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Towards the end of this memoir, the author, wanting to contact his old army buddy Butch, looks up his name in the Durban telephone directory" . . . but it was not to be found. Perhaps he, too, had left the country like so many other&."

At a time when Butch and "so many other\$" are leaving the country in search of jobs or personal security or whatever it is they find lacking in post-apartheid South Africa, it is salutary to be reminded by this book of that earlier, possibly more idealistic, emigration in the 1970s and 1980s.

Rick Andrew quotes a letter written on July 1, 1976 by a young man to his brother serving in the SADF:

"There's *kak* in this land and soon we're all going to have to wake up and choose sides. Being in the SADF is the wrong side as far as I'm concerned." And then, in August of the same year: "Well, boet, we're on different sides now. No hard feelings, but wake up to the facts and get your arse out of there." Andrews, for better or for worse, was fighting on "the wrong side" and knew it. *Buried in the Sky* recounts his experiences and those of his fellow conscripts in the fateful year of 1976. Andrew's experience may not have been representative in all respects - his regiment, the Durban Light Infantry; seems to have been less blatantly and uniformly racist than some others - but his account remains a valuable record of an era of which today's young emigrants know nothing.

Andrew was well placed as an observer of the military madness he became part of for three months in 1976. Having resigned from his job as an art teacher at Maritzburg College ("I had had three major disagreements with the headmaster, who was a mathematician") he found himself in Cape Town with his wife and child, part of a group without "any kind of national or political identity. We couldn't associate ourselves with the politics of the 'white' government, but, as whites, felt ourselves to be in an involuntary collusion,"

This dilemma intensified the alienation he felt within the vagaries, irrationalities and inhumanities of army life. Not that he was often moved to open protest. Only once, ordered to examine the contents of the suitcase of a man who had narrowly escaped being shot, and discovering inside the "gifts that a father has planned to give to his wife and children", he broke out and "started asking who, ever I could see in the vicinity how they felt to be part of a system that fired on innocent people".

This question remains implicit in much of the narrative of *Buried in the Sky*. Such implicitness is a strength as well as a weakness: a strength in that the book escapes the obsessive preoccupation with the guilt of the participant that war narratives can lend themselves to, and a weakness in that at times it seems to lack a coherent vantage point on the events it describes. Neither fiction nor documentary; the deliberately disjointed narrative (divided into short "episodes") may at times seem deficient in the focus and coherence that give a novel such as Damon Galgut's *Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* meaning, and without the analytical rigour of an academic study such as Jacklyn Cock's *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa*.

On the other hand, it is possible that in the very insignificance of the experiences of *Buried in the Sky* lies much of their point: what we are given is not a dramatised account of war nor a theoretical analysis, but an honest attempt at rendering the feel and texture, the futility and, for much of the time, the boredom of waging a war in which nobody seems to believe except the high-ranking officers who fly in and out in helicopters to make pompous and condescending speeches,

Another effect of Andrew's technique of fragmentation is to de-centre himself as narrator: his intention is not to cast himself as hero or even as victim, )'

The closest the book comes to heroics is in recounting the exploits of one Gav, whose resourcefulness

("For, some or other reason old Gav keeps calm under fire. He shits himself like anybody else, but his mind doesn't panic") leads to his being decorated with the Honoris Crux silver medal.

The aftermath of this makes Andrew's point for him. On his return from his appointment with PW Botha (then still minister of defence), Gav finds that he is shunned by his comrades, who resent the singling out of one of their number. Asking permission to address his comrades, Gav explains that "I hold this medal on behalf of all of you ...all of us really". Andrew clearly tells his story on behalf of all his comrades – or rather, all soldiers who had to risk their lives for an unworthy cause.

This dedicatory intention is evident also in the book's title, derived from an anecdote Andrew recounts in his epilogue, of giving a lift to a young man without a right hand, who explained that he had lost it in 1988 picking up an unexploded grenade on an army shooting range:

"It was gone ... buried in the sky."

On being told about the book Andrew is writing, the young man says, "I wish my story could be there too." In this honest, unselfish narrative, Andrew has granted the wish of this young man, and many others like him.