

Peter Gibbon, ed. *Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995. 283 pp.

There has been a global stampede for economic reform in the last quarter of the 20th century. Countries of every geographic region, income level, and ideology have joined the rush to economic liberalization: Africans, Asians, Europeans and Latin Americans. In the analytical literature there are many competing theories on how to transform these economies so as to provide better social services to the populace. These theories fuel policy debates on issues concerning the relationship between and the sequencing of structural transformation and macroeconomic stabilization. These theories pose questions such as whether gradual change or shock therapy is most appropriate for the world's ailing economies.

The experiences of the past decade have led to a growing consensus with respect to the general economic principles that each individual country is expected to adopt if it is to successfully reform its economy. There is, unfortunately, less understanding of the political processes through which economic reform can be achieved. Perhaps such a gap is inevitable due to the complexity of politics and the diversity of countries involved. Given the current wave of reforms taking place in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, it is critical to learn as much as possible about the politics of economic reform.

This book documents three extended studies on the relation between structural adjustment and changes in the social conditions of subordinate social classes in Zimbabwe. In this regard, this volume provides a uniquely detailed account of the plight of various vulnerable groups in Zimbabwe between the beginning of a structural adjustment program in 1990 through 1993. Zimbabwe adopted structural adjustment as one of the strongest and most diversified economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Zimbabwe's entry heralded high expectations of further economic growth, but this expectation failed to materialize.

The first study in the book, "Industrial Relations and Labour Relations under ESAP in Zimbabwe," by Lloyd M. Sachikonye is an analysis of conditions faced by formal sector workers in larger scale industries in 1993 as well as the impact of structural adjustment on industrial capital. The second study, "Structural Adjustment, Women and Informal Sector Trade in Harare," written by Veronica Brand, Rodreck Mupedziswa, and Perpetua Gumbo focuses on the activities of urban women traders (in the informal sector) between 1992 and 1993. The third essay, by Leon Bijlmakers, Mary Bassett, and David Sanders is entitled "Health, Structural Adjustment in Rural and Urban Settings in Zimbabwe: Some Interim Findings." This report is another longitudinal study that began in 1992, dwelling on the health sector processes and outcomes in one working class and one peasant area in Zimbabwe.

These analytical essays present one of the richest accounts of contemporary social trends affecting the working poor in any African country. It not only provides a basis for evaluating some of the claims and counter claims made in relation to economic liberalization in Africa, but also focuses detailed attention on many important though frequently neglected aspects of the changing social experience of ordinary working people on the continent. The following are some emergent themes that will help exemplify these points.

Capital: Uneven Restructuring

Evidence from outside Zimbabwe suggests that even at best, adjustment has not been associated with any major increase in industrial investment. However, in Zimbabwe, larger scale companies, particularly in textiles, clothing, paper and packaging, engaged in quite fundamental re-equipment processes as a direct response to economic liberalization (p. 60). Apparently, as a result of increased confidence generally, and easier access to foreign exchange and inputs in particular, companies in these sub-sectors invested heavily over the first three years of the program.

However, this restructuring was uneven. For instance, the restructuring did not extend to small and medium sized companies, nor was it present in agro-industry (p. 84). In addition, the book addresses an acute problem facing companies associated with adjustment; this is the major increase in real interest rates. Substantial borrowing by companies deepened the negative effects of these increases.

Corresponding to a pattern of new investment, there was also an apparent pattern of labor restructuring. The workers surveyed reported significant work intensification, retrenchment, and job enlargement (31% were doing jobs performed earlier as part of other jobs). They also reported reductions in real wages and in fringe benefits (p. 95). Ironically, according to the authors, labor restructuring seemed to have proceeded further in the public sector, where sub-contracting had also been introduced in some areas. Furthermore, capital had generally succeeded in pushing through most of these changes without great resistance. This was in part due to earlier company policies of gradually increasing numbers of non-permanent workers so that the relatively few workers with substantial employment rights (who had to be removed) could now be offered favorable severance terms. In addition, employers created new collaborative mechanisms which succeeded in defusing protests. The latter, according to the authors, included paternalistic welfare and/or savings funds from which especially "needy" workers could borrow (p. 128).

