these policies, the governing party unduly financially benefited. Against the backdrop of corruption, labour unrest, tariffs increases and cost overruns of Medupi, load shedding, a controlled way of rotating the availability of electricity when electricity demand is more than supply, is not only a technical issue but indicative of larger management and political crises. However, Ballim argues that the construction of Medupi absorbed a variety of 'expectations and imaginaries of the future by virtue of its complexity and its extended time duration' (p. 15).

The context laid out in chapters 3, 5 and 6 is crucial for understanding contemporary discussions on climate change, Eskom's unbundling, and the just energy transition. To be sure, Ballim has written a readable and comprehensive book that would be of great use to graduate students in grasping Eskom's current state.

References

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Social Ethics and Governance in Contemporary African Writing: literature, philosophy, and Nigerian world

by Nimi Wariboko

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In *Social Ethics and Governance in Contemporary African Writing: Literature, Philosophy, and Nigerian World*, Nimi Wariboko brings a unique approach and understanding of how people in Nigeria might read and think of the relationships of literature, creative writing, entertainment to philosophy and how they relate directly to the daily activities of postcolonial Nigerian experience. This book comes at a time when there is a continuous discussion on possible connections between literature, academic writing and entertainment with the socio-political activities of African countries, but Nigeria in particular because it has numerous gifted writers and entertainers (comedians and singers). Some of the main questions that guide Wariboko's book are, 'What is the relationship between literature and Philosophy in the Nigerian post colony' (p. 4); 'What is the Philosophical Significance of Literature in Nigeria?' (p. 4). Wariboko bridges this gap by inviting his readers to see an uninterrupted flow, systemisation and connections between literature and the human conditions in Nigeria. He states that 'the question of the relationship between philosophy and Nigerian literature is central to this book' (p. 4). Wariboko does this by generally inviting his readers to think widely and critically, drawing on multiple philosophical and ethical themes.

Wariboko draws his arguments on the relationships between the application of philosophical, ethical theories and literature in Nigeria by analysing the literature of four Nigerians writers and one comedian (p. 10–11). He states that he was deliberate in choosing the works of these four Nigerians for many