

reader, as participant in the life of the country and as a citizen, not only of her own town or village, but of the world”.

Die onderwerpe wissel vanaf “Women in fashion” tot die meer substansiële “Women and the Struggle”. Daar is ’n onderhoud met Maud Sumner van 1967 onder die “Women and the Arts” hoofstuk, ’n onderhoud met Enid Blyton in die “Women-writing and storytelling”, asook ’n interessante onderhoud met Adelaide Tambo in 1993. Daar is natuurlik ook die onvermydelike plasing van “To have or not to have children” en die “Half a century of baby care” inbelprogramme waarin die gewilde onderwerpe deur kenners soos Marina Petropulos aangepak word.

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Johannesburg’s Portraits: From Lionel Phillips to Sibongile Khumalo.

Mike Alfred. Houghton: Jacana. 2003.
131 pp. ISBN 1-919931-33-3

Johannesburg, by any measure, is an extra-ordinary city. In the history of modern cities, it has to take its place alongside of other equally extra-ordinary cities of recent times, such as Mexico City, New York, Seoul, Bombay (or Mumbai), Madrid, Sao Paulo, Sydney and so on. Relative to these sister cities, what distinguishes it is the speed with which it “grew up”, and, still, its comparative youth. It started from nothing in 1886 and within thirty years had a population of over 100,000 people. Today, there is talk of the city, with Pretoria and the metro of Ekurhuleni, constituting a global metropolis that will, in the next ten years, be larger than Los Angeles. Its size aside, there are many other curiosities that make it special. It sits astride a ridge to the north of which

water flows towards the Indian Ocean, and to the south towards the Atlantic Ocean. It is the most “treed” city in the world. It has become home to vast numbers of birds. Its architectural heritage is priceless marked as its streets are with grand edifices of entertainment, work and business.

In addition to these facts about the city, Johannesburg is also a place of extra-ordinary people. Mike Alfred’s simple but attractively designed book, *Johannesburg’s Portraits*, attempts to tell the story of some of these people. The book consists of ten stories of special Johannesburgers, four of which are of couples and the remainder of individuals drawn from different walks of life. The stories are all told with empathy but also with candour. The way Alfred writes is to reveal the vision and greatness of his subjects but also to show, partly through the technique of juxtaposing these different Johannesburgers with very different understandings of their roles in life, what their detractors thought of them.

The first story is of Lionel and Florrie Phillips, a couple who bequeathed to the city its incomparable gold mining industry, the magnificent Johannesburg Art Gallery, the School of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand and much more. The next describes the less-well-known story of the relationship between Hermann Kallenbach and Mohandas Gandhi and the almost miraculous evolution of *satyagraha* as a mode of struggle against the backdrop of the rough and volatile social experiment that Johannesburg stood for in the early years of the twentieth century. From the pacificism of Gandhi the book moves to the tempestuousness of the enigmatic Percy Fisher, an English immigrant who sought to set the white working-class of Johannesburg up against the intractable Randlords, such as Phillips, in the amazing Rand Revolt of 1922. Following Fisher’s story comes

that of a set of modern Johannesburgers, Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Phillip Tobias, Bram Fischer, Peter Magubane, Geoff Lockwood, Lionel Abrahams and Sibongile Khumalo and her father Khabi Mngoma.

The story of the Sisulus is told tenderly, befitting the gentle yet tough couple who came to make Johannesburg their home and the home also of the national struggle against apartheid. This is echoed in the portraits of Bram Fischer, one of the most significant South Africans of his generation, and Peter Magubane, amongst the country's foremost photographers. The torment suffered by Bram Fischer is felt on the tip of Alfred's pen, as is the frustration experienced by Ngubane through one period of incarceration followed by another during the height of apartheid. The challenges of the modern apartheid city are vividly also painted in the lives of Phillip Tobias, living out his humanity through his incredible contributions to modern science, and surely one on whom should have been bestowed the Nobel prize for his palaeo-anthropological work, Geoff Lockwood and his life's work on the beautiful birds of South Africa, the amazingly generous Johannesburg muse, Lionel Abrahams (who sadly died as this review was being written), and the incomparable musical talents of Khabi Mngoma and his daughter.

The writing in this book is punchy and sharp. Alfred's approach to his task is direct and unafraid. The technique often rests on the use of the short sentence accompanied by longer, sometimes more discursively constructed phrases and clauses. He is not afraid to use a well-worn phrase if it suits his purpose. In using it, it emerges fresh and apposite. The writing is, as a result, attractive and direct. It reads fluidly and convincingly.

Not unexpectedly, comment on the collection of characters in Alfred's cast is un-

avoidable. In the midst of the great number of people who make up the gallery of Johannesburg's heroes, never-mind its rogues and just plain ordinary types, it is a matter of interest that *this* particular group of people is assembled. It could be said that the book leans too heavily in the direction of Johannesburg's white history, or, more generously, its liberal history. Even if one accepts that this cast features large in key moments in the city's life, a question could be asked about the omission of characters such as Moses Kotane, Clements Kadalie, Solly Sachs, or modern figures such as Ismail Mohamed, W. Kambule, and Zeph Mothapeng. One could point to many more in the black community. Alfred explains that the people represent his personal fascinations. This as an explanation is fine up to a point but a little more historiographic justification is called for here. It would be useful to hear what meta-story animates this fascination, if only to be able to have a fair squaring-off with Alfred about *how* one narrates a municipal history. And that in itself, even in a relatively modest book such as this, would be a really valuable provocation.

Having made these last remarks, the book is a thoroughly enjoyable read. Even for those who would have grown up in Johannesburg there is much to learn.

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Die stilte na die boek: Kitsessays.

Etienne van Heerden. Kaapstad: Tafelberg. 2004. 207pp. ISBN 0-624-04215-4.

Die 66 tekste in hierdie versameling, vertel die skrywer in 'n Nawoord, is 'n keur uit rubrieke onder die oorkoepelende titel *Kommapunt*, wat in *Die Burger* verskyn het en ook oorgeneem is deur *Beeld* en *Volks-*