

Recently Reviewed South African Life Writing Publications IV

Reviews Editor: Judith Lütge Coullie

List of Publications Consulted

All publications are from South Africa, unless otherwise indicated with **.

Most prices are quoted in South African Rands.

Reviews which were originally published in Afrikaans are marked with *
and have been translated into English by Judith Lütge Coullie.

****African Book Publishing Record**

African Review of Books

Cape Times

Die Burger

Fair Lady

H-Net (H-Safrica@h-net.msu.edu)

*Quarterly Bulletin of the National
Library of South Africa*

Rapport

Saturday Dispatch

Sowetan

The Star

The Sunday Independent

The Witness

This Day

Weekend Post

The Herald

Mail & Guardian

Pretoria News

Abrahamson, A.E.

The Moon Can Wait. Paul Clingman. Johannesburg: Penguin, 2004. 249pp.
R140.

This book traces the eventful and illustrious life of the Honourable Abe Abrahamson, from his boyhood in Bulawayo as the son of Polish Jews who emigrated to Africa at the beginning of the 20th century to escape the pogroms and discrimination against Jews, to his eventual retirement in South Africa.

His political career, which began at the age of 31 in 1953, saw him rise to become a minister in the government of Edgar Whitehead in what was then Southern Rhodesia. He was modest and principled throughout his life.

Referring to the breaking of the space barrier as a great advance for mankind, Abrahamson told the ILO in Geneva in 1962: "The moon can wait, but social justice cannot tarry."

His story, rich in anecdote, political intrigue and travel, is also a fascinating historical record of the erosion of colonial rule and the emergence of the African nationalism which led to independent Zimbabwe.

Unnamed reviewer. *Sowetan*. June 30 2004: 20.

Accone, Darryl

All Under Heaven: The Story of a Chinese Family in South Africa. Darryl Accone. Cape Town: David Philip/New Africa Books, 2004. 283 pp. R149.95.

All Under Heaven is the poetic name that the Chinese nation used to describe itself. It is thus a fitting title for a book that lovingly chronicles three generations of an extended Chinese family. Accone, one of the children of the last generation, has used the symbols of the four elements to divide his book into readable chunks: Sky describes the old country; Sea takes us through the transient periods; Earth finds the family settling; and Fire sees them through the refining horror of the worst of South Africa's apartheid years. The resilience of the family is at once humbling and uplifting. We are reminded that prejudice is a universal failing—Accone describes Chinese anti-Eurasian sentiment as unflinchingly as the larger horror of institutionalised racism. This book is fascinating.

Kelly Vos. *Saturday Dispatch*. July 3 2004: 4.

Baker, Florence

The Stolen Woman: Florence Baker's Extraordinary Life from the Harem to the Heart of Africa. Pat Shipman. London: Random House, 2004. 428pp. R150.

The life of Florence Baker would put lead in the pencil of any biographer. Orphaned at four, she was raised in an Ottoman harem. At the age of fourteen, she was taken to auction to be sold as a white slave. But fate had

other plans for her. Attending the auction was the maharajah, Duleep Singh, and his companion, Samuel Baker, a broken-nosed, hirsute Victorian widower. Despite the difference in age, Sam Baker and Florence fell in love and he smuggled her out of the Ottoman territory in his carriage. Together, they travelled in search of the source of the White Nile, which Sam Baker named Lake Albert N'yanza. Although Florence was shunned in England as a loose woman (and Queen Victoria refused to receive her at court), Sam was knighted for their explorations.

"All biography is ultimately fiction," writes Pat Shipman. "I consider it my job to portray the deeper truth of [Florence Baker's] character and a more insightful perspective ... than can be conveyed by mere facts." In this Shipman succeeds admirably, occasional Americanisms notwithstanding.

Caroline Hurry. *The Sunday Independent*. July 4 2004: 18.

Barnard, Christiaan

Celebrity Surgeon: Christiaan Barnard—A Life. Chris Logan. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2003. 340pp. R169.95.

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the world's first heart transplant was the 2.20am argument the three South African surgeons had at its most critical moment when about to remove the donor's heart. Denise Darval was declared "brain dead", but after she had been taken off the ventilator her heart continued beating for at least another twelve minutes. The doctor who insisted that they wait until the ECG was flat eventually won out.

The mid-operation argument is one of many revelations and insights in an objective and highly readable biography of the world's first heart transplant surgeon. Chris Barnard was complex and contradictory, and this was as apparent in his treatment of people as in his politics. In the late 1960s and early 1970s he was critical of apartheid, comparing Afrikaner Nationalists to Nazis, but then later defended South Africa's policies and even published a propaganda book which described "one-man-one-vote" as national suicide. Later still, he supported the opposition Democratic Party.

John Scott. *Cape Times*. November 28 2003: 16.

Celebrity Surgeon is a fascinating read. Logan interviewed more than 100 people to gain the insights he did, including Barnard's last wife, Karin Setzkorn, and his daughter Deirdre. The book is a serious look at an astonishing event—the world's first heart transplant—that happened in Cape Town largely because of one man's determination. The book is no hagiography, and Barnard is portrayed charm, warts and all.

Vivien Horler. *Cape Argus*. November 14 2003: 12.

Barnard, Deirdre

Fat, Fame and Life with Father. Deirdre Barnard. Cape Town: Double Storey, 2004. 243pp. R150.

This is the first book of champion waterskier and daughter of pioneering heart surgeon, Chris Barnard, simultaneously published in English and in Afrikaans. In this wise and funny book, Deirdre tells it like it is—about life in the Barnard family as they coped with the successes and losses that befell them, about the painful intrusions into privacy that were the flip-side of fame, about bereavement and true friendship and the sustaining power of family. An entertaining and courageously forthright storyteller with a wicked wit, Deirdre has woven a moving account of her sometimes painful but ultimately uplifting personal journey. Its compassion and humour will touch us all.

Unnamed reviewer. *Pretoria News: Interval*. October 31 2003: 1.

Fat, Fame and Life with Father is not well written; the book is sorely in need of a good editor. But it provides interesting details about one of South Africa's most famous sons, and that of his extended family, and to the more cynical among us, is a reminder of the redeeming qualities of love, loyalty and devotion.

Vivien Horler. *Cape Argus*. November 14 2003: 12.

This is one of the most disarmingly honest books I have ever read. And it is not only the sheer honesty about her life that Deirdre shares with her readers,

it is also her honest, no-nonsense style. Deirdre's story is as much about the confusion of being famous heart surgeon Chris Barnard's daughter, as it is about being in the spotlight as a champion waterskier, and then a fat girl. The sense of being a daughter doing the right thing, in the right way to unite a family and bury a man who loved many, was loved by many and disliked by many, is conveyed exquisitely in *Fat, Fame and Life with Father*. In this book she pays tribute to her father and shares her vision of what it is to be human, and a very good and joyful vision it is.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. December 2 2003: 7.

Barnard's book is utterly disarming and delightful, although, at times, appallingly written. Some sentences are absolute clangers, non sequiturs abound, she leaves an idea at a tangent never to return and repeats entire themes quite regularly. Thankfully, the publishers saw fit to leave it that way. The end result is a book that you hear, rather than read. This biography is proof that a book doesn't need to be immaculately written to be an unputdownable read.

Katy Chance. *ThisDay*. December 11 2003: 8.

Cassidy, Michael

African Harvest. Anne Coomes. London: Monarch Books, 2002. 552pp. R179.95

Michael Cassidy was born in Johannesburg in 1936. Forty-two years ago, he started African Enterprise with the aim of spreading the Christian gospel to all corners of Africa. Biographer, Anne Coomes, captivates the reader from the very beginning of this inspiring biography of a dedicated Christian who has helped to win millions over to Christ and also helped to feed many of the starving masses. At the conclusion of the book Michael states that it continues to be an overwhelming privilege in his life to be in the work of evangelism, adding: "If God has called you to preach, do not stoop to be a king."

Cyrus Smith. *Pretoria News*. July 19 2004: 8.

Dicey, William

Borderline. William Dicey. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004. 287 pp. R120.

Very occasionally, a book comes along that is so stunningly original in concept, and so compelling a read, that it leaves one with what scientists call an “aha moment”. *Borderline* is one long “aha moment”.

On the surface it is the story of a kayak trip down the Gariep (Orange) River in South Africa that Dicey and two companions undertook. Woven into the narrative is an eccentric cast of characters and vivid descriptions. But it is in what starts as a subtext and rapidly becomes the main text that the real power of this book lies. Dicey uses the river as a metaphor for his fascination with a search for “coloured” (in apartheid terminology) identity. He weaves into his tale the writings of a host of adventurers, historians, naturalists, explorers, geologists and others to trace the history of this vast, arid region and of the origins of the “coloured” people.

This book is very readable, enormously entertaining and often funny.

