

Recent Reviews of Life Writing Publications III

List of Publications Consulted

All publications are from South Africa, unless otherwise indicated.
Prices are quoted in South African Rand.

*The African Book Publishing
Record*

Arena

Die Burger

Cape Argus

Cape Times

Daily Dispatch

Fair Lady

The Herald

H-Net Book Review

Journal of Cultural Studies

London Review of Books

Mail & Guardian

The Mercury

The Natal Witness

*NELM (National English Literary
Museum) News*

Pretoria News

Rapport

Saturday Dispatch

*The South African Journal of
Cultural History*

Sowetan

The Sunday Independent

Sunday Times

Weekend Post

The Women's Review of Books

Wordstock

Contributing Reviews Editor: Judith Lütge Coullie
School of Languages and Literature
University of Durban-Westville

Awerbuck, Dianne

Gardening at Night.

By Dianne Awerbuck

London: Secker & Warburg, 2003, 247 pp. R141,00

'Why this book should be called a novel is a bit of a mystery. Presumably most of it is fiction, though it is told in the first person, and the protagonist-memoirist is the author, Dianne Awerbuck. Just how much of it really did happen will be known only to those people really close to her. If it is autobiography why not just say so, since it has the long baggy shapelessness of a lived life, forgivable in a memoir, less attractive in a novel'. Awerbuck's story begins in Kimberley, South Africa 'where very early on her Jewish biological father is ejected from the family and then commits suicide.... Readers need to brace themselves for an ongoing deluge, a 'sea of troubles', which also includes abortion, abandonment, deaths from car crash, overdose and diving off a bridge. And cancer.... The day-to-day superficiality of a middle-class white existence in the Eighties and Nineties in South Africa is often well caught...'

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardian*: Friday June 13-19 2003:iv.

Gardening at Night is an intimate account of growing up and growing aware in South Africa in the '80s, the '90s and the new millenium. Awerbuck tells her story 'with total honesty and without sentimentality The story is bleak in parts, but also bitter-sweetly funny'.

Kay-Ann van Rooyen. *Fairlady* July 2003:171. .

Basson, Wouter

Secrets and Lies: Wouter Basson and South Africa's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme.

By Marlene Burger & Chandre Gould

Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2002, 231 pp. R139.95.

Authors Chandre Gould (a researcher for South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission) and Marlene Burger, a journalist, have tried to unravel the story of Wouter Basson, the first head of a biological and chemical warfare programme to go on trial in the world. The book is not an easy read: it is a tangled web of events, people and companies which stretches over many continents; however, it is too good a story not to read. *Secrets and Lies* is a laudable effort insofar as anybody has been able to paint a picture of the apartheid state's chemical and biological warfare programme.

Estelle Ellis. *Cape Argus* October 4 2002:12.

Breytenbach, Jan

The Buffalo Soldiers: The Story of South Africa's 32 Battalion.

By Jan Breytenbach

Alberton: Galago, 2002, 360 pp. R270,00

This is Colonel Jan Breytenbach's personal account of South Africa's involvement in the Angolan civil war in the mid-'70s. The Buffalo soldiers, along with South Africa's notorious Koevoet irregulars, were the main opponents of the MPLA and Cuba during the Angolan civil war and the border war against Namibean freedom fighters, the South West African People's Organisation. The war left scars, and amongst them is Breytenbach's bitterness at the way ex-President F.W. de Klerk disbanded his battalion before the 1994 democratic elections.

Archie Henderson. *Cape Argus* April 11 2003:10.

Dean, Geoffrey

The Turnstone: A Doctor's Story.

By Geoffrey Dean

Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002, 273 pp. R139.95.

The turnstone is quite literally a curious bird moving along the shore, using its beak to shift pebbles to see what lies underneath. It is the apt title of the autobiography of former Port Elizabeth doctor, Geoffrey Dean. He's plainly a brilliant researcher whose research into porphyria, multiple sclerosis and lung cancer led to him being made Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2003. His account is spiced with anecdotal material that cannot fail to interest.

Robert Ball. *The Herald* January 22 2003:4.

'If it was there to be researched, you can be sure that doctor Geoffrey Dean has probably studied it in his 60 years of globe-trotting. He starts at the beginning and ends at the end, not always the best way to keep readers transfixed, but in spite of a sometimes pedantic style Dean's work is so fascinating it's impossible not to remain interested'.

Di Caelers. *Cape Argus* March 21 2003:9.

de Kock, Eugene

A Human Being Died that Night.

By Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela

Claremont, South Africa: David Philip, 2003, 193 pp. R140,00

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, associate professor of psychology at the University of Cape Town, worked in the Rehabilitation and Reparations Committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In this book she recounts her acquaintance with apartheid's henchman, Eugene de Kock. The relationship (arising out of 46 hours of interviews) between the interviewer and the man who came to be known as Prime Evil allows for fascinating insights into their psyches, but also into the very nature of reconciliation and forgiveness: the search for the human in the inhuman which make this a book that will become seminal reading on the TRC. Do not miss this book.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times* June 13 2003:10.

Apartheid's master assassin, Eugene de Kock, is now serving 212 years in jail for crimes against humanity. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's first exposure to de Kock came in 1997 when he testified about his part in the murders of three black policemen and a man who was their friend. A few days after the hearing, Gobodo-Madikizela met the widows of two of the victims, one of whom said that her tears were not only for their husbands but also for de Kock. This empathetic act led to Gobodo-Madikizela's desire to interview de Kock to find answers to fundamental questions about forgiveness and remorse, at the level of the individual and the nation.

Each chapter of *A Human Being Died That Night* unveils new horrors and new hope, new questions and offered explanations. It sheds light on the dynamics of a threatened (white) society which wanted results, sometimes revenge, and the threats the 'other side' faced. Every South African should own a copy.

Lindsay Slogrove. *The Mercury* June 26 2003:13.

The desire of many reviewers to cast de Kock in the role of a South African Hannibal Lecter, to erase complexity and specificity, should not put readers off this book. In his preface, Albie Sachs asks whether Gobodo-Madikizela and de Kock can stop being a black South African woman and a white South African man and simply be humans. My question was: Can any South African? Gobodo-Madikizela answers these questions in terms of an analysis of individual versus structural and systemic crimes.

Carol Christie. *Wordstock* June 29 2003:2.

