

BOOK REVIEWS

"An Access to the World of Wole Soyinka" A Review of James Gibbs, K.H. Katrak and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., **Wole Soyinka: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources** (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), 107 pp Price: \$35 Hardcover.

In a world in which the retrieval of published information is becoming more and more specialized and technical, access to information on published material is also becoming more difficult, especially by researchers from the Third World countries. Also in a world where published material is growing so rapidly that it is difficult to keep a comprehensive track on any subject world-wide, researchers have sometimes been competent to deal with their material on a regional basis often duplicating or failing to connect information contained in similar material published in other parts of the world. In a manner of speaking, while information gathering and retrieval is becoming more and more efficient and technical in the modern world, the sharing of information has become more and more difficult. The result has been a greater global ignorance.

The disadvantages of this state of affairs hits the developing and underdeveloped areas of the world the hardest. Without access to computerized services in libraries and other centers of information, researchers in these countries find information gathering a very arduous and frustrating experience. The solution to the unbalanced flow of information thus created does not lie in the continuous development of high technology in information-gathering because this will create even greater disadvantages and disequilibrium. Instead, emphasis should be placed on the publication of books and other material which can easily be accessible to literate people worldwide.

It is for this reason that the publication and distribution of bibliographies on very important cultural and scientific matters must be seen as a priority. It is on the same grounds that the recent publication of a bibliography on Wole Soyinka, Africa's sole Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, takes on a global significance. The compilers of this work and the Greenwood Press deserve high praise for letting the world have a greater insight into the works of Wole Soyinka and the kind of interest these works have aroused in people from different walks of life.

Many scholars, journalists, politicians and culture-watchers know Wole Soyinka, no doubt, in person, through his writings and by

what people have written about him. But it is doubtful how well they know him. The more famous a person becomes in the world, the more people are bound to ride on the waves of the superficial knowledge they have about him. The compilation of the Soyinka bibliography by James Gibbs and others will help those who are primarily or secondarily interested in Wole Soyinka to know him better and fully. Going through the bibliography one can easily appreciate why Soyinka could be considered for the Nobel Prize and why he is such a controversial literary figure: a politician, dramatist, novelist and mytho-poet. His literary works, including his essays about himself and his world, and the information regarding what other people say about him, are so comprehensively documented in the Soyinka bibliography that future researchers on the man, his works and his world will be in a more favorable position of objectifying and analyzing his views and those of his critics.

The compilers of the Soyinka bibliography are experts in their own right. James Gibbs has been the most persistent and consistent Soyinka scholar working and this bibliography owes much of its comprehensiveness to him. His associates, Ketu H.Katrak and Henry Louis Gates, are also Soyinka scholars and the pooling of diverse research and resource experience has resulted in the best ever produced bibliography on any of Africa's literary figures.

The coincidence of the publication of the Soyinka Bibliography and the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to the man is remarkable. The significance of the award must certainly rub off on the popularity of the publication. To this end the compilers and the Greenwood Press have struck the right note at the right time and deserve their credit without question. However, this does not appear to be a marketing speculation because Greenwood Press has published six other numbers in its series: *Bibliographies and Indexes in Afro-American and African Studies*. One hopes that in the not so distant future this laudable pan-African contribution can be extended to other literary luminaries of the African firmament, especially Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa' Thiongo. African scholars on these authors and other publishers are challenged to follow the trail now blazed by Gibbs et al and the Greenwood Press. Wole Soyinka: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources is a compulsory acquisition by all African Literature scholars and libraries everywhere. It is hoped that Greenwood Press will put out a paperback edition of the bibliography to make it accessible to more readers.

James N. Amankulor