Tony Weaver. *Cape Times*. October 15 2004: 9.

Duff, Diana

Leaves from the Fig Tree (from Ireland to Africa). Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003. ix + 304pp. R110.

Diana Duff recounts her childhood in Ireland, on the estate of her grandparents, and her moves to Kenya when she was 18, and then, once married, to Dar es Salaam and then to apartheid Johannesburg in the 1960s. She recalls much of her past with clarity, vivid detail and with passion. This is an absorbing memoir that has the richness and depth of a life lived to the full.

Robyn Bentley. *The Herald*.

Diana Duff’s heart-warming tale takes in the anachronistic eccentricities of Ireland, the vastness and beauty of Kenya and the devastation of apartheid South Africa over more than 60 years. Duff writes brilliantly of the Kenyan

conflict between the Mau Mau and the British. One of the touching stories in this book is that of six-year-old Nico, Duff's domestic assistant's child, a black child in apartheid South Africa who somehow manages to attend school with white children. However, I did have problems with early parts of the book: she includes a lot of historically inaccurate, misleading sepia-hued nonsense about the "Oirish". But once you get to the parts about sun-drenched Kenya and stunning South Africa, you'll not put this book down.

Peter Cardwell. *Cape Argus*. October 10 2003: 15.

Du Preez, Max

Pale Native: Memories of a Renegade Reporter. Max du Preez. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003. 286 pp. R204.

The memoir of South African reporter, Max Du Preez, is not only about his identity and his complicated relationship to his Afrikaner "tribe" whom he claims to hate and love and not understand. It is also about his achievements, for instance his editorship of the anti-apartheid Afrikaans newspaper, *Vrye Weekblad*, and his investigative work for State television, the SABC. There are no compromises for the journalist who was once loved by the Mandela government, but later considered a menace by that of Thabo Mbeki. His account of his accomplishments and conflicts is compelling; less interesting is his fixation on the superficial differences between blacks and whites and his reiteration of events that often relies on the inclusion of tracts of previously published columns by Du Preez and about Du Preez.

Tanya Jonker-Bryce. *Daily Dispatch*. October 10, 2003: 14.

"El Negro"

The Return of El Negro. Caitlin Davies. Johannesburg: Penguin, 2003. 260 pp. R140.

The author, Caitlin Davies, follows the fate of the remains of an early 19th century African man, perhaps a Tswana, who came to be known as El Negro. She outlines what evidence she can track down to identify El Negro's movements before he was placed on exhibition in Banyoles, Spain and then

traces the efforts to have his remains repatriated to Botswana. In this wonderful, quirky book, Davies muses over how people have used, abused, protected or been fascinated or repelled by human remains.

J. Brooks Spector. *The Sunday Independent*. September 12 2004: 18.

Emslie, Betty L.

An Autobiography: One Beggar to Another. Betty L. Emslie. Durban: Privately published, 2002. 322pp. Price not available.

Emslie works through her memories in chronological sequence, beginning with her Jewish grandfather's story (he left Czarist Russia for Lithuania, then Britain and finally South Africa) and then moving on to her own formative years in Durban, South Africa. The turning point in her life came in 1941 when she was just 16: her acceptance of God in her life ushered in an itinerant life committed to missionary work, mostly in southern Africa. Emslie offers some overview of apartheid South Africa and the ways in which this impacted on missionary work. She was critical of the system but admits that cowardice prevented her from taking any pro-actively anti-apartheid action.

The book is recommended: it shows how a Christian life of self-sacrifice can be fulfilling, but also how hard it can be.

Gillian Bowden and Judith Lütge Coullie. *AlterNation* 10 (2): 2003: 348-354.

Ghandi, Mahatma

Ghandi in his Time and Ours: The Global Legacy of his Ideas. David Hardiman. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press: 2003. 338pp. R155.

Of the many books written about Mahatma Ghandi, this is considered to be one of the very best. It covers almost every aspect of the life of Ghandi and his influence on the world and many of its leaders. He was the creator of a radical style of politics based on a larger vision of an alternative society which believed in mutual respect, lack of exploitation, non-violence, and ecological harmony. Hardiman devotes a number of pages to Ghandi's stay

in South Africa and his influence on Nelson Mandela. While the book covers a wide field and repeats well-known facts (albeit in an interesting manner), it also includes a lesser known aspect of Ghandi's views on celibacy and discusses the fact that Ghandi was himself influenced by the writings of Tolstoy.

Cyrus Smith. *Pretoria News*. June 28 2004: 6.

Greef, Jack

A Greater Share of Honour. Jack Greef. Alberton: Galago, 2001. 172pp. R143.

Written by a much-decorated member of 1 Reconnaissance Regiment of apartheid South Africa's Special Forces, this is another example of "bush war writing". Although the identities of some of the participants are hidden, the book does have value: it provides detail of Pretoria's incursions into southern Africa and the extent to which operations—attributed at the time to UNITA (in Angola) and RENAMO (in Mozambique)—were in fact South African. The book also throws light on the mid-1970s invasion of Angola (an event still poorly documented in spite of its historical importance), and on joint operations between Rhodesia and South Africa on the Mozambican Gaza front, the history of small infiltration teams in Zambia and the link between special operations and game ranging.

The author takes a generally unrepentant approach to this history, arguing that all operations were militarily justified but he makes a frank admission: "There were no victors in [the bush] war. We all lost some way or the other".

The text, which should have been better edited, is a useful representative addition to a collection of southern African history and politics, and essential to any literary history.

Christopher Merret. *African Book Publishing Record*, Vol. xxx, No. 1. 2004: 33-43.

Hastings, Beatrice (Emily Alice Beatrice Haigh)

Beatrice Hastings: A Literary Life. Stephen Gray. London: Viking Penguin, 2004. 730 pp. R184.

By the end of Gray's biography of Beatrice Hastings, she emerges as one of the most remarkable women of letters of the last century. Hastings pops up as a character in works by Cocteau, Wells, Max Jacob, Apollinaire, Katherine Mansfield and—especially—in biographies of the latter and of Modigliani, Hastings' lover during the 1920s. A large part of Gray's purpose is to counter the many distortions and ill-informed accounts of Hastings that are currently available.

I can only locate a handful of slips in this stunningly well-researched and insightful biography.

Chris Dunton. *The Sunday Independent*. October 10 2004: 18.

It is not often that one can endorse the encomiums that publishers choose for their book covers, but this biography is a notable exception. When Margaret Drabble calls *Beatrice Hastings* "A treasure house ... researched with true scholarly passion" she does not exaggerate. What Stephen Gray has done in this exhaustive study is to retrieve from obscurity a distinctive literary talent and an intriguing personality. One of the main strengths of this biography is the way in which, at every turn of fortune in Hastings' life, Gray builds up a wonderfully evocative context. Through substantial quotation, Gray demonstrates that she was a fine writer whose work deserves to be saved from oblivion.

Shirley Kossick. *Mail & Guardian online*. (<http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2004oct/041008-woman.html>) October 8 2004: np.

Jacobs, Rayda

Confessions of a Gambler. Rayda Jacobs. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2003. 240 pp. R130.

Confessions of a Gambler is a glorious romp. The trials and tribulations of a Capetonian Muslim woman who takes to gambling like a duck to water are heart-wrenching, eye-opening and just plain fun. It's the perfect read for people who take risks when they think no one else is looking.

Unnamed reviewer. *FairLady*. January 2004: 112.

Jaffer, Zubeida

Our Generation. Zubeida Jaffer. Cape Town: Kwela Books: 2003. 164 pp. R125.

When former Cape Times (South Africa) journalist was 22, she was detained under the apartheid government's draconian security laws, detained and drugged. Five years later she was detained again, but this time she was pregnant, and this was exploited by the security policeman who told her that unless she talked she would have to drink a chemical concoction which would kill her baby. Jaffer bravely deals with her personal struggle against apartheid: the struggles of motherhood; marriage to an activist and then a painful divorce; her relationship with her parents; her Muslim faith; and then her collapse with depression.

Barry Streek. *Cape Times*. August 15 2003: 9.

Jaffer's book is a useful corrective to widespread cynicism about anti-apartheid activists arising from the new—seemingly daily - allegations in South Africa about people using what are called “struggle credentials” to enrich themselves illegitimately. In a low-key tone, Jaffer describes the selfless struggle of many ordinary people; they paid a heavy price and were left with many scars. The power of Jaffer's book lies in its honest confrontation of intimate choices and fears.

Raymond Suttner. *The Sunday Independent*. September 7 2003: 18.

Jardine, Bill

Now Listen Here: The Life and Times of Bill Jardine. Chris van Wyk. Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2003. 263pp. R179.

