

contemplates breaking with him.

Hampered by the problems of translation and writing in second languages, the quality of writing is uneven; however, the collection is a fascinating cultural document even though some of the stories told are heavily didactic or stylistically troublesome. "Traitors" by Doris Lessing and especially "Inkalamu's Place" by Nadine Gordimer show polished brilliance, while the seeming simplicity of Efua Sutherland's "New Life at Kyerefaso" shares their complexity and tension.

The introduction to the geographically arranged sections of the book and the short biographies of the individual writers are informative and succinct.

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Philip Butcher. *The Ethnic Image in Modern American Literature: 1900-1950.* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1984) Volume I, xviii, 430 pp., \$19.95. Volume II, xvi, 416 pp., \$19.95.

American literary scholarship in the mid-1980s generally seems to be insufficiently sophisticated to give more than perfunctory attention to ethnicity's significant role in American writing from the colonial period to the present. When intellectual maturation finally is achieved, as there is reason to believe it will be even though progress proceeds at a disappointing snail's pace, credit for the event will be due in part to Philip Butcher's unique and impressive *The Ethnic Image in Modern American Literature: 1900-1950*, as well as to his earlier two-volume anthology, *The Minority Presence in American Literature: 1600-1900* (1977). These are essential books for all libraries.

The fiction, poetry, and drama in Butcher's latest massive collection impressively demonstrate that, in the first-half of our century, ethnicity has been a recurrent, often profoundly expressed concern of many great, good, and minor American writers. Furthermore, if we extend our perspective and take into account American literature written after Butcher's cut-off date of 1950, ethnicity makes itself visible even more as a major presence, one giving strong indication of remaining a vital literary theme.

Several sensible criteria guided Butcher in his choice of materials for *The Ethnic Image in Modern American Literature: 1900-1950*. Selections were chosen if they possessed a substantive capacity to "portray the

realities of ethnic participation in American culture as well as the stereotypes that have stigmatized, at one time or another, all Americans of ancestry other than white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP).” As for readers, Butcher had in mind two categories: “general reader[s]” and “student[s].” He hoped to “enlighten and entertain” the former and to “instruct” the latter, “for whom [the anthology] might also “serve as a text or reference in a variety of academic situations.”

Those familiar with the full panorama of American literature from 1900 to 1950, not merely with the canonized handful of writers obsessively studied in most conventional academic settings, will be delighted that Butcher has cast his net encyclopedically far and wide for pertinent works by many different kinds of writers. Some selections are by modernist luminaries such as Stephen Crane, T.S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O’Neill, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, E.E. Cummings, Hart Crane, and Gertrude Stein. However, Butcher also includes selections by once popular, now relatively forgotten writers such as Finley Peter Dunne, Lincoln Steffens, Edna Ferber, and Edward Bok, as well as by arguably ephemeral, living writers such as Jean Stafford, James Michener, Robert Penn Warren, Norman Mailer, Edward Newhouse, and Howard Fast. Many of the writers we would expect to find in a collection focusing on ethnicity are included, *e.g.*, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Ralph Ellison, Abraham Cahan, Charles W. Chesnutt, Henry Roth, Zora Neale Hurston, Mary Austin, O.E. Rolvaag, James T. Farrell, Daniel Fuchs, D’Arcy McNickle, William Saroyan, and Pietro Di Donato. One will also discover popular writers, some of them “best sellers,” whose appearance here is the commendable result of Butcher’s assiduous combing of apparently unlikely sources for potentially pertinent materials, *e.g.*, Zane Grey, Louis Bromfield, Kenneth Roberts, Kathryn Forbes, Booth Tarkington. It is of interest, finally, that the ethnic portrayals most “significant[ly] represent[ed]” in the selection are black, Jewish, and American Indian.

Butcher’s selections more than adequately provide readers with glimpses of the heterogeneous elements comprising the ethnic image in American literature from 1900 to 1950. Many writers sympathetically and knowledgeably delineate the societies and cultures of non-WASP ethnic groups, but other writers reveal limited familiarity with the lives of non-WASP individuals’ emotional and intellectual fear and abhorrence of them, even when these writers apparently were sympathetically oriented. It will shock readers not comprehensively familiar with the works of Eliot, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Wharton to discover that these writers were often viciously hostile to non-WASP ethnics. Perhaps as a result of the phenomenon of self-hatred, non-WASP writers occasionally deal unsympathetically and unfairly with members of their

own ethnic groups. Some non-WASP writers may also be less than sympathetic to or informed about ethnic groups other than their own. The negative ethnic image which evolves after one has read the mass of hostile selections in Butcher's collection is extremely disturbing. Recognizing that some readers might misconstrue his editorial decision not to exclude offensive writings as advocacy of racism, he was well-advised to make a prefatory disavowal of support for the "bigotry and chauvinism, stereotyping and gratuitous insults" in which many of his selected American writers regrettably indulged.

The Ethnic Image in Modern American Literature: 1900-1950 may not be as successful in all pedagogical situations as it is sure to be for the general reader. Space limitations and Butcher's belief that there is "an abundance of reference and other guides" dealing with the "ethnic experience," as well as of adequate "standard literary and historical sources," led Butcher to omit "bibliography, chronology . . . author biographies" and other helpful information. However, scholarship in the field of ethnicity is still in an infant stage. Many teachers and students do not have the time nor are they equipped quickly to acquire background information essential for proper comprehension of writers, selections, and ethnic groups in the anthology. For example, it is desirable to inform a student in advance, instead of trusting to the later chance acquisition of knowledge, that the positive attitude to Central European immigrants revealed in the Willa Cather selection did not prevent her from being grossly anti-Semitic in other, unincluded writings. In addition, the rationale for the various groupings in which Butcher has arranged his selections is not always self-explanatory or otherwise clear; some group titles are ambiguous, and selections contain several overlapping themes. Although it is true that the absence of intellectual guidance is often stimulating, in relatively uncharted fields confusion may be induced. However, bearing in mind the breadth and depth of Professor Butcher's anthology and its unquestionably forceful impact upon all categories of reader, the absence of a traditional academic apparatus may be less crucial here than in anthologies whose contents are hackneyed, less venturesome, less socioculturally important.

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