Poet’s work now in an anthology

For many of her adoring fans, she is just a Kenyan poet, but Njeri Wanga- gare is a lot more than just a pretty face or poetry poems. She is one of the young Kenyans who have revolutionised poetry and its performance in Nairobi. She is also an IT specialist and arts blogger. Wangaare has now added a new feather in her cap: Found- ing Editor of the up-and-coming poetry book “This is a collection of some of the poems I have written and performed,” explains Wangaare. “It has over 50 poems written in En- glish, Kiswahili and Gikuyu as well as in Sheng. The book is expected both in hard copy and as an e-book in all major bookstores globally as well as on Amazon and other major online shops in March next year”. Some of the memorable pieces in the collection include Digital Hearts, Women and Men, My Heart Is A Playground. The anthology is published by Neema Ine Publishers based in Canada.

East African Educational Publishers has entered into a deal with Google to have their books available on the giant Internet platform. The partnership deal, signed in July, is aimed at digitalising all EAP books as part of a marketing strategy for the publisher and content generation for Google. “Last month saw the first collection of EAP books live on Google books,” says Mr Peter Nyero, EAP’s editorial manager. Texts of EAP books in English, Swahil- i and other African languages are now accessible online via Google Book Search. “The relationship with EAP marks a very important step for Google Book Search in East Af- rica,” said Mr Nyero. He added that Google Book Search is one of the Eu- ropean Partnerships Lead for Google Book Search after the partnership deal was signed.

Compiled by JOSEPH NGUNJIIRI
josenguniri@gmail.com

Success rooted in its bottom-up approach that embraces local norms, structures

Book title: Somaliland: An African Struggle for Nationhood and Interna- tional Recognition
Author: Prof Isqbal D. Jhazbhay
Year of publication: 2009
Pages: 243
Reviewed by AHMED AIDEED

A ny reader may wonder if any- thing other than piracy, war- fare and bombs can ever come from So- malia. Such negative perception of Soma- lia is understandable if one is to refuse the de facto break-up of Somalia into two dis- parate parts that have had paradoxically different trajectories since 1991.

Prof Isqbal Jhazbhay’s recent book, Somal- ian: An African Struggle for Nationhood and International Recognition, deals with that part that has attracted huge academic interest but little media attention.

In this study, Prof Jhazbhay provides us with a detailed analysis of a part of former Somalia that ironically seems to escape in- ternational attention for doing well.

He takes us through a historical jour- ney of the internal struggles in what was viewed as the most successful attempt to re-drawing of colonial demarcation at in- dependence.

From a brief history of the genesis of Somaliland alienation from the union process, a unique liberation movement that set the stage for the move from insur- gency to clan-based democracy, Jhazbhay provides an interesting academic analysis of Somaliland’s effort to re-establish an independent nation-state.

He also reviews in broader detail the import of its colonial legacy and power- ful clan structures on the reconciliation process and the role of its diaspