

# Notes and news

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## European Union Literary Award

It was announced at a ceremony in Johannesburg on 22nd February, 2006 that two writers, **Fred Khumalo** and **Gerald Kraak**, would share the second **European Union Literary Award** for a first novel. Khumalo, 39, a journalist, won for his novel *Bitches' Brew*, and Kraak, 49, a development consultant, won for his novel *Ice in the Lungs*. *Ice in the Lungs* tells the story of a group of friends caught up in South Africa's political uprising in 1976 and who are also linked to a story during the 1940s Greek civil war. *Bitches' Brew* follows the life of a South African man who searches for a role for himself during the apartheid era. Kraak and Khumalo will share the R25 000.00 cash prize, will travel to a literary festival in Europe and their manuscripts will be published by Jacana Media. Both winners also received a trophy showing the covers of their books. The other finalists were: Stephen Simm for *Miss Kwa Kwa: Traditional Weapon*; Nicholas Dall for *Holiday Town*; and Elizabeth Pienaar for *Akhenaten's Garden*.

The finalists were selected by a four-person jury headed by Professor Bhekizizwe Peterson of the University of the Witwatersrand. The other judges were Veronique Tadjó, Alan Swerdlow, and Alex Dodd. The Chairman of judges Professor Bhekizizwe Peterson described Khumalo's novel as "A heady brew of off-beat characters, encounters and inventive language... evokes memories that speak to the present". Of Kraak's work he said: "Its bold narrative and taut writing make for an assured and compelling novel". Another of the judges, award-winning writer Véronique Tadjó from Ivory Coast said that these books showed "Exciting new writing, full of punch, courage and intelligence. Both novels change our perception of history and life in general by exploring previously overlooked topics."

The first **EU Literary Award** was won last year by Ishtiyag Shukri for his novel *The Silent Minaret* (see ABPR XXXI, no.4, p.316), which has since received international acclaim. This year Jacana Media will also publish the novels of two finalists in the 2004-5 award, *Song of the Atman* by Ronnie Govender and *All Is Fish* by Kirsten Miller.

For further information on the prize contact: Royal Netherlands Embassy: Tel: +27-(0)12-344 3910 ext. 202; Email: <margriet.leemhuis@minbuza.nl>; The British Council: Email: <anriette.chorn@british.council.org.za>; IFAS: Tel: +27-(0)11-836 0561; Email: <benedicte@ifas.org.za>; Goethe-Institut: Tel: +27-(0)11-442 3232; Email: <petersen@joburg.goethe.org>; and for information on the prize winning books contact: Sahn Venter, Jacana Media; Tel: +27-(0)11-628 3216; +27-(0)82-370 6656; Email: <sahn@jacana.co.za>; Website: <www.jacana.co.za>.

## Commonwealth Writers' Prize

The **Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book** category for Africa was won by **Benjamin Kwakye** from Ghana for his novel *The Sun by Night* published by Africa World Press and the **Best First Book** prize went to **Doreen Baingana** of Uganda for *The Harmony Silk Factory* published by University of Massachusetts. The prizes are worth £1,000 for each region and this year were presented by Prince Edward on 14th March in Melbourne during Festival Melbourne 2006.

The shortlist for the Best Book for Africa Region also included, in alphabetical order: André Brink (South Africa) *Praying Mantis* (Harvill Secker, 2005); J.M. Coetzee (South Africa) *Slow Man* (Harvill Secker, 2005); Michael Heynes (South Africa) *The Typewriter's Tale* (Jonathan Ball, 2005); Zakes Mda (South Africa) *The Whale Caller* (Penguin SA, 2005). The shortlist for the Best First Book for Africa Region also included, in alphabetical order: Angie Hermann (South Africa) *Repeat Performance* (Two Three Publishers, 2005); and Uzodinma Iweala (Nigeria) *Beast of No Nation* (John Murray, 2005).

The international judging panel for the Africa region, chaired by Professor Mary Kolawole from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, commented that there was "a strong variety of thematic issues ranging from personal reflections to such topical issues as war, child soldiers and the HIV/AIDS scourge". For the first time, there were more entries for Best First Book than Best Book category and the jury also noted "a considerable improvement in the editorial and production qualities of the entries." The jury also would have liked to see more entries from countries in East and Southern African sub-regions apart from South Africa, such as Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland.

The aim of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize is to recognize outstanding literary talent in the Commonwealth and its contribution to contemporary writing in English. The Prize was open to all novels and collections of short stories written in English by a Commonwealth citizen and published between January 1st and November 30th 2005. Awarded annually, this major prize for Commonwealth fiction is fully international in its character and administration. To be eligible the author must be a citizen of one of the 53 Commonwealth member countries. Entries are first assessed by four regional panels of judges and the selection of the overall winner is made by a distinguished pan-Commonwealth panel. Each year the award ceremony is held in a different Commonwealth country. In 2006 there will be one award of £10,000 for the best book submitted and an award of £3,000 for the best first published book. Two prizes of £1,000 will be awarded in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth: one for the best book and