
Cette œuvre de Cherif rompt radicalement avec la tendance actuelle à créer des théories critiques trop souvent ancrées dans des traditions occidentales – des théories qui par leur discours même créent une illusion d’authenticité négro-africaine. Cherif a démontré que le critique ne peut pas pénétrer dans le texte africain sans une connaissance profonde des traditions dont l’auteur s’inspire. Avec une verve de style, Cherif nous propose une esthétique pour lire les œuvres africaines produites à partir des tensions entre traditions et moeurs occidentaux. L’œuvre de Diabaté n’a pas été objet d’une étude si profonde, et le travail de Cherif nous révèle la richesse d’un écrivain malien qui dorénavant devrait figurer davantage dans les programmes d’études francophones.

Paschal Kyiiripuo Kyoore (St. Peter)


The South African National English Literary Museum occupies an old colonial building in the historic settler town of Grahamstown, some distance inland from Port Elizabeth. That it should be located so far from the main centres of population on the Rand and at the Cape may seem somewhat impractical; there is nonetheless some historical justification for it, since it was in this area that many English immigrants first came to settle in 1820 and the town has remained a centre of South African English culture ever since. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the major focus of the collections the museum has been putting together since its establishment in 1974 should be material, mainly literary, relating to the history and use of the English language in the southern region of the African continent. Recently the museum has begun to make available to readers and researchers interested in South African literature some of the results of its work of acquisition, cataloguing and indexing being so assiduously carried out on these increasingly impressive archival
holdings. So far it has published bibliographies on some of the better known writers in English such as Bessie Head, Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard and J.M. Coetzee, as well as a series of annual bibliographies, of which the present volume is the third.

Being based on NELM acquisitions rather than on the totality of items published, the bibliography does not aim to be comprehensive in its coverage of material. It nevertheless remains a most useful bibliographical tool. It includes primary and secondary literature, publication in books, periodicals and anthologies, it is provided with author and title indices but is not annotated. Much labour has evidently gone into its compilation. The list of periodicals scanned is extensive; the overseas user, in particular, will be grateful for the coverage of titles such as ADA Magazine, the Cape Librarian, Sash, and Theoria, which it is not always easy to track down outside South Africa. The compilers have wisely adopted broad definitions as to what actually constitutes their field of interest; thus the user will find works in English together with translations into English from the many other languages of South Africa, works concerning South Africa (eg., by foreign literary critics), as well as works by writers born in the country or – somewhat vaguely – "having South African connections" (i) – which means that someone like Doris Lessing is included.

The volume is prefaced by a useful compilation of works which won, were nominated or shortlisted for any of a considerable array of literary awards, South African and international. The book publications listed comprise novels, short stories, poetry, drama, essays, travel writing, autobiographies, letters and journals, biographies, criticism, bibliographies, theses and dissertations, and anthologies. This looks like a comprehensive enough selection, but on closer inspection some of the sections do turn out to be more useful than others. The listing of poetry published in periodicals and anthologies, for example, whose compilation must have involved quite a lot of bibliographical detective work, is quite daunting at no fewer than 41 pages, whereas that of drama so published comprises a single work. Does that mean that only one drama was published in a periodical or anthology during 1992, or that NELM only acquired one? Likewise, in the section devoted to academic theses (again an important listing for those working overseas), all but two of the dissertations written on South African literature for an M.A. or a Ph.D turn out to have originated at the University of Natal, which can surely not be the whole story. Perhaps more universities should be encouraged to donate copies of their theses to NELM!

One interesting spin-off of an annual bibliography is that it gives the user an overall sense of what is happening in the field, and this one is no exception. The reader, like the present reviewer, will be grateful for a reliable, up-to-