

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.<sup>1</sup>

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 Dangarembga 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

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