

Verster's approach in *Omega, oor en uit* is, however, distinctly different from the mainstream 'Border War' memoirs. Verster's account of his time in the SADF indeed details his journey from innocence into experience, in which he both questions and tells the story of his military experience in an effort to discover its true meaning. All in all, it is an attempt to set the war, and at times his own life, straight. The book comprises fourteen key chapters, in which the reader is regularly transported from Verster's then present – an archivist at the Cape Archives Depot and later at Naspers – to the past – a national serviceman in the SADF. The text is rich and descriptive, and offers a fresh perspective on several social aspects underpinning life as a national serviceman on the so-called 'Border' – such as leisure time utilisation and the provision of education, for example. Unfortunately, the anecdotal account of life at Omega becomes rather repetitive at times, particularly the constant moaning and fault-finding of a self-proclaimed *opstandige* (rebellious) *troep*. Whether or not the author was in fact *opstandig* during his national service is a matter left open for debate. Nevertheless, Verster's account of his time as a national serviceman is commendable, in that it offers a counterpoint to the majority of drum and trumpet accounts available on the 'Border War'.

All in all, *Omega, oor en uit* is definitely worth reading. Verster succeeds in what Hynes proposed in *The soldier's tale* – he offers an honest account of what his 'war' was like, how he felt about it, and, most importantly, how it affected him. The book is recommended for inclusion into university course material, particularly modules that deal with the wider milieu of war and society. If more former national servicemen perhaps followed Verster's approach, an entire different history of life on the 'Border', and readjustment to civilian life, will appear.

Endnotes

⁴⁵³ S Hynes. *The soldier's tale: Bearing witness to modern war*. London: Pimlico, 1997.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

⁴⁵⁶ A Wessels. "Half a century of South African 'Border War' literature: A historiographical exploration". *Journal for Contemporary History* 42/2. 2017. 42.