People who make a significant difference in the life of a country are often ordinary men-in-the-street who see injustice being perpetrated and begin in a small way to fight back. The playing field becomes bigger and bigger and the work of these people has wider and wider impact. Such a man was South African, Bill Jardine. He started out as a fanatical rugby player and coach in the coloured suburbs of Johannesburg, during the apartheid era when sport

was strictly segregated. Through his involvement in sport he moved into anti-apartheid activism, helping to smuggle funds into South Africa for the Africa National Congress.

Chris van Wyk is a writer rather than an historian, and there are a couple of historical inaccuracies. Van Wyk interviewed dozens of Mr Jardine's friends and family—and this anecdotal style of writing is lively and entertaining. More than 40 black and white pictures add to the enjoyment of the book.

Susan Stead. *The Herald*. February 4 2004: 4.

Jenkin, Tim

Inside Out: Escape from Pretoria Prison. Tim Jenkin. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2003. 333 pp. R205.

On December 11 1979 three white activists—Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris—escaped from Pretoria Central Prison. They had been imprisoned for underground work on behalf of the African National Congress, and were the first and only activists to escape from the jail's "political" wing. First published in the 1980s and banned in South Africa, Jenkin's book has been updated to include his life in exile and return to South Africa. Vivid and pacy, it is well worth reading or rereading.

Anthony Egan. *Mail & Guardian: Friday*. December 5-11 2003: vi.

"K"

Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier. Alexandra Fuller. Johannesburg: Picador, 2004. 269 pp. R142.

This is the tale of a tortured character called K who was a member of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, a unit of "highly trained white boys whose 'kill ratio' and violent reputation were a source of pride for most white Rhodesians". It is a tale that grips you from the very first page and doesn't let go until long after you've put it down. What makes this book so utterly compelling is the sheer brutal honesty of it all: Fuller makes no concessions to political correctness, reproducing her subject's racist terminology and

opening up the dark secrets and grief that lie beneath the scars of an entire generation.

Alex Dodd. *This Day*. September 23 2004: 8.

Scribbling the Cat is a fresh take on the quest by white southern Africans to understand the dehumanisation that racism dictated. When Fuller met K at her parents' farm in Zambia, she was warned by her father that curiosity scribbled (killed) the cat. Undeterred, Fuller and K embark on a journey back into the dark past of the man who had allowed himself to become a state-endorsed killing machine. Fuller's gift for description relieves us from the dialogue and K's excruciatingly limited vocabulary. Fuller's thesis is that circumstances determine identity; that nobody asked for war—war is shit—but it makes people understand death and therefore life.

Maureen Isaacson. *The Sunday Independent*. August 29 2004: 18.

This book takes on some serious issues. At times it seems an extended apologia for (mainly white) former soldiers such as K, for the many appalling things done by them in the name of defending a lifestyle. Some of these are so extreme that this reader fervently hoped that some retribution was in store for K, but Fuller shows that he is merely a *muzungu*, festering in his own post-war trauma, neither absolved nor forgiven, despite his new-found faith in the Almighty.

However, Fuller makes it plain that K and his mad friends are not the only ones in need of forgiveness, understanding and absolution. Clearly, she considers herself, and by implication all the indifferent and propaganda-fed whiteys of Rhodesia, South Africa and good old England, to be as guilty as the soldiers who used the guns.

The writing of *Scribbling the Cat* lacks the economy and consistent freshness of her first memoir, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*. Yet it's a good yarn.

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardian, Friday*. September 30 2004: 2.

Kathrada, Ahmed

Memoirs. Ahmed Kathrada. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004. 416 pp. R199,95.

The *Memoirs* of South African freedom fighter, Ahmed Kathrada, offers readers “a whole new, deeper level of the reality” of apartheid and liberation. In the experiences laid open in his life, “the solar plexus where the full impact is revealed is the Rivonia Trial and his resultant life sentence to Robben Island.... The depth and sensitivity of Kathrada’s account of 26 years of political imprisonment establish how this is, indeed, nothing less than ‘the other life’ that exists in exclusion of virtually all that makes a life.... If the unexamined life is not worth living, Kathrada’s memory does not spare himself. He examines where he thinks he made mistakes, failed his high standards in behaviour towards others.... In the tribunal of this book, beyond the great testimony to his bravery, he clearly has reached that priceless achievement, truth and reconciliation with oneself.”

Nadine Gordimer. *The Sunday Independent*. August 15 2004: 18.

Kathrada’s story of his own struggle against apartheid and his observations of the other leading players in the struggle is as important and uplifting a piece of writing as Nelson Mandela’s *The Long Walk to Freedom*. He recounts the humiliations imposed upon black South Africans; his own humiliations started when he was a child: as there was no school for Indian children like him in his small town, the tear-stained eight year old was dispatched to an Indian school in Johannesburg where he stayed with a distant aunt. He hardly saw his parents again.

In the liberation movement, Kathrada himself was not a leader; he was a worker bee, an organiser, one of those who got things done. He did, however, pay the same price as his more senior colleagues. His book is the most moving and informative book ever written on the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

Chris Horne. *Weekend Post*. September 25 2004: 11.

Keren-Krol, Shmuel

Mulik the Zulik. Shmuel Keren-Krol. Cape Town: Privately published, 2004. 232 pp. R150.

Mulik the Zulik makes riveting, often shocking reading. It is about a lost and later a “bad” boy making good in Africa. The author was born in Pabrade, a *shtetl* in what was then Poland but is now Lithuania on an unknown date. Zulik is Russian for “naughty” and this is what he claims he was—and still is.

Keren’s mother and six brothers and sisters were killed. As an orphan, he was shipped to Israel, later joining the army. His military career ended when he shot his first wife’s lover. At the end of his jail term, he settled in South Africa and there built up a successful jewellery business.

There is something of the motivational book style which creeps into the narrative, but on a deeper level, the author grapples with identity and cultural dislocation. His candour is unnerving.

Robyn Cohen. *Cape Times*. August 6 2004: 9.

Khuzwayo, Zazah

Never Been at Home. Zazah Khuzwayo. Claremont: David Philip, 2004. 154pp. R140.

A thought-provoking chronicle about battery and abuse, *Never Been at Home* is a disturbing record of the down-side of patriarchal culture. Khuzwayo highlights a culture where the breaking of rules is punishable by an accepted form of battery; where women are viewed as property legitimately “bought” with *lobola* (a Zulu word meaning, bride price). With classic gender stereotyping firmly entrenched in the South African psyche, African women—both rural and urban - remain disempowered by stringent mores. Khuzwayo’s delivery is blunt, and her account of Zulu culture is one that we don’t often have access to.

Jane Mayne. *Cape Times*. April 8 2004: 12.

That Zazah Khuzwayo - born in rural KwaZulu-Natal in the 1980s - retained sufficient sanity to write this book is testimony to her strength. She herself attributes her survival to her mother and sister whose love pulled her through. This account is full of anger. She rages not against her abusive father (whom she describes as "a pig"), but also against Zulu tradition and the Catholic Church, for fostering patriarchal dominance and the belief that to end a marriage, however, terrible, was wrong.

Though it is fluently written, the content makes this important autobiography difficult to read.

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardian: Friday*. April 30—May 6 2004:2.

Krog, Antjie

A Change of Tongue. Johannesburg: Random, 2003. 376 pp. R180.

Poet/author/journalist/translator Antjie Krog manages, in this her new book, to blow one away on every level. Krog seems to span all the genres of writing, but also deals with the many intricacies of living in South Africa where a white woman criticising is seen as a racist—but if she didn't point out what she believed could be improved, she would be denying her own truth. It would, in fact, be a change of tongue for this forthright author. She has an illuminating way of capturing the emotional chaos that is part of the South African psyche. *A Change of Tongue* should have exactly the same impact as *Country of my Skull* and, fortunately, Antjie always takes it a step further—a blessing for both author and reader.

Diane de Beer. *Pretoria News: Interval*. October 27 2003: 3.

In *Country of my Skull* Krog held a mirror to South Africa's fragile, fragmented new society - *A Change of Tongue* is a reminder of how far South Africa has come, without travelling too far. Part biography, part small-town musings, it's a powerful albeit challenging look at where South Africa is, and where it's going. Highly recommended.

Unnamed reviewer. *Saturday Dispatch*. November 22 2003: 4.

In her acknowledgments, the narrator states that “the ‘I’ is seldom me” and earlier she quotes Anne Sexton: “I use the personal when I am applying a mask to my face.” Thus is the reader warned against simply equating the narrator with the author, alerting us to the fact that what we have here is not so much autobiography as auto-fiction in which known facts about her life are interwoven with fictional techniques.

Her theme is transformation, personal and political, and the role of language in this. This is a book that disturbs, that angers and becalms, that provokes tears and laughter. Krog’s book opens up a space for difference and community.

* Johann Rossouw. *Die Burger*. November 17 2003: 7.

