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Book Review Editor (*New Contree*)

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The *New Contree* Journal publishes reviews of significant books that are relevant to historians. Book reviews are written on invitation from the office of the review editor, but unsolicited reviews may also be considered. *New Contree* has an interdisciplinary outlook and welcomes suggestions of historically significant works written by scholars in other disciplines. The review should be submitted to the review editor within two months of receipt of the book. If this deadline cannot be met, a mutually agreeable alternative date can be negotiated. If it becomes impossible to review the book, it should be returned to the review editor. All reviews will be submitted to the members of the editorial board before acceptance for publication.

Contents and additional (or book) references

The review should summarize what is important in the book, and critique its substance. The reviewer should assess the extent to which the author achieves the stated aim of the book. It is important that the reviewer should engage the material instead of simply reporting the book's contents. For this reason, the reviewer should try to avoid summations of book chapters or the separate contributions in an edited collection. Instead, the reviewer should assess the ways in which chapters and contributions are relevant to the overall context of the book. Reviews should be written in a style that is accessible to a wide and international audience.

Any use of references or additional references from other sources must be informed on in footnote style.

Format

The review should generally be between 800 and 1 200 words, and should include as little bibliographic data as possible. When necessary, use page references for quotations in the text of the review and provide complete bib-

liographic details of the source. The review should begin with a heading that includes all the bibliographic data. The elements of the heading should be arranged in the order presented in the following example:

The early mission in South Africa/Die vroeë sending in Suid-Afrika, 1799-1819. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2005, 272 pp., map, chronology, bibl., index. ISBN: 1-9198525-42-8. By Karel Schoeman.

Do not indent the first line of the first paragraph, but indent the first line of all successive paragraphs. Use double spacing for the entire review. Add your name and institutional affiliation at the end of the review. Accuracy of content, grammar, spelling, and citations rests with the reviewer, and we encourage you to check these before submission. Reviews may be transmitted electronically as a Word file attachment to an email to the review editor. If you have additional questions, please contact the Book Review Editors.

*Hidden Histories of Gordonia, land dispossession and resistance in
the Northern Cape, 1800-1990*

**(Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2016, 410 pp.,
illustrations, references, index. ISBN: 978-1-86814-955-4)**

Martin Legassick

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Professor Martin Legassick the doyen of South African Marxist historiography, the political activist, the passionate teacher is no longer amongst us (1940-2016). But his ideas, his words and the many people he influenced, especially the thousands of students he taught, live on. This was his final book, published a few months before he died. And as others have remarked, this was his *magnum opus*.

I have a dilemma: how do I fulfil the role of *critical* reviewer about a major historian who is deceased and who relentless argued for critique and critical

perspectives. My direct relationship to Martin Legassick was in the context of training young historians in oral history interviewing and fieldwork techniques, for the South African Democratic Education Trust (SADET) project. More broadly, I am reminded of Italian oral historian Luisa Passerini, who argued that many academic researchers spend much time talking about “ancestors” and their importance to cultures and living generations but what of our *intellectual ancestors* as academics? Their ideas and dialogues – such as the Legassick versus Wolpe debate – had and continue to have an impact on how we teach, research and most of all, how we think about the production of histories in South Africa and beyond.

Hidden Histories is a meticulous historicization of the Northern *frontier and struggles* of South Africa in the region known as *Gordonia*. This region falls within contemporary Northern Cape, and as the most sparsely populated of all South African provinces, it has been perpetually under-research and under-represented in historiography. Yet from the early 1990s, when Legassick returned to South Africa from political exile, he doggedly engaged archival records, made many fieldwork trips to the region, and wrote and produced several articles (some previously published), which lead to this book. Legassick details various conflicts between white farmers, colonial administrators, isiXhosa, the San and so-called “basters” and “coloureds” of the region. Through these conflicts and contestations the frontiers of the Cape colony expanded during the 19th until the early 20th century. The early chapters of the book are a rigorous historical documentation of a series of brutal land displacements, resistance and human sufferings.

After the detailed chronology of frontier expansion, the middle chapters hone in on specific events such as the Marengo rebellion of 1903-1907, which Legassick argues has been misleadingly framed as the *Bondelswarts war*. These chapters make for fascinating reading. Moreover, the chapter on the politics of human remains repatriation is especially useful for memorialisation scholars. Legassick conducted this research with UWC colleague Ciraj Rassool, and their co-authored book, *Skeletons in the cupboard: South African museums and the trade in human remains* (2000) appeared at a key moment in the attempted transformation of the South African heritage sector. The related chapter in *Hidden Histories* details the horrific “scientific” work of Rudolf Poch and transportation of “Bushman remains” to Vienna. The chapter also discusses how these remains were repatriated to South Africa and makes the significant claim that this was:

... the first time in the history of international human remains repatriation from Europe that a return occurred on the basis of remains returned in coffins as recently deceased human, rather than as artefacts. It potentially helped all South Africans to understand colonialism's violence and the complicity of science in this. This method of 'rehumanisation' could become a landmark moment, with the potential to influence any future returns from Europe (p. 156).

I have no doubt that the above claim by Legassick and Rassool is correct, however, I doubt such a "rehumanisation" process has been sufficiently replicated with the repatriation of other South African human remains located elsewhere across the globe. I now shift my focus, to the final chapters on 20th century themes, which document significant resistance figures such as Alfred Gubula. In constructing biographies Legassick moves cautiously and he makes the following pertinent point:

The presentation of a life history of course privileges agency over circumstances. Moreover, the construction of autobiography, or biography, has a tendency to give a life a retrospective 'plot, consistency, development', presenting an orderly projection of events, lessons learnt, actions engaged in consistently – when lives are in reality 'messy and contradictory' (p. 371).

The biographical accounts provided were indeed illuminated by the messiness of everyday life. These biographies also gave substance to Legassick's stated aim – made in the introductory chapter - that as far as possible he wanted this book to demonstrate the value of "applied history". To varying degrees, *Hidden Histories* succeeds in this aim. However, in his use of oral history methods Legassick sticks to a recovery-mode approach to fieldwork and interviews. It is now largely accepted amongst oral historians that such stories are constantly reworked over time, and mediated, through patterns of selectively shared and unshared memory. I am not challenging the authenticity of the stories presented here but I am respectfully quarrelling with my deceased mentor. In my view, the dialectic of personal and public memory and the evolution of memory studies are not mere supplements to historiography but central to understanding and explaining historicizing processes. I know Legassick was aware of these debates but in *Hidden Histories* he remains committed to the empiricism of the recovery-mode and the primacy of class struggles over land and material resources in his analysis of colonial *frontiers*. For example, in the chapter on "the battle of Naroegas", he "reflects on the silences and distortions in the written accounts of the war, as well as the 'hiddenness' of the oral records of the battle" (p. 195). He argues that this is, "a recovery of the story of the battle based solely on oral testimony", with the

aim “to discover the oral narratives” (p. 227). The significance of these oral and written archival texts are undeniable but I do wonder, to what extent such accounts have been hidden to local communities across decades? Is “hiddenness” as a relational status, more applicable to the academic gaze and other public audiences who were either observant (with racist scientific lenses), and/or, unobservant in not listening to the suffering subjectivities seared across the stories and landscapes of the Northern Cape?

My quarrels aside, *Hidden Histories* must be recognized as a major South African book. It is a testament to an extraordinary scholar and activist, who gave his mind, heart and soul to historical work and the liberation struggle in South Africa. I hope students at many levels, and scholars, not only historians, will read it and appreciate its critical thinking and its skilled display of historical documentation and analysis. *Hamba kahle* comrade Martin, your inspirational work will be remembered and your intellectual contributions put to productive use in many, many future works.

Students must rise. Youth struggle in South Africa before and beyond Soweto 76

(Wits University Press, Johannesburg: 2016, 193 pp., timeline, map, glossary, abbreviations, photographs, bibliography, ISBN: 9781868149193)

Anne Heffernan and Noor Niefertgodien (eds.)

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Students must rise. Youth struggle in South Africa before and beyond Soweto '76 is a volume of voices that engages with the ongoing struggle of the youth of South Africa, a struggle that also represents the ongoing South African struggle. This struggle is multifaceted and deals with the hardships of education in South Africa, but also with all those other social dilemmas and ills that has plagued modern South African history and that is continuing as part of the present.

These issues are also the social, political and economic challenges of South Africa, which include, inequality, poverty, racial discrimination, contesting

political ideologies, injustice, freedom and the lack thereof, humanity, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia and decolonisation. In this sense the struggle of the youth is also a micro-cosmos of South African society as well as enduring challenges for humanity on a global scale.

This volume allows those who are affected and who were and are part of these struggles speak for themselves. It is a collection of memories, academic research and a reflection on current developments. The volume therefore does not attempt to be an academic dissertation analysing the phenomenon, but is inherently a democratic exercise that affords the power and the voice to the people and in this sense also represents a platform for the struggle mentioned above. It is a collection of snapshots throughout the country that represents variable manifestations of youth struggle in South Africa.

The volume also tells the story of the dispossession from the youth of those things that is traditionally considered to be the birth right of the youth, such as a certain freedom from want and deprivation and a right of enjoying that part of life before the challenges of adulthood sets in. However, this volume tells the story of how that is taken away by the injustices that we know historically troubled South Africa and those that have become synonymous with a post-apartheid South Africa.

In brief, the volume tells the story of various students' organisations, youth and student culture, the role of religion and theology in the organisation of student activities, black consciousness, student activism in rural and urban areas and in high schools and universities. It also tells the story of different generations, since the struggle in the 1960's up until the current developments pertaining to the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements. The voices that speak below articulate the challenges mentioned above and speaks to the optimism of the youth and the hunger for education.

Lekgoathi (p. 109) states that: "After 1976, schools, particularly in urban areas on the Witwatersrand, were turned into battlegrounds from which students repeatedly launched offensives against gutter education, authoritarianism and the apartheid system as a whole".

Xaba (p. 123) refers to access she had to banned and underground books from an "informal librarian" while she was at school and states: "I became a weekly visitor loaning and returning books and tapes all of which injected into me a political and social growth spurt and consciousness beyond my

wildest dreams. Most importantly I understood at a very deep level that racism, sexism and classism exist all over the world, that South Africa was not unique, and that people everywhere had to fight against these in order to see change. Such was my breadth of political and social consciousness then when I went on to Ongoye University”. She concludes her account by stating further that: “Universities often become the training ground where the youth try out their ideas, come into their own, and where they dream” (p. 127).

Kunene (p. 159) tells us about the experiences of youth at Bahale Secondary School in Phomolong. Pertaining to students campaigning against sexual abuse, she tells us: “The response by education authorities to a campaign that students regarded as both legitimate and not explicitly political marked a turning point in the evolving political awareness of the students of Phomolong. No longer would they trust the authorities. Thus the campaign against sexual harassment also signalled the birth of student politics in the township”.

In the context of the recent Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall activism at university campuses, Leigh-Ann Naidoo states that: “The broader questions of the student movements...formed part of the overarching question of decolonisation, of both the university and South African society” (p. 183).

Naidoo further refers to six long-term national demands articulated by students in November 2015 and that applied to society as a whole. These are:

- “Free, quality education from the cradle to the grave.
- An end to outsourcing and labour brokering.
- The decriminalisation of protest and protestors.
- An end to debt.
- A reformulation of governance structures to promote participatory rather than representative democracy.
- An end to all oppressive systems including racism, exploitation, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and ableism, amongst others” (p. 188).

Finally, Naidoo concludes that: “Let us hope that the responses that lie ahead are not driven by the impulse to suppress the important questions and demands that have been developed, but rather that the voices and questions of the youth of South Africa are taken seriously and engaged in a manner that will allow for all of us to contribute to building a better country and world” (p. 190).

In conclusion, the volume provides us with brief glimpses into youth experiences with human challenges in particular localities and within particular time frames. What is also important is that it affirms to us that the youth are drivers of societal change and they continue to articulate the lessons that those in authority are reluctant to learn.

Amsterdam tot Zeeland: Slawestand tot Middelstand? 'n Stellenbosse slawegeskiedenis, 1679-1834

(SUN Press, Stellenbosch, 2016, 196 pp. ISBN: 978-1-928357-09-4)

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Die boek, *Amsterdam tot Zeeland: Slawestand tot Middelstand? 'n Stellenbosse slawegeskiedenis, 1679-1834* is 'n belangrike toevoeging tot die outeur, dr Hans Heese se gepubliseerde werke oor slawegeskiedenis.