This is a fascinating book that raises disturbing questions about the nature of evil, of what it is that produces monsters in society and whether, by trying to

understand perpetrators, we give them a way out: pertinent questions in a society where former enemies live side by side. Gobodo-Madikizela's writing is intensely powerful, shattering assumptions about what constitutes our humanity.

Laurice Taitz. *Sunday Times: Lifestyle* August 3 2003:13.

'Dread, Zebulon' (Elliot Josephs)

Memoirs of a Closet Guerrilla.

By Zebulon Dread

Self-published (South Africa).

This autobiographical novel by South African 'cultural terrorist' is an honest and exciting tour through an interesting life. The book focuses on his traumatic childhood with an abusive father in a township 'littered with children' and bedevilled by gangs, alcohol and drug-abuse. He goes on to criticize the middle classes and political ruling classes (past and present).

Erns Grundling. *Die Burger* June 17 2002: 7.

Fafunwa, Aliu Babatunde

Memoirs of a Nigerian Minister of Education.

By Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa

Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria, 1998, 369 pp. \$7.00.

Fafunwa was a university teacher and administrator, and later Federal Minister of Education under Nigeria's President Babangida. Early sections of this volume overlap with Fafunwa's previous memoir, which extended up to 1979. Throughout, Fafunwa provides details which are 'massively in excess of what is expected of a 'good read' memoir', but which may be useful to those who use it as source material on the history of educational planning in Nigeria. The photographs amount to 'little more than autohagiography not inappropriate in a book mired at the level of management that offers, finally, little insight into the problems and challenges facing the Nigerian educational system'.

Chris Dunton. *The African Book Publishing Record* 38 (1) 2002:10.

Fischer, Bram

Fischer's Choice: A Life of Bram Fischer.

By Martin Meredith

Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2002, 164 pp. R143.00.

Born into 'well-connected Afrikaner "royalty"', Bram Fischer is remembered

today as an advocate who defended anti-apartheid activists in South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. He saved Nelson Mandela and others from the gallows in the Rivonia trial. In 1966, he was himself sentenced to life imprisonment.

The author 'does his best to maintain impartiality but cannot disguise his admiration for Fischer's sacrifices. At times, the book is intensely moving. It deserves a wide audience'.

Bruce Bennett. *Sunday Times: Lifestyle* November 24 2002:13.

Fox, Justin

With Both Hands Waving: A Journey Through Mozambique.

By Justin Fox

Cape Town: Kwela Books, 208 pp. R95.00.

Getaway magazine journalist Justin Fox was asked by his editor to drive from Ponta da Ouro in Mozambique's extreme south to the Rio Rovuma in the extreme north in one month. He and a couple of mates made it just about all the way, but then two of them got malaria and dysentery and they had to make for Malawi. This account of the journey is wonderfully literate (not surprising, as Fox holds a doctorate from Oxford University) and makes for highly entertaining reading. My only gripe is that at times there is a certain joylessness as one feels that they are racing to get from place to place. But for anyone who has ever been to Mozambique, ever wants to go there, or simply for those who love travel books, this is a must-have addition to the shelf.

Tony Weaver. *Cape Times* August 30 2002:12.

Given the lack of good roads and the accommodation which is 'generally non-existent or way below acceptable standards', travelling through Mozambique is not for wimps. But it has much to offer, and Fox's account is both educational and highly entertaining. To keep an audience enraptured without the benefits of glossy pictures, takes great skill. Fox has it aplenty.

Debbie Derry. *The Herald* August 21 2002:4.

Fox recounts his travels with a few friends in Mozambique during which he 'met some extraordinary people and travelled over some extraordinary roads, saw misery and beauty and enormous potential and explored many of their own feelings about living as whites in Africa'. The journey, Fox says, 'taught me to see differently ... plunged me into depression and made me soar. It had done everything a journey should do'. One small disappointment with this book is the poor proofreading.

Vivien Horler. *Cape Argus* August 16 2002:12.

'Fred'

Fred at Your Service, Ma'am: Reminiscences of a Service Dog.

By Lauren Singer

Illustrated by Tony Grogan.

Claremont: Spearhead, 2003, 86 pp. R105,00

Fred is a golden retriever who is a service dog serving author Lauren Singer who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis twelve years ago. The title is listed as Spearhead biography and that is exactly what it is—Fred's ancestry, life as a puppy, separation from family, initiation into service age one; then his life with Singer. This account, told from Fred's perspective, is a gem which will move you in so many ways with humour and insight all rolled into one.

Robyn Cohen. *Cape Times* May 30 2003:12.

Fugard, Athol.

The Captain's Tiger: A Memoir for the Stage.

By Athol Fugard

New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1999. 64 pp. R134,00

(Also, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1997. 88 pp. R45.)

This quasi-autobiographical play has two plots: the external plot concerns the life of Betty le Roux, the protagonist's mother. Tiger, the protagonist-author, is writing a novel about her life. The internal plot concerns the particularity of Tiger's growth and maturity as a writer. The play makes 'the point that a writer's creative imagination inextricably intertwines with the reality of his environment, and that 'creative authority and freedom' can only find a voice when the writer tells the truth'.

Peter Anny-Nzekwe. *Journal of Cultural Studies* 3,1,2001:224-228.

Hamilton, Steve

I Want my Life Back.

By Steve Hamilton

Johannesburg: Penguin, 2002, 384 pp. R95.00.

This is a deeply, deeply disturbing book which you could only want to read for two reasons. One is if you are a drug addict wanting to break free; the other is if you know someone who is an addict and you want to understand them so as to help them. If you have ever felt a craving for anything vaguely narcotic, then read this book and give yourself a chance.

Craig Bishop. *The Natal Witness* September 6 2002:7.

At the age of six, Steven Hamilton had to help his drunk father home. This is one of a number of harrowing incidents in this damaged life. But it is a testament to both Hamilton's wryness and the skill of his co-writer Alison Lowry that the book never becomes oppressive. Hamilton, who descended into drug addiction and who now makes his living as a public speaker, has been clean for twelve years.

Michele Magwood. *Sunday Times: Lifestyle* September 8 2002:13.

Holgate, Kingsley

Cape to Cairo: One Family's Adventures along the Waterways of Africa.

By Kingsley Holgate

Cape Town: Struik, 2002, 207 pp. R169.95.

Holgate recounts an epic African adventure, and if this tale doesn't make you want to buy a Land Rover and head off for the experience of a lifetime, nothing will. *Cape to Cairo* is a recreation of Holgate's leather-bound, sweat-stained journal that accompanied him, his wife, son and four friends as they journeyed up the continent.

