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Edited By David Attwell and Derek Attridge

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF  
SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

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South Africa's unique history has produced literatures in many languages, in oral and written forms, reflecting the diversity in the cultural histories and experience of its peoples. The *Cambridge History* offers a comprehensive, multi-authored history of South African literature in all the country's eleven official languages (and more minor ones), produced by a team of over forty international experts, including contributors drawn from all of the major regions and language groups of South Africa. It will provide a complete portrait of South Africa's literary production, organised as a chronological history from the oral traditions existing before colonial settlement to the post-apartheid revision of the past. In a field marked by controversy, this volume is more fully representative than any existing account of South Africa's literary history. It will make a unique contribution to Commonwealth, international and postcolonial studies, and serve as a definitive reference work for decades to come.

DAVID ATTWELL is Professor of English in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. He has published widely on anglophone African literature, South African literature and postcolonial studies.

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DAVID ATTWELL

*and*

DEREK ATTRIDGE



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The history of racial classification in South Africa makes it necessary to use terms referring to different racial groups; this is done without any implication that these categorisations have a scientific basis. The terms ‘black’ and ‘African’ are used to refer to the indigenous Bantu language speakers and their descendants, ‘white’ to European immigrants and their descendants, and ‘coloured’ (without capitalisation or quotation marks) to what the apartheid legislators called ‘Coloured’ or ‘mixed-race’ peoples. The largest group of Asian South Africans identify themselves as Indian.

In opposition to the official vocabulary of apartheid, “‘coloured’” in quotation marks and ‘so-called coloured’ were widely used, but the term can now be employed without any stigma. During the ascendancy of the Black Consciousness movement, ‘black’ or ‘Black’ was often used collectively with reference to African, coloured and Indian peoples, but that is less frequently the case today.

The earliest inhabitants of the country, when encountered by European settlers, were called ‘Hottentots’ (a pastoral people of the western and northern Cape) and ‘Bushmen’ (hunter-gatherers widespread through the country). The former are referred to as the ‘Khoikhoi’, the latter as the ‘San’ or ‘Bushmen’ (see Chapter 1, note 2, on these terms). The two groups are closely related and are known collectively as the ‘Khoi-San’ or ‘Khoisan’ peoples. Only small populations survive in South Africa today.

Numerous languages are spoken in South Africa, eleven of which have been declared ‘official languages’ (see Introduction, p. 2, and note 2). The names of the indigenous languages are formed with prefixes: thus the Zulu people speak isiZulu. Similarly, Xhosa: isiXhosa; Ndebele: isiNdebele; Swazi: Siswati; Tswana: Setswana; Tsonga: Xitsonga; Venda: Tshivenda. The Sotho language, Sesotho, is distinguished from Northern Sotho (Sesotho sa Leboa), which is also referred to as Sepedi.

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