

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.

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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

works in South Africa. *Seven South African Poets* (AWS 64), *South African People's Plays* (AWS 224), *Africa South Contemporary Writings* (AWS 243), and *Black Poets in South Africa* (AWS 164). They do not cancel out this collection. They merely point out that the cries of pain have flowed out of South Africa too steadily for anyone to say "I did not know."

The costs of bearing these tales to the deaf have been enormous. Can Themba, author of *Will to Die*, one of the leading South African journalists, drank himself to death in exile in neighboring Lesotho. Nat Nakasa, one of Themba's colleagues, fell from a 23-story apartment building in New York City while attending Harvard's Nieman Program. Nakasa had to go into exile to come to the U.S. He was twenty-five when he left South Africa. Each contributor catalogs a personal chamber of horrors.

All collections are uneven. Each critic finds someone or some story that "should" have been included. The absence of any work by Peter Abrahams who now writes out of Jamaica (see his latest novel, *The View from Coyoba*, termed by some as the ultimate novel of the black diaspora) is unfortunate. Abrahams, who later was a colleague of George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, and Jomo Kenyatta in the Pan-African struggle in England, had earlier described how important black Americans were as role models for South Africans. His work is thus a living refutation to Paul Scanlon's view, that "to me the 'Back to Africa call' would always remain a black American myth, at best a rallying slogan and an emotional focus. A political weapon and little besides." Scanlon, who has taught literature in Botswana, Swaziland, Nigeria, Jamaica, and Barbados, should know better. The role of black Americans in moving the issue of South Africa to the front burner of international affairs makes any further comment unnecessary.

This is a classic collection, not the latest word from Southern Africa. What is important is that this old wine has traveled well. The headlines make sense when you realize the daily horrors that the twenty-three contributors (five are women) have portrayed.

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