



# Glendora

**BOOKS SUPPLEMENT**

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**Afrikaans Literature and Other Themes**

In the study of African writing

In Search of Character

Manufacturing African Studies

Haven Imagined & Paradise Lost

The Citification of Creole

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# Farah Wins the Neustadt

**T**HE writer, Nurudeen Farah was named the 1998 winner of the Neustadt international prize for literature, widely regarded as the most prestigious international literary prize after the Nobel prize.

The prize is conferred by the University of Oklahoma and its international journal, *World Literature Today*. Previous winners have included Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1972), Elizabeth Bishop (1976), Czeslaw Milosz (1978) and Octavio Paz (1982). Nurudeen Farah who had been residing in Northern Nigeria since 1992 became the first African to win the Neustadt in its twenty-seven year history. *The Los Angeles Times* in the month of December also selected his latest book of fiction entitled *SECRETS* (published by Arcade, New York as one of the best fiction books published in the United States in 1998 even as *Village Literary Supplement*, New York voted the same work as one of the best twenty novels to appear in 1998.

The Neustadt International Prize for Literature is sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and *World Literature Today*, the oldest continuously published international literary quarterly in the United States.

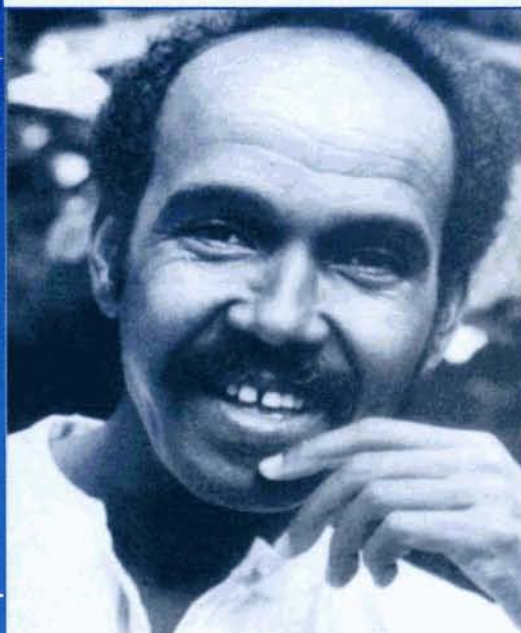
The Prize consists of \$40,000, a replica of an eagle feather cast in silver, and an award certificate. It is conferred biennially in even-numbered years. Funding for the prize has been ensured in perpetuity by a generous endowment from the Neustadt family of Ardmore, Oklahoma.

Established in 1969 as the Books Abroad International Prize for Literature, then renamed the Books Abroad/Neustadt Prize in 1972 before assuming its present name in 1976, the Neustadt Prize is the first international literary award of this scope to originate in the United States and is one of the very few international prizes for which poets, novelist, and playwrights are equally eligible.

The charter of the Neustadt Prize stipulates that the award be given in recognition of outstanding achievement in poetry, fiction, or drama and that it be conferred solely on the basis of literary merit. Any living author writing in any language is eligible, provided only that at least a representative portion of his or her work is available in English, French, and/or Spanish—the three

languages used in jury deliberations. The prizes may serve to crown a lifetime's achievement or to direct attention to an important body of work that is still developing. The Prize is not open to application.

A new international jury of 12 outstanding writers is selected to decide the winner of each Neustadt Prize. Membership of the jury is determined by



Inner back cover >>

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** Jide Adeniyi-Jones Shows aerial view of Cape Town through the mountains. Patch of land in the middle of the water is Robben Island.

Then how come that Akuba's stepfather was not prepared to stay with the stepdaughter. Had it been him who had a child, would he have expected Akuba's mother to live with that Child?

There is also the resilience of women, from Mampa who accept to bring up Akuba, as well as her mother whose determination to have her daughter educated could not be dimmed by an unfeeling husband. In the end, perseverance did it. Women must not be daunted by the obstacles. They can succeed.

In 'Some Global News: A Short Far-Voice Report,' the international dimension is brought into the picture and how human beings virtually behave the same way.

In 'Lice', the author touches on a major social problem, the tendency for men to abandon their children to their wives and leave the

the arms of another woman, all these can affect the moral and psychology of women to think negatively.

But as happened with Sissie, how can a mother kill herself and her daughter out of frustration. So, even after Sissie had poured petrol on the head of Baby and herself, she could not bring herself to see their death, hence the decision to put off the lighted match before it caused havoc.

'How should she go about it? Ah, she knew. She should light baby's head first. Then her own. She struck the match. Loud coughing came from beyond the door. Of course, it was Kofi who had coughed. There was also a sound of him turning restlessly in his sleep. He coughed again. Sissie heard it. The match box and the lighted stick fell from Sissie's hands. She sat on the edge of the bed. After a second of being perfectly still, she moved with the greatest effort she must have ever made in her whole life, and brought her foot on the glowing match. Then she threw herself back on the bed and burst into tears.'

'Choosing - a Moral from the World of Work,' is another with philosophy, a great lesson for those with talent. We must always have to make a decision and a choice.



Ama Ata Aidoo

upbringing of such children to the women. The frustrations and the thought of your man in

Boadu-Ayeboafoh writes for the literary columns of The Graphic, Accra

## Not yet the hour of signs

Sola Olorunyomi

**W**HEN the automobile came, techno-advicts promptly proclaimed that the bicycle's hour of signs had arrived, but somehow after about a century the 'iron horse' continues to redefine its own imperatives. The allusion seems to underscore Bellagio's new initiative which attempts to weigh the impact of the new information technology on the old letter press mode of publishing; and for those conversant only with Bellagio's fellowships to scholars and writers, this must be indeed a welcome development.

Somehow though, 'the

Philip G. Altbach and Damtew Teferra Eds., **KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS**, Bellagio Publishing Network Massachusetts and Oxford, 1989, 137 PP.

Philip G. Altbach and Damtew Teferra Eds., **PUBLISHING AND DEVELOPMENT: A BOOK OF READINGS**, Bellagio Publishing Network; co-published with Obor. The International Book Institute, Inc., Massachusetts and Oxford, 1989 190 pp.

'Bellagio Studies in Publishing, 9-publishing'-foregrounds the 'Bellagio Studies in Publishing, 8 -Knowledge' - which merely contextualises the African experience in publishing;

hence, I have taken liberty with this more convenient sequence to draw my observations. Publishing contains nine chapters including 'Current Trends in Book Publish-

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ing' (Philip Altbach); 'Multinationals and Third World Publishing' (Gordon Graham); 'The Economics of Book Publishing' (Datus C. Smith Jr); 'International Copyright' (Paul Gleason); and 'Distribution: The Neglected Link in the Publishing Chain' (Amadio A. Arboleda).

Others are 'Educational Publishing and Book Provision' (Pernille Askerud); 'The Transition from State to Commercial Publishing Systems in African Countries' (Paul Brickhill); 'Electronic Publishing: New Technologies and Publishing' (Czeslaw Jan Grycz); 'Publishing in the Third World: Issues and Trends for the Twenty-First Century' (Altbach); coupled with an engaging introduction on 'Publishing, Independence, and Development' by the editors.

Basically, the contributions provide us with key readings concerning book publishing in the third world, the role of multinational corporations viz 'the needs of a small industry publishing in low per capital income countries,' as the introductory note states, and the struggle between independence and dependence in the book industry. All contributors are in agreement to the fact that new technologies have radically transformed the book publishing process and distribution, with much of the third world standing peripheral to the major centres of publishing. Graham identifies three factors that have led to the entry of multinationals into the publishing industry namely as: the proliferation of information beyond the capacity that the printed word could efficiently handle, the intervention of the stock market, and the presumption of both buyers and sellers of books that the book would progressively decline as the major vehicle

of communication.

The moment for concern in book piracy, Gleason suggests, is that phase of the emergence of printing-press pirates who are invariably beyond sanction once they operate outside of the laws of a given country, a situation which explains the need for bilateral copyright legislation. A number of posers are raised by Altbach concerning the status of the Third World in the Import/Export of Publications. For instance, he asks: why is the cost of foreign books so high in the Third World; should more books be reprinted in third world countries under license from the original Western publisher; what are the implications of book imports for indigenous Third World publishing; and, how can imports be discouraged and indigenous publishing be advanced without at the same time restricting access to information? These are posers which, one hopes, would invariably have to be taken up both by government agencies and NGOs at the level of policy formulation.

With this background properly laid, one begins to get a better appreciation of knowledge, whose main theme is the role of scholarly journals in Africa.

Altbach explores 'The Role and Nurturing of Journals in the Third World,' Paul Tiyambe Zeleza - 'The Challenges of Editing Scholarly Journals in Africa,' Teferra - 'The Significance of Information Technology for African Scholarly Journals,' while Jacob Jaygbay considers 'The Politics of and Prospects for African Scholarly Journals in the Information Age.'

