Africans familiar with the context of his culturally nuanced pieces. Though not interested in playing the role of "cultural big brother" (198), what he does do, in the tradition of people like Biko, is to write what he likes (250) in a South Africa where black folks are still expected to be hewers of wood rather than thinkers.

Dikeni's prose which strikes a delicate balance between seriousness and humour reveals a true satirist who enjoys "pissing on the nation" (211) with a goal of contributing to its healing. His arguably off colour jokes run the gamut from former president Nelson Mandela's failed marriage; his playful sneer at the failure rate of partying black students in 1998; and his scandalous idea of publicizing the names of South Africa's super rich to better guide those burglars who want to "nationalize" their property. Offering a necessary critique of South Africa's discourses of reconciliation which are interpreted superficially by some white South Africans as possessing African art Dikeni, who calls for a "return to laughter—but not forgetting" (175), at times does not lift the curtain far enough. Former and current presidents Mandela and Thabo Mbeki are mostly glamourized as leaders. While the African National Congress's "arrogant Africanism" (120) during the 1996 local government elections in the Cape is criticized, Dikeni purports to know the "real Mbeki," a brilliant and caring leader "made to be president" (159). Like Mbeki's flaws which are largely ignored, Dikeni dwells not on Mandela's sometimes autocratic rule but on a near saint who romantically "lives in us" (125).

In this otherwise excellent collection which should captivate scholars of South African literature and culture, Dikeni clears an important space where he, as a "darkie," can be noisy and pushy because, as he rightly says, "the days of silent suffering are long gone" (204).

Gugu Hlongwane

Jami L. Carlacio, ed. *The Fiction of Toni Morrison: Reading and Writing on Race, Culture, and Identity*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2007. Pp. xxv, 279. $37.95 pb; $27.95 (for members of the National Council of Teachers of English).

In 1997, the Modern Language Association published *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Toni Morrison*, edited by Nellie Y. McKay and Kathryn Earle. Since the publication of that foundational work, Morrison has published two more novels (*Paradise* [1998] and *Love* [2003]), a series of co-authored children's books, and has continued her critical work concerning literature,

race, and gender in the U.S. Ten years after McKay and Earle's work, Jami L. Carlacio has both added to and updated the pedagogical resources on Morrison's work in this new collection of essays.

Where McKay and Earle's book was organized thematically, offering more of a scholarly or critical structure, Carlacio has instead divided her work into sections that move chronologically through Morrison's major fictional works (*The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, "Recitatif," *Beloved*, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, and *Love*). Two or three chapters are dedicated to each novel, while the short story "Recitatif" is given only one. Additionally, Carlacio has included sample undergraduate student essays covering six novels. Taken as a whole, then, Carlacio has provided a rich mixture of analyses of and approaches to Morrison's most often taught works, greatly enriching the field of material available to both post-secondary and secondary school educators alike.

Consciously "not intended to serve as an anthology of 'scholarly' essays on Morrison's fiction and prose" (xix), Carlacio's collection is, as she writes, explicitly building on McKay and Earle's earlier work, with the hope to "go beyond its useful discussions about teaching Morrison's fiction" by having the contributors "not only articulate in detail how they teach Morrison but also to offer specific pedagogical suggestions as well as discussion/essay questions that a new or experienced instructor might use in teaching Morrison" (xvii-xviii). This decision leads to what is, in some ways, the most useful aspect of all of the essays: concluding sections covering various combinations of "Questions for Class Discussion," "Essay Prompts," "Written and Oral Work," assignments, and a number of other specific pedagogical suggestions. All of the essays precede these concluding suggestions with discussions of the work at hand, discussions which range from specific interpretation to examples of classroom exchanges to more specific suggestions about class structure. Many of the authors outline the difficulties (and concomitant joys) of teaching Morrison's admittedly challenging texts.

While these essays thus achieve the volume's overall pedagogical aims, and generally do so admirably, the aspect of the book likely more fascinating for Morrison scholars involves the ways in which the essays singularly and collectively address the always astonishing range of dialogues in which Morrison's work itself is engaged. The collection highlights the historical and historiographic, literary and cultural, local and global, and generally interdisciplinary and interconnected depths of Morrison's works. While the book's subtitle points to the essays' collective engagements with "race, culture, and identity"—broad topics, to be sure—there are also more specific strains of these larger categories that run throughout the book: certainly Morrison's concerns

with language, orality, and textuality shine forth, as do her analyses of community, history, and their interactions. As Stephanie Li reminds the reader in her description of teaching *Love*, "with any Morrison text, it is essential to bear in mind the variety of perspectives and voices offered in the novel" (186).

