

Ken Goodwin. *Understanding African Poetry: A Study of Ten Poets.* (Exeter, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1982) xix, 204 pp., \$12.50 paper, \$25.00 cloth.

Understanding African Poetry is a valuable asset to anyone interested in African anglophone poetry. Goodwin offers textual analysis, evaluation, and supplementary contextual information on each of the ten poets he chose to discuss. Much of the analysis shows a keen insight and the contextual commentary is quite informative. However, Goodwin's evaluation reflects his bias towards British and white American concepts of what constitutes "good" poetry.

In his introduction Goodwin explains that he chose to discuss ten poets who "seemed to me the best African poets writing in English in the last twenty-five years. . . ." He classifies Dennis Brutus, Christopher Okigbo, Lenrie Peters and John Pepper Clark as "Internationalists," still captive to British poetic tradition. Taban-lo Liyong, Kofi Awoonor, and Wole Soyinka are credited with synthesizing indigenous and European traditions; Gabriel Okara, Okot p'Bitek and Mazisi Kunene are viewed as writing with only minimal European influence. The ten poets were arranged, according to Goodwin, "in such a way as to show the trend to Africanization in the poetry of the period." A separate chapter is devoted to each of these poets, discussing his life and the circumstances which influenced his writings. This chronological evolution is quite informative and Goodwin compares each poet's later collections of poems to his earlier publications to trace the growth in taste or thought and his recurring motifs.

Goodwin's major argument is that politicization, radicalization and each poet's increasing professional commitments have reduced the quality of anglophone poetry over the years (1960-1979) covered in this study. However, anglophone poetry is still alive in Africa and moving towards a thorough Africanization of the materials used in poetry. Goodwin thinks indigenous African traditions are "deep mines of almost inexhaustible riches," which the younger set of poets would do well to excavate.

Goodwin's study fails in two respects. He never acknowledges the influence which Afroamerican poets such as Imamu Baraka would have had on the development of modern African poetry. Had Goodwin included poets such as Keorapetse Kgositsile or Jared Angira, both of whom have openly admired Baraka, he would have been forced to broaden his view of the international factors influencing modern African poetry. Secondly, Goodwin does not include any women poets. He contends that there is a "marked dearth of good women poets" in Africa because fewer women are encouraged to seek a higher education and to learn a foreign language. He further suggests that a literary

difficulty in the way of a woman poet is the prevalence of a myth in both anglophone and francophone poetry that presents the land of Africa as a woman. In Goodwin's words "a woman wanting to write on political subjects might have to establish an entirely new symbolism." This is surely not a major obstacle to overcome as the South African women poets have already proven. The African land is mother to both men and women. Poets of both genders can and do lament the land's having been raped by European colonizers. Male and female poets both use Christian symbolism (especially the cross) as a starting point in discussing the changes Europe imposed on Africa. Goodwin seems unwilling to accept as good any poet who cannot demonstrate a mastery of British and white American poetic form or a willingness to move beyond political subject matter. This helps him to exclude women from countries where the political situation is the main focus of the poetry. Goodwin's study would be a good text for study in conjunction with *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, Chinweizu et al. (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982), a text which also tries to evaluate the gradual Africanization of African poetry since independence.

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James W. Green. *Cultural Awareness in the Human Services*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1982) xiii, 257 pp., \$17.95.

James W. Green has produced a sensitive, thought-provoking book which is based on a multi-ethnic approach in the delivery of human services by social workers. Green is a cultural anthropologist who earned a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Washington where he is currently a faculty member.

According to Green, the purpose of the book was an effort to identify the implications of a cross-cultural perspective for social services. The contributing authors have presented theoretical concepts with an emphasis on an ethnographic or anthropological perspective.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part consists of four chapters which were written by Green. This is the strength of the book. Green provides theoretical models and concepts dealing with ethnicity, health-seeking behavior, ethnic competence in cross-cultural social work, and language and communication in cross-cultural social work. There are numerous examples throughout the chapters that show the