Adelle Horler. *Cape Argus* November 1 2002:14.

Kingsley Holgate is one of Africa's great adventurers, a modern-day Livingstone, if you like, who is passionate in his quest to explore some of the remotest and most fascinating regions of the continent and the world. This account is a great read, wonderfully written with informative, amusing and fascinating stories, and it looks good too with its journal-like cover and layout crammed full of interesting visual tit bits.

For all those who love Africa and adventure, this is one of those must-haves.

'G.F.' *Pretoria News, Interval* January 13 2003:3.

Ing, Andrew

Paris to Pamplona on a Barstool.

By Andrew Ing

Cape Town: Lighthouse Publications, 2002, 102 pp. R72,00

Ing recounts the somewhat hedonistic 18-day journey that he and four South African friends undertook through Europe. No space is wasted on descriptions of the countryside or places of interest; the focus of this unusual travelogue is

the various liquids the travellers manage to imbibe en route. The humour, which is boyish and often lavatorial, is mirrored by pen-and-ink illustrations. The misuse of foreign phrases is a great source amusement.

Penny Grimbeek. *Fairlady* March 2003:163.

Jacottet, Edouard

Murder at Morija.

By Tim Couzens

Parklands: Random House, 2003, 474 pp. R150.

Murder at Morija is the biography of Edouard Jacottet, an eminent scholar and missionary of the Paris Evangelical Society in Basutoland (now Lesotho), as well as the history of the Christian mission he served amongst the people to whom he devoted his life. Jacottet was poisoned in 1920: there was no trial and no one was ever convicted of the murder. In this 'compelling and groundbreaking' study, Tim Couzens sets out to solve the murder.

Unnamed reviewer. *Arena* July 2003:32-33.

The story, which traces the history of the bringing together of the Basotho nation under Moshoeshoe and the role of the early missionaries, is compellingly told by Couzens. Couzens 'spent the best part of the last ten years researching the book' and offers a comprehensive history of how it is that the nation of Lesotho still exists independently today, resisting being swallowed up by South Africa which surrounds it.

One of the central themes concerns the interdependence of the personal and the political: for both the missionaries and the chiefs who formed alliances with them there were choices to be made. Couzens' exploration of this theme shows his understanding of 'the magic and meaning of history... of how personal choices alter the future'.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times* May 9 2003:7.

Johnson, Nkosi

Nkosi's Story.

By Jane Fox

Parkview: The Life Story Project/ Spearhead, 2002, 303 pp. R120,00

This is the story of a black South African boy and his white mother and their courageous battle against AIDS. The book also opens 'a whirlpool of questions about cross-cultural adoption, ordinary people's fears and unethical journalism'.

Christi Naude. *The Natal Witness* December 20 2002:13.

At the age of two, Xolani Nkosi arrived at Gail Johnson's after the closure of the care home where his mother Daphne placed him. All the controversies are in this account: getting HIV+ children into school, making public statements about AIDS and anti-retrovirals, and the media furore around Gail's supposed exploitation of her son. Fox deals deftly with the politicking madness that surrounded him, the love, the ugliness, and gives (with what must have been excellent research) insight into the 11-year-old's choice to stop and let go. Expect to sniff through this book while the family's, especially Nkosi's and Gail's, spirited approach to life and their humour bring bitter-sweet floods of tears on many occasions.

Justine Gerardy. *Daily Dispatch* January 4 2003:4.

Jonker, Ingrid

Ingrid Jonker: Beeld van 'n Digterslewe. [Ingrid Jonker: Portrait of a Poet's Life.]

By Petrovna Meterlerkamp

Hermanus: Hemel en See, 2003, 252 pp. R250,00

Meterlerkamp sought to collect as much material as possible about the Afrikaans poet, Ingrid Jonker, who—in 1965 at the age of 31, a year after she had won a prestigious literary award—walked into the sea at Three Anchor Bay, Cape Town, and drowned. This book contains 140 photographs and 60 letters and manuscripts which give an overview and perspective which has previously not been available. The author/compiler insists that this is not a biography, but rather an attempt to present the facts as objectively as possible, to leave it up to the reader to make up his/her own mind.

Ampie Muller. *Cape Argus* July 4 2003:10.

Keitetsi, China

Child Soldier: Fighting for my Life.

By China Keitetsi

Bellevue: Jacana, 2002, 218 pp. R154.95.

Child Soldier is a harrowing account of one person's traumatic childhood—and traumatic adulthood. Following her departure from an abusive home, China Keitetsi, at the age of nine, was dragged into Uganda's National Resistance Army, which dehumanised her and turned her into a killer. She survived attempted rape as well as imprisonment, and finally fled the army.

With its straightforward and simple language, *Child Soldier* makes an accessible read. It is not a comfortable story, but it is gripping and an impressive tale of courage and determination in the face of horrific odds.

Reggy Moalusi. *Mail & Guardian*, Friday February 7-13 2003:3.

Koch, Blaise.

In, Around, Through and Out: An actor's life.

By Blaise Koch

Claremont: Spearhead, 2002, 319 pp. R130.00.

In a career stretching over 30 years, South African, Blaise Koch, has appeared in more than 250 stage productions. This book is a record of his life as an actor and as a man, struggling to come to terms with his HIV-positive status. This is an important book and an eloquent testament to a special spirit. In the literature of HIV-AIDS, it will unquestionably have a major impact, not only for its insights but for the journal-based immediacy of much of the text.

Kenosi Modisane. *Sowetan* June 28 2002:26.

What could have been an illuminating, moving record of Koch's life—not to mention a fresh take on the stigma of HIV—is instead a tedious, peevish, narcissistic diatribe that reflects so badly on Koch as to be pitiable.

Di Caelers. *Cape Argus* June 10 2002:10.

Although this masterfully told story throws light onto this disease which is, in South Africa, obscured in silence, it often gets bogged down in the award-winning actor's own emotional downswings.

Michele Magwood. *Sunday Times: Lifestyle*. August 18 2002:12.

Kombuis, Koos

Seks & Drugs and Boeremusiek. [Sex & Drugs and Afrikaner music.]

By Andre LeToit (Koos Kombuis)

Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2000, 294 pp. R79.95.