Die titel van die boek met die woorde “Amsterdam” en “Zeeland” dui op die Europese, maar veral Nederlandse kultuurinvloed, aangaande naamgewing en vanne, van A tot Z, van slawe en hulle families vanuit die Kaapse distrikte soos Stellenbosch, Paarl, Wellington, Franschhoek en Hottentots-Holland. Die vraagteken in die titel dui op die vraag of die meerderheid van die nageslag van Stellenbosse slawe wel middelstandstatus bereik het al dan nie. Die skrywer skets die agtergrond van slawerny aan die Kaap en fokus op slawerny in die Stellenbosse-omgewing, vandaar die subtitel “'n Stellenbosse slawegeskiedenis, 1679-1834”. Die datum 1679 dui op die ontstaan van die dorp, Stellenbosch en 1834 op die beëindiging van slawerny.

Hierdie publikasie is maklik leesbaar en gee aan die leser 'n beter begrip van die verlede van Europeërs wat uit vrye wil na Suid Afrika gekom het, teenoor slawe wat onder gedwonge omstandighede hier beland het. Ongelukkig bly die gedagte aan hawelose mense wat na die suidpunt van Afrika gekom het en op onmenslike wyses, soos ondermeer deur teregstellings, nog vlak in die herinneringe van Suid-Afrikaners. Tog is daar statistieke wat daarop dui dat

slawerny aan die Kaap nie so hardvogtig was, as dit vergelyk word met slawerny op slaweplantasies van ondermeer die Wes-Indiese Eilande en die VSA nie.

In die inleiding word erkenning aan historici soos Robert Ross en Herman Giliomee gegee wat tot die “slawe-oeuvre” bygedra het. Hier word na werke verwys wat onder meer slawe se lewensomstandighede, hulle politieke, sosiale en ekonomiese geskiedenis, tydens en na die afskaffing van slawerny bespreek. Belangrik is ook die mate van nie-rassigheid wat teen 1700 in die uitgebreide Stellenbosse distrik geheers het. Tog is die term “bruin”, reeds vanaf 1658 tot 1834, as ’n gebruiksterm gebruik. Kleur of fisiese voorkoms is nie daaraan gekoppel nie, maar wel aan die wetlike en tradisionele laer status/stand van slawe. Rasse-verskille word wel in die boek bespreek wat slawerny as vorm van onderdrukking beskou het, en wat hierdie navorsing so belangrik maak.

Landboubedrywighede tydens die VOC en Britse bewind is breedvoerig bespreek sowel as die veranderinge wat tydens die onderskeie bewindstydperke plaasgevind het. Hier kan verwys word na die grense van die Stellenbosse distrikte tussen die jare 1679 tot 1979 wat op kaarte in die inleidende hoofstuk aangedui is, wat eers vinnig uitgebrei het en later weer nouer getrek is.

In die Stellenbosch en omliggende gebiede is daar sedert 1679 wyn en graan verbou, waar seisoenale handarbeid belangrik was. Hierdie landboukolonie het vinning uitgebrei, wat ’n arbeidstekort veroorsaak het, gevolglik is slawe ingevoer om op plase te werk. ’n Unieke Kaapse slawegemeenskap het ontwikkel en stelselmatig ’n integrale rol in die ekonomiese en sosiale ontwikkeling van die gemeenskap begin speel. Afgesien daarvan was daar nie rassediskriminasie nie, maar tog is daar op persone wat hulle binne die slawestand bevind het neergesien. Die binneland daarenteen het hoofsaaklik op veeboerdery gefokus waar min van slawe-arbeid gebruik gemaak is. Die houding en omgang van sommige veeboere teenoor die inheemse Khoikhoi wat reeds hier woonagtig was, was in kontras met dié van vooraanstaande “landhere” in Stellenbosch wat hulle as wynboere bekwaam het. Tog is die rykdom van hierdie wynbougebiede grootliks op die rûe van Afrika en Asiatiese slawe gebou.