Kruiper, Belinda

Kalahari Rain Song. Elana Bregin and Belinda Kruiper. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004. 110pp. R145.

Apartheid South Africa has provided ample evidence of the truth of Napoleon’s dictum that history is written by the victors. If the majority of African people were marginalised, the Khoisan were almost pushed over the edge of historical consciousness. Now we’ve entered a new phase in which their remote, shadowy figures are moving into the foreground. Compelling us to question past assumptions, in *Kalahari Rain Song*, Belinda Kruiper tells us of her love for her husband, for his people, the Khomani Bushmen, and for the land they belong to. Because she is now accepted as one of them, her depiction of the Bushmen has none of the mystic gloss of a Laurens van der Post. The reality of people struggling not only for survival and for land but also for identity is far more complex, including profound spirituality on the one hand and the brute fact of drunkenness and abusive behaviour on the other.

It is a grippingly authentic account. Belinda Kruiper’s story is only one element; in the book there are also a number of powerful photographic studies of Bushmen life, a selection of Belinda’s poems, and representations of the art of her husband, Vetkat Kruiper.

The whole is at once intellectually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing.

John Boje. *Pretoria News*. August 9 2004: 8.

Levin, Adam

The Wonder Safaris. Adam Levin. Cape Town: Struik, 2003. 222 pp. R143.

Adam Levin's spirit-filled book—spirits of West African marabouts, of lost settlers, of ordinary and extraordinary people, of thugs and human angels—is at once weepy, hilarious and ultimately engaging. Through his travel narrative you realise that Africa is indeed wretched, bloody, intriguing, beastly, but also mysterious, spiritually wealthy, and culturally diverse.

Bongani Madondo. *Sunday Times*. December 14 2003: 6.

Lobengula, Peter and Kitty Jewell

Kitty and the Prince. Ben Shepherd. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball: 2003. x + 278 pp. R152.00.

Kitty Jewell and Prince Peter Lobengula, respectively the middle-class daughter of a mining engineer and a man who claimed to be the son of the Matabele king, are the central figures in this book. Lobengula was in the cast of the show, *Savage South Africa*: this was a melodrama, such as was popular a century ago, based on historical events, but combining the horrors of the freak show with spectacular action. The story of the doomed marriage of Lobengula and Jewell is not the whole tale. The main fascination of this account lies in its exploration of popular entertainment and press hysteria around 100 years ago. While Shepherd does not solve all of the mysteries, including exactly who his protagonists were, he has written an interesting piece of social history.

Margaret von Klemperer. *The Natal Witness*. July 1 2003: 11.

The man who claimed to be Prince Peter Lobengula was part of *Savage South Africa*, the spectacular, if highly exploitative, show which Frank Fillis brought to Victorian England. In this account of the thwarted love affair between Lobengula and Cornish belle Kitty Jewell, historian Ben Shepherd traces the social responses to miscegenation.

Loren Anthony. *Sunday Times*. September 21 2003:13.

Luyt, Louis

Walking Proud: The Louis Luyt Autobiography. Johannesburg: Don Nelson, 2003. 352 pp. R171.50.

This is the story how a very poor boy from the Karoo progressed to become one of the richest men in South Africa. Luyt tells of his involvement in the Information Scandal involving top Nationalist Party officials in the 1970s, his experiences as leader of the Transvaal Rugby Union and other episodes in a life that is almost larger than life-size. Having experienced extreme deprivation and denigration as a child, he becomes obsessed with ensuring that this never occurs again, for himself or his family. The personality that emerges is one of a hardheaded man who will brook no opposition. Some facts seem to be misrepresented, and in the end, this book leaves a bitter taste in one's mouth.

* Fritz Joubert. *Die Burger: Boekeblad*. December 22 2003: 7.

Machobane, J.J.

Drive out Hunger: The Story of J.J. Machobane of Lesotho. J.J.Machobane and Robert Berold. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2003. 110 pp. R120.

This co-written autobiography of J.J. Machobane covers the life of a man with a vision: the hungry being able to feed themselves. In the 1940s and 1950s in Lesotho, Machobane spent 13 years in isolation germinating various combinations of crops until he found a way to plant a hectare of land in such a way that it yielded crops all year round. Machobane, Berold says, developed permaculture long before it was called that, but he also had a uniquely African way of teaching and sharing his skills. Machobane's garden is above politics, it is a personal space to grow your own food and to sustain yourself. Nevertheless, due firstly to outgoing British rule and then the new Lesotho government, Machobane and the people applying his agricultural system were forced to go into hiding from the mid-1960s to the 1980s. Both governments were more interested in the people of Lesotho

producing exportable harvests. Machobane would not accept this when most of the population was starving.

The book has a Zen-like quality; the rhythms make it sound like oral literature; the twisted litanies make it sound like grass growing. The ironies make it sound real.

Nadine Botha. *ThisDay*. January 22 2004: 8.

Mandela, Winnie

Winnie Mandela: A Life. Anne Marie du Preez Bezdrop. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003. 287 pp. R199.95.

The author narrates Winnie Mandela's life from her birth in 1934 in the Transkei through her student days in Johannesburg, her career as a social worker, her courtship with Nelson Mandela, the protests of the 1950s and then Nelson's incarceration. In 1969, Winnie herself was detained for 17 months, leaving her 10 and 9 year old daughters without any parental care. In the 1970s, Winnie was first detained and then banished to a town in the Orange Free State. We learn of her estrangement from Nelson a few years after he was released in 1990.

One leaves this book wishing the story could have been happier. One wonders what Winnie would have been had she rejected Nelson's advances and had had her life to live fully on her own. It is likely she would have been a force to reckon with.

Lisa Combrinck. *Sowetan*. December 12 2003: 11.

This second biography of Winnie Mandela is a sympathetic yet realistic look at the life of one of South Africa's most controversial figures. Her life was clouded by the imprisonment of her husband, Nelson, and her own spells in prison. The author tells us that Nelson found his own three-day encounter with solitary confinement "the most forbidding aspect of prison life"; Winnie was held in solitary confinement for 13 months. Then she was banished to Brandfort.

But, the author suggests, Winnie's physical and emotional torture turned into post-traumatic stress disorder. Back in Soweto, Winnie would

often wear khaki military-style outfits and make highly inflammatory statements, such as, "Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches and our necklaces, we shall liberate this country." At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission she would again be implicated in the murder of 14 year old Stompie Seipei.

An interesting book that gives a human face to one of South Africa's most formidable women.

Christi Naude. *The Witness*. December 22 2003: 8.

It is ten years since Emma Gilbey's, *The Lady*: its sheer volume of detail made it an almost definitive biography of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Gilbey barely appears in Du Preez Bezdob's footnotes as she eschews academic conventions. If she had referenced her sources properly it would become quite obvious that this book rests quite heavily on Gilbey's text and on other standard works, those by Nancy Harrison, Fatima Meer and Madikizela-Mandela herself. Du Preez Bezdob has invested very little real research in constructing her narrative. Convinced that Madikizela-Mandela has been unfairly treated by today's political leadership, she has accordingly been very selective in her use of sources. This biographer presents the banished Winnie as displaying unambiguous nobility of spirit; Gilbey, on the other hand, spoke to people who lived in the town she was banished to and she tells of a community divided by Madikizela's-Mandela's presence. Instead of any effort to establish the extent of Madikizela's-Mandela's culpability in the affairs of the Mandela United Football Club, Du Preez Bezdob merely recycles, without comment, the conclusions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Winnie Mandela certainly merits serious consideration as a public figure but this book does not even begin to engage with her complexities as a tragic heroine.

Tom Lodge. *The Sunday Independent*. December 14 2003: 18.

Masekela, Hugh

Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela. Hugh Masekela and D. Michael Cheers. New York: Crown Publishers, 2004. 394pp. R180.

This must-read autobiography of globally acclaimed South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela is a bitter-sweet musical journey through the anti-apartheid system, a struggle with addiction, hardship, bewilderment, womanising and tragedy. The story, told in brutally frank style, is divided into three parts. The first is entitled “Home” and is about growing up in apartheid South Africa, prior to Masekela’s going into exile in the 1960s. In it he tells about his romantic association with “Mama Afrika”, Miriam Makeba, and how he became a musician. His first trumpet was courtesy of Louis Armstrong via Masekela’s mentor, the anti-apartheid campaigner, Trevor Huddleston. In the second part, called “The World”, Masekela accepts an invitation to study music at the Manhattan School of Music, rubbing shoulders with jazz greats like Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Harry Belafonte, Otis Redding and Marvin Gaye. While in exile, Masekela sank into drug and alcohol abuse. He recorded over 30 albums and later conceived the musical *Sarafina* with Mbongeni Ngema. In the third part, “Africa”, Masekela kicks the addictions and then returns home.

