

## Repercussions

### Anthony Schneider

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*Immigrants participate in antiapartheid efforts, in this compassionate novel about family, bravery, and loss.*

Anthony Schneider's *Repercussions* is a much-needed addition to the canon of South African antiapartheid literature.

The novel opens in 1961, focusing on a young, white lawyer, Henry Wegland, and his participation in the newly formed military branch of the African National Congress. Schneider deftly folds in alternating chapters about Henry's childhood as the son of Lithuanian immigrants living in Liverpool, his present-day life as an elderly man residing in Brooklyn, and Henry's grandson, Saul, who, urged by Henry, returns to South Africa searching for unanswered questions from Henry's life there.

Fueled by his Uncle Isaac's commitment to justice and equality for his fellow immigrants, Henry becomes involved in the MK Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the military group established by Nelson Mandela's party. The MK decides to counter the continual police brutality with its own acts of violence, pulling Henry into an assassination plot. The fallout from that plan forces Henry to flee the country, leaving his wife and young son, Glenn, behind.

A smooth transition is effected from these events to Henry's life in his eighties. Henry reckons with memories of his participation in antiapartheid movements and what that action cost him. His desire to search out his lost love is developed with subtle nuances, humor, and perspicacity. In contrast to Schneider's vivid portrayal of the resistance movement of the sixties, Saul's experience in rural, present-day South Africa is a troubling journey through poverty, crime, and disappointment, as most of his grandfather's compatriots have died.

Resistance to brutality and inequality always deserves historical recognition, though those on the front lines often have to wait for future generations to discover and admire their deeds. *Repercussions* not only succeeds at honoring those who offered resistance, but provides an opportunity to understand a tumultuous and vital time in South African history. In *Repercussions*, Schneider highlights the real people who figured into the antiapartheid movement, crafting a compassionate novel about bravery and loss in the process.

MONICA CARTER (Spring 2016)

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