The Economic Degradation of the Working Poor

The decline in formal sector real incomes has already been referred to extensively in the literature on adjustment. In their study, Brand et al. include a sample of women workers in the informal sector. Their findings suggest a decline in nominal median incomes between 1992 and 1993 in Zimbabwe. The study also reports that in Chitungwiza — an area in which most households have male workers in the formal sector present — 39 % of households had no savings, could not save, did not participate in savings societies and had made no major expenditures other than school fees. The discouraging picture emerging from each of these studies is one in which the working class (formal and informal) is portrayed as painfully on the verge of destitution.

All three studies document important changes in consumption patterns of Zimbabweans. Bijlmakers et al. note that among informal sector worker households in Mbare, a majority in 1992 had eaten three meals a day; by 1993 a majority ate only two, 80% of households reported changes in diet, 68% ate less meat and 59% ate less bread. The report also reveals the plight of households which could no longer buy bread or meat at the end of each month. Households in which there were retrenched workers were twice as likely to experience such a disruption of regular eating habits. The survey shows a considerable decline even in those saying they could afford maize-meal which is the basic food item of the poor in Zimbabwe (p. 160). Dietary changes such as these will clearly have long term effects on the population in Zimbabwe. The baseline health survey, conducted by Bijlmakers et al. allows limited comparisons to be made with a similar population in Chitungwiza examined in 1985. This shows an increase in the proportion of stunted children aged one to four years from 12 % to 20% (p.166). On the other hand, the great majority of households appeared to be resisting cuts in strategic areas of consumption - presumably by increasing other sacrifices. The number of school drop-outs reported was surprisingly low in each of the surveys.

Matrilocalization of Production and Reproduction

The book also identifies the matrilocalization of production and reproduction as a significant trend among many informal sector households in Zimbabwe. Matrilocalization refers to the simultaneous enlargement of households by the relatives of the senior female member and the extension of the financial and domestic responsibilities of this member. It also refers to the increasing withdrawal of senior male household members from productive activities contributing to household expenses and contributions to household decision making (p. 209). According to the authors, in Zimbabwe, urban society generally and the

working poor in particular are experiencing a subtle process of transformation which unfortunately exhibits few encouraging portents.

This book includes insightful analysis and skillfully written contemporary history of how changes in the social conditions of subordinate social classes in Zimbabwe are affected by structural adjustment programs. Overall, it contains a wealth of information and is an important addition to the literature in the field of development policy planning and implementation. The text is well written and is quite readable. It provides an excellent overview of the topic and will be a useful text for a general reader with a limited knowledge of structural adjustment policy reforms in developing countries.

Meena Khorana. *Africa in Literature for Children and Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Books*. London: Greenwood Press, 1994.

The history of literature written and published specifically for African children began in the 1960s with independence from colonial rule. Precolonial literature for children was oral in nature, and was passed down by adults in the form of folktales, myths, songs, riddles, and proverbs. During the colonial period, children's reading was confined to textbooks and literature with a Western slant, which promoted Western culture and values. However, with political independence, this trend has seen a shift in paradigms.

In this bibliography, both African and Western authors are represented. The listed books, which date from 1873 to 1994, are organized into three broad phases as follows: colonial literature, postcolonial Western literature, and postcolonial African literature. This bibliography, has approximately 700 entries arranged into 6 chapters as follows: General Books, North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa. And each chapter is further subdivided by genre: traditional literature, fiction (including historical, realistic and fantasy), poetry, drama, biography and autobiography, and informational books.

While the entries are numbered consecutively throughout the bibliography, individual titles are listed alphabetically by author under each genre. Separate indexes on authors, illustrators, titles and subjects are also provided. The subject index of this bibliography, lists the major themes, national figures, deities, historical sites, ancient civilizations, and events mentioned in the annotations. Each book listed in the bibliography has a content summary, thus suggesting the care and treatment given to each entry by Khorana. For instance, each entry has a plot/content summary, thematic analysis, and literary evaluation. Furthermore, in biographies of prominent national figures, only the first

entry contains a detailed summary of the content. Subsequent entries only mention the scope of the book and any distinctive features of the author's style or treatment.