Tydens die Eerste Britse besetting van die Kaap, 1795-1803, is daar weinig gedoen om die omstandighede rondom slawerny aan die Kaap te verander. Dit was eers tydens die Tweede Britse besetting vanaf 1806 wat die Britse filantropiese en anti-slawerny bewegings begin veld wen het, wat die lot van slawe wetlik verbeter het. Eers in 1816 was slawe eenaars verplig om ’n register van hulle slawe en slawetransaksies te hou.

Slawerny is in 1834 soos in die res van die Britse koloniale ryk afgeskaf. Vrygestelde slawe het vir hulle gewese eienaars kontant in die hand besorg. Slawe en hulle nakomelinge het ook 'n belangrike rol in die vorming van die eties-genetiese samestelling van die bruingemeenskap gespeel, aangesien die bruin samelewing hoofsaaklik van slawe-nasate afkomstig was.

Afgesien van die voordele van slawerny, het die afskaffing daarvan op 'n ongeleë tyd vir die graan/koring en druiwe boere gekom wat tot bankrotskappe en ekonomiese depressie gelyk het. Die verlies aan 'n stabiele arbeidsmag het ook deels aanleiding tot die Groot Trek gegee. Voorts het die afskaffing geen daadwerklike gelykstelling met die middelklas beteken nie – die gewese slawe moes tot 1838 steeds as “ingeboekte vakleerlinge” in die diens van hul voormalige eienaars bly. Gedurende die vier jaar het daar min opleiding plaasgevind wat hulle werklik vir arbeid in die ope mark sou bekwaam. Die Britse owerheid het na 1838 sy plig versaak om tot die opheffing en verbetering van slawe se lewensomstandighede by te dra. Hierdie taak is deur verskillende sendinggenootskappe met beperkte finansiële bronne, verrig. Enkele slawe het wel skoolopleiding te ontvang. Onderwys en geletterdheid het eers gedurende die laat negentiende eeu belangrik geword, terwyl die beoefening van ambagte soos messelary en wamakery belangrik was vir vrygestelde slawe om ekonomies te oorleef en uit te styg.

Heese bespreek ondermeer ook die invloed van die kerk, siviele en regstatus en kriminaliteit van vryswartes as 'n afsonderlike klas. Die kwessie van identiteit word ook uitgelig en rassediskriminasie het sedert 1948 tydens die apartheidsbewind, in rassediskriminerende wetgewing gestalte gevind. Hierdie diskriminerende wetgewing het reeds sy oorsprong tydens die koloniale beleid van die negentiende eeu gehad. Sekere bruinmense wou selfs hulle status na “wit” verander, en swartmense wou “bruin” word omdat hulle nie pasboeke wou dra nie.

Heese noem ook dat die nageslag van slawe langtermynverloorders was. As voorbeeld kan gekyk word na die feit dat die verwantskap van die volwasse slavinne en die kinders onder 10 jaar nie vermeld word nie. Oor die nalatenskap van slawerny en kolonialisme beklemtoon die skrywer dat die Nederlandse-Britse koloniale mentaliteit die lae status van die gewese slawe buitengewoon lank laat voortduur het – hoewel die Britte se rol in die beëindiging van slawerny tog belangrik was. Afgesien van die negatiewe impak van slawerny het ook die inheemse Khoi-Khoi en sy nasate 'n mindere rol gespeel, omdat hulle grondloos was en min, indien enige skoolopleiding gehad het.

Heese het 'n verskeidenheid bronne geraadpleeg, maar hoofsaaklik van primêre bronne uit die Kaapse argief, die Algemene Rijksargief in Den Haag en die NG Kerkargief op Stellenbosch gebruik gemaak. (Die menings in die boek word gerugsteun deur die verwerking van oorspronklike dokumente uit die Kaapse argief wat op die ingeslote kompakskyf gelees kan word).

Hierdie boek in Afrikaans, *Amsterdam tot Zeeland*, is Africana weens die unieke aard daarvan en is boonop uiters insiggewende en relevant van aard. By die slapbandboek is daar 'n CD ingesluit waarop heelwat ekonomiese gegewens gelees kan word. Biografiese gegewens, soos byvoorbeeld doop- en trouerekords van Pniel, naby Stellenbosch is ook beskikbaar. Befondsing vir die boek is deur Het Jan Marais Nationale Fonds verskaf.

