As one might expect, common themes emerge, although each situation is individual and the texture of the particular historical experience, the smells and the colours, appear naturally from the writing. The outcome in most cases depends on the balance between those who want retribution, or at least recognition of their suffering, and those who do not need or want to penalize the perpetrators too heavily, especially if this risks the transition. Amnesty for the perpetrators was a condition of transition in both Spain and Chile. And this, though they might agree with the necessity to make the compromise, left the victims, at a deeper level, unsatisfied.

Ariel Dorfman's play, *Death and the maiden*, vividly represents the dilemmas. Paulina, the main protagonist, has been tortured in the past by a man who played Schubert's *Death and the maiden* while raping and assaulting her. She recognizes this man, Roberto, who is brought to the house by her partner, Geraldo, who has been put in charge of a commission to investigate past abuses, but only in the case of those who died. While Geraldo is out, she manages to tie up Roberto and threaten him with a knife. She forces him to confess, although he maintains he has no memory of her. Geraldo says she must accept the commission's limitations for the sake of the nation. She asks why the victims are always the ones who have to give way.

The newly independent African government in Kenya chose not to recognize the suffering of Mau Mau suspects at British hands or to promote recognition and reconciliation between 'loyalists' and Mau Mau. It was considered more important to keep on good terms with the remaining white settlers and the British government. Ngugi was a tireless recorder of these situations, showing in his novels the distortions to community life induced by colonialism and then perpetuated by the new African elite. He tried to write in the vernacular to carry his message deeper—and was detained as a result.

When the needs of the victims are not met, they tend to resurface later. Spain is now beginning to allow some discussion of the atrocities of both sides during the civil war and of the repression under Franco which followed. Michelle Bachelet, when she became president of Chile, allowed gardens of memory to be planted and opened a Museum of Memory in Santiago in 2009. And some Mau Mau claimants have now gained compensation from the British government for sufferings during the emergency.

All the writers cited lived through periods of transition and used their work to project situations and beliefs to a wider audience, often through autobiography and memoir. Newman's approach remains political and he makes clear that he is using his authors to illuminate political dilemmas and is not embarking on literary criticism. This seems entirely justified given his project. But one welcome consequence of the book is that it gives an introduction to and context for the work of some exceptional writers, not all of them well known. Readers may be drawn to study them further.

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International history

Eisenhower and Cambodia: diplomacy, covert action, and the origins of the Second Indochina War. By William J. Rust. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 2016. 374pp. £36.95. ISBN 978 0 81316 742 8. Available as e-book.

At the height of the US intervention in Vietnam, during the mid-1960s to early-1970s, Cambodia was considered a 'sideshow'. More than a decade earlier, Cambodia was a 'sideshow of a sideshow'. This is the period examined in *Eisenhower and Cambodia*; but as William J. Rust

convincingly demonstrates, there was no shortage of diplomatic intrigue, policy frustration and international plotting over this relatively unknown Cold War battleground. Although the book is principally focused on US–Cambodian relations during the mid to late 1950s, and on Washington's rather difficult dealings with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, it also offers a fascinating look at the clandestine role of South Vietnam and Thailand in seeking to undermine the Cambodian monarch, the limited ability of the CIA to promote 'regime change' and the even more limited influence the US had on its regional anti-communist allies. The book further explores the extent to which US foreign policy was undermined by numerous objectives and organizations working at cross-purposes, and provides a useful case-study of the Eisenhower administration's response to the emergence of neutralism in the 'Third World'.

While Rust's extensive investigation into the US archives offers readers a more sophisticated and detailed narrative of the US's role in Cambodia during this period than any previous work on the subject, the author acknowledges that the lack of access to still-classified CIA material has meant that a more conclusive treatment remains to be written. That being said, Rust does a commendable job collating and evaluating the available material, especially with respect to the US's role in an unsuccessful coup attempt against Sihanouk in 1959 and the numerous plotting that preceded it. Sadly, the key sources that are not included in this study, assuming they exist at all, are the records of the South Vietnamese and Thai governments, particularly those of their intelligence services. Whereas a mainstream image exists of South Vietnam and Thailand as countries with no shortage of coups occurring internally, there is much less awareness of these two countries as launching pads for coups elsewhere in the region. As Rust highlights, leaders in Saigon and Bangkok often had their own foreign policy agendas that conflicted with Washington's. With respect to Cambodia, their approach to promoting anti-communism was viewed by the Americans as unhelpful, if not outright counterproductive. Indeed, it was precisely because these countries were generally seen as US pawns, rather than actors that often ignored American efforts to constrain their activities, that Washington still received the blame for their actions. Admittedly though, the US was often unwilling to sanction its allies, fearing it would undermine or alienate them.

