

Because he feared his opinions were too offensive and insulting, Iwain, the pen-name of Samuel L. Clemens, did not want his memoirs published until 100 years after his death (April 21 1910). His wishes were ignored and they've been published several times, albeit heavily edited. His autobiography, though, is complete and unexpurgated. Iwain visited South Africa in the 1890s. He was a vehement anti-imperialist, and he loathed Rhodes. Sadly, events in our neck of the woods are largely absent, but they might appear in subsequent volumes.

BIBLIOTHERAPY

Wary of the Tony Blair and George W Bush memoirs? Barack Obama's *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters* (Doubleday) might be just the thing. Aimed at four to eight-year-olds, it doesn't treat its readers as if they're children — unlike the Bush and Blair books.

THE BOTTOM LINE

"I remembered some advice I'd like to say my Dad gave me but that I'd read off a T-shirt (it was the name of a Pat Travers Album), 'Go For What You Know ...' — *In Fifty Years We'll All Be Chicks... And Other Complaints from an Angry Middle-Aged White Guy*, by Adam Carolla (Crown Archetype).

PILLOWTALK: SEAN BADAL

What are you reading right now?

Some months back I bought William Dalrymple's *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* from a street vendor in Delhi. I was in the back of a taxi and when I eagerly unwrapped the neat cellophane, what confronted me was a badly photocopied manuscript. I've kept it as a souvenir!

In a nutshell?

Dalrymple's latest work is more of an elegiac homage to his adopted homeland than a travel book in the traditional sense. He subsumes all traces of the author's personality in pursuit of the nine lives in the book — a motley collection of Indian myths whose intense fervour in search of the sacred leaves the reader with an inexplicable longing. It is, by turns, funny sad and, above all, erudite.

of the extra-terrestrial. I've been granted the gift of distance and perspective to see things that those who are too close to the situation may miss. I came to Zimbabwe on assignment for Vanity Fair to chronicle the last days of Mugabe's reign, but ended up staying three months to cover the shockingly violent story that unfolded from there."

The violence of Mugabe's attempts to crush political opposition following the disputed 2008 election is something Godwin does not balk at describing. I suggest that there is a fine line between "unflinching" and "voyeuristic" when it comes to descriptions of violence and ask whether he was consciously trying to stay on the right side of that line as he wrote.

"It's more that I was trying not to lose my readers through a relentless catalogue of atrocities," he says. "There is only so much a human being can face before wanting to look away. The descriptions of vi-

Why read it?

Dalrymple is an Orientalist of the gentlest kind. His obvious love for India, as evidenced in *City of Djinns, The Age of Kali* and *The Last Mughal*, shines through the book.

He shows, via the (different religious sects) Sadhus, Jainists and Sufis, how the tangential threads of our lives make the whole.

While perhaps showing that modern India isn't all that it's cracked up to be, there is a glow of warmth and fragility that suffuses this book that makes it essential reading. — *Sheriffini Naidoo*

● Badal is the author of *Dead Sanctities, Seeds of Disorder* and *The Fall of the Black-eyed Night*. His latest book, *The Ice on Mars* is out now. R130 at book stores.



TURBULENT TIMES: Peter Godwin, left, says his book, *The Fear*, describes a particular moment in history

olence are broken up with other scenes to provide some relief. I had to bear witness to what I saw and heard, however. There was no question of sweeping it under the carpet."

There is much less of Peter Godwin, the person, in this book than there is in his previous two Zimbabwean memoirs, *Mukawa* and *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*. He acknowledges this and suggests that *The Fear* is not a

memoir in the true sense of the word. It is a socio-political history, and a grim one at that.

"Obviously I am present in the book, and there are certain personal elements to it," he goes on. "But it is not my story in the same way as the first two were."

There is just enough of Godwin to provide some much-needed leaven to the story. His sister, Georgina, is his travel-



BOOK FAIR

THE launch of BookEx will take place this weekend in Johannesburg.

This new book fair will be held at the Sandton Convention Centre from Friday to Sunday and will showcase hundreds of titles for sale under one roof.

Authors will be on hand to engage the book-loving public on their work, and daily events like the mini crime-writing festival, CrimeWrite, will be held.

A focus on local and independent writers and publishers will give them a platform alongside the big guns.

A large children's section will attract youngsters of all ages and entertainment like storytelling, face-painting and colouring will keep them busy under the eye of childminders while you shop.

BookEx is the brainchild of Mohan Kanjee, the owner of Estoril Books. He says: "Our aim is to create a hub of book shopping ahead of the summer holidays and Christmas together with author participation." — *Andrea Ngele*

● Entrance is R30

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