Khorana also examined the listed books for their sensitivity to multicultural and international issues. For instance some of the factors considered are: Does the book reflect an ethnocentric attitude? Are cultural details presented respectfully and in their proper contexts? Is there stereotyping in characterization, plot and themes? Is there any distortion, omission, or misinterpretation of facts? Furthermore, the annotations for works by African authors contain an indication as to their relevance to social, political, cultural and literary contexts. For instance, each book was analyzed using the following parameters: Are the characters and plot presented in an interesting manner? How effectively have themes of love and hate, growing up, and problems of identity been treated? Is the book well written? How has African society been portrayed? Is the book well edited and produced? Are illustrations accurate and aesthetically pleasing?

A treatment of some of the major themes covered in this annotated bibliography, will serve to exemplify the brilliance and richness of Khorana's work. Colonial literature as Jeffrey Richards states in *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, is written solely for domestic consumption and so it legitimizes, glamorizes and romanticizes particular mindsets. It thus perpetuates myths and misconceptions about the geography, social organization, peoples, cultures, and civilizations of Africa by introducing stereotypical themes, characters and plots in book after book.

In colonial literature, African society and culture are trivialized and judged according to Western standards. In the area of religion, Africans are considered superstitious and highly susceptible to nonrational beliefs in their constant fear of the *idolozis*, or ancestral spirits, and the *inyanga*, called the "witch doctor." Religious practices are denounced as magical worship of demons and spirits (p. xix). The *inyanga* is a favorite subject of ridicule and verbal abuse, instead of being considered a healer or a wise spiritual leader.

The stereotypical "witch doctor" is a hideous and deformed embodiment of evil, who cunningly plays on the gullibility and superstitious beliefs of the people. In one novel, the "witch doctor" is frequently referred to as "baboon," "old hyena," and "old buzzard." Books abound in descriptions of *inyangas* in grotesque costumes, engaged in meaningless ceremonies and inhuman rites. In *Seven Grandmothers*, for instance, the *inyanga's* hair is adorned with: five dried gall bladders, striped feathers in the . . . straggly reddened hair and a tuft of black fur that stuck out from the back of her head like a bushy tail (p.10).

Colonial literature has an obvious Christian agenda to convert "heathen" souls by recruiting prospective missionaries for the churches in Africa and by urging the homebound to contribute generously to missionary societies. Furthermore, the message that colonial literature sends is that Western civilization and Christianity will bring salvation and prosperity to the savage land. In this vein, the works celebrating the colonial era, present exotic features of African cultures such as bride price, initiation rites, clothing, and eating habits in detail, without a true understanding or analysis of their religious and social values. For instance in *Seven Grandmothers*, Mirsky states that Zulus have many beautiful and useful customs, but there are others that are no longer sensible (p. 177).

Western literature, particularly most fiction works, published after the 1960s continue to reflect old prejudices, as well as creating new stereotypes even after most African countries have attained political independence. Books published in the 1980s prefer a premodern, rural, setting, while modern city life with its inherent adjustment to postcolonial realities is totally ignored by Western writers of postcolonial African literature. For instance, the exotic atmosphere of ancient Egypt and its monuments and the harshness of the Sahara Desert are exploited in adventure and mystery novels like *Fear in Algeria*, *Bess and the Sphinx*, *Riders of the Wind*, *Cliffs of Cairo*, *The Dragon and the Thief*, *Tales of a Dead King*, *King Tut's Game Board*. The authors of these novels do not explore the daily lives of North Africans but try to evoke the mysteries surrounding ancient tombs and artifacts.

Furthermore, African culture is not represented in an authentic manner by writers of postcolonial Western literature. Most authors focus on exotic ethnic groups such as the Zulus, Bantus, San, Masai, Watusi or Mbuti. And in examining the cultural wealth of these ethnic groups, authors of postcolonial Western literature only give a superficial rendition of manhood ceremonies, rituals of witch doctors, polygamy, bride price, and bodily adornment of these communities.

There is a growing volume of literary works on Africa by African Americans aimed at addressing the issue of negative self-image among African Americans. Daud Malik Watts the founder of Afro Vision, states: we have found that the records of history abound with positive images of Black people, and that the history of Africans is one from which all people can gain knowledge, wisdom, and pride. Books like *My First Trip to Africa*, *Afro-Bets First Book About Africa*, *Story of Africa's Flags to Color*, *1000,000 Horsemen*, *Roots of Time* set the record straight by outlining the reasons for European expansion in Africa, impact of colonialism, and the misinformation or Eurocentric interpretation of African history.

