

Sacramento Book Review



Below is a clipping of your book review that appeared in the January 09 issue of the *Sacramento Book Review*. Thank you for sending us the book.

Unfeeling

By Ian Holding

Key Porter Books, \$13.95, 256 pages

First published in Great Britain a few years ago is Ian Holding's debut novel, *Unfeeling*. Holding, who lives in Zimbabwe and is 30 years of age, wrote the novel when he was 27—a fact his publisher calls our attention to. And why not? Serious novelists in their twenties are unusual, since they rarely have the emotional maturity to pull off an extended work of fiction. And, that is what Holding does (more or less) over the course of 256 pages, writing with a smoothness and authority of a much more seasoned author.

The book centers on 16-year-old Davey Baker, who witnesses the murder of his parents on their farm and is taken in by his neighbors. Everybody wants to save and rehabilitate him, but Davey has his own ideas. He flees his boarding school and the rest of the novel involves his journey across the continent in his search for... well, he isn't really sure. But it involves redemption. The prose of the book is quite smooth, if a little wordy at times, and there is little that Holding doesn't do well—except make the reader truly care about his character. It is a real curiosity that the novel never quite compels or takes

flight, imbued as it is with a curious lifelessness. A final irony is that the novel's title could accurately describe both the author's approach and the reader's reaction.

Reviewed by Aaron Stypes

