

Editorial

AFRICAN LITERATURE in English, the subject of this special issue of *ARIEL*, differs in several respects from other world literatures written in English, such as Australian or Canadian, similarly treated in past issues of the journal. We are not dealing here with the literature of a country or region but with that of several nations in a continent; these nations are by and large very dispersed geographically and heterogenous culturally; and finally within them English is a significant but not an exclusive means of literary expression, the other being African mother tongues. African literature in English is, of course, like African literature in French or Portuguese, a legacy of European colonialism which introduced European languages as *linguae francae* for diverse linguistic groups in African colonies. For the African writer, European languages provided models from the European literary tradition and practical advantages in an established infrastructure of publishing and distribution and in major world audiences and markets. But the colonial origins of English and other European languages have in post-independence Africa inevitably led to an examination of their validity as a means of expressing African experience, a subject explored in detail in Chukwudi Maduka's article in this issue.

The issue of language is part of the larger one of the relations between European and African cultures which is explored obliquely or directly in all the scholarly contributions. Articles by Bernth Lindfors and Clive Probyn study the fusion of the two by way of European dramatic and African folk traditions in two plays by the prolific Nigerian author, Wole Soyinka. Both Ala-

stair Niven and Abioseh Porter, the one in general and the other in a specific study, discuss changing African perceptions of family structure and sexual roles as reflected in the novel form. Kirstin Holt Petersen reviews the work of Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah, highlighting its vivid record of and often critical insights into both modern developments and traditional values in his homeland. Kai Nielsen and Joseph Nnadi in reviews discuss transformations in African thought through its developing formal philosophy and literary criticism: Peter Sabor's article documents the growth of that literary criticism.

As Chukwudi Maduka points out, contemporary African literary criticism emphasizes the total cultural context in which the literary work appears much more than its European counterpart. For this reason we have attempted to give some sense of that larger context in the form of material drawn from the Nigerian National Treasures exhibition in Calgary, as well as through the review of an African philosophical work. Without its poetry *ARIEL* would not be *ARIEL*, and we give a generous selection of work by contemporary African poets. We do not normally publish prose fiction, but special issues create special considerations. African literature has made an astonishing contribution to the novel genre, and we are very pleased to represent this through a chapter from a work-in-progress by Nuruddin Farah.

In the preparation of this issue I have been greatly indebted to the ideas and efforts of colleagues and friends. My colleagues George Wing, Robert Carnie, and Victor Ramraj gave generously of their knowledge of matters literary and African. In Canada Stephen Arnold and Douglas Killam gave valued help; from Europe A. Norman Jeffares, Alastair Niven and Anna Rutherford helped make the issue possible. As always Christopher Wiseman's imagination and sensitivity inform the poetry selection. Peter Sabor, our new associate editor, provided energetic and informed assistance in the preparation of the issue, and before assuming editorship provided an article for it. To these, and others, heartfelt thanks. Finally, special thanks are due to the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, and the National Museums of Nigeria, who provided the photographs for this issue, and through whose courtesy they are displayed.