The books in part, describe the achievements of precolonial Africa in the areas of science, industry, mathematics, statesmanship,

medicine, engineering, architecture, horsemanship, art, writing and literature. These books also portray the rich and diverse life in traditional Africa by examining communal organizations, supportive family life, psychological effect of rituals, age-sets, respect for environment, noncompetitive economy, kinship ties, and marriage customs.

Recent books by writers of South African Children's literature attempt to describe the problems and experiences of black protagonists in a sensitive manner. However these authors do not take a definite stand on issues in their writings. In this regard, some of their works show open ended plots, restrained tones, failure to depict the anger and resentment of blacks, lack of direct condemnation of governmental policies and powerlessness of the characters. For instance, in *Wake Up Singing*, *Kayaboeties*, *PIG*, etc. the youthful idealism of white liberals is presented as something that they will outgrow when confronted with adult realities; they must learn to tow the line despite private sympathies. The interracial friendship in these stories is one-sided, with the white characters taking leading roles and the blacks merely passive recipients.

However, there are some exceptional books like *Ghamka, Man-of-Men*, which provides a respectful treatment of traditional social organization, religious beliefs, and social customs prior to Portuguese landings in South Africa. *Summer's End*, set in a future ice age, which depicts South Africans as a happy blend of African and European characteristics, whose society resembles precolonial Africa.

Tuti and the Black Iron, which is a fantasy linking modern South Africa with the iron-making skills and technical achievements of ancient Africa. All these books however, are set far enough in the past or future so as not to offend political sensibilities, or to make an impact on contemporary values. They do not subvert or deconstruct the power of the state. Gladys Thomas' *Spotty Dog and Other Stories* is, perhaps the only book published in South Africa that reveals the daily humiliations and inner despair of township children.

Overall, *Africa in Literature for Children and Young Adults*, represents a split identity for authors; because it is the product of dichotomous forces: African versus Western, traditional versus modern, rural versus urban. On the one hand, children's authors are engaged in restoring cultural pride by reconnecting with their roots. And on the other hand, other writers are advocating the pursuance of benefits of Western civilization through formal education, science, and technology.

This annotated bibliography of English language books vividly indicates that both African and Western authors have responded to the shifting political, economic, and social paradigms of their respective societies and the changing needs of the reading public. This is an

excellent resource for scholars, teachers, librarians, parents, and students. Because it provides the much needed contribution to modern scholarship. Besides, it illuminates both the strengths and weaknesses of critical representations of literary works of education and society; thus suggesting the need to replace Eurocentric metanarratives of modernity with more situated discourse and ways of seeing. This is the contemporary challenge not only for authors or writers, but also for all who are connected with the education industry.

Prosper Godonoo

Denis Hirson editor, with Martin Trump. *The Heinemann Book of South African Short Stories*. Portsmouth, NH: UNESCO, 1994.

The short story is a literary genre that compensates, by the sheer force of its message, for the difficulty that it has in creating character depth. The shocking intensity of the subject matter spawns emotional reactions that would otherwise be described in detail in lengthier prose. The anthology of 21 short stories collected by Denis Hirson with the help of Martin Trump is no exception to this rule. They have successfully combined powerful short stories that were authored between the periods of 1945, around the same time the National Party was on the rise, and 1992, the period which witnessed the formal abolition of apartheid and the release of Nelson Mandela. All of the stories were either written in English or translated from Afrikaans. Denis Hirson deeply regrets that no stories were translated from an African language however the logistics of translating the works into English proved inefficient and rendered the works a far cry from the originals.

This compilation of stories, when viewed in relation to one another, offers the reader an invaluable window into the lives of the oppressed and the oppressors and provides a glimpse at how their perceptions toward each other changed throughout time. Within the relationship between ruler and subject there also exists the relationship between male and female. However, while the superior/inferior theme is dominant, gender as a theme is a nearly non-existent sidecar. *The Suit* by Can Themba and *Mad Dog* by Etienne Van Heerden depict their indigenous female characters as weak, dependent and subservient. In striking contrast, however, the non-indigenous, white woman in *The Hajji* by Ahmed Essop has the strength and individuality to demand equal recognition with the men that she encounters.

Mistrust between races is manifest in several stories that resound with an ever present fear of sudden death or the fear of losing a loved one to uncontrollable circumstances. In *Bloodsong* by Ernst Havemann