

Monday 6 July 2009

EC Osondu Wins 10th Caine Prize for African Writing

Nigeria's EC Osondu has won the 2009 Caine Prize for African Writing, described as Africa's leading literary award, for *'Waiting'* from Guernicamag.com, October 2008. The Chair of Judges, *New Statesman* Chief Sub-Editor Nana Yaa Mensah, announced EC as the winner of the £10,000 prize at a dinner held this evening (Monday 6 July) at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Prize.

Nana Yaa Mensah said "a tour de force describing, from a child's point of view, the dislocating experience of being a displaced person. It is powerfully written with not an ounce of fat on it – and deeply moving."

EC Osondu was born in Nigeria and worked as an advertising copywriter for many years before moving to New York to study for his MA in creative writing at Syracuse University. He has won the Allen and Nirelle Galso Prize for Fiction and his story 'A Letter from Home' was judged one of 'The Top Ten Stories on the Internet' in 2006. In 2007 his story 'Jimmy Carter's Eyes' was shortlisted for the Caine Prize. He is now at Providence University.

Also shortlisted were:

- Mamle Kabu (Ghana) *'The End of Skill'* from *'Dreams, Miracles and Jazz'*, published by Picador Africa, Johannesburg 2008
- Parselelo Kantai (Kenya) *'You Wreck Her'* from the St Petersburg Review, NY 2008
- Alistair Morgan (South Africa) *'Icebergs'* from The Paris Review no. 183, NY 2008
- Mukoma wa Ngugi (Kenya) *'How Kamau wa Mwangi Escaped into Exile'* from *'Wasafiri'* N^o54, Summer 2008, London

Two other entries were highly commended: *'Devils at the Door'* by Sierra Leone's Brian James, and Ghanaian writer Nii Parkes's *'Socks Ball'*.

Chair of Judges Nana Yaa Mensah is a commentator and editor. She is on the advisory board of *Wasafiri*, the quarterly journal dedicated to the literatures of Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia, and is at present editing a collection of think pieces on Ghana in the 21st century. Joining her on the panel are Professor Jon Cook of the University of East Anglia, award-winning novelist and Georgetown University Professor Jennifer Natalya Fink, *Guardian* journalist and author Hannah Pool, and Mohammed Umar, the Nigerian novelist, journalist and bookseller.

Once again the winner of the £10,000 Caine Prize will be given the opportunity of taking up a month's residence at Georgetown University, Washington DC, as a 'Caine Prize/Georgetown University Writer-in-Residence'. The award will cover all travel and living expenses.

Last year the Caine Prize was won by South African writer Henrietta Rose-Innes for her short story *Poison*, from 'Africa Pens', published by Spearhead, an imprint of New Africa Books, Cape Town, 2007. Chair of judges Jude Kelly said at the time that the story showed "a sharp talent, a rare maturity and a poetic intelligence that is both subtle and deeply effective. It is writing of the highest order."

Previous winners include Uganda's Monica Arac de Nyeko, for *Jambula Tree* from 'African Love Stories', Ayeibia Clarke Publishing, 2006, and Brian Chikwava, from Zimbabwe, whose first novel *Harare North* has just been published by Jonathan Cape.

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Notes to Editors

The Caine Prize, awarded annually for African creative writing, is named after the late Sir Michael Caine, former Chairman of Booker plc and Chairman of the Booker Prize management committee for nearly 25 years. The Prize is awarded for a short story by an African writer published in English (indicative length 3,000 to 10,000 words). An "African writer" will normally be taken to mean someone who was born in Africa, or who is a national of an African country, or whose parents are African, and whose work has reflected that cultural background.

The African winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer and J M Coetzee, are Patrons of The Caine Prize, as is Chinua Achebe. Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne is President of the Council and Jonathan Taylor is the Chairman.

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