This book comprises 294 pages of 'self-centred, self-appreciated, self-delighted, self-contented and self-advanced ravings' of South African 'Boere-rocker' (Afrikaner singer/composer). I'm at a loss as to why Kombuis—and the publishers—got the idea that anyone would want to read about his never-ending trips through Weskoppies mental hospital, coffee shops, drinking and drug-taking sprees.

Eddie Botha. *Saturday Dispatch* March 15 2003:4.

Labuschagne, Riaan

On South Africa's Secret Service: An Undercover Agent's Story.

By Riaan Labuschagne

Alberton: Galago, 2002, 304 pp. R275,00

In this book, Labuschagne describes his 15 years as an undercover agent for the National Intelligence Service of the apartheid government. The book is published by Peter Stiff who has cornered a niche market of books on South Africa's various covert forces. Labuschagne's book draws on Stiff's somewhat fictional style, so most of his claims are not backed up by supporting evidence, but his service in the NIS appears to be well documented.

Sam Sole. *Mail & Guardian* January 3-9 2003:8.

Lessing, Doris

Doris Lessing: A Biography.

By Carole Klein

London: Duckworth, 2000, 283 pp. 18.99 pounds sterling.

Klein's biography has a 'souffle-ish quality': she blanches and trims Lessing's two short monographs about her parents, cannibalises the autobiographies, and supplements these with conversations with journalists, former personal assistants and political and literary acquaintances, and a voluble ex-lover. Although all the key facts are there, Klein is too baffled by Lessing and the choices she made, and usually too disapproving of them, to probe the connection between the life and the work. This is particularly frustrating since there is a problem with Lessing's writing, in spite of all its praiseworthy qualities—its ambitiousness, its formal daring and philosophical seriousness—which it is the biographer's job to address. Klein's 'bland biographical mix' is not the biography Lessing deserves.

Elizabeth Lowry. *London Review of Books* March 22 2001:29-30.

Lewin, Hugh

Bandiet: Out of Jail.

By Hugh Lewin

Johannesburg: Random House, 2002, 264 pp. R150,00

Hugh Lewin was the son of English missionaries. As a young man, he joined the anti-apartheid Liberal Party and the African Resistance Movement, whose aim was to commit acts of sabotage to demonstrate opposition to apartheid. He participated in three such acts before being arrested. At the age of 24, he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. *Bandiet*, his account of the fear,

physical pain, humiliation and deprivation he and his fellow politicals endured, was published in 1974 but banned in South Africa. Here it is again with some additions, and it's useful reminder of the barely restrained brutality with which the National Party government ruled South Africa for 46 years.

Chris Barron. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle* December 15 2002:13.

Mallet, Nick and Rob van der Valk

Nick & I: An Adventure in Rugby.

By Rob van der Valk & Andy Colquhoun

Cape Town: Don Nelson, 2002, 224 pp. R102.00.

This account of the years during which Nick Mallet coached the Springbok rugby team is simply and honestly told by Rob van der Valk. The book not only gives the reader an insight into rugby personalities and events behind the scenes in the Springbok camp, it also exposes the political minefield—principally regarding racial quotas in the team - which the Springbok coach must negotiate.

Fritz Joubert. *Die Burger—Boeke* June 10 2002:9.

Mdakane, Zinhle

No Way Out: Story of an X-Street Kid.

By Zinhle Carol Mdakane

Durban: Life History Series, University of Durban-Westville, 2001, 139 pp. R100,00

Zinhle Mdakane was raped on the way home from school when she was only six years old. She does not confide this horrifying event to anyone. Thereafter, her family situation deteriorates when both of her parents find new partners and Mdakane gives birth to an illegitimate baby. This is the boy her mother has always wanted and Zinhle is cast out and forced to leave her child behind. From this point her life descends into a gruelling chronicle of misfortune. *No Way Out* makes for painful reading. Its style is not polished but what it has to say is certainly worth hearing.

Shirley Kossick. *Mail & Guardian: Friday* August 8-15 2002:3.

The idea behind this first-person novel is superb, and the issue tackled an important one, but the actual execution is disastrous. The narrative lacks plausibility and is grammatically and structurally flawed.

Myolisi Gophe. *Cape Argus* May 13 2002:10.

The autobiography begins with Zinhle Mdakane's unhappy childhood in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and her later years on the streets of Durban and Johannesburg. At the same time, there unfolds a tale of crime, drug abuse, torture and murder—but also of humanity and empathy in hopeless circumstances. This account (like that of Zazah P. Khuzwayo in the same series) is self-published and thus represents a refusal of a marginalised black woman to be silenced by cruel circumstances and by an unsympathetic publishing industry. Unlike the majority of recent South African autobiographies, Mdakane's is not largely political. However, it is in stories such as these, between the lines of official history and political history, that valuable political and historical commentary is to be found.

Annemarie van Niekerk. *Rapport* June 9 2002:17.

Meer, Ismail

A Fortunate Man.

By Ismail Meer

Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2002, 287 pp. R180,00

Sadly, the author died before completing this most detailed of autobiographies. On his death, his widow and children took up the task. Together they have demonstrated how a life-long standing in his local and the wider community was won and maintained.

Meer was certainly fortunate in his family, his friends and acquaintances, in his professional, legal colleagues and, not least, in his mutually loyal political comrades in the anti-apartheid struggle. Above all, he was blessed by birth into the Islamic faith: a religious conviction that carried seamlessly through to his public life.

Alan Lipman. *The Sunday Independent* January 5 2003:17.

Mhlaba, Raymond

Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs: Reminiscing from Rwanda and Uganda.

By Raymond Mhlaba, narrated to Thembeke Mufamadi

Pretoria: HSRC and Cape Town: Robben Island Museum, 2001, 192 pp. R114.80.

While the story of this veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle is 'engagingly forthright', the manuscript should have been more carefully edited.

Tim White. *The Sunday Independent* July 7 2002:18.

Mogoba, Mmutlanyane Stanley

Stone, Steel, Sjabok: Faith Born on Robben Island.

By Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba

Johannesburg: Ziningweni Communications, 2003, 87 pp. R115,00

Mogoba's activism in the Pan Africanist Congress landed him on Robben Island in 1964. It was nearly soul destroying and was meant to be nothing less. But prisoner 20/64 turned to Christianity and found the moral and spiritual strength the authorities hoped would be beaten out of him. He later rose to become leader of the Methodist Church and more recently—and controversially—he returned to politics as president of the PAC. His book, he believes, offers an explanation to Methodists, especially, who were distressed by what they saw as a revocation of sorts. He asserts that there is no contradiction between the two roles in a society like South Africa's.

