

The text seems more suited to students who already have a grasp of political history, because although *De Wereld en Nederland* considers structural political processes, it refrains from *histoire événementielle*. At times, however, you need just that to get a good grasp of the problems. Whereas in chapter 7 Jeroen Touwen is rather critical of the financial and economic policies of King Willem I during and after the Kingdom of Holland (1815–1830), in the next chapter Leo Lucassen is much more positive. Both authors disregard the king's policies in the southern Netherlands, except for the payment of taxes, and fail to elaborate on other problems of this temporary cohabitation of two populations. In a box, Lucassen explains the background to the creation of this kingdom and, very summarily, points to non-economic issues. But that does not help those students who read Touwen's chapter first. This shows the difficulties of integrating chapters by different authors. These difficulties also become clear when one compares the socio-cultural chapters by Manon van der Heijden and Lex Heerma van Voss. Both are very interesting and well-written, but they also diverge in terms of approach. Different times – different histories; different authors – different orientations.

The book comes with a website, which presents the students with a series of factual questions per chapter (no answers are given), which will undoubtedly be useful when students want to absorb the book's contents for examination purposes. In addition, it contains, per chapter, an extensive bibliography. It also provides students with more extensive information about debates and topics concerning the chapters of the book and the book as a whole: "What can we continue to learn from the *Annales* school?", for instance. Perhaps in the future it might also include case studies to put some human flesh and blood on the broad structures and processes the book deals with.

In conclusion, *De Wereld en Nederland* raises the question of the relevance of the global for national developments. When is it needed, and how does it come into play? It shows the importance of developments in the more immediate and congenial geographical context. In doing so, it enables authors and students to take a deep dive into socio-economic history (understood in a very broad sense) in order to see sharply the peculiarities of the Dutch experience. As such, the book seems perfectly suited to the more mature student.

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CHRISTOPHER, EMMA. *A Merciless Place. The Lost Story of Britain's Convict Disaster in Africa*. Oxford University Press, Oxford [etc.] 2011. vii, 432 pp. Ill. Maps. £16.99. doi:10.1017/S002085901200065X

This is a story. Not entirely a "lost" story as the title implies, but a story that illustrates the tensions that existed within Britain, and the British Empire, in the late eighteenth century. As a story dominated by convicts, it deals with the relationship between crime, property, and punishment, and with transportation as the apparently attractive solution to this problem. It is also a story of how imperial problems – the American Revolution, the rise of the abolitionist movement, and continued exploration and expansion – influenced internal issues within Britain. Finally, while the merciless place for some might be identified with improper stereotypes of Africa, it was merciless because of the system that primarily sought to rid Britain of its criminals by exporting them without much concern for their future in their new situation.

Emma Christopher's eloquently written and engaging story, carefully constructs an in-between, and lesser known, period of Britain's transportation system. It was in-between

because it occurred when British North America, thanks to its Revolution, could no longer serve as the terminus for transported felons but before Britain's most famous penal colony, Australia, was established. The work thoroughly examines the period when Africa, but most specifically West Africa and for a very brief moment South Africa, served as an unsuccessful experiment in creating a new penal colony. Christopher does this with fifteen narrative-driven chapters that explore the subject; within each it is apparent that Christopher's vast archival work has allowed her to construct and intersect the narratives of her main historical agents.

The work begins with British North America and its role as the disembarkation point for Britain's transported criminals. This was something with which North American colonists did not agree and which the American Revolution quickly disrupted. Christopher sets up these early issues by introducing one of her main characters, William Murray, who, because of his crimes, forcibly traveled throughout the northern Anglo-Atlantic world. A British judge found Murray, a charming but scheming criminal, guilty and sentenced him to be transported to British North America. Luckily for Murray, he received a reprieve courtesy of the American Revolution that afforded him the opportunity of creating a new persona as an upper-class American Loyalist named William Jefferson. Like other Loyalists, Jefferson decided that it was best to return to Britain but William Jefferson was just as much a criminal as William Murray had been and because of this he was captured, tried, and became one of the first convicts to be transported to West Africa where he experienced a gruesome execution.

