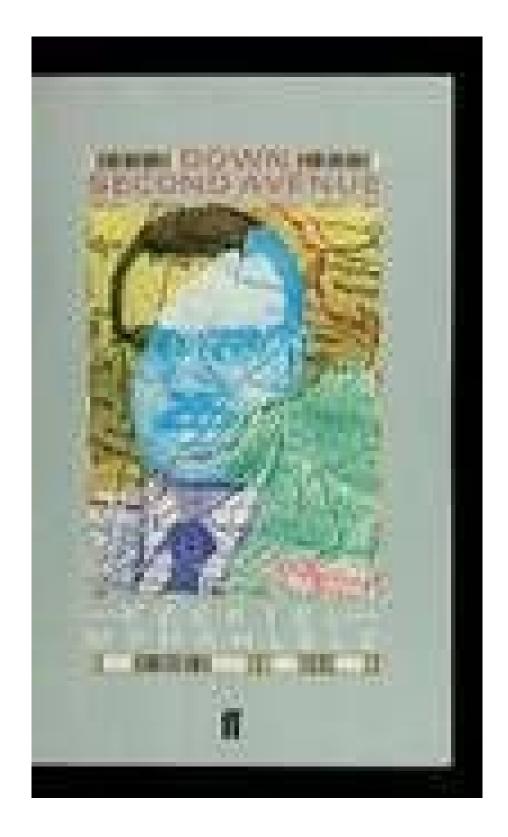


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• Binding: Paperback

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11 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Down Second Avenue

By A Customer

Before the dawning of the next Millenium, every discerning reader should have read this classic, by preeminent author Es'kia Mphahlele. In his true-life drama, Mphahlele chronicles the life of a young Black man growing up in South Africa. From the onset, he takes his readers through the layers of his multi-dimensional life. In the spirit of Jean Toomer, the grace and sophistication of Nelson Mandela and the furor of Toni Morisson, Mphahlele offers no apologies about all that has unfolded in his midst. He celebrates women, challenges racism without showing bitterness. Like no other Black author, he is not ashamed to showcase his tenderness. All in all, he propels us forward and with Alice Walker's caution, and Sindiwe Magona's humour he clarifies the philosophy connectednism. He takes his readers from his rural roots of Pietersburg, to the lights and bustle of Johannesburg, and finally settles them on the rumbles and tranquils of West Africa. What is prominent throughout Second Avenue is his refusal to take no for an answer. Down Second Avenue is a magnifying glass that portrays a lifetime that is more refreshing than Vivaldi's concerto. He comes acrosssubtly so-as more of an uncolonized African who is not afraid to paint an elegant watercolour of his stumbles, fumbles, falls and moving ons. In my opinion, he is one of the the 5 best novelists of the 20th century.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Apartheid revealed!

By Patrick W. Crabtree

As Ralph Ellison did in mid-1900s America, Mphahlele shrewdly conveys the actualities of a miserable, mendacious government, and its innumerable crimes upon its native inhabitants, in a way that does not turn off readers not of his own race prior to the story actually being told. He, again like Ellison, makes us (caucasians) aware of a central social reality of which most of us are ignorant: It's better to be hated than it is to be ignored, (ergo, 'I felt like a bull without a China shop.').

Mphahlele is an angry man, but he keeps his anger in check throughout this fine work and artfully renders his story, as well as that of millions of other unfortunate natives of South Africa enduring an unenviable

existence during the Apartheid period.

Correctly so, Mphahlele has no use whatever for the Catholic (or any other) church and their superficial soup kitchens. It's not that he's an athiest -- it's just that he observed the perfect collusion between the church and the heinous government during the Apartheid years as black people were treated as chattle on the horrific 'locations' where they were forced to live. The church was no help in effecting change for these aggrieved people -- The church could never overcome the mentality of 'White Man's Burden' and 'Manifest Destiny'.

I also loved Mphahlele's ability to touch on the good times (as a boy, swimming in the local creek with his peers), and the humorous ones as well, (an old scoundrel gets run out of town for copulating with a goat). If you want a look at Apartheid as it truly was, no rose-colored glasses, then don't bother reading some ivory-tower fantasy of a British author -- read Mphahlele, a highly-educated and accomplished man who endured the truth of those most heinous times.

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