

ambitious. There is in the poems an underlying escape from a problem or a set of problems into a protective optimism. As a result the anthology *Ezivusa Usinga* does not contain any strong social protest or any criticism of social injustices. It might be referred to as poetry which does not speak for the masses.

Most of the poems in the anthology would seem to have been in 'cold storage' in the Literature Bureau or at Mambo Press waiting to be published, a factor which accounts for their limited relevance in the 1990s. Unfortunately, proof-reading and editing have not been of the highest order and the numerous typographic errors tend to interfere with the smooth conceptualization of the poems, since the reader has to spend time 'rewriting' and subsequently reinterpreting some terms.

Despite the basic weaknesses, the anthology has much to offer to the student of poetry as well as to the researcher interested in the 'hidden' subconscious and conscious working of the Ndebele poetic mind. It is a book well worth reading in terms of the variety and scope of the poems as well as for the potential that it has for providing room for poetic discoveries.

University of Zimbabwe

J. ZONDO

Family Law in Zimbabwe By W. Ncube. Harare, Legal Resources Foundation, 1989, xxviii, 227 pp., ISBN 0-908312-01-6, Z\$25,00.

The author tells us in the preface of this work that his aim is to provide a 'concise and comprehensive overview of family law in Zimbabwe both under general and customary law'. There is no doubt that Ncube has written an adequate reference work that will be useful to various professionals who need to know the law as well as, obviously, the legal practitioner and law student. Its defect is that it is rather more concise than comprehensive. A person seeking an answer from this work is likely to be frustrated in being able to extract only general guidelines to the law, thus requiring further research in order to find a specific solution. This is unfortunate in view of the large number of semi-trained people administering the law who would benefit from a comprehensive text as well as many legal practitioners who are themselves operating without reference to a full library.

However, the book's real strength is in bringing together, for the first time, what the law is in respect of families under the two systems of law in Zimbabwe. By collating this information from previously dispersed and sometimes inaccessible sources, the book is of tremendous value. Its pitch will limit its use to those familiar with the law rather than provide an easily understandable source for the layman. Throughout the book there is a sense that the author was in haste to complete and publish the manuscript. This feeling pervades from the first part — also the weakest — where the inherited legal system is discussed in rhetorical rather than historical terms through to the final chapter which ends so abruptly that the author's relief at having reached the end of his labours is almost tangible.

Having looked at how the two systems of law co-exist, Ncube then examines the different issues that can give rise to actions between parties. Each of these

issues are discussed in relation to their implications under the general and customary legal systems. In the first and second sections, the author rarely comments whether the courts had, in important post-Independence cases, reached the correct decision. On page 129, for example, the Supreme Court appears in *Dolby v. Lewis* SC No. 34 of 1987 to have come to a blatantly political, rather than legal, decision regarding the removal of a child (of divorced parents) from its jurisdiction. It is important, in a legal system governed by precedent, to challenge potentially wrong decisions so that they can be overruled if necessary.

In the second section, the author considers the law as it affects children. A wide range of interesting and topical points are discussed, including the status of children conceived through artificial insemination, where Ncube gives a succinct appraisal of what he believes the legal situation to be. A hint of the haste earlier alluded to can be seen on page 77 where the author has omitted an important alternative to Section 62 of the Adoption Act (*Chapter 33*). The text makes reference only to potential applicants who are known to the parents and completely omits paragraph B of Section 62(a)(ii) which allows the court to select applicants on the register of the Director of Social Services.

Ncube seems more sure of himself in the section on marriage. His previous tendency to disregard anomalies and contentious decisions is replaced by a sure touch, especially when discussing the proprietary consequences of the breakup of a marriage under both systems of law. Ncube sensitively discusses the need for the courts, when splitting the matrimonial property, to be aware of obligations both parties — but particularly the man — may have to future families. Then, suddenly, after this excellent analysis, the last paragraph is abruptly reached.

As is inevitable with a text of this nature, it will be out of date as soon as the (constantly referred to) Customary Law and Primary Courts Act (No. 2 of 1990) becomes operative. It is hoped that in future updated versions, Ncube will take the time to provide the comprehensive cover promised in the preface of this first edition.

MARY STOCKER

The Conundrum Trees By C. Emily Dibb. Harare, Modus, 1989, vi, 153 pp., illus., ISBN 0-908309-03-1 (pbk), Z\$29,28.

Few authors can write successfully about their attitudes towards animals and nature, possibly because nature inspires such intensely personal feelings. This little book of recollections is written by someone who clearly loves the Zimbabwean bush and the author's enthusiasm is strongly evidenced. Unfortunately, there is no clear theme to the book and it comes across as a series of small stories with only the author's love of nature and outdoor life in this country to connect them. Although the book is well written I had some difficulty in reading it because, at times, I could not be sure what the point of it all was.

The first part of the book ('On Safari') deals with incidents that the author and her family experienced in the Zambezi Valley. Having myself lived in the Zambezi Valley for several years, I have heard many similar stories, embellished to varying degrees, and there was nothing novel in this section for me. The second part of the book ('Simple Pleasures') was, I thought, rather better as the experiences it describes are simpler, less dramatic and so better written.