*SINET: An Ethiopian Journal of Science*, is the focus of Legesse Negash's contribution, while Hans M. Zell gives an insight into the world of 'African Journal Publishers in a Digital Environment'. 'Ana

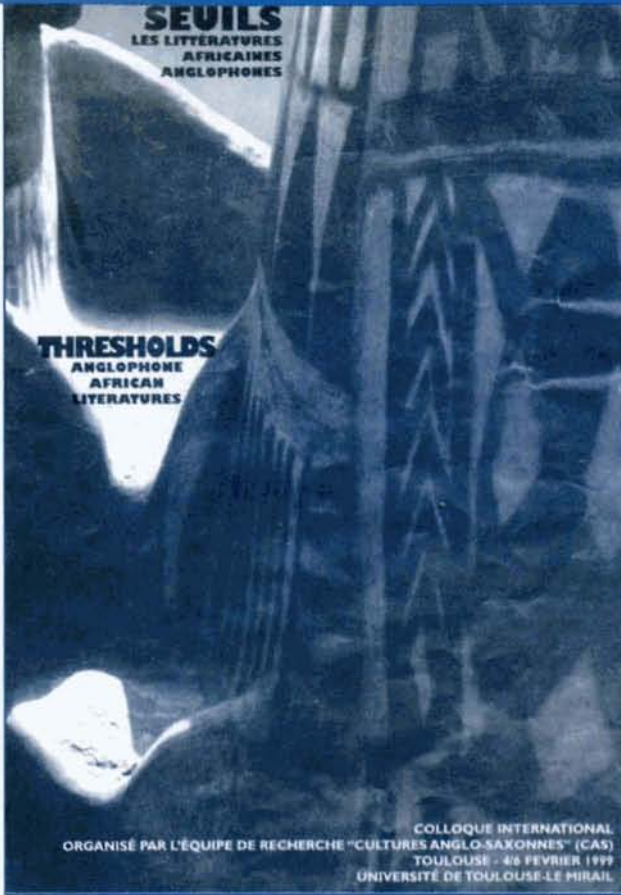
Maria Cetto's and Octavia Alonso-Gamboas joint paper is the only exception in exploring though the same theme from the Latin American and Caribbean experience. Zell adds an interesting appendix on journals' marketing on the internet.

Often though, contributors are quite repetitive of one another, with each irrelative of specified topic - belabouring the reader on basic information on digiscript, E-mail service, computer, and the nature of the internet. One of the strong points of this collection is the editing process which the author identifies as a serious drawback in the scholarly journal process on the continent. The main problem here, he suggests, is the review process, which is poorly developed 'both in terms of referring and communication with authors' (p.29).

It is with the Latin American and Caribbean experience that we are brought into the common problems of Africa and this region. The authors note the problem posed by the language situation whereby scholars have increasingly found themselves having to submit articles in other languages - mainly English - in order to tap into a wider international outreach.

However, the general conclusion drawn is that in spite of the limitations of the traditional print medium of journal publication, it still stands as a tested form of knowledge dispersal and this tradition should be continued, while at the same time 'domesticating' the information super highway in a manner that would best serve African scholars.

Olorunyomi, a literary journalist, is a doctoral student in the English department, University of Ibadan.



Niyi Osundare

<< Inner front cover

the Editor of *World Literature Today* (who is the only permanent member and Chair of the Jury) in consultation with the journal's Editorial Board and the President of the University.

Each juror nominates one author for the Prize. All nominations are released publicly six months prior to the jury meeting. The jurors convene for 2-3 days at the University of Oklahoma (usually in February or March of even-numbered years) for their deliberations. The President of the University announces the jury's decision once it is reached. The award ceremonies take place 2-4 months later at the University, and a special issue of *World Literature Today* is subsequently devoted to the laureate's work.

Born in 1945 in Baidoa, Somalia, Farah has been living in exile since 1976, in the early days of the late Siyad Barre's regime in Mogadishu.

His novels include *Naked Needle*, his debut which was promptly banned in Somalia, *Maps and Sweet and Sour Milk* for which he was awarded the English Speaking Union Literary Award in 1980. He has also authored short stories, plays and film scripts.

His upcoming non-fiction book tentatively entitled *Awake When Asleep* is based on Somali refugees in Africa and Europe, slated for publication at the end of 1999 by Cassel, London and New York.

## Thresholds in Anglophone African Literatures

THE very first conference on Anglophone African Literatures to be held at the Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, France, also represented as the last of the Millennium, is to convene between the 4th and 6th of February, 1999. Expected speakers, including Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, Kojo Laing of Ghana, Samuel Millogo of Burkina Faso, Chris Dunton of South Africa and Odua Ofeimun also of Nigeria, are mostly Anglophone African writers and scholars who are to contribute on topics surrounding the theme *Thresholds*.



