

American literature and society. One cannot read these essays and not be moved by their significance in a society where mutual respect could support us all as individuals in our searches for self-understanding.

—Cortland Auser
Bronx Community College

Maria Estes Sanchez. *Chicana Poetry: A Critical Approach to an Emerging Literature*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 377 pp., \$35.00; \$10.95 paper.

Sanchez's reason for writing this book was to "contribute to an emerging body of literature that traditionally has had no voice in dominant academic discourse, . . . [and to work] toward an understanding of the ambiguities suggested in the identities of the Chicano Scholar and the Chicana Feminist." There is no question that the author has been successful.

The book contains detailed analyses of some of the works of four of the most prominent Chicana poets today: Alma Villanueva, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Lucha Corpi, and Bernice Zamora. A better selection of poets could not have been made. Sanchez stated that these poets were chosen because "their work dramatically demonstrates the range of socio-cultural positionings that make up the label Chicano." Because each of the poets hails from a different locale in the Southwest, thus having been exposed to entirely different, albeit related, cultural experiences, the author was successful in providing a wide cross section of the Chicana experience. Also particularly noteworthy in this regard were the differences in the linguistic styles of the poets. Some of the works were entirely in English, some in Spanish (translations were provided), and others contained a blending in various degrees of the two languages. This is appropriate insofar as most Chicanos in their language usage fall somewhere along this continuum.

The work appropriately begins with a description of the emergence of both Chicano and Chicana literature and carefully illustrates the differences between the two as well as some of the reasons for these differences. The chapter continues to illustrate some of the major contrasts between this style and some of the more traditional styles of Anglo literature. It is through these sociocultural descriptions that one is able to understand and appreciate the unique position in which the Chicana finds herself, trying to exist both in a Chicano and an Anglo world. The author continues these sociocultural descriptions in each of the chapters that follow, relating them to the works of the various included poets. A true understanding of the Chicana experience would

not be possible to an outsider had not these sociological/sociocultural descriptions been so carefully drawn and formulated. What is most outstanding is that these were written so as not to detract from, but rather to enhance the works which are included and to help the reader to appreciate more fully the meaning and the experience of the poetry.

The selection of the literary works and the excellent commentary accompanying them makes this book serve as a paradigm for reading and understanding Chicana literature. While it is true that this genre is still emerging, this work should help to move Chicana literature out of the closet and into the classrooms of literary scholars.

—Glen M. Kraig
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Paul A. Scanlon, ed. *Stories from Central and Southern Africa*. (Exeter, NY: Heinemann (Series No. 254), 1983) 207 pp., \$6.00 paper.

Any work in the prestigious paperback African Writers Series commands immediate attention and respect. As policy makers and policy breakers wrestle about the South African question—newly discovering the horrors of an inequality that has existed for more than 300 years—it is refreshing to look at this collection of twenty-two short narratives. They provide a proper cultural baseline for the current struggle. Like it or not, what lies underneath the political turmoil are cultural values.

Although the stories are from nine countries in Southern and Central Africa—Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Namibia and South Africa—South Africa, the symbol of institutionalized racism, dominates the collection, much as South Africa culturally, politically and economically shadows all else in Southern Africa. South Africa remains the distillation of the European settler experience in Africa with all its complexities and incongruities. The state and society have constructed and reinforced racial inequality as a first principle of life. Most of the stories bear witness to the desolation resulting from that choice.

The resentment, hostility, humiliation and guilt and sin buzz about the closed bottle of oppression like maddened hornets. The reader wants to smash the bottle and scatter the contents to the winds.

A number of the contributors to this collection—Eskia (Zik) Mphahlele, Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer—are world famous. Yet their depiction of the evil in South Africa is no more powerful than that of the lesser known writers. In sum, South Africa's sickness pervades.

The African Writers Series has previously published other important