western part of central Africa and its sensitive analysis of the ways in which these populations reconstituted each others' positions in their (to a large degree shared) ideological universes. It is a major contribution to our knowledge of the history of this region, and will be an essential reference work for historians, linguists, ethnographers, and archaeologists working in central Africa.

Scott MacEachern
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Maine

Philip Frankel. *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. viii + 263 pp. Tables. Appendixes. Bibliography. Notes. $30.00. Cloth.

Henk van Woerden. *The Assassin: A Story of Race and Rage in the Land of Apartheid.* Translated by Dan Jacobson. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001. 176 pp. $23.00 Cloth.

These two books are concerned with South Africa during apartheid. Few developments of the period have been studied more intensively than the Sharpeville massacre. It might seem, indeed, that we do not need yet another examination of the subject. *An Ordinary Atrocity*, however, is a groundbreaking work, as good a study as I have read on any political development in modern Africa. In the four decades since it occurred, we have not had a truly comprehensive history of the massacre. The behavior and motivations of the police remain unclear, for example, and until recently the government discouraged investigations into any aspect of the affair. With few exceptions little evidence has been produced on most of those involved, and previous studies have all but ignored the forensics of the massacre. Frankel's work attempts to fill existing gaps and to reassess established theories and claims. Its aims are multiple: to compare the two diametrically opposed narratives of the event in light of historical evidence recently made available; to accord the Sharpeville community the status it deserves within apartheid history; to situate Sharpeville within the general context of twentieth-century massacres; to provide a better sociology of the massacre; and finally to consider oral evidence from participants, witnesses, and others connected to the disturbance.

The study is based on an impressive set of primary sources, including more than one hundred individual interviews and more than seventy depositions, and it incorporates much of the previous research on the subject. It is divided into three unequal parts and a postscript. The first part places Sharpeville in the context of South African history before apartheid and during its early period by considering the geographic setting, the social, economic, and environmental bases of the city, as well as public policy relat-

ing to its creation and governance. In the second part—the most interesting of what is throughout an interesting book—the author, besides dealing specifically with the carnage, provides insights into the politics, policies, and composition of the security forces, the roles of black informers, and brutality by black policemen. Frankel's detailed account of events—from time lines to how many bullets were distributed—is captivating. He is the first writer to identify and classify participants in the massacre—victims, policemen, police informants, nationalists, witnesses, and health workers—and to analyze their roles. His examination is in the best tradition of history "from the bottom up."

The massacre was "a seminal event in the dark history of the apartheid era" with far-reaching consequences, as Helen Suzman notes in the foreword. To Frankel, it was a nefarious incident which, as the defining event of the twentieth century for South Africa, transformed the body politic of the nation. In its wake the government decided that it would not tolerate any but the most ineffectual political activity by or in support of blacks and moved to expedite construction of the security structure for a mature apartheid. Those decisions helped shape apartheid until the fall of the regime.

Frankel, a political scientist at the University of Witwatersrand, challenges accepted wisdom on the massacre. He rejects the notion that authorities sought to teach a lesson to the people of Sharpeville. He posits that the death of a number of policemen in a violent confrontation at Cato Manor in Port Natal weeks before Sharpeville, as well as a clash between police and protesters in the nearby city of Evaton on the eve of the disturbance and the exhaustion of policemen prior to that calamitous afternoon of March 21, 1960, all helped to condition their response in Sharpeville. He revises upward the number of policemen deployed and the number of people killed or injured. He also illustrates that history might flow from miscalculations and leaves us with a sobering thought: many more could have been killed or injured if all the policemen had used their firearms. Frankel's excellent study might lead some to ask if Sharpeville was an attempted genocide or a police riot.

The Assassin: A Story of Race and Rage in the Land of Apartheid deserves to be read by all students of modern South Africa, as well as by anyone with an interest in biography. It is the first biography of Demitrios Tsafendas. Were it not for his assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd, the South African prime minister, Tsafendas most likely would not have merited even a historical footnote. *The Assassin* saves him from the historical anonymity accorded the slayers of such twentieth-century notables as the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Princess Sophie, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and John F. Kennedy.

Van Woerden reminds his readers that race was an issue in southern Africa long before the rise of apartheid. Tsafendas was born in Maputo in 1918 to a Greek father who had lived formerly in South Africa. His father

refused to marry Demitrios's Euro-Swazi mother because she was not white and was not Greek. Officially, Demitrios was classified as Greek, and therefore white. Yet to prevent "the half-blood" from becoming "a shackle around his legs," the father shipped the infant Demitrios to his grandmother in Egypt, where skin color was less of an issue. At the age of nine, because his grandmother was too frail to continue to care for him, he was reunited with his father, who had married appropriately in the meantime. His wife did not want the "coloured" Demitrios in her house, and he was sent to a boarding school in Pretoria for English- and Portuguese-speakers. It was at the boarding school that the teenage Tsafendas learned that his mother was part Swazi, and he found the heritage shameful. Tsafendas wandered, apparently aimlessly, over Western and Southern Europe, the Americas, and Africa. He was deported or denied reentry by a number of countries, including South Africa and the United States, and was treated for mental illness on various occasions in different countries. Eventually he was able to reenter South Africa and acquire the low-level messenger job—in part because he was not recognized as a nonwhite—that provided him with proximity to the Prime Minister, whom he stabbed to death in the chamber of the South African Parliament.

Like Henrik Verwoerd, van Woerden was born in the Netherlands. He lived in South Africa for twelve years, from the age of nine until his return to the Netherlands in 1968, six months after the murder of the prime minister. He visited South Africa in 1989 specifically to meet Tsafendas and to learn what had happened to him in the twenty years since the assassination. For van Woerden, a celebrated artist and novelist, the quest became a passion to discover the "real" human being who became a murderer, and "to render something of the South African trauma." The resulting book, an "attempt to achieve an anamnesis, a bringing back to memory of that which has been forgotten" (167), is a fascinating account of the scholar as detective. His passion for what might be judged a rather minor actor in history is entrancing.

A methodical researcher, van Woerden seems to have examined all the possible sources, buttressing thin areas with interviews with Tsafendas and others and with psychological inferences. In seeking to answer what motivated the assassin and what the death of Verwoerd would mean for the nation, and in preparation for the expected trial, authorities had gathered a massive quantity of documents on Tsafendas. After Tsafendas was judged insane and incapable of trial, the material went unused until van Woerden consulted it. He fashions an urgent tale that in real life unfolded in fragments spread out over many years and four continents. His book is a valuable contribution to the sociology of race. Jacobson's translation from the Dutch reads well.

Ashton W. Welch
Creighton University
Omaha, Nebraska

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2005.0046 Published online by Cambridge University Press