largely positive ("caring ... a fine work and a superbly nostalgic experience") (133), while foregrounding the "layer of transgressive sparkles" under the words and actions of Mary Renault and her lifelong consort, Julie Mullard, which she feels Swottness has missed. He also corrects some names (such as Heinrich Weinreich), which Swottness gets wrong. Gray's regard for Renault ("Likeable. Real. Teaching us not to cheat") (133) is everywhere evident, and is based on her uncompromising standards as a historian and researcher who asked that her epitaph should read "She got it right".

The next chapter, on Sipho Sepumla - presents a carefully considered account of the "Soweto Poets", Gray moves through Sepumla's childhood - the family background with a domestic worker mother and a teacher-turned-miner father - to Sepumla's apartheid-determined career as a schoolteacher, to his early theatre writing, to his best-known poetry in To whom it may concern. Decoding the political indignities suffered by Sepumla under apartheid - the fact that he received a passport for the first time in 1980 and that The Soweto I have remained banned until 1996 - Gray outlines Sepumla's preoccupations as set out in "The black writer in South Africa today: problems and dilemmas" (1975) and in his two collections, Hurry up as it (1975) and The blues is you in me (1976), before detailing his only personal contact with Sepumla, an interview conducted in June 1977. Commenting on the success of A ride on the redwood (1981), which has been translated into French, German and Italian, Gray cites the essays recently offered to Sepumla by the French government and the Woza Africa Foundation. He ends the chapter with Sepumla's refrain manifesto: "An artist is the conscience of any nation. He should be free of party politics. He should be free to criticize politicians." (156). Always politically aware, the Sepumla essay nevertheless stands out from the other pieces in this collection by its lack of personal anecdotage. It eloquently demonstrates what writers like Gray have often deplored in print: the almost unbridgeable gap between the experiences of black South Africans under apartheid and the cultural privilege of their white peers.

The concluding chapter on Richard Rive has a very different feel. Though the baritones of apartheid inspire us greatly on Rive's as Sepumla's bih, this is nevertheless a chapter about literary friendships - two all with Jack Cope, Uys Krige, Ivan Riche and Marjorie Wallace of Contras, and with Gray's and Rive's publishers, David and Marie Philips. Gray and Rive share many encounters, from embattled classrooms during the 1976 riots to posh restaurants where Rive gourmands and Gray pays, to diving into the Indian Ocean rollers at Outust in search of Uys's false teeth, hacked out by the thundering surf. Framed though it is by the tragedy of Rive's untimely death, the chapter contains some of Gray's funniest anecdotes. My favourites are Rive's reply to "that old racist battleaxe" Sarah Germaine Milin, author of the eugenicist God's stepchildren.

When the colour bar dissolves ended this sentence [The is the of what fractionists] and were frequently beset with genealogical confusion. All who could but with: "What exactly is a black?" (Formerly Richard is usually explicit "No more with this (1958)"

There is also the story of Cecil Skotnes's coming novels depicting scenes from Selborne's Diary of an African farm on the front doors of Richard's Heathfield villa. This occasioned a visit to the scholar of the Calderwood (1981), which has been translated into French, German and Italian. Gray cites the essays recently offered to Sepumla by the French government and the Woza Africa Foundation. He ends the chapter with Sepumla's refrain manifesto: "An artist is the conscience of any nation. He should be free of party politics. He should be free to criticize politicians." (156). Always politically aware, the Sepumla essay nevertheless stands out from the other pieces in this collection by its lack of personal anecdotage. It eloquently demonstrates what writers like Gray have often deplored in print: the almost unbridgeable gap between the experiences of black South Africans under apartheid and the cultural privilege of their white peers.

Craig MacKenzie's original, scholarly yet always accessible The oral style of South African short stories in English: A Praction in the article by Bob Brown reveals as its point of departure the fact that "writing (eunice written literature) was preceded by many thousands of years of cultural life rooted in oral discourse"(1). He explains that this book is not concerned with what Walter Ong calls "primary oral cultures" (cultures with no knowledge of all writing) but rather with literacy as a literary device. This trope dates back to Bacon and Chaucer, where "the reader can pretend to be one of the listening company" (2).

REVIEW ESSAYS

by Carol Fireman

Writing Lives

Letters
A key feature of "oral style" is the creation of a fictional narrative through whose spoken voice the story is mediated. Here MacKenzie draws on the work of the Russian Formalist Boris Eichenbaum, who uses the term "skaz" to describe literature that has an orientation toward the oral form of narration. Eichenbaum defines skaz as

the form of narrative prose which, in its lesson, humor and selection of interests, reveals an orientation toward the oral speech of a narrator, i.e., a form which fundamentally departs from written discourse and makes the narrator as much a real personage. (6)

As much a writer or oracy narrative as any other form of narrative, the skaz creates the illusion that we are hearing rather than reading a story because it foregrounds the narrative rather than the experiencing self. Inherently self-reflexive, skaz narratives - like modernist and post-modernist texts - thus introduce the dimension of metatextual play.

Within the context of theoretical sophistication is added to the discussion of skaz narratives by Anne Drayson, who brings into the question of audience. The skaz narrator "adresses the tale to some audience; whose presence is linguistically reflected in the tale itself" (7). Such fictional audiences, MacKenzie explains, are persons associated with the narrator - fellow travelers, dancing around an evening campfire or fellow farmers meeting on a farm stoop or at the village post office. To the work of Eichenbaum and Sunfield he adds Mitchell Baldwin's, whose distinction between skaz and dialegos (double-skaz) narrative forms affords the skaz the possibilities of irony and parody.

Mackenzie deploys this Eichenbaum-Sunfield-Baldwin theoretical framework to distinguish, in South African oral-style stories, between "artless" and "witty" stories. The tales of the master-storyteller Thoman Charles Bosman (in whom the oral-style story reaches its apogee), though ostensibly simple and artless, are unquestionably effective. Taking over the older genre of the fable-like tale with its characteristics of intimacy and familiarity, Bosman introduces new elements of narrative economy and ironic social commentary, exploiting the potential for self-subversion latent in the works of his predecessor and "creating a complex set of relationships between author, narrator, internal audience, and readership" (14). Thus the Bosman chapter (entitled "The oral stylist par excellence") is the most important in the book. Earlier chapters establish, in contradistinction to the metatextual artificialness of Bosman's stories, claims as "plain truth" and "authenticity" (in the stories of Drayson, Doyle, and Ingam) as authentic in the depiction of Africa (the solipsism European/African does not include the native inhabitants of Africa, who are therefore effectively denied a full human subjectivity" (39), and, in relation to one of Ingam's stories, no anthropologically striking attempt on the part of the authorial persona to "translate" from one language and culture into another, as though the project were unproblematic.

In the chapter on the late nineteenth-century stories of Scully and Fitzpatrick, MacKenzie notes some progression away from the cultural zyopia of the earlier tales and a greater degree of narrative sophistication, reflected in "a more sophisticated aesthetic and ... the beginnings of ironic interplay between internal narrator and frame narrator" (27). Scully, unlike Ingam, "recognizes the integrity and appearance of African culture in its own right" (34). Where the work of earlier short-story writers revealed a generic indeterminacy that suggested these writers' struggle to find cohesive narrative modes to embody the "African experience", both Scully and Fitzpatrick are consciously "telling tales".

Chapter 4 considers Ernest Glanville's achievement in incorporating humor and irony into the oral-style tale, thus inaugurating in the South African center what Baldwin calls "parodic skaz" - marked by the kynographic nature of the storyteller's oral style. Glanville's "Uncle..."