

equality of sources that he calls for when he says that 'Scripture should be regarded as a source of theology equal to others' (p. 41). Another is his ambiguous assertion that the Bible contains 'but a small part of the divine acts of God in human history' (p. 42). The author is also not convincing when he argues that 'Church creeds and doctrines are almost irrelevant and meaningless to our context' (p. 42). Furthermore, he discounts the notion of an eschatological kingdom of God as 'garbage' to the Shona and Ndebele people. He regards the mediatorship of Christ at the Parousia as 'meaningless and nonsensical', again, within the context of the understanding of the Shona and Ndebele people.

Undoubtedly, there is a lot at fault about a theology that emphasizes the local context at the expense of the essential faith and beliefs held by the Universal Church. Banana's model distorts the Christian context and foundation that it purports to build upon. Instead an authentic African Christian theology should 'be ready to discover traces of God's natural revelation outside the Christian religion', in this case, from the African context, without, however, calling into doubt the uniqueness and 'centrality of the Christ event' (*Crossroads*, Oct./Nov. 1991, 26).

Any Christian theology, be it African, Asian, Latin American or Western European, has to engage faithfully with the Scriptures and Church tradition. Christianity not only enjoys the status of having 'sacred writings', it is also a historical religion. As such, Scripture and Church tradition in the form of great conciliar teachings and creeds form part of the Christian heritage that cannot be dispensed with as easily as Banana implies. To undervalue or distort this heritage is to renege on the faith into which Christians are initiated.

While *Come and Share* is meant to challenge the Zimbabwean Church from its characteristic complacent slumber, the overly extreme stance that the author takes is counter-productive. It stands in the way of, rather than facilitates or encourages, further experiments in evolving local theologies. A more conciliatory attitude in subsequent editions of the book will be necessary in order for it to be given a warm reception by the Church.

University of Zimbabwe

P. H. GUNDANI

Chakwesha By H. Chimhundu. Harare, College Press, 1991, 198 pp., ISBN 0-86925-906-7, Z\$12,95.

Chimhundu's first novel *Chakwesha* is a most welcome and overdue contribution to the slowly developing genre of Shona prose fiction. The author's experimentation in terms of plot and characterization makes this work unique in more than one way.

The title of the novel (*Chakwesha* can be loosely translated as meaning 'confidence trickster') is derived from the anti-social character and behaviour of Moses Marufu, a University student in the colonial education system who chooses to betray the goals of the Chimurenga War for his personal benefit and who is paid as an informer by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization. At Independence he returns from self-exile the

same hypocritical man to scramble for the independence 'cake' and rises to join the emergent 'whisky' class. But after a short-lived enjoyment of petty-bourgeois life, he dies in mental and physical torment.

Interwoven with the story of the protagonist are the stories of several other characters, each of whom has a different background but all of whom experience difficulties under colonialism and, later, neo-colonialism which contribute significantly to their different destinies. Characters are realistically and sympathetically depicted. Through the multiplicity of plots the author competently captures the spirit of nationalist political activities in the rural areas and at the University of Rhodesia in the 1970s. He also manages to relate different events to mainstream history, alternating between the narration of individual stories and historical events. It is no mean task to research history and then to fictionalize it, but, unfortunately, some chapters tend to be overloaded with historical data which is not fully exploited in the fictional sense. Sometimes the setting is propounded too discursively, forcing the reader who is immersed in the story to emerge in order to grasp the historical context before returning to the plot.

Chimhundu is, however, a sensitive observer and analyst of social history. He relates the various traumas in different characters to politically-induced social ills. His focus ranges from economic problems, the betrayal of socio-political ideals, the crisis of the AIDS epidemic to tendencies towards millenarian spiritualism in the economically depressed.

The individual story lines are given verisimilitude by the author's inclusion of every minute but significant detail of life in the country and the city before and after Independence. This makes the novel quite outstanding as prior to this work there were no real Shona historical novels. *Chakwesha* traverses the past and the present and ends facing the future. This historicity, especially the focus on contemporary life, gives this novel social relevance and will help to develop society by stimulating passionate discussion. It depicts the inalienable relation between the individual and the history of his people.

A noticeable achievement in the narrative style of the novel is the absence of the overtly intrusive moralistic voice which hitherto has pervaded Shona novels, often reducing them to moralistic fables. Restraint is maintained even in the condemnation of Moses to purgatory.

The length of the novel as well as the breath of its setting (Hartzel High School, Goromonzi, Harare, Botswana and London) offer a wide canvas in which to portray historical action in detail. This wealth of detail creates the illusion of reality which is the hallmark of good fiction. Other Shona authors such as Giles Kuimba, Charles Mungoshi and Raymond Choto approximate such breath of vision but are not quite as successful as Chimhundu has proved to be in this work.

The author is very enterprising in his diction, freely drawing from the rich vocabulary of traditional and modern Shona. The novel abounds in proverbs, idiomatic expressions and loan words. This gives the novel an affinity with the complex reality with which it grapples. Language purists would have lots of surprises when reading this novel but the author's successful attempt to weave adoptives not only into dialogue, as would be

normal, but also into the third person narrative itself is an achievement which is as yet unsurpassed. His resourcefulness shows the dynamic and transitional nature of the Shona language, as well as the possibilities of future literary development. A long poem forms a satirical epilogue to the novel, summing up the vision of the artist in a brief but vivid way.

Notwithstanding the national problem of a shortage of good quality paper at the time, College Press could have improved the quality of the cover by using a little more imagination.

University of Zimbabwe

E. M. CHIWOME

The Sound of Snapping Wires Compiled by T.O. McLoughlin. Harare, College Press, 1990, xxii, 225 pp., ISBN 0-86925-910-5, Z\$17,55.

Professor T. O. McLoughlin's selection of Zimbabwean short stories, published under the intriguing title, *The Sound of Snapping Wires*, is indicative of his long-standing interest in promoting the works of (young) Zimbabwean writers. One is reminded of his earlier anthology, *New Writing in Rhodesia*, published by Mambo Press, which was a selection of poetry, short stories and drama.¹

The latest collection focuses on the 'poor relation of Zimbabwean literature': short stories. The perceptive introduction neatly posits the major critical issues raised by the short story as a genre. It also provides an interesting historical overview of the chequered history of the short story in Zimbabwe. His essay highlights the pervasive influence of censorship, which effectively meant that there were very few outlets for short stories with an overtly socio-political theme. A contrast is drawn with the creative ferment that occurred in South African literary circles, where the short story was a powerful medium of exploring the lot of the urbanized Black South Africans.

The selection spans the period 1910-89 and introduces the reader to a number of Zimbabwean writers, from established literary figures like Arthur Shearly Cripps, Doris Lessing, Charles Mungoshi, Shimmer Chinodya, Dambudzo Marechera, Tsitsi Dangaremba and Pius Wakatama, to other less well-known writers such as P. N. Katsande, Noel Masvosvere and Dennis Matangara. Some of the stories are carefully crafted, while others show less skill in the writers' handling of language and theme.

This is, nevertheless, a welcome selection, as many of the short stories published in Zimbabwe appear in magazines and newspapers rather than in book form. It covers a variety of themes and the introduction is pitched at a level which will encourage both the informed reader and the secondary-school pupil, to read around the subject. The editor pays due tribute to periodicals such as *Moto*, *Parade*, *Prize* and *Mahogany* which have done much to encourage the Zimbabwean short-story writer.

University of Zimbabwe

M. Z. MALABA

¹ T. O. McLoughlin (comp.), *New Writing in Rhodesia* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1976).