

A world before the world war

**At Lockwood by Keith Fisher
(Centric Corporate, Centurion,
R150 including postage)**

IF NOT told that Keith Fisher was a born and bred South African, many readers may think that the author of this exciting and gripping new novel was a budding English writer living in Oxford, as his story vacillates between Oxford and Milan.

His main character is Edward Marlow whose ambition was to become a painter. His father, Major General Harold Marlow, in turn wanted him to follow in the footsteps of his forebears and join the armed services. Fortunately Edward's mother, Marjorie, backed him. After studying at the Sloan School of Art, London in 1929 he visited Milan for two reasons. First, he had a shopping list from Major Atwood based on Milan's industrial muscle and its pivotal role in the manufacture of

armaments for Mussolini's new "Roman Legions", and secondly to turn his attention to his painting. After completing his assignment for Major Atwood, Edward made his way around the poorer section of the city in search of young men of strong, distinctive regional features who had been attracted to the growing industrial centre from the rural areas. They portray the fundamental vigour and vibrancy he was seeking in his focus on the youth of Europe – the faces of the nation "who would shape the future".

It was in one of Milan's industrial suburbs that Edward came across young Guido Benito Vietri and painted him. This is the painting that appears on the cover of the book and that made Edward's reputation as a painter.

We also learn what happened to Edward's childhood friend, Rupert (Squirrel) Skinner, who tragically



became entangled in the politics of Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists.

Once again Fisher cleverly mixes truth and fiction.

● To buy the book, e-mail centric@icon.co.za or visit the website www.keithfisher.co.za – Cyrus Smith