

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**

Sean Field  
*Historical Studies Department*  
*University of Cape Town*  
sean.field@uct.ac.za

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 19<sup>th</sup> until the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.)**

Pieter Heydenrych  
*School of Government Studies*  
*North-West University*  
pieter.heydenrych@nwu.ac.za

*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