Jimmy Matyu. *Weekend Post*. August 28 2004: 21.

In this autobiography, Masekela’s blissful nonchalance sometimes lays him open to charges of lack of context. There are several unsubstantiated claims and, sometimes, sheer myths. There are, for instance, large unsupported claims like, “Even Hitler’s Nazi machinery never equalled the timely responses of the police forces to disruption, or the swiftness with which black ‘lawlessness’ was defused”, and the claim that dead miners’ bodies were used by medical researchers. Also, solecism and sheer editorial oversights abound.

But all of this seems mere carping in the light of his anal retentive memory (he seems to remember verbatim all conversations with Miles Davis, Marlon Brando, Don King, Nga Machema and many others), the carefree vigour and sheer cleverness of Masekela. Strangely, Masekela’s life—in which seeds of distrust for journalists were planted by *Drum* journalist, Lewis Nkosi—is quintessentially sleazy tabloid.

Mduduzi Dlamini. *Sowetan*. August 27 2004: 23.

Mashinini, Tsietsi

A Burning Hunger: One Family's Struggle Against Apartheid. Lynda Schuster. London: Jonathan Cape, 2004. 451pp. R275.

Tsietsi Mashinini was a student leader in the 1976 riots in South Africa. This account, written by a foreign correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Christian Science Monitor*, tells the remarkable story of black South Africa through the Mashinini family. It embraces just about every facet of the liberation struggle and makes the point that if the Mandelas were the generals in the fight for black liberation, the Mashininis were the foot soldiers. Their story is one of imprisonment, torture, separation and loss. It is also a story of dignity, courage and strength in the face of appalling adversity. Readers will also get a glimpse of Tsietsi's life in exile, and of his subsequent death of AIDS in Guinea. The book also mentions that it is painful for his parents to watch the ANC government heap honours on all manner of freedom fighters—except their son.

Ali Mphaki. *City Press*. July 11 2004: 1.

Meldrum, Andrew

Where We Have Hope: A Memoir of Zimbabwe. Andrew Meldrum. London: John Murray, 2004. 272pp. R220.

In *Where We Have Hope*, journalist Andrew Meldrum (who was deported from Zimbabwe in 2003) gives us a fascinating and fast-moving memoir of his 23 years in Zimbabwe, a time in which he observed the nation decline from democracy to virtual dictatorship. He is not naïve, or some rightwinger. Matters such as land reform and economic equality are real issues. The question that he raises is how to deal with these effectively—and here we could have done with much more analysis.

Despite the repression, we see a different Zimbabwe through Meldrum's eyes, one of courageous journalists and lawyers, honest political analysts, brave MPs, an opposition movement that persisted under increasing repression, and ordinary people who somehow manage to survive. It is such people who offer the hope of Meldrum's title.

Anthony Egan. *Mail & Guardian*: Friday. July 30—August 5 2004: 3.

Where We Have Hope is one of those rare books that achieves a symbiosis between personal experience and political fact and analysis. Written by America-born journalist, Andrew Meldrum, part of the strength of this book is that Meldrum does not snatch the entire story for himself. The book is inhabited by the stories of his friends, colleagues and even enemies. If you want an update on what has happened in Zimbabwe since liberation, this book will provide it.

I read *Where We Have Hope* in one night. It's a wonderful book that pays tribute to a country and a people.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. July 7 2004: 7.

Motsei, Mmatshilo

Hearing Visions, Seeing Voices. Mmatshilo Motsei. Bellevue: Jacana, 2004. 89 pp. R140.

It is difficult to slot this collection of musings and recollections into an existing genre: as an inspirational journey, an engaging autobiographical account and a rallying cry for an affirmation of African identity and tradition, it stands alone. Seldom have black women's experiences been investigated in South Africa writing with such frankness and scope. This is a book that will speak to men and women who want to make sense of the "African Renaissance", the complexities of male-female relationships, the violence of the times we live in, and the interplay between traditional African spirituality and modernity. *Hearing Visions, Seeing Voices* occasionally descends into glib aphorisms, and to gain from this book one must approach it with tolerance of a certain brand of earnestness.

Henrietta Rose-Innes. *Mail & Guardian*. August 6-12 2004: 37.

In *Hearing Visions, Seeing Voices* Motsei takes you on a journey of her life, how she dealt with the violence in her own marriage, the pain she caused her son while going through the divorce and her decision to embrace her calling as a healer. The book is full of warmth and compassion. The descriptions,

Judith Lütge Coullie

the language, the pictures she paints of her experiences are very moving and this is a book that stays with you long after you have put it down.

Nosipho Kota. *Saturday Dispatch*. October 2 2004: 4.

Mugabe, Robert

Brothers under the Skin: Travels in Tryanny. Christopher Hope. London: Macmillan, 2003. 279 pp. R163.

Brothers under the Skin is supposed to be a journey through and a meditation on tyrannies around the world, including Mugabe's. The underlying premise is that all dictatorships have similar traits. As Christopher Hope describes his many sojourns in Zimbabwe, he recounts his impressions of the Soviet Union, East Germany, the former Yugoslavia and Vietnam, stressing their similarity to Mugabe's reign of terror. Sadly, what promises to be highly edifying juxtaposition from an obviously knowledgeable and talented writer ends up as a mishmash, albeit one with some value.

Sousa Jamba. *Mail & Guardian*, Friday. *September 19-25, 2003: iv*.

Nuttall, Michael

Number Two to Tutu. Michael Nuttall. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003. 178 pp. R90.00

This is a story of camaraderie in bad and good times between two of South Africa's best-known and best-loved Anglicans, Emeritus-Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Michael Nuttall, the former Bishop of Natal and then Dean in the Church of the Province of South Africa—a post that made him effectively the Archbishop's deputy. Working together during the harrowing 1980s and beyond, the two were offered the opportunity to assist with the great changes that were to come to South Africa under F.W. de Klerk's presidency. However, the great issues of the day are not what this book is about: it's about love, friendship, professionalism, and the hard and busy work of the priestly calling. This explains, perhaps, why it is not a dry and wooden text.

Peter Christopher. Grocott's Mail. November 2003: 5.

Pagé, Lucie

Conflict of the Heart. Lucie Pagé. Cape Town: David Philip, 2003. 370 pp. R179.

This memoir is really a story of longing and love with, as backdrop, the South African liberation struggle in its final moments, the transitional period, the historic 1994 elections and the first five years of the new democracy. It is a woman's story in a country dominated by men. It is an autobiography which conveys a sense of the larger reality out there, the biography of a people and the stories of those who migrate between Canada and South Africa.

Lisa Combrinck. *Sowetan*. November 11 2003: 27.

This is an awful book. No matter how worthy, how sincere, French-Canadian Lucie Pagé's writing of her love affair with Jay Naidoo in Africa isn't romantic: it's embarrassing. There is some history of the struggle and the new South Africa, but being an electronic media journalist doesn't make a writer. And she is not.

Beverley Roos Muller. *Cape Argus*. November 28 2003: 18.

Pinnock, Don

African Journeys. Don Pinnock. Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003. 224 pp. R185.

These unusual adventures will take readers into new worlds. Pinnock has a marvellous way with words and a restless spirit which takes him—by means of many different modes of transport - to strange places such as Tristan da Cunha (between South Africa and South America) where he has strange encounters.

Diane de Beer. *Cape Times*. March 2 2004: 10.

What a stunning book! In the startling and vivid photographs of Africa, from the dusty Karoo in South Africa to the lake of stars in Malawi, Don Pinnock captures the essence of Africa, born out of a clear love of the continent. No ordinary coffee table glossy book of photographs, *African Journeys* takes the reader on an unusual journey that includes tracing the footsteps of legendary missionary David Livingstone, canoeing across the Okavanga Delta and cycling through the Knysna. The book showcases incredibly rich, detailed and often humorous travel essays.

Taralyn Bro. *Saturday Dispatch*. March 6 2004: 4.

Plaatje, Sol T.

Peaceable Warrior: The Life and Times of Sol T. Plaatje. Maureen Rall. Kimberley: Sol Plaatje Educational Trust, 2003. Xvi + 314 pp. R265.

There is something inspiring, intriguing and remarkably complex about Sol Plaatje: a largely self-taught man who establishes an international reputation as a journalist, interpreter, translator, writer, politician and statesman. He speaks several languages fluently, translates Shakespeare, collects Setswana proverbs and folklore, collaborates on the first phonetic study of an African language and is a pioneer of Africa-language journalism—all this while he tirelessly defends the dwindling rights of African people in post-Union South Africa. Nevertheless, Plaatje's work remains relatively unknown beyond a small circle of dedicated scholars.

In this book Maureen Rall, who worked as curator at the Plaatje Museum in Kimberley, South Africa, attempts to provide a popular account of Plaatje's life. At times, Rall succeeds admirably in her attempts to draw Plaatje's enormous output and varied interests into the confines of a single book: for instance, we get a real sense of the people with whom Plaatje interacted in Kimberley. Unfortunately, this passion and acute sense of place and period is not apparent throughout the text and, at times, the scholarship becomes sloppy. Large chunks of the book are comprised of verbatim quotes from Brian Willan's meticulous and scholarly biography and in some instances, Rall's choice of editions when discussing Plaatje's work is troubling. Furthermore, Rall's text itself is in need of editing and proofreading and several photographs are poorly reproduced. While this

book does cover all the bases, it often does so in a cursory fashion and with little enthusiasm.

Peter Midgley. H-Safrica@h-net.msu.edu. March 2004.

“Rachael”

Rachael: Woman of the Night. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2003. 248pp. R139.

Offering a firsthand look at the sex trade in South Africa, these memoirs tells the story of Margaret (a.k.a. “Rachael”) who becomes a prostitute at the age of 38 in order to save her family from poverty. This sobering tale of abusive husbands, addiction, bereavement, a traumatic stay in a psychiatric ward and a family torn apart by bureaucracy is told with a wicked wit and remarkable depth.

Maria Mikolchak. *The African Book Publishing Record* 30 (2), 2004: 116.

Rhodes, Cecil John

Cecil Rhodes and his Time. Appolon Davidson. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2002. 324pp. R199.95.

In this very different biography of the money magnate and imperialist, Cecil John Rhodes, Davidson studies Rhodes as both the product and personification of the greatest wealth in history. But for Rhodes, the acquisition of millions was never enough. His ideal was always to establish an “African Empire” under the British flag.

Davidson describes the tragic course of Rhodes’ political life and his growing ill-health. Although Davidson does not give a psychoanalytic interpretation and broaches Rhodes’ emotional life cautiously, he does introduce the reader to the main points regarding Rhodes’ way of thinking and acting. Only those who are averse to historical biographies will be able to resist the attractions of this book.

*Tienie van Schoor. *Die Burger*. April 12 2004: 7.

Sachs, Albie

The Free Diary of Albie Sachs. Albie Sachs (with occasional counterpoint by Vanessa September). Johannesburg: Random House, 2004. 232 pp. R150.

South African Constitutional Court Judge, Albie Sachs, was almost killed by a car bomb planted by agents of the apartheid regime in 1988. In this book Sachs pens a post-liberation diary of the journey he and his life partner, Vanessa September, went on to places of former exile (London, Belfast, Berlin, St Petersburg). The aim was for him to “move beyond disaster” (solitary confinement, detention, sleep deprivation, the car bomb) and to write about “joy experienced”. In pursuing his theme of what Sachs refers to as Late Life Love, Sachs acquits himself brilliantly. He is too balanced, sensitive and self-deprecating (in a healthy way) to fail. He is also a remarkably elegant and clear writer, and always charming.

This book is not only about Sachs’s private life; the best parts are those where his experiences as an activist collide and interact with the world and other people, or where his recent journeys and experiences are counterpointed by his memories of his earlier life.

The book could have been pruned here and there, and I found Vanessa September’s commentaries increasingly predictable and also too ingenuous. But Sachs’s voice is truly remarkable. He represents the acme of a certain generation of South African: activist, thinker, writer, legal brain, loving and forgiving human being.

Jeremy Gordin. *The Star*. September 16 2004: 15.

Some authors have the knack of taking almost anything and making it sound exciting simply by virtue of their ability to write. Albie Sachs is one such writer. In his earlier works, Sachs wrote of his experiences of detention, exile and survival of an assassination attempt. This new book deals with happier subject matter - Sachs’s travels with his partner through Europe.

Although in content and emotional intensity these “diaries” do not match his earlier books, this narrative holds attention by its sheer wit and quality of description. Characterisation is one of Sachs’s strengths. He takes ordinary events and turns them into delightful portraits. And the contributions by September are mostly illuminating.

Anthony Egan. *Mail & Guardian*. September 24-30 2004: 3.

This brave book is a vehicle for aligning past and present; it is also a remarkably good-to-read gallop through several of Europe's most beautiful cities, which were the main centres of support for the struggle against apartheid. South African freedom fighter, Albie Sachs, is able, for the most part, to maintain a deft touch, weaving a spirited chronicle around his core image: sometimes a "riddle", sometimes a "paradox". It is "the riddle of how to encourage respect for the past without condemning people to live in the shadow of its burdens". And "the great paradox of my generation was that we had fought with all our passion to create a boring society", one which it is "normal" "simply to enjoy the ordinary things in life".

Hugh Lewin. *The Sunday Independent*. October 3 2004: 18.

Sharp, Chrystal

In Fool Flight. Chrystal Sharp. New York: Penguin, 2003. 240pp. R90.

These tales of the experiences of Chrystal Sharp and her veterinary husband Dave continue on from those in her previous book, *Dog in my Footsteps*. Living in South Africa, in the Eastern Cape town of "Dolphin Bay", Sharp and her husband have some amazing relationships with some unforgettable animals. Sharp's writing style and narration are positively charming. Her animals are as human as the people in her life and her descriptions of the beautiful scenery around "Dolphin Bay" are breathtaking. *In Fool Flight* is a must read for anyone who loves animals.

Samantha Bartlett. *Cape Times*. January 16 2004: 7.

A new collection of Chrystal Sharp stories is reasonably priced and a real treat. If you are an old softie you might shed a tear or two as she relates the stories behind some of the hurt creatures who come into her vet husband's surgery. However, the narrative is leavened with loads of light wit. Sharp has a wonderfully self-deprecating sense of humour and manages to avoid being "twee", a trap that animal writers can all too easily fall into when they are so involved with their subjects—as Chrystal so obviously is.

All in all, just delightful.

Gillian McAinsh. *The Herald*. December 24 2003: 4.

Stern, Irma

Remembering Irma—Irma Stern: A Memoir with Letters. Mona Berman. Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003. 184 pp. R174.

This account of the woman who has been referred to as “the supreme South African painter”, Irma Stern, is based on 30 years of intimate letters from Stern to author Mona Berman’s parents, as well as the personal memories of the author. The book reveals part of Stern’s life few people knew about, from the depths of despair to the heights of her triumph as an artist. What Berman has done skillfully is to put into context the difficulties experienced by Stern and the difficulties she sometimes caused for those around her. I loved this book from the moment I picked it up. It is like a family scrapbook, and you get to see the pictures as well.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. September 12 2003: 7.

The brilliant, willful Stern was one of the greatest Expressionist painters of her time. In this captivating “memoir with letters”, Berman describes with disarming frankness her childish resentment of Stern’s extended visits to their home. More than insight into the artist, *Remembering Irma* also presents an intriguing portrait of a liberal immigrant Jewish family, the sort that has so enriched South Africa’s history. My only complaint about this book is that there is not enough of it.

Michele Magwood. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle*. October 5 2003: 15.

“Taffy”

See you in November: The Story of an SAS Assassin. Peter Stiff. Alberton, South Africa: Galago Publications, 2002. 312pp. R180.

The title, *See you in November*, is from a code-phrase to authorize the assassination of the Zimbabwean freedom fighter, Joshua Nkomo. This

autobiographical account (as told to Peter Stiff) of a British SAS soldier who served the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation was first published in 1985. Written in a “hectoring cliché-filled style”, this lurid story of intrigue, assassination and treachery in service of UDI Rhodesia is not supported by reference to any verifiable evidence.

The book is of interest as the record of a certain kind of approach to the travails of southern African racial oligarchy in its dying days. For this reason it should be in the libraries of institutions that aspire to comprehensive coverage of modern southern African historiography.

Seán Morrow. *The African Book Publishing Record* 30 (2), 2004: 120.

Taylor, J.B.

Lucky Jim: Memoirs of a Randlord. J.B. Taylor. Cape Town: Stonewall Books, 2003. 205 pp. R123.

First published in 1939, these intriguing memoirs of the pioneering South African mining entrepreneur tell, with gripping immediacy, of that rapacious band of get-rich-quick, supremely racist, quasi-aristocratic, always fascinating brigands—the self-serving Randlords. In this narrative, we are in the heartland of opportunistic, racially fertilised colonialism. We are among the precursors of apartheid. It is an absorbing historical portrayal.

Alan Lipman. *The Sunday Independent*. August 3 2003: 18.

Lucky Jim offers a first-person account by one of the Randlords who knew both sides of the gold-mining equation in the old Transvaal Republic—Cecil Rhodes’s crude capitalism on the one hand and president Paul Kruger’s farm-based republican virtue on the other. Taylor’s language reflects the rough and tumble of the frontier, exudes an almost unconscious arrogant articulation of racism and imperialism, but is equally speckled with quaint Victorian expressions. In this sense, *Lucky Jim* is a time piece that shows South Africa at the advent of its industrial and racial order.

