

IV. Endings

The Olifants River has fixed starting and ending points. It originates in a mountain spring and ends where it meets the Atlantic Ocean near Papendorp. Crafting a history of the peoples who have lived from its waters requires active intervention to mark the beginning and ending of a narrative, however. The communities acting in this drama lived before 1725 and persisted well beyond 1838—although Khoisan groups lived in dramatically altered circumstances by the end of the eighteenth century. The interactions at the heart of colonial dynamics also had precedent before the first settler land claims in the Cedarberg, while some aspects of domination persisted well into the twentieth century—and indeed exist today. 1

This final section of the book provides two approaches to summing up. Chapter 9 interrogates the historical practice of periodization. It argues that characterizing a frontier region as orthodox—or not—productively complicates temporal as well as geographic and social frameworks of frontier studies. Emphasizing the ebbs and flows of conquest reminds us that settler success was not the result of steady progress, but rather an ongoing battle waged in fits and starts. Consequently, no single end point clearly marks the triumph of colonial households, which were so crucial to settler survival throughout the eighteenth century. The Appendix provides chronological details of the process I discuss in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 considers the Cedarberg's place in the broad sweep of South African history. 2