

interessante manier. Geerhardt word voor die krygshof gevoer en van hoogverraad beskuldig. Maar toe verskyn sy (met Geerhardt se medepligtigheid) vermoorde Joodse vriend, verklaar homself as skuldig en verleen aan die protagonis sy eie identiteit – die identiteit van die onskuldige waarmee Geerhardt die Nuwe Wêreld ingaan. Hier word die ambivalente natuur van die mens herken: die slagoffer word die dader, iedereen kan in feite dader word. Die krygshof is 'n ritueel van die oorgang.

Die spookverhaal, hierdie “eksistensiële spoor” is 'n dialoog van die protagonis met homself, dis sy eie manier om te herstel na herinneringe “wat aanhoudend na hom terugkom, wat by hom spook [my onderskeiding – P.Z.]”. Wat hy “in die kamp moes doen, was, God weet, nie maklik nie [...]”. Traumatiese stories vorm 'n daadwerklike uitdaging vir die negentiende-eeuse realistiese styl wat vir sulke ervarings te beperkend is. Elke poging om traumas uit te beeld, manifesteer die onmag van die literêre voorstellingsvermoë. Dan moet die grens van die realistiese oorskry word. Want die onmenslike kan die beste deur die spookverhale verwoord word.

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**A Century is a Short Time. New Perspectives on the Anglo-Boer War.**

Ina Snyman, Ian Liebenberg, Gert van der Westhuizen and Mariaan Roos (eds.).  
Pretoria: Centre for International Political Studies (University of Pretoria). 2005.  
507 pp. ISBN: 0-620-35311-2.

The analysis of wars is a classic subject matter in the history of western historiography (it is

enough to mention Tychydides' s book on the war in 5 BC between the Greeks and Persians). The topic always attracts attention and renovates itself. The purpose of this captivating book, *A Century is a Short Time*, is to offer new perspectives on the Anglo-Boer War, one of the best studied wars in contemporary historiography. Indeed here the reader will encounter fresh views and new approaches to the topic – even in the light of the already inexhaustible quantity of books and articles on the war. In this case we have a book that is not written only by historians but also by specialists from disciplines like literature, medicine, philosophy, political science and sociology.

In the title of the book and in its brief introduction the editors choose to denominate the war as the “Anglo-Boer War” and not the “South African War” (as the historian Jabulani Maphalala explains: “There was no South Africa during the hostilities of the Anglo-Boer War” – 183). It is obvious that the question of denomination is neither a small matter nor useless. It deserves to be pointed out since the naming of the war is still a matter in dispute. In every article or book written about the Anglo-Boer War authors explain or defend their particular choice of denomination.

The twenty texts are grouped around core topics. I would group the first five articles together. They are dedicated to the philosophy of the war (Mogobe Ramose), the analysis of certain Afrikaner personalities (Charl-Pierre Naudé), the study of the Afrikaans novel *Op soek na generaal Mannetjies Mentz* (Petrus of Kock), the comparison of the guerrillas campaigns of the Boer Republics and of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Rocky Williams) and a study on the figure of Jan Smuts (Ian Liebenberg). These articles are located at a space between philosophy and history. They emphasize the rebelliousness of the Afrikaner or explore the establishment of new Afrikaner identities, different from that constructed by the apartheid ideologists. In diverse cases, for instance

with Williams and Naudé, the war is a pretext to consider its impact on the post-war and post-apartheid periods.

The next group of nine articles reveals more historiographical characteristics. These are the paper by Mariaan Roos and Ian Liebenberg on the suffering of animals in the war and two articles by Jabulani Maphalala on the participation of Africans – black people – in the war and the consequences of the war on this section of the South African population. There is also the paper by Louis Changuion on the origins of the negative relationships between the Boers and the local black tribes during the war and its consequences into contemporary South Africa. Bernard Magubane returns once again to the classic topic of the relation between gold and Anglo-Boer War and Arlene Grossberg and Ian Liebenberg write on the history of the city of Pretoria while Gert van der Westhuizen discusses rugby matches as an extension of the war at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the last group four articles explore the international links of South Africa with Ireland (Gert van der Westhuizen), with Russia (Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova), with Holland (an outstanding article by Vernon February) and one on the activities of an emergent Red Cross Society (Kay de Villiers). Two analytical articles by Ina Snyman, one on memoirs, the second on the consequences of the Anglo-Boer War and lastly her epilogue with suggestions for new studies and fresh views, conclude *A Century is a Short Time*.

It is praiseworthy that the compilers intended the book to cover a broader scope on the war, i.e. a sample of diverse views on the war and even more important to extend their brief to writers outside the field of professional historians. However, the reasons for this set of authors and the selection of the specific topics should have been stated much clearer. If the reader does not know why these specific writers or their topics were chosen

he/she will be none the wiser about these selections or omissions, for example what about the participation of Indian people in the war – i.e. Mohandas Gandhi and his followers – or the participation of countries like Germany or France?

Although the compilers in their introduction clarify the effects of the Anglo-Boer War and its imprint on current South Africa with the phrase that a century is a “very short time in the history of any nation” I suspect that the title of the book does not reveal the wealth of the book. The book is a demonstration of the richness of analysis, diverse points of view, interesting approaches and useful suggestions for future research. May I suggest that the authors demonstrated thoroughly that one century is enough to look back, to meditate and to look into the future?

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#### **Room 207.**

Moele Kgebeti. Cape Town: Kwela Books.  
2006. 238 pp. ISBN 0-7957-0234-5.

Moele Kgebeti gives an eyewitness account of black experience in South Africa’s city of dreams, Johannesburg, focussing on the experiences of the occupants of Room 207, namely, the first person narrator, Molamo, D’nice, Modishi, the Zulu boy and Matome, all university dropouts who came to the city in search of success in life through education. Of interest in this narrative is the fact that the Johannesburg that Kgebeti vividly paints is identical to that of Can Themba of the *Drum* decade, forty decades earlier, depicted in stories such as “Kwashiorkor”, “The Suit”, “Mob Passion” and “Marta”, to mention a few.