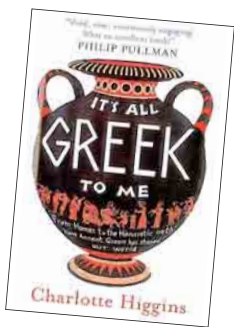


EDITED BY JAMES MITCHELL

# HOLIDAY MISCELLANY



## IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME

by Charlotte Higgins  
Short Books R229,95

Indulge in too much liquid refreshment over the holiday period and everything will seem Greek to one, as the saying has it.

But dip into this little book to admire just how much we owe to those ancients, and likewise enjoy the way in which Charlotte Higgins (author of *Latin Love Lessons: Put a little Ovid in your Life*) opens their concepts – which have proved universal – up to our respect and delectation.

Be stirred by Thucydides' version of a "backs to the walls" speech by Athenian general Nicias, to his defeated and cut-off troops: "In a word, soldiers, you must make up your minds that to be brave now is a matter of necessity, since no place exists near at hand where a coward can take refuge ... It is men who make the city, and not walls or ships with no men inside them." Nicias would've understood our air force's expensive, bribe-burdened fighters that can't be flown for lack of pilots.

Then read Pericles' funeral oration on democracy to understand the flaws in our own much-vaunted and over-rated, constitution. Those dwems (dead white European males) knew a thing or two in their day.

Once again the publishers have saved their best (or most bizarre) offerings for this time of the year, and we take a not-always-serious look at some of them. Most of them make great stocking-fillers; others will be ideal for a read on the beach or to help reduce that stagnant, postprandial feeling after too much food and drink. Enjoy the list, writes **James Mitchell**, and if you don't see an item that will appeal to your nearest and dearest, then take a trip to a good bookstore: their shelves are stocked. More holiday season reviews on page 23 in the main body of *The Star*.

## DO IT!

by James Motlatsi & Bobby Godsell  
Jacana R110

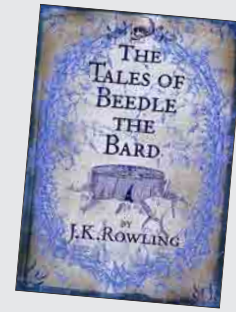
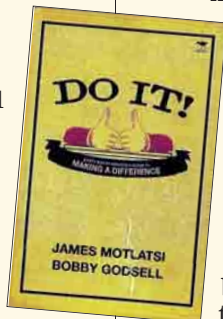
Not such an unlikely synergy after all, despite the fact that James Motlatsi is the former president of the National Union of Mineworkers and Bobby Godsell was once far on the opposite side of the great divide ... founder CEO of AngloGoldAshanti.

But the agents of change come from the most unlikely quarters, in this case Germany which, during 1992, hosted Motlatsi, Godsell and others on a tour designed to investigate how that country manages to make work the system of worker representatives on

company boards. As Motlatsi tells it, their hosts set such a heavy schedule that the former opponents were forced to work together to try and carry out their mandate.

Now they've written, as the subtitle has it: "Every South African's guide to making a difference", with the intention of showing that genuine, effective transformation comes from the individual, rather than being imposed from on top.

It sounds good; it's also short and practical in emphasis. Let's hope they've started something here, while we also wish the until-recently happily retired Godsell well in his new job as chairperson of Eskom.



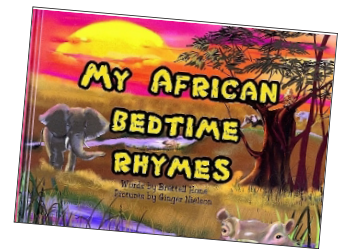
## THE TALES OF BEEDLE THE BARD

by J K Rowling  
Bloomsbury R139,95

Although Professor Dumbledore is no more, this little work – apparently "completed around 18 months before the tragic events that took place at the top of Hogwarts' Astronomy Tower" – will remain as his memorial.

Edited by the biographer of *Harry Potter*, J K Rowling herself, it was apparently "translated from the original runes by Hermione Granger", and although written for a "wizards audience", these five tales will be of interest to many Muggles.

All profits from the sale of this book will be donated to the Children's High Level Group, which works to better the lives of children across Europe where more than a million are confined in large residential institutions and generally living without adequate human or emotional contact and stimulation.



## MY AFRICAN BEDTIME RHYMES

by Brettell Hone & Ginger Nielson  
Shamwari Publishing R79,95

Don't forget the children! If, like many parents in these difficult times, you're cutting down on presents for yourselves, remember that the next generation can be educated and entertained at the same time.

