Drama and the South African State bears all the marks of many of the contradictions and polarisations of South African society. In a country which has for so long demonstrated the unholy alliance between capitalism, colonialism and racism, it is little wonder that committed artists and academics should demonstrably articulate their position in the language of an ideology which is rapidly being expunged from the textbooks in former Socialist countries. South Africa was for so long an exponent of one anachronistic ideology, one wonders if in a New South Africa intellectuals will continue to espouse another anachronistic ideology. These reservations notwithstanding, Orkin's book is certainly a significant contribution to criticism on South African drama and some readings of individual works will certainly attract deserved attention and find their way into the critical canon.

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A Zulu warrior, clutching behind his back a couple of assegais and a knobkierie, his cowhide shield and musket propped up against the wall and watched by an attentive John Bull perched on a stool, leans towards a school blackboard, on which he is writing in chalk the words: "Despise not your Enemy." This comment on the course of the Anglo-Zulu War, published in the form of a cartoon in the March 1st 1879 edition of Punch and reprinted as the cover illustration for the present volume, not only constitutes a comic reversal of the white man's self-appointed civilising mission in Africa whereby the black becomes the teacher and the white the pupil, it also serves neatly to underscore the author's concern to take account of the Zulu perspective in his depiction of the conflict in preference to the Eurocentric approach traditionally adopted by historians. Accordingly, this study should be viewed as a contribution to the process of rewriting and revising the history of Southern Africa which of recent years has transformed the historiography of the region into an exciting and politically highly relevant field of research.

Laband's particular concern is with the probably less well known facet of this development, which he terms "new military history" or "war and society studies." Originally a PhD thesis, and based on extensive archival research in Britain and South Africa, his study marshals parliamentary papers, Colonial Office records, and numerous collections of private manuscripts to compile a fresh account of the war which takes cognizance both of the largely familiar British side and of the hitherto less well documented Zulu dimension. In the belief that the "new" military historian should stress

... the interrelationship between the nature and structure of society, the condition of the economy, the functioning of the state, military capability and planning, and actual performance in battle ... (2),
the author prefaces his work with a description of the Zulu polity which seeks to understand the nature of their military system in its political, social and economic context.

This gives a good idea both of Zulu social structures, particularly as far as the amabutho and the role of the umuzi or homestead are concerned, and of political relations between the king, the chiefs and other high-ranking persons. The reader is thus better placed to comprehend the nature of the society the British sought to destroy as well as the sociopolitical factors which determined that society's resistance. And indeed, throughout the work, the author is noticeably concerned to elucidate Zulu customs, particularly those rituals associated with war which so horrified the British such as the disembowelment of the slain, the stripping of clothes from corpses or the inflicting of multiple spear wounds after death, the first two of which, we learn, formed part of the cleansing rite after homicide, while the latter "did honour to their dead" (88).

Essentially the book is an account of the British invasion of Zululand in 1879. It portrays the personalities involved on both sides: Sir Bartle Frere, Governor of the Cape and Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, convinced that "it was Britain's high mission to spread the civilizing influence of Christian government and to eradicate barbarous institutions" (7); Lord Chelmsford, military commander in the field, his reputation tarnished by tactical errors and subsequent defeat at Isandlwana, anxious to restore it before he could be relieved of his command; Cetshwayo, king of the Zulus, his authority impaired by successive defeats, finally a lonely figure faced with the defections of his chiefs and the prospect of exile.

It is, however, in the set pieces that Laband is at his best: the great series of battles which marked the campaign: Isandlwana, Rorke's Drift, Kambula, Gingindlovu, and Ulundi. Here he provides detailed accounts of the character of the opposing armies: on the British side, almost 18,000 men (half of whom were black auxiliaries) hampered by conservatism and authoritarianism, over-confident in the superiority of their weaponry and unaware of Zulu fighting ability; the Zulus, an estimated 29,000 of them, brave fighters, their younger amabutho (age-set units) often impetuously eager for the glories of battle, but untrained marksmen, unable to use to full advantage the often antiquated firearms they had obtained from white traders, and curiously enough, likewise encumbered by "the force of military conservatism" (65), which made it difficult for them to adapt their previously successful military tactics to a completely new type of encounter. Laband reconstructs the Zulu success in the open field at Isandlwana, which has gone down in the annals of history as one of the greatest of British defeats, and shows how this advantage could not be sustained when later they had to confront prepared and fortified positions from the comparative safety of which the British were able to develop a firepower of terrifying efficacy. It was not, however, until the final encounter on the plains of Ulundi that Lord Chelmsford was able to report that "British arms had at last been vindicated throughout Southern Africa" (231).

With its accounts of campaign tactics and command structures, of the difficulties of unfamiliar terrain and of maintaining supply lines, and, not least of course, of the resistance offered to invasion, this book memorably describes the practice of colonial warfare - and, one might add, the carnage. For Laband leaves his readers in little doubt as to the manner in which the British, humiliated and enraged by Isandlwana and by what