Early in the story the American Revolution is important because it forced the British to rethink the possible solutions to its criminal problem. One solution that became clear was the possibility of Africa as a new penal colony. Beyond this, the idea that Africa could serve as the next penal colony suggests that officials in Britain had little understanding of the situation in West Africa during this period beyond the vague notion that there were some British possessions there. Africa as a solution occurred within the context of the Revolution and as it became clear that Britain and the Netherlands would fight one another along the West African coastline. This fight provided British officials with the first opportunity to send convicts to West Africa as soldiers.

The Anglo-Dutch coastal war was the culmination of a long struggle between the two to dominate the transatlantic slave trade. As Britain prepared for battle, it decided to man its African corps with convicted criminals who would then be left behind in Africa. This Anglo-Dutch war on the Gold Coast provides its own interesting story, but what Christopher clearly shows is the coastal mayhem caused by abandoning these transported criminals in West Africa and the inhumanity of the system. It was hoped that the criminals left behind would become part of the coastal garrisons of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa but it became clear that company officials did not want them and could not support them. It is within this context that the next major character, Kenneth Mackenzie, is introduced.

Mackenzie saw a way to improve his status through military service in the war but was then shocked to learn that he would command an army of criminals in West Africa. Mackenzie, like his convict soldiers, would run amuck along the Gold Coast as he engaged in numerous schemes to acquire a fortune. From the mayhem caused by the coastal war, Christopher then moves to the unsuccessful attempts to define better a West African penal colony. This included the possibilities of utilizing Gorée Island or southwest Africa and sending more convicts to the Gold Coast. None proved to be viable solutions but all would be forgotten when a new possibility, Australia, emerged.

An important element that ties this story together, and which makes it engaging, is Christopher's focus upon the various characters that played a role. These characters include criminals, politicians, company servants, West Africans, and others who became involved in the enterprise. The research conducted by Christopher allows her to create a

fuller story as we learn about the activities of the criminals William Murray and Patrick Madan, the opportunist Kenneth Mackenzie, the Reverend Philip Quaque of Cape Coast Castle, Richard Miles, the governor of Cape Coast Castle, and the inhumane Joseph Wall of Gorée. This focus on characters, and the work that Christopher has done in finding everything possible about these individuals, expands the story while illustrating the intersection between the micro and the macro.

The work is more informative than it is interpretative, so while the reader learns facts about crime in Britain during this period, especially crimes against property, there is little explanation of why there was so much crime and why transportation became a form of punishment. This is not a major issue, but there are places where aspects of the story could be clarified, especially in relation to West Africa. An example involves the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. Christopher calls their trade castles “quintessentially British” because they promoted British trade, but ignores the fact that the company’s funding came entirely from an annual parliamentary grant, ensuring that the government had a say in what the company did or did not do. Thus, while the company resisted the attempt to send convicts to the Gold Coast, its bargaining position was weak. Beyond this, as the fighting occurred both sides utilized African allies – but they were not incorporated into the coastal European or company forces, as the work implies. Finally, a better understanding of the coastal situation would show why West Africa was a poor choice for a penal colony.

As convicts were incorporated into the company system they were being brought into a system that more often than not ensured death rather than survival. This occurred not only because of the diseases endemic in West Africa, but also as a result of the company wage system in which company servants received their pay in over-valued goods that they were expected to barter for food and for other necessities they required. The problem here was those lowest in the company hierarchy received the fewest and least desirable goods. Most soldiers, which is what the convicts became within the company structure, received the majority of their pay in alcohol, either brandy or rum, and tobacco. This they could either barter or consume – with most doing the latter.

However, these are minor quibbles within a story that needed to be told as it provides us with important insights into late eighteenth-century British crime and punishment. What is most shocking involves the nature of a system that was designed to move criminals somewhere else, but once there, abandon them and, as Christopher shows, most quickly succumbed. Thus, while they were spared the noose in Britain, they suffered and died from yellow fever or other painful causes, such as when Kenneth Mackenzie placed William Murray in front of a cannon and executed him. This was a system designed to export a problem and which provided considerable profit for some, such as the captains of the various vessels which carried transported criminals around the North Atlantic. An inhumane system was being transported to a new place where another inhumane system was starting to come under a concerted challenge.

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BALACHANDRAN, G. *Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c.1870–1945*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi [etc.] 2012. xii, 318 pp. Rs 1,240.00; £30.00. doi:10.1017/S0020859012000661

Maritime workers from India made inter-oceanic commerce possible within the British Empire but their identities and roles were highly contested and fluid. G. Balachandran’s