



The Last of the Warrior Kings

Books Reviewed:

[The Last of the Warrior Kings](#) [1]

Issue:

[171](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Geoff Fox](#) [3]

Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Maxi Miffion Wolf talks the gangsta talk and walks the gangsta walk right down to the air bubbles in his Nike trainers (?expensive, fashionable, black with subtle cream edging?). The conceit is that the text is his Sworn Affidavit ? an explanation in his own words of why he nicked the Benin Bronzes from the British Museum and, despite the fury and menace of the Establishment, returned them to the Nigerian government by way of its London embassy.

It's a creaky conceit if you take it too literally, given that Maxi's English teacher would be lucky to get a couple of paragraphs out of him, since he begins his adventures as a self-confessed fashion victim (?Totally impulsive. All action. No brain?). Initially, the narrative isn't too sure what kind of story it is; Maxi's twin, his mother and her rapper boyfriend are all murdered within two or three chapters, and it seems we are in for a bleak walk down the mean streets of South London. But once Maxi teams up with his late twin's girl friend, the lovely Sapphire Issa-Hilcote and his geeky public school chum Roland (?Rollz?) Bluntstone, we're off on a hectic chase of a comedy thriller; the More Dread Crew are just a shadow of a step behind our heroic trio, seeming to know their every move.

Rollz picks up a scrapbook on the internet which includes an account written by a young bluejacket of his experiences on the 1897 British Punitive Expedition which looted the bronzes in the first place. Mussi is in earnest about the immorality of the theft ? the bronzes are, in the real world, still in the BM ? and it may be this which prompted her to devise lengthy extracts from the memoirs of the sailor and other members of the expedition. For me, the ironic contrast with the present became intrusive ? chiefly because events in modern day London were careering along with such comic energy in both plot and telling that I was impatient to know what happened next to Maxi and his friends.

Once you have stopped expecting anything remotely plausible, it's a great read. Partly for its wriggling plot and crackling street talk, but also for some huger than life characters: there's Dreader Dread, poet of protest; Abiola Olusamilola, the verbose junior diplomat at Nigeria House who is not what he seems to be; and Walter, leader of a flying squad of pizza delivery scooter riders. When the bronzes were first stolen, Henty's Deeds of Empire offered young readers unimpeachable role models in their soldiers and statesmen; in 2008, a novel can take it as read that we expect our cultural and political overlords ? here with oil deals on their minds ? to be greedy, ruthless and duplicitous.

Running Order:

37

Source URL (retrieved on Oct '20): <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/171/childrens-books/reviews/the-last-of-the-warrior-kings>

Links:

- [1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-last-of-the-warrior-kings>
- [2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/171>
- [3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/geoff-fox>