Dors geles oor die Dorsland

Berigte uit Die Dorsland en ander pioniersgemeenskappe

(SUN MeDIA, Stellenbosch, 2017, 495 pp. ISBN: 978-0-620-74742-4)

Meer oor PJ van der Merwe

(SUN MeDIA, Stellenbosch, 2017, 178 pp. ISBN 978-0-620-74744-8)

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Die stofomslag van *Berigte uit die Dorsland* herinner nie verniet aan die plakkaat van Jamie Uys se oorlewings-avontuur *Dirkie* nie. Die area – eerder die lewensuitkyk en leefwyse – wat as die Dorsland bekendstaan is in die Sentraal-Kalahari gevestig. Soos oor *The Big Apple* kan gesê word: *As jy hier kan oorleef kan jy enige plek oorleef*. PJ van der Merwe het as Stellenbosse geskiedskrywer en koerantberiggewer, hierdie uithoeke vanaf die vroeë 1940s gaan uitsoek. Sonder die alomteenwoordigheid van hedendaagse kommunikasie-tegnologie en die gemak van GPS was Dorslandgemeenskappe afgeslote en nie met presisie gekarteer nie. Van der Merwe het die seldsame mense gaan uitsoek. In die proses het hy 'n onskatbare kennisbank daargestel oor hoe hierdie groepe

se lewenswyses, of eerder oorlewingswyses, daaruitsien. Sy dogter, Margaretha Schäfer, het die vloed van berigte en skrywes saamgestel. 'n Dubbelloop-bundel vloei voort: *Berigte uit die Dorland en ander pioniersgewestes* en die meegaande *Meer oor PJ van der Merwe*.

Berigte is in nagenoeg 20 afdelings gesorteer en beslaan amper 500 bladsye. Van der Merwe se beskrywings en besprekings van die Dorlanders was haas ensiklopedies in so verre dit enige en elke aspek denkbaar van Dorlandlewe aanraak. Genadiglik het Van der Merwe sy outydse bokskamera oortyd laat werk, omrede die magdom foto's harder spreek as wat die woorde sê. Kiekies van toentertyd is altyd lekker, maar die beelde in hierdie boek – soos die groewe in 'n Dorlandboer se gesig – gee die boek 'n bepaalde trefkrag en 'n sekere diepte wat moeilik andersins verhaal sou kon word.

Met berigte wat wissel van “Ewolusie van die Trekboer” na “Boomplanting in die Noord-Bokveld” en “Baanbreker se Brakdakhuis” is die onmiddellike vraag: *So? Is 'n halfduisend bladsye se versameling van berigte (sommiges 'n paragrafie en ander 'n hele sarsie bladsye) immers 'n boek?* 'n Blitzverkoper gaan dit beslis nie wees nie. Die waarde van die samestelling is egter dat dit 'n epiese volume inligting bevat vir huidige navorsers, en ook gemakstoel-historikusse, wie oor 'n tema werk wat, al te maklik na 'n afgeleë nis terrein lyk, maar veelvuldige vertakkings in die historiografie skiet en sonder twyfel interdisiplinêr van waarde is.

Ongeag, hierdie is nie die geskiedenis van Honolulu of Monaco nie. Watter tipe mens het begeester geraak oor *die* vindingryke of versukkelde / brawe of dwase pioniers? *Meer oor PJ van der Merwe* gee die antwoord. Berigte se meegaande bundel omvat berigte oor Van der Merwe. In 2000 skryf Herman Giliomee oor Van der Merwe dat hy 'n “briljante” stilis was en dat “dit is sekerlik nie vergesog om te sê dat geen Afrikaanse historikus nog die helderheid, soepelheid en konkretheid van Van der Merwe se aanbieding kon ewenaar nie.” Hierdie bundel se trefafstand is uiters beperk. Dit is 'n jammerte dat, in stede van berigte en skrywes omtrent Van der Merwe, daar nie eerder 'n samestelling van sy meer akademiese werke saamgebundel is nie. Dalk, sou dit bestaan het, selfs 'n samestelling van sy vertellings oor sy lewenstaak. Hierdie wil-wil raak aan 'n koffietafelboek vir vriende en familie. Wat weliswaar 'n pluspunt is, is dat 'n groot geskiedskrywer 'n huldeblyk soos hierdie ontvang.