Michael Morris. *Cape Argus* May 16 2003:10.

Mphahlele, Letlapa

Child of the Soil: My Life as a Freedom Fighter.

By Letlapa Mphahlele

Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002, 214 pp. R99.95.

Commander of the Azanian People's Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Pan African Congress, Letlapa Mphahlele has rewritten the history of South Africa and of the PAC. *Child of the Soil* depicts his childhood, his life in exile and recounts anecdotes about struggle leaders, politicians and other vivid characters.

Needo Kumbaca. *Daily Dispatch* October 9 2002:6.

Far from being a liturgy of the black man's burden or a catalogue of atrocities inflicted on the defenceless masses, Mphahlele's book ably steers away from sob stories to focus on his life as a freedom fighter in the anti-apartheid struggle. There are no sacred cows in Mphahlele's book. He puts all liberation movements under the microscope, but the harshest criticism is reserved for his party, the PAC.

Mongadi Mafata. *Sowetan* October 11 2002:8.

Letlapa Mphahlele was a commander in the Azanian People's Liberation Army. He was the man who ordered the massacre in the St James' Church in Cape Town (in which 11 people were killed) and the Heidelberg Tavern attack (in which 4 people died). These attacks on civilians took place after Nelson

Mandela and the liberation movements had been freed. Later Mpahalele applied for amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but then withdrew his application. Yet he believes in reconciliation.

Myolisi Gophe. *Cape Argus* October 25 2002:18.

Mugabe, Robert

Robert Mugabe—A Life of Power and Violence.

By Stephen Chan

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, xvi + 240 pp. \$27.95.

‘Stephen Chan, a New Zealander, was on the staff of the Commonwealth secretariat from 1977 to 1983. He was an early advisor to Mr Mugabe’s government. He is today professor of International Relations and dean of Law and Social Sciences at London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies’. He attempts to describe Mugabe’s metamorphosis from ‘brave statesman’ and ‘a byword for reconciliation’ into someone who ‘has missed his chance to enter history without shame’. The result is a narrative with as many contradictions as Chan sees in the character of his subject. Chan’s lingering devotion to Mugabe shines through. Paradoxically, he is, as a political scientist, unfair to Mugabe, failing to understand the magnitude of the problem that Mugabe—unlike Ian Smith before him—faced in maintaining stability as the country’s population doubled in 20 years. The first prerequisite of any real democracy is an ability to face the unvarnished truth and Mr Mugabe could never do that. Neither can Chan.

Michael Hartnack. *The Herald* March 12 2003:6.

Despite its title, this book is not a biography in the generally accepted sense of the term. Instead, it deals (in strictly chronological order) only with Robert Mugabe’s years in power between 1980 and 2002. It thus fails to consider Mugabe’s rise to leadership—‘crafted by deceptions and treacheries’—during the liberation struggle days. Although written by a professor at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, the book is ‘not a purely academic text’ and the references do not include any of the existing books on Mugabe, such as the biographies by David Smith et al, Martin Meredith and David Blair. There are some errors of fact in Chan’s account, as well as some omissions and some seemingly irrelevant inserts: Chan does not examine Mugabe’s early achievements in domestic reform (especially education and health) or failures such as his inability to stamp out corruption.

Elaine Windrich. H-Net Book Review. H-Safrica@h-net.msu.edu. May 2003.

Rorke, Winnefred and Agnes Lottering
Winnefred and Agnes: The Story of Two Women.

By Agnes Lottering

Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002, 248 pp. R89.95.

Agnes Lottering, a mix of Zulu and Irish, decided, at the age of 65, to tell the story of her life and that of her mother, Winnefred Rorke. Under South Africa's apartheid regime, those of mixed blood often found themselves in the horrible position that the law forbade them to be part of one group yet they were also discarded by the other group. Lottering recounts an amazing life, and displays an inner strength and a love for the land and her people that is quite astounding. She shows a rare talent for telling her life story with an honesty and openness which not only take her on her own journey of discovery but do so for the reader as well.

Diane de Beer. *Pretoria News, Interval* January 30 2003:2.

This micro-history in the form of a story is more than the story of Agnes and her mother. It is also the story of women and their relationships and families and the violence that they have to endure; it is also about love, and how it follows its own logic and is not always contained within the boundaries set by laws. Their stories are uniquely South African as they trace the lines of marriage between male colonisers and Zulu women.

One could criticise aspects of this book—the stories of mother and daughter could have been better integrated, the narration sometimes lacks momentum as it overindulges in detail—but it offers a special and personal glimpse of the past.

Herman Wasserman. *Die Burger* December 2 2002:7.

Roup, Julian
A Fisherman in the Saddle.

By Julian Roup

Houghton: Jacana, 2003, 251 pp. R148,00

A Fisherman in the Saddle consists of two separate but complementary stories. Both books are a pastiche of memoir, travelogue, geography and history. Through geographical and personal changes, the two constant passions in Roup's life have been horses and fishing. *Switched* focuses on fishing rituals

with his dad, mates and strangers. *Horse Medicine* is the more biographical of the two.

Roup was the privileged son of an industrialist Jewish father with Lithuanian roots and a mother of 'blue chip Boer Rugby Royalty'. A sickly child, Roup hated rugby and remained an outsider. When he was six or seven he got his first horse and was given free reign to roam the beaches near Cape Town. As an adult in 1980, he and his wife emigrated to the UK; here, cut off from family and birthplace, he says horses became his nation, his identity and his friends.

Thankfully, Roup doesn't 'trundle out the predictable white [South African] privileged angst justifications for leaving the motherland'; instead he focuses on 'the pain of losing one's cultural space, of discovering how South African you are when you leave'. Roup's stories are 'enjoyable, interesting and informative... refreshingly devoid of self-posturing'.

Robyn Cohen. *Cape Times* June 27 2003:12.

I really don't know what to make of this slightly strange book that is actually two books in one. For one thing, it does not have a back cover, but two front covers. The two tales are basically life stories and read like one-sided conversations during which Roup bangs on about his younger years in Cape Town. He writes well: his style is easy-going and colourful but a wildly exciting reading experience it is not.

Henri du Plessis. *Cape Argus* July 18 2003:10.

Ryan, John

One Man's Africa.

By John Ryan

Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2002, 346 pp. R159.95.

