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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.

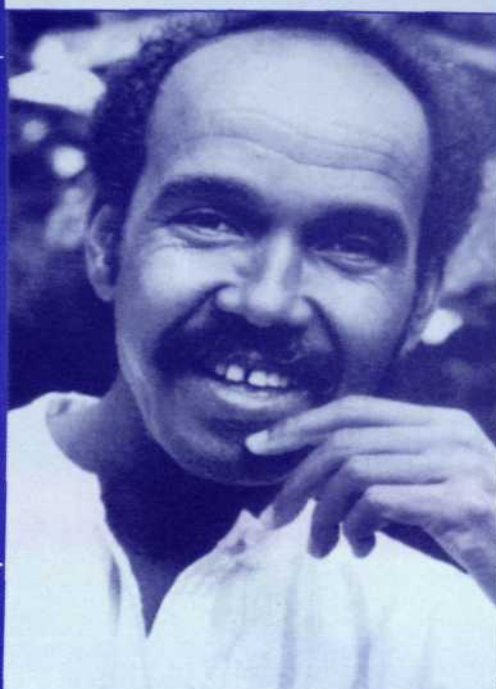
The Prize consists of \$40,000, a replica of an eagle feather cast in silver, and an award certificate. It is conferred biennially in even-numbered years. Funding for the prize has been ensured in perpetuity by a generous endowment from the Neustadt family of Ardmore, Oklahoma.

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 prize 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.





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 Odia 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.