Cornelius Thomas. *Daily Dispatch*. September 6 2003: 4.

Turkington, Kate

Doing it with Doris. Kate Turkington. Johannesburg: Penguin, 2004. 254pp. R95.

In this memoir, Turkington reminisces about her mother, Doris, and recounts her own life journeys. Her mother, she says, was liberated before the term was invented and always encouraged to her daughters to accept no boundaries. Both mother and daughter believed that it is never too late to have an adventure. This is a book that inspires. Her enthusiasm is catching, her storytelling has you turning the pages, and when you have finished you will want to get out there and do it!

Diane de Beer. *The Star: Tonight.* June 17 2004: 9.

Van Houten, Gillian

The Way of the Leopard. Gillian van Houten. Claremont: Spearhead, 2003. 169pp. R165.

Animal-lovers of all ages will delight in this true-life account by one-time TV newsreader and photojournalist Gillian van Houten of how she reared, and eventually reintroduced into the wild, two orphaned leopard cubs at South Africa's Mpumalanga's Londolozi game reserve. Many of the anecdotes are humorous, and the scientific and personal observations interesting, but her attempts to analyse the twins' personalities—especially through the use of astrology—seem to be a bit fanciful.

Sheila Hadden. *The Herald.* May 19 2004: 6.

Van Wyk, Chris

Shirley, Goodness and Mercy. Chris van Wyk. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2004. 333pp. R162.

Chris van Wyk was born in Soweto, South Africa, in 1957 and grew up and still lives in the poor “coloured” suburb of Riverlea, Gauteng. His award-winning poems have been published in several countries and six years ago, he published his first novel. Van Wyk grew up in an apartheid world in

which he is not only poor, but is a second-class citizen. During the struggle years, he is arrested a couple of times and once is beaten by the police. But he gets his reward: in 1994, he performs his work in front of Nelson Mandela.

Here and there, van Wyk has interspersed his childhood memoir with his poems, and they slip into place like a hand in a glove; they are personal, tender, pertinent. This is a wonderfully crafted childhood memoir.

Beverley Roos Muller. *Cape Argus*. July 17 2004: 12.

If you delight in stories of childhood and growing up you will delight in *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy*. It's the tale of growing up in Johannesburg in the suburb of Riverlea. It's an amazing sense of place and time that van Wyk brings to this childhood memoir that raise it a generous cut above many other books in this genre. Van Wyk's prose is wonderfully fleshed out, without resorting to maudlin sentiment or adjectival excess. Although it has documentary value pertaining to the socio-political climate, the last thing I would want to do is reduce van Wyk's work to a stereotype of "what it was like to grow up in a coloured township in the apartheid years". The book is simply too much of a joyful celebration of life. But it is a memoir that does give general access to a reality that has not been well-documented in the past.

That van Wyk loves words is evident from his writing, that he remembers his past in a way that makes you feel like you are stepping into memories, is stamped all over his work. A lovely book, well told and beautifully executed.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. June 11 2004: 10.

This is a text in which self-deprecating humour and punning are let loose. Driven by an unassuming verbal dexterity in which everyday occurrences are transformed by spontaneous, anarchic wit; as if by magic, it reads like an outrageous running gag. The writer's skill in seeking out and amplifying moments from his experiences with a keen sense of the ludicrous, the absurd, the abject and the marvellous makes it read like a risky bar-room yarn. Yet it is all pure narrative wizardry.

The “magic” here is not the exotic, crypto-religious variety of the epigones of Latin American fiction. Van Wyk’s magical aesthetic is grounded in everyday experience gathered among the exploited in a society blighted by prejudice. His text speaks unflinchingly of the ugly realities of life in South Africa between the late 1950s to the early 1990s, but avoids the curdled staples of South African autobiographical writing. Most strikingly, it does not fabricate a narrative nor does it invent a fictional consciousness to give a literary gloss. In mimicking memory, it accentuates a random selection of incidents and enlarges fragments to cohere marvellously by virtue of its sustained humour. This is a memoir not to miss.

Andries Oliphant. *The Sunday Independent*. June 6 2004: 18.

Weinberg, Paul

Travelling Light. Paul Weinberg. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004. 109 pp. R265.

One of South Africa’s best photographers has launched this reflection of his 25-year journey from the 1970s. The photographic journey is presented as a lyrical narrative of 90 images, complemented by private observations from Weinberg’s diaries. Most of the images are previously unpublished because they were taken at a time when there was no space for the ordinary.

Patience Bambalele. *Sowetan*. May 25 2004: 21.

This selection of photographs makes for an interesting retrospective of South Africa’s toughest times during apartheid. The narrators he has chosen illustrate how successful apartheid was in creating a people apart, alienated. Weinberg has not overlaid his subjects with meaning, but his work is intense; it draws one into his experience. Yet he is unobtrusive, which earns him the intimacy essential to his detailed narrative. The absence of super-effects and gimmicks reveals an honesty that renders his poetic interludes unnecessary.

Maureen Isaacson. *The Sunday Independent*. July 25 2004: 18.

Wende, Hamilton

Deadlines from the Edge: Images of War from Congo to Afghanistan. Hamilton Wende. London: Viking, 2003. 291 pp. R154.

War correspondent Hamilton Wende takes the reader from the chaotic streets of Lumbumbashi in the former Zaire during the fall of one of Africa's most ruthless dictators, Mobutu Sese Seko, to the Kuwaiti desert, where American soldiers await the go-ahead to invade neighbouring Iraq. Wende (who was born in the US but grew up in South Africa) shares his fears and frustrations of working in war zones around the globe. This insightful account is written with simplicity, but its message is powerful and it brings to life the full horror of war as seen through the eyes of a man, rather than the lens of a camera.

Lucas Ledwaba. *ThisDay*. October 30, 10:9.

Younghusband, Peter L.

Every Meal a Banquet, Every Night a Honeymoon: Unforgettable African Experiences. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2003. 347pp. R140.

In this collection, Peter Younghusband looks back on a long and evidently harrowing career as a foreign correspondent in Africa. The book consists of 23 stories culled from these experiences. There is no easy coherence here: the stories vary from wry insights into the fraught married life of a foreign correspondent to highly coloured accounts of farcical and not-so-farcical revolutions and other upheavals all over the continent. But there are also quieter pieces. Some seem to be faithful accounts of Younghusband's own experiences; others are near-fictionalised accounts of third-person protagonists, often with a good deal of imaginative extrapolation.

Younghusband does not shirk the excesses, the sleaze, the opportunism of reporting, but he insists on these as the price paid for the conditions under which these people work. His book testifies, in a most engrossing way, to a life of courage and initiative. More unusually, it reflects a humanity sobered but not embittered by experiences so extreme as to be thinkable for the rest of us only as news reports.

Michiel Heyns. *The Sunday Independent*. December 21 2003: 17.

Younghusband is in many ways the quintessential “old Africa hand” that the British media love to romance about. He has been there and done that. But in this wonderful collection of short stories, vignettes and novellas, he has chosen not to write his own history (this has been done too often, he says), but rather to tell 23 quirky stories from a long history of reporting. The result is a very good book, a cracker, in fact. It’s a rollicking, quirky, very funny, very sad and fairly eccentric look at Africa.

Tony Weaver. *Cape Times*. December 12 2003: 7.



Mutiple Subjects

AIDS victims in Africa

I Die, But the Memory Lives On: The World AIDS Crisis and the Memory Book Project. Henning Mankell. London: Harvill Press, 2004. 120 pp. R80.

The Memory Book Project, which Mankell - a Swede with a conscience - supports, aims to keep alive the memories of parents who are dying of AIDS, for the children they leave behind. Mankell, an actor who works in Mozambique, travels to Uganda where he attempts to come to terms with the virus on the continent. Here, he gets close to people who are living with AIDS, with their waiting and then their wasting stages. He tackles his immense subject with passion, but his approach is nonetheless delicate. The additional essays by Rachel Baggely, the head of Christian Aids’s HIV unit, and Anders Wijkman, a member of the European Parliament, add a certain weight to this slim, uneven volume.

Maureen Isaacson. *The Sunday Independent*. September 19 2004: 18.

This is a wonderfully-written book that reflects the constant fears, suffering and hopes of people living with HIV/AIDS. The writer documents the lives

of people in Kampala, Uganda, who are living with this dreadful disease. He writes with compassion for ordinary people.

Nosipho Kota. *Saturday Dispatch*. September 18 2004: 7.

Citizens of Johannesburg

Johannesburg Portraits: From Lionel Phillips to Sibongile Khumalo. Mike Alfred. Houghton, South Africa: Jacana Press, 2003. 131 pp. R169.00.