Over the last 40 years, veteran news correspondent John Ryan has travelled extensively in Africa, reporting on events in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Lesotho, (the then) Rhodesia, and in his native South Africa. During the course of his career, he has been involved in five wars, detained four times and witnessed the final, painful death throes of white rule in Africa. In *One Man's Africa* he gives a vivid, colourful account of what it was like to be a journalist on assignment in these event-filled, often traumatic, defining times. Insightful, intelligent, scrupulously fair and written with a sort of sustaining humour and an eye for the absurd, it blends history with his own personal experiences.

Anthony Stidolph. *The Natal Witness* November 6 2002:6.

Sharpe, Chrystal

Dog in my Footsteps: More Stories of a Vet's Wife.

By Chrystal Sharpe.

London: Penguin Books, 2002, 249 pp. R110,00

Dog in my Footsteps is Sharpe's second book about life with a vet. And a very interesting life it is because her husband, Dave, doesn't run an ordinary small animal practice but specialises in marine and wildlife animal care, with only a small sideline in treating Fluffy and Spot. The beauty of Chrystal's writing is the way her domestic animals come to life, each finding a voice. She writes with humour, clarity and an unbounded love of nature.

Samantha Bartlett. *Cape Times* March 21 2003:12.

Sisulu, Walter and Albertina

Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime.

By Elinor Sisulu

Claremont: David Philip, 2002, 448 pp. R220,00

A biography of epic proportions, *In Our Lifetime* traces the life histories of two outstanding and leading activists during the dark days of the struggle against apartheid. The author (who is married to their son) covers their respective childhoods in the Eastern Cape and then later their lives together in Johannesburg and how they dealt with apartheid. The story of the Sisulus is also the story of the rise of the ANC, the Treason Trial and the making of Robben Island into an icon of the anti-apartheid struggle. The book also provides rare insight into the rocky relationship between Albertina Sisulu and Winnie Mandela. This eminently readable and well-researched biography tells the story with great sensitivity and depth, but tends to be too positive in that it doesn't give a sense of the full gamut of human experiences, the foibles, the mistakes that were made.

Trevor Oosterwyk. *Cape Argus* January 31 2003:14.

There is a plethora of publications on how South Africa was liberated, but *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime* is in a class of its own. It is an intimate account of one family's role in the struggle for democracy. Sensitively written, it manages its enormous historical freight and its vast cast of actors with judicious balance and insight.

The biography conveys vividly the contrast between Mandela's magnetism and Sisulu's self-effacing manner, the latter serving as the liberation organisation's senior strategist.

Andries Walter Oliphant. *The Sunday Independent* February 16 2003:18.

The biographer is to be congratulated; she provides an account of all the major phases of both Walter and Albertina's political involvement, without allowing the political pre-eminence of Walter to relegate Albertina as a footnote to her major partner. This biography shows that despite Walter's 26 years of incarceration, constant harassment of Ma Sisulu and other members of the family, they nevertheless continued their relationship and love for one another and their children. Ma Sisulu's contribution provides an interesting and critical case study for examining the specificity of African feminisms and their contexts.

Raymond Suttner. *Mail & Guardian*, Friday February 14-20 2003: 1-2.

Slaughter, Carolyn

Before the Knife: Memories of an African Childhood.

By Carolyn Slaughter

New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2002, 222 pp. \$32.00

Memoirs have been an important genre for white women in Africa: the writings of Karen Blixen, Doris Lessing, Kuki Gallman and others sound a constant note—Africa gets under your skin, defines your inner landscape and becomes your measure of outward beauty. But many white women writers have sought, as well, to confront the evil processes that allow them access to this landscape. Carolyn Slaughter tells the story of her own childhood in a family which, like colonialism, is rotten at its core. Slaughter's father revels in the power of his race and colonial status, her outwardly glamorous mother is a feeble depressive at home.

Slaughter's story is told with bitter humour and passion, in lyrical writing that leaps off the page in unforgettable images. Yet, perhaps because of the seductive power of the writing, I read with increasing unease the implicit metaphor of the book: the heart of darkness. The inner world of family trauma parallels the outer world; colonialism is akin to rape. It is far away from Africa, in the bleak English landscape, that healing finally begins. But this points to the limitations of the metaphoric association of Africa's heart of darkness with

intimate violence: in reconciling her inner world Slaughter had to turn away from the more messy responsibilities of 'the white woman's burden'.

Shireen Hassim. *The Women's Review of Books* XX,2, November 2002:10-11.

Swartz, Simeon and Olga

A Life of One's Own.

By Hilda Bernstein

Bellevue: Jacana: 2002, 293 pp. R160,00

This book is essentially a pair of cameo stories of Hilda's father, born Simeon Swartz, and her sister Olga, and their separate experiences of Russia and England after 1917. Bernstein is a careful, scholarly writer who has gone into great detail about the political and historical context.

Vivien Horler. *Cape Argus* February 7 2003:14.

Uys, Pieter-Dirk

Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun.

By Pieter-Dirk Uys

Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2002, 230 pp. R129.95.

Pieter-Dirk Uys is a remarkable man who has written a remarkable book. Divided into three sections, he looks at his own past, then at the lead-up to the elections in 1999 and lastly, in the third 'and most important section', at AIDS in South Africa and the rest of the world. The book reveals a man who feels strongly about South Africa and its people.

Unnamed reviewer. *Weekend Post* November 16 2002:6.

van der Merwe, H.W.

Peacemaking in South Africa: A Life in Conflict Resolution.

By H.W. van der Merwe

Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2000, 223 pp. R89.95.

'H.W. van der Merwe pioneered the field of conflict resolution in South Africa. This book is a memoir of his life as a peacemaker in that troubled nation. The early chapters chronicle his childhood, education and formative experiences, culminating in what he describes as the 'moment of truth: Afrikaner becomes African'. By that he means the shedding of the racial prejudices he has been taught. The bulk of the book describes his experiences as the director of the Centre for Intergroup Studies. Its director for 25 years, van der Merwe provides an authoritative history of that institution (renamed in 1994 the Centre for

Conflict Resolution), which under his tutelage became the leading centre of mediation in South Africa.

His personal story is at the same time a narrative of the major figures and events in South African political history

Peacemaking in South Africa will be of interest to a broad audience: students of apartheid, of conflict resolution and of Quaker faith and practice. Its interdisciplinary approach is its appeal. It is highly recommended for libraries at all levels'.

Lyn Graybill. *The African Book Publishing Record* 38,1,2002:11.

Vaughan, Iris

The Diary of Iris Vaughan.

By Iris Vaughan

Cape Town: Stormberg, 2002, 131pp. R120,00

The Diary was written at the time of the Anglo-Boer War by a young girl whose father had given her a notebook to use as a 'diary' so that she could write 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth', instead of being rude to his guests. This delightful account retains all the spelling mistakes—thus enhancing the authenticity and unintended humour to be found in Iris's amusing perspective on the world.

Paul Murray. *Cape Times* January 17 2003:10.

A slice of authenticated South African history, Iris's diary is invaluable. But above all it is laugh-aloud funny.

Laura Melville. *The Natal Witness* January 20 2003:8.

Williams, Chester

Chester: A Biography of Courage.

By Mark Keohane

Cape Town: Don Nelson, 2002, 224 pp. R119.95.

This biography of South African Springbok rugby legend, Chester Williams, gives an intriguing view of relationships in South Africa's top rugby teams during the 1990s. Williams claims to have been the victim of other team members' racism.

Douglas Carew. *Weekend Post* October 19 2002:3.

The biography contains shock revelations which are 'standard and necessary as selling items for such books. As is the honesty with which Williams talks about

his youth' in apartheid South Africa—a youth which was surprisingly relatively free of overt political influences. *Chester* tells of how Williams was made to feel more and more aware of his black skin as he progressed in rugby. Author Keohane has 'done a good job of reflecting William's personality'.

Kevin McCallum. *The Sunday Independent* November 3 2002:21.

Zungu, Andreas Z.

Usukabekhuluma and the Bhambatha Rebellion.

By Andreas Z. Zungu, translated by Dr. A.C.T. Mayekiso

Durban: Centre for the Study of South African Literature and Languages, University of Durban-Westville, 1997, 70 pp. R36.00.

Usukabekhuluma, originally published in Zulu in 1933 and here translated by the late Dr. A.C.T. Mayekiso, is a valuable retrieval of South African oral history. Referred to throughout the text by his praise name, Chakijana, Zungu was enrolled by the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, was captured by the British, betrayed the Boers and continued vacillating between the two groups. Later, he is instrumental in the murders of the chiefs who co-operate with the British by paying poll-tax. He was sentenced to death but was reprieved when he agreed to tell all, thereby betraying his comrades.

Almost biblical in its simplicity of the language used in the translation, this narration reveals the complexity of the personality of Chakijana/Zungu.

Elaine M. Pearson. *NELM News* 37, May 2002:7.

Multiple subjects

The Afrikaners

The Afrikaners: Biography of a People.

By Hermann Giliomee

Cape Town and Charlottesville: Tafelberg and University of Virginia Press, 2003, xix + 697 pp. R295,00

Hermann Giliomee's book—which took 10 years to complete—traces how, over 350 years, revolt and protest became the motivating force in the history of the Afrikaner. All is meticulously documented. The book clearly demonstrates how the language, Afrikaans, made the Afrikaner nation. The issue which is not tackled in the book concerns the threats that the language now faces in the democratic South Africa.

Ampie Coetzee. *The Sunday Independent* May 18 2003:18.

Complexity and controversy are often good signs of great history. Good, clear writing is usually a bonus. Yet all three are to be found in Hermann Giliomee's new magnum opus. Biography as a genre is a form of history that focuses on a person, a life, achievements and failures, context and character. Giliomee's biography of the Afrikaner reveals a highly complex people whose sense of identity is multi-layered, formed by a range of conflicting experiences: multiple nationalities; a sense of African-ness, yet with strong ties to Europe; the experience of being an underdog, yet also having an experience of *baasskap* (being top dog); fiercely independent, yet with a strong sense of group solidarity. At the end of the book, Giliomee sums up Afrikaner history as embodying 'both a fatalistic anticipation of inevitable collective defeat and a mysterious vitality'. There is a sense of both in this book. No one will agree with everything Giliomee says. But only a politically naïve or mean-spirited few will accuse him of attempting to justify apartheid. Giliomee's approach insists that we consider complexities, not stereotypes, and he does this magisterially in a book that will become a classic of South African historiography.

Anthony Egan. *Mail & Guardian: Friday* May 9 - 15 2003:iv.

Giliomee's attempt to tell the Afrikaners' story with empathy but without partisanship is the first major survey of South African history written from a post-1994 perspective. If there is a theme running through this book it is the suggestion that the Afrikaners' urge to survive, rooted in their history and particularly in their humiliation and defeat at the hands of the British Empire, was the mainspring of apartheid, rather than simply an obsession with racial purity. Giliomee acknowledges the devastating effects of apartheid legislation, yet he does not explain how a kindly, civilised, church-going community such as the Afrikaners could contemplate with equanimity the appalling human suffering inflicted by these policies.

Gerald Shaw. *Cape Times* May 16 2003:7.

British Soldiers in the Cape Colony

The British Army in the Cape Colony: Soldiers' Letters and Diaries, 1806–58.

By Peter B. Boyden (ed.)

London: The Society for Army Historical Research (Special publication No. 15), 2001, 165 pp. 10 pounds sterling.

By studying the letters and diaries published in this book, several themes emerge, for example the country and its people (the British soldiers stationed in

the Cape Colony had the opportunity of seeing unfamiliar landscapes inhabited by peoples with very different ethnic, social, cultural and religious backgrounds from those of the British Isles); military accommodation; military service (for example references to guerrilla operations against the Xhosa and the Khoikhoi); food and prices; recreation (for example climbing Table Mountain, hunting lions, and horse racing), and contacts with home. Dr Peter Boyden (Assistant Director: Collections at the National Army Museum in London) must be commended. He has selected manuscripts that are both interesting and important; he has edited them thoroughly, and annotated the texts in a balanced way. The bibliography and comprehensive index are very useful.

André Wessels. *South African Journal of Cultural History* 16,2, November 2002:132-134.

Political Prisoners: Apartheid South Africa and Communist Czechoslovakia

(Joseph Mati, Johnson Mgabela, Monde Mkunqwana and Jiri Mesicki, Lola Skodova, Jiri Stansky)

Fallen Walls: Voices from the cells that held Mandela and Havel.

By Jan K. Coetzee, Lynda Gilfillan & Otakar Hulec

Prague: Lidové Noviny Publishers (with the Robben Island Museum), 2002, R129.95. 194 pp.

Straddling two continents, this collection of prison writings compares and contrasts the political struggles that gave birth to two vibrant new democracies of the 21st century: South Africa and the Czech Republic. Their two extraordinary leaders, Nelson Mandela and Vaclav Havel, have urged that the role played by ordinary men and women in effecting freedom and justice be acknowledged. And this is what the authors have done. Despite its sad subject, it is an uplifting book.

Adrienne Carlisle. *Saturday Dispatch* June 15 2002:4.

There are remarkable parallels in the modern history of these two seemingly dissimilar countries: in both the large majority of people were deprived of freedom and human rights by oppressive systems of government established (in both cases) in 1948. Both were affected by wider processes that shaped world history during the second half of the 20th century—in particular the Cold War period that led to each of the two countries finding themselves categorised into a bloc: South Africa as part of the West and the former Czechoslovakia as part of the Eastbloc. Both regimes led their countries into deep international

isolation. Both regimes collapsed shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall by the end of 1989 and gave way to a democratic transformation. Both countries had as first presidents former prisoners of conscience who touched the hearts and minds of the world.

The contrast occurs on personal levels: the tales from Robben Island are characterised by an absence of bitterness while the mood of the Czechs is darker, more sceptical. But all of these ordinary individuals tell of determination, of firm adherence to principle, and the unflinching sense of personal truth.

Unnamed reviewer. *Grocott's Mail* June 7 2002:7.

Read, Herbert and Lily Visser and descendants

Bridging the Divide: The Story of a Boer-British Family.

Angela Read Lloyd. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2002, 465 pp. R220,00

Angela Lloyd's skillfully crafted family history tells the story of her English-born grandfather, Herbert Read, and his Boer wife, Lily Visser, and their descendants. This handsome, well-illustrated book contains extensive quotations from family letters and personal papers, and while some are a little indulgent, they contribute much to the immediacy and intimacy of the narrative. Although Lloyd has sketched the political and economic background competently, it is in terms of conventional, pre-1980s historiography rather than more rigorous modern scholarship.

Jackie Loos. *Cape Argus* December 27 2002:10.

In 1901, Herbert Read married a Boer woman, Lily Visser: this is the 'divide' that was 'bridged'. Although the Read-Visser ties were strong during Herbert's, Lily's and, at first, their children's times, they gradually weakened as the families' political views differed more and more. This long book would have benefited from some excision; also, Read's account seems to show tremendous bias.

Dorothea Meihuizen. *The Natal Witness* December 10 2002:6.

Refugees in South Africa

We Came for Mandela: The Cultural Life of the Refugee Community in South Africa.

By Keith Adams (ed.)

Rondebosch: Footprints Publishers, 2001, 98 pp. R150,00

This collection of essays, poems, stories and photographs written and taken by a diverse group of refugees in South Africa seeks to show the complexity of the refugees' situation. 'While the essays, poems and stories cover both the pain and the happiness that these people have experienced, they seem only to scratch the surface. The heart of *We Came for Mandela* is in its photographs'; these enable the reader to comprehend the many dimensions of daily life in this community.

Elise Deeqa DeLancey. *The African Book Publishing Record* 38,1, 2002:18.

South Africans and the Anglo-Boer War

The Brave Boer Boy and Other Stories.

By Taffy & David Shearing

Sedgefield: Privately printed by Taffy and Dave Shearing, 2002, 148 pp. R150,00

This is a collection of 36 stories told to the authors over the past 25 years while on the trail of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa. The book includes a story about the young Winston Churchill shortly after his capture by the Boers. This is a successful book, filled with interesting pictures and sketches.

Lourens Schoeman. *The Herald* June 4 2003:4.

South African Families

Group Portrait South Africa: Nine Family Histories.

By Paul Faber

Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2003, 240 pp. R315,00

There are enough important historical figures in *Group Portrait South Africa* to contradict the claim—in the foreword by Nelson Mandela—that it is about 'ordinary people'. The book, edited by the Africa curator of Amsterdam's Tropenmuseum with Anneri van der Merwe, is the result of an exhibition held last year to explore families that displayed 'diversity in terms of cultural, economic, social and geographical backgrounds'. This is a glossy tribute - full of mementoes, commissioned art works and images by the country's top photographers—to more than a century of the South African family. Like soap operas, or epic movies, each story sweeps across generations and provides just enough family dirt to be classified as healthy voyeurism.

Matthew Krouse. *Mail & Guardian: Friday* March 28 - April 3 2003:iv.

Group Portrait South Africa is a glossy and very beautiful book, however, for all its superb pictures and illustrations it feels a little like Weigh Less bread—light and insufficient. The book falls perfectly into the coffee table genre: just when you expect to read more about the characters, the authors hop to a new generation of the family. It does remind one, however, that we still need to hear the stories of soldiers who fought in the South African Defence Force in the 1980s and the Umkhonto weSizwe cadres who survived the ANC camps.

Patricia Oppelt. *Sunday Times: Lifestyle* April 6 2003:21.

Young South Africans

Steering by the Stars: Being Young in South Africa.

By Mamphela Ramphele

Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2002, 176 pp. R120,00

In *Steering by the Stars* Ramphele, formerly vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, explores the post-apartheid experiences of the youth of New Crossroads (an environment characterised by violence and alcoholism) near Cape Town. The socio'logical study, begun in 1991, set out to trace the everyday lives of 48 adolescents—in 1993 the group was trimmed to 16—each of whom would be observed into adulthood. Ramphele finds that constitutional rights of the child are meaningless to the children of New Crossroads; corporal punishment, physical abuse and rape are common. Moreover, in circumstances of crushing poverty, uniformity—a group mentality—is seen as essential for survival and individual success is thus spurned, causing successful people to leave the township and depriving the community of positive role models. As failure envelops everything, poverty and depression deepen. And Ramphele is scathing in her criticism of the ANC government's inaction.

Tim White. *The Sunday Independent* March 3 2003:18.

Zimbabweans

Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe's Tragedy.

By Cathy Buckle

Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2002, 218 pp. R140,00

In *Beyond Tears* Buckle faithfully records the horrifying experiences of victims of Robert Mugabe's cynical land grab, showing how his calamitous policies, persecution of the opposition and persistent disregard of law have sent the

country into complete economic free-fall. Direct and heartfelt, her account makes illuminating, if very depressing, reading.

Anthony Stidolph. *The Natal Witness* February 13 2003:19.