Marvellous illustrations complement the intriguing rhymes, the latter having a depth to them that will bring inquiry from the little ones and a smile of recognition from adults.

Read *Krish the Fish and Guy the Sly Fly*, and you'll pick up all sorts of bonus lessons on fate, on health, on perceptions of beauty, and on survival.

Other rhymed stories are *Mvu the Hippo*, *Orlando the Wood Owl* and *Kwena the Crocodile*, each of them adding an extra dimension to our multicultural world.

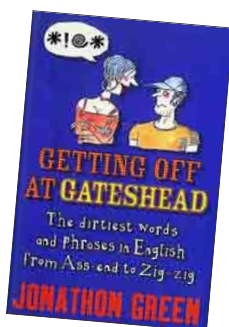


## STIMELA: RAILWAY POEMS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Selected by Laurence Wright  
Echoing Green R140

If, like this reviewer, you're of an age to remember the pleasures of leaning out the carriage window and getting smuts in your eye from the steam engine chugging, puffing, grinding, labouring up the Hex River pass, then this is for you. There's a magic to this form of transport that has enthusiasts travelling from all over the world to experience our railway relics and the splendid civil engineering that saw a web of iron rails criss-crossing the country.

Rudyard Kipling's *Bridge-guard in the Karoo* is here. Try *Men in Chains* by Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali for an almost brutal initiation into a world where railways are another medium of subordination. Tony Voss's *Kimberley Train Blues* will have you wishing Johnny Cash could be heard singing its few short, but perfect, verses.



## GETTING OFF AT GATESHEAD: THE DIRTIEST WORDS AND PHRASES IN ENGLISH FROM ASS-END TO ZIG-ZIG

by Jonathon Green  
Quercus R174,95

Getting off at Gateshead (or at Haymarket, Broadgreen, Edge Hill, Fratton, Paisley or Redfern) or refer to the rail journey less completed, and originate from the age of steam. They reflect, says Green, "a slower, stater, Bradshaw-regulated era of travel in which mighty engines ... deliver the sated traveller at that final, climactic stop."

The significance of those names is that they are the penultimate railway stations before the terminus is reached (as Gateshead is immediately prior to Newcastle), and thus to "get off" there is synonymous with *coitus interruptus*.



## THE CHAMBERLAIN GUIDE TO BIRDING IN GAUTENG

by Etienne Marais and Faansie Peacock  
Mirafrfa R199

The only birds in Gauteng's polluted skies are hadedas, starlings and those airborne rats ... the seagulls that infest our rubbish dumps.

True?  
Not so, as this superb guide shows.

Start perhaps with its suggested two-day and three-day itineraries, or just turn to one of the seven regions into which the authors cleverly divide our province, pick a particular site, and enjoy the avian variety.

Many will find the way the book has been designed – by geography rather than genus – a stimulating introduction to bird-watching, suggesting a great and inexpensive way to spend at least some of the festive season.



## STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS IN SOUTH AFRICA (11TH EDITION)

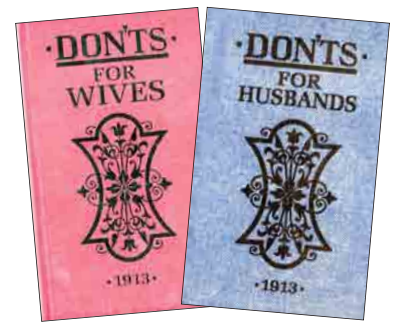
by Barrie Terblanche, Pamela Moeng and Guy Macleod  
Oxford R179

With all too many local businesses displaying their own peculiar sense of the Christmas spirit by handing out redundancy notices this December, this latest is sure to outsell all previous 10 editions combined.

You'll have to wait until January for it to become generally available, but *Starting Your Own Business in South Africa* comes highly recommended as having both a practical approach and more case material relevant to the local situation.

A bit gloomy to include in a Christmas reading list?

No ways, if it helps put bread on the table in the new year.



## DON'TS FOR WIVES DON'TS FOR HUSBANDS

by Blanche Ebbutt  
Jonathan Ball R55

Two tiny volumes, originally published in 1913 in the UK, these can now be read for laughs, although I suspect they were deadly serious at the time, in intent if not in style.

"Art is a hard mistress, and there is no art quite so hard as that of being a wife," Blanche Ebbutt starts off one book.

(The other, much more formally, begins: "My Dear Sir, You are neither as bad nor as good a fellow as you imagine yourself to be.")

All very middle class, redolent of a world which had not an inkling that within a year much of the lifestyle celebrated here would be swept out of existence by World War 1.