*Thresholds* itself as an idea is selected for its topicality in the context of African writing and criticism. Towards a new millennium. The conference will be expected to encompass the literary, critical and historical issues of a multi-faceted continent 'which are linked with the notions of passage and transition along with those of transgression and subversion'.

Additionally, *Thresholds* or boundaries - whether to be crossed or to be avoided - would call for some kind of appraisal - critical *Thresholds* in African literatures within the context of cultural and political realities but also in connection with literary theories, 'post-colonial', 'post-independence', 'post modern' and 'post Marxist'.

Other subthemes such as *Subversion of Genres and Forms* and *Thresholds of Literary Translation* would consider orality against writing, ritual against drama, written poetry against performance poetry and translating African languages into English and

French, French into English, English into French and Pidgin English into French.

Concurrent with the conference, Nigerian poet and academic, Niyi Osundare will be awarded an honorary doctorate of the University. Also, key presentations from the conference are billed to appear in *Anglophonia/Caliban*, of Universities du Mirail press.

## Everyman's classics

EVERYMAN Millenium Library described as representing the finest tradition of British book design and production, is printed on wood-free, acid-free paper. Everyman's Millenium Library comprises two hundred and fifty outstanding examples of world literature in English spanning the classics, European works in translation and Commonwealth writers, in addition to mainstream English literature of all periods. The library includes some new titles of regional significance such as Mabinogion and Scottish Chaucerians, and modern African classics including Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

The first batch of Everyman's classics has already been distributed to secondary schools in the United Kingdom. One thousand and five hundred sets of books will also be presented to schools, colleges and British Council libraries in a total of forty-five Commonwealth and developing world countries.

The gift of the Everyman Millenium Library has been made possible by a Millenium Commission grant, Everyman's Library, generous donations from various British charities, and with the help of the British Council.

The editions sighted in some West African branches of the British Council library recently will be delivered in batches of fifty every six months until spring 2000.



Ifowodo, fifth on first row, among participants at the Rotterdam poetry festival.

## Ifowodo's Free Word Award

THE 'Free Word Award' for 1998 was received by the young Nigerian poet, Ogaga Ifowodo. Awarded by the organisation, *Poets of All Nations* in the Netherlands, it is an award given in the main to writers in distress, particularly to those

### African Theatre

A NEW Journal *African Theatre* an annual publication, will offer a focus for research, critical discussion, information and creativity in the field of African drama and performance. The editors, Professors Martin Banham (University of Leeds) James Gibbs (University of the West of England) and Femi Osofisan (University of Ibadan) note that the publication's outlook for each issue would be to concentrate on a specific theme, carry full reviews of outstanding productions of, and publications on, African theatre as well as include the text of one previously unpublished play from an African writer.

The maiden issue on 'Theatre in Development' (date of publication: September 1998) features reviews and essays around the work of national playwrights including Alemseged Tesfai, Zakes Mda and Alec Dickson. Field reports also focus on organisations, among which are *The Performance Studio Workshop* in Lagos and *The Eritean Community Theatre*.

Two succeeding numbers of *African Theatre* have been committed to 'playwrights and politics' and 'Southern African Theatre & Performance.' Maximum length of contributions: five thousand words. Editorial address - *African Theatre*, 8 Victoria Square, Bristol BS8 4ET, UK.

in gaol or in danger of death for opinions arising through their creative enterprise.

Ifowodo was arrested in November 1997 near Nigeria's border with Benin Republic along with a fellow writer and journalist, Akin Adesokan, on his way from the United Kingdom where he had been in attendance at the special Commonwealth Session on Nigeria in Edinburgh.

The incriminating item on Akin Adesokan's person had been a photo-card of Ifowodo with Wole Soyinka, at the time Nigeria's most prized exile.

Following his imprisonment between November 1997 and April 1998, Ifowodo was adopted a honorary member of the PEN centres in Germany and Canada as well as the recipient of the Barbara Goldsmith Freedom-to-write award.

Born in May 1966, he was a national student activist while at the university and is currently a lawyer and human rights activist under the Civil Liberties Organisation in Lagos.

His first collection of poetry *Homelands and Other Poems* was published in 1998 as a Kraftgriots title, a literary imprint of Kraft Books in Ibadan. The main poems however have appeared in anthologies, journals and in the literary columns of Nigerian newspapers.