These "perspectives and voices" are, I would add, as much about context as personality, a fact that Carlacio emphasizes by collecting essays by people who teach Morrison's work at a variety of levels and in a variety of disciplinary contexts. While the majority of the contributors teach in English or American literature, there are also contributions by writing centre directors and comparative literature scholars. More importantly, however, the contributors draw on a wide range of classroom experience in their explorations of teaching Morrison's fiction, from introductory and sophomore composition classes to general English and American literature classes, to African American literature courses, to senior English seminars dedicated to Morrison's body of work, and even to graduate seminars. Representing a partial list of the many areas of study that Morrison's works intersect, this list is, though by no means exhaustive, certainly a solid resource for instructors. The number of special topics covered is equally valuable: Lisa K. Perdigao has taught *Beloved* in a course "on the topic of death, burial, and entombment in twentieth-century American literature" (117), while Tsitsi Ella Jaji uses *Jazz* to introduce "an interdisciplinary first-year writing seminar titled Strange Fruit: Practicum in Jazz and Literature" (137).

The volume is not without its weaknesses, but, of course, while perfection may be a goal it is an impossible outcome for any such collection, and the minor problems here are limited to what is not included, rather than what actually appears. Carlacio admits in her introduction to one of the gaps, noting that "none of the entries addresses Morrison's children's literature (coauthored with her son Slade Morrison)," though the editor then goes on to trace briefly the importance of these works "in the overall canon of [Morrison's] work" (xviii). Likewise, the inclusion of only one essay concerning "Recitatif" may risk appearing to reduce the pedagogical complexity of that work. These lacunae serve more as indications of the richness of approaches possible to Morrison's fiction, rather than as a problem with the current text. Indeed, as all of the essays implicitly or explicitly argue, the possibilities for interpretations of Morrison's work are as limitless as the contexts in which instructors place the material. Jaji's essay and course can serve as a microcosm of the pedagogical structure of most of the approaches outlined in the volume, insofar as many of the essays explicitly situate the teaching of Morrison's works in dialogue, whether with each other or with a variety of literary and other cultural material. Indeed, Carlacio's overview of Morrison's imaginative cosmos

also nicely summarises the pedagogical possibilities offered by her contributors: "These worlds," she writes, "presuppose a heterogeneous community in which we are all participants" (xv).

Works Cited

McKay, Nellie Y., and Kathryn Earle, eds. *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Toni Morrison*. New York: MLA, 1997.

Jason Haslam

H. Nigel Thomas, ed. *Why We Write: Conversations with African Canadian Poets and Novelists*. Toronto: TSAR Publications, 2006. Pp. xvii, 244. $24.95.

I remember my first year of high school in Toronto, when I met a young man on the subway who was collecting donations for an all-black bookstore. He had a comprehensive list of authors that were underrepresented by corporate bookstores, a list divided into African American and African Canadian writers. I recognized half of the Americans and I was shocked to realize that I only vaguely recognized some of the Canadians. The young man was, incidentally, a crook. The black bookstore was a scam. This young man was exploiting a need in Toronto, the need for an all-black bookstore and a need for the exposure of African Canadian writers. He made a profit on the average person's guilt over their own complicity in these matters.

Nigel H. Thomas reminds me that these issues (over a decade later) are still, in fact, relevant. Canada still has a need for bookstores that market black writers, publishers still need to seek out new and marginalized talents, and African Canadian authors are still prolific forces in literature, despite the hardships and impasses that go along with being *different* in an audience-oriented market.

Thomas' *Why We Write: Conversations with African Canadian Poets and Novelists* is an edited collection of interviews with prodigious contemporary black writers. The book considers issues that are particular to African Canadian authors, such as ethnic labelling and the stigmatization of minority voices in the Canadian publishing industry, alongside matters of importance to writers of any denomination, like the function of writing itself or the need for reviews. Thomas presents fifteen talented writers, who range from the established and foundational authors like Austin Clarke to the younger and more experimental works of those like Wayde Compton, in his