Johannesburg Portraits is a series of 10 succinct biographies intended, according to the author, "as an accessible, informative read for those who wish to learn more about the city of Johannesburg and some of its citizens". Alfred's range is broad and eclectic, and includes a famous Randlord, political activists, writers, artists, a musical family, an illustrator-ornithologist and a lone but high-profile scientist. *Portraits* is a comfortable weekend read and will provide most readers with brief, but never shallow, pen portraits of the subjects and a sense of the times and environment in which they lived, worked and struggled.

Mike Berger. *Cape Times*. September 12 2003: 7.

Hermer, Bennie and Olda Mehr

The Piano War: A True Story of Love and Survival in World War II. Graeme Friedman. Claremont: David Philip, 2003. 287pp. R159.

Talented young South African pianist, Olda Mehr, and the young doctor, Bennie Hermer, met in Johannesburg in the 1930s. Then, in 1938, Olda and her mother Ida sailed to London so that Olda could take up a music scholarship at the Royal Academy. In August 1939, on her summer break from her music studies, they went to visit relatives in eastern Europe and were caught up in Hitler's Holocaust: Olda and her mother were taken to Pawiak, Warsaw's primary terror centre. At this time, Olda took courage from the letters of the loyal Bennie, who was now a captain in the South African army fighting in North Africa. Later, Bennie was taken as PoW. Amazingly, they met in Egypt and married, returning to South Africa and enjoying nearly 50 years of married life together.

The narration is at times a tad overblown but this does not hamper an extraordinary story.

Caroline Hurry. *The Sunday Independent*. February 15 2004: 18.

Journalists

Something to Write Home About. Claude Colart and Sahm Venter. Bellvue: Jacana, 2004. 279pp. R200.

This collection of pieces from a wide variety of journalists and correspondents focuses on telling the story of getting the story. It gives an alternative, often very personalised and sometimes indulgent view of conflict the world over. But it makes an interesting read, and you will certainly learn things that you didn't know before. The collection is something to dip into rather than to read in one go. The Foreword is by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He describes the stories as "deeply moving" written by "wonderful, sensitive human beings".

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. June 8 2004:7.

Modern information technologies have given us almost boundless access to information, yet these same technologies mean that there is a danger of information overload; also, many can remain secure in their comfort zones and wish away the harsh realities on their screen with a mere flick of their remote control. Sometimes, images appear so unreal that the viewer feels as though this is a fiction. Then, too, the images repeat themselves day after day on different channels until the ways of the world seem both monotonous and also hopeless. Furthermore, the journalists at times seem so detached and anaesthetised to the reality around them, that one imagines them as civilised visitors to rather strange, unfamiliar, barbaric and exotic worlds. This increases the viewer's alienation from the vents taking place and often serves to reinforce a notion of the "backwardness" of people in the developing world.

Given all of this, *Something to Write Home About* is a breath of fresh air. The journalists in writing about their experiences in working in war zones or places very different from their own do try to empathise and can

bring out the very real humanity of the people they meet and work with. They make meaning out of seemingly absurd situations or articulate their inability to make meaning. They capture the banality of evil that is often left out of newscasts. The stories take us around the world. All the royalties from this book go to the special funds of two of the journalists who were killed.

Lisa Combrinck. *Sowetan*. June 25 2004: 13.

“Sher, Harry and Jack Rubin”

People who have Stolen From Me. David Cohen. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2004. 181pp. R150.

This story relies upon fiction for style, narrative tension and flow, but it deals with real events and real people, even if the names have been changed to protect the innocent—or even the guilty. *People who have Stolen From Me* is a funny, poignant tapestry which chronicles the lives and circumstances of a pair of retail furniture dealers in southern Johannesburg.

Cohen has spun a great, delicious tale, in which he examines the inventive criminals who prey on Rubin and Sher, searches for a psychological dimension for this crime, and then places the “blame” for this growing criminal activity on the collapse of the apartheid strictures that had held crime and its perpetrators in seeming check.

But this is a story with a hole in the centre. Sher and Rubin’s furniture empire relies for its profits on its offering of store credit to customers. By contrast to people who have the money or who can get a bank loan, store clients end up paying much higher rates. In effect, it can be argued, the real business of the Sher/Rubin empire isn’t furniture at all. It is non-bank credit. Cohen does not consider this aspect.

J. Brooks Spector. *The Sunday Independent*. May 30 2004: 18.

The author of this book, a South African living in London, examines his country’s crime wave through the story of Harry Sher and Jack Rubin, partners in a small chain of furniture stores in Johannesburg. They and their stores are subjected to every kind of acquisitive criminality, from fraud to

smash and grab and armed robbery. Despite this and their ages (77 and 68), the two partners have decided to soldier on. While it is alarming to read of such widespread criminality, it is correspondingly uplifting to read of people who refuse the blandishments of dishonesty.

The author lets all the characters, including the thieves, speak in their own voices and tell their own stories. David Cohen's prose is easy to read. The book could easily have been unremittingly gloomy, but it is an inspiring testimony to the human spirit.

Anthony Daniels. *The Herald*. March 24 2004: 8.

South African women: anti-apartheid activists

Strike a Woman Strike a Rock: Fighting for Freedom in South Africa. Barbara Hutmacher Maclean. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2004. 339 pp. R220.

Strike a Woman Strike a Rock is a powerful collection of narratives: life stories, love stories and death stories, of the women of all race groups who, often behind the scenes, made a stand against the apartheid state. The American author takes the title from the slogan, Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo, adopted by the ANC's Women's League when they marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against the law which would force women to carry passes. If there is one criticism of this book it is in the detail - incorrect spelling of place names and misspelling of Afrikaans words—however, the content is gripping.

Lisa MacLeod. *African Review of Books*. (<http://www.africanreviewofbooks.com/Reviews/maclean0409.html>) September 17 2004: np.

South African Women: Careers

Inspirational Women at Work. Lisel Erasmus-Kritzinger. Pretoria: Lapa, 2003. 490pp. R210.

This compilation of interviews is an empowering handbook, a groundbreaking guide to success. The author says that the women—all of whom are South Africans, representing a cross-section in terms of geography, age,

cultural background, business experience and lifestyle—have in common their tenacity, caring and optimism and all are achievers who are making a difference in the lives of other women and in South African as a whole. The responses of the women to the interview questions remain in their own words.

Easy to navigate, the book is divided into sections taking you through many spheres of business. Each chapter closes with a workbook section which you can use to take yourself forward. I found particularly helpful the sections “taking it a step further” where strategic skills are identified for achievement within the discipline discussed. In addition, a list of resource books gives you more options for improvement.

With a foreword by Graça Machel and special messages from Oprah Winfrey, Irene Charnley, Albertina Sisulu and Yvonne Johnston the author says that the world can learn a lot from the stories of these women.

Beryl Eichenberger. *Cape Times*. April 2 2004: 12.

Travel Writers, South Africa

The Wind Makes Dust: Four Centuries of Travel in South Africa. Ben MacLennan. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003. 378 pp. R250.

MacLennan's anthology includes attractive as well as disturbing extracts and anecdotes by travellers, explorers, convicts, entrepreneurs, people of title, naturalists, missionaries and native peoples. This is not a once-off read, but rather a book to dip into selectively. MacLennan helpfully gives introductions to each author and the context in which the extract was written.

M.B. (Full name not given.) *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, Vol. 56, No.1. January—March 2004: 39-40.

This collection of travel writings by writers who visited South Africa between 1497 and 1900 demonstrates just how insightful the accounts of ordinary travellers can appear to readers a hundred years or so later. This anthology is a valuable and readable asset for collectors of Africanana, although the absence of an index is troubling.

*Pieter Malan. *Rapport: Boeke*. March 14 2004: 17.

Twelve South African children

The Story of my Life: South Africa seen through the eyes of its children. Han Lans. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002. 132pp. R175.

This is a most unusual and wonderful book. Twelve South African children, aged between ten and thirteen, tell their stories. They invite the reader into their homes and schools to see their daily lives. These children from all over South Africa, are from different cultural backgrounds, speak different languages and have different religious beliefs. They are the epitome of the rainbow nation.

The compiler, Han Lans, a professional photographer, in collaboration with Annari van der Merwe of Kwela Books compiled a list of children all chosen by someone in their communities. Lans provided each child with a camera and instructions on how to use it. They had to keep a diary and write down what they had photographed over three months. All the photographs are reproduced as they were taken by the children and the captions and short family histories were also written by them. Each section begins with a brief description of the region or town in which each child lives, written by Annari van der Merwe.

The book is beautifully produced. The charm of this book rests with the honesty and fresh vision of the children. It is highly recommended for public library collections, schools and as a model for other countries, regions and towns to emulate and think about.

Cécile Lomer. *African Book Publishing Record*, Vol. xxix, No. 2. 2003: 125.