Rust's account is notable for illustrating how US officials were repeatedly swept up in intrigues not of their own making and over which they had little control, regardless of popular images to the contrary about US omnipotence. Such was the complex nature of relationships, interests, policies and priorities within the US government and among its regional allies that it would prove highly challenging even for a first-class game theoretician to come up with a winning formula. On the one hand, the US wanted to promote its anti-communist agenda in an ostensibly neutral country led by a monarch who seemed to lean towards communism—an awkward situation in itself. On the other hand, the more hard-line but clumsy anti-communist efforts of America's regional clients were likely to undermine that agenda. Living with Sihanouk was far from ideal, but engaging in plots to overthrow him that had little chance of success was also problematic. The result, as Rust shows, was to seek to please everyone, but failing to please anyone: an enduring policy dilemma that remains highly relevant today. Though there may have been missed opportunities to improve US–Cambodia relations, or more precisely US relations with Sihanouk, *Eisenhower and Cambodia* showcases the wider regional complications and internal bureaucratic interests that ensured that consistent and coherent policy formulation, even in a relative backwater, was nearly impossible.

If there is one weakness of this book, it is the title. Eisenhower rarely makes an appearance—hardly surprising given Cambodia's relatively low priority—nor is there much

discussion about the 'origins' of the Second Indochina War—a hugely contentious issue in its own right. That said, *Eisenhower and Cambodia* should not only be considered the standard work on US–Cambodia relations during this period, but it is also a highly useful text for understanding US foreign policy formulation during the Eisenhower years, Washington's often fraught relationship with its anti-communist allies, and the limits of covert action.

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The tears of the Rajas: mutiny, money and marriage in India 1805–1905. By Ferdinand Mount. London: Simon & Schuster. 2015. 784pp. £20.00. ISBN 978 1 47112 945 2. Available as e-book.

India conquered: Britain's Raj and the chaos of empire. By Jon Wilson. London: Simon & Schuster. 2016. 576pp. £20.00. ISBN 978 1 47110 125 0. Available as e-book.

Among the stained glass windows of Westminster Abbey is a memorial to Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona, who was born in 1820 and died in 1914, commended as a 'great Canadian imperialist and philanthropist'. The word 'imperialist' leaps out as an anachronism to the viewer of 2016, but was a high commendation in 1919 when the window was dedicated. In subsequent years the British empire collapsed, was transformed to form the geographical basis of the modern Commonwealth, and has received differing treatments at the hands of historians and biographers, above all since Indian independence and the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947. Niall Ferguson's 2003 television series and book on *Empire* (Allen Lane, 2003) was dismissed in a *Guardian* article at the time by the author of one of the two books reviewed here, Jon Wilson, as presenting 'the acceptable face of imperial brutality … based on a version of the history of empire that is simply wrong'. As the 70th anniversary of the end of British rule over India approaches in 2017, the polemic over whether the whole venture was, on balance, good or bad, still rages on, with more (from William Dalrymple, *inter alia*) in the pipeline.

The two books under review (published in 2015 and 2016 respectively) both challenge any remaining vestige of a glorious interpretation of empire, but from different ends of the spectrum. Ferdinand Mount's *The tears of the Rajas* charts the history of his family of Scots-men and women who played a variety of roles in India in the period 1805–1905, described against a background of all but forgotten massacres and partial military victories—during which Mount's great grandfather, General Sir John Low, rose through British military ranks to fulfil his imperial mission in particularly gory circumstances and detail. Jon Wilson's *India conquered* charts the fragility of the conquest and administration of (or 'dominion over' in the language of the time) India from the perspective of a wider social scope of actors from the seventeenth century onwards. The work concludes, as does the book's subtitle ('Britain's Raj and the chaos of empire'), that imperial rule was more smoke, mirrors and improvisation than a reality of control.

That this 'dominion' expanded and lasted so long, however, did reflect the success of the official propaganda and social hierarchies established by this chimera of control, which prevailed for much longer in the eyes of the British who were part of it. My own mother, who was brought up in southern India in the 1930s and 1940s as the daughter of a nonconformist missionary, still maintains that 'it wasn't all bad'—and if visits back to her old school in the Nilgiri Hills that still functions as a Christian academy for girls are anything to go by, the current and entirely Indian incumbents would in large part agree. It was the conception and execution (often literally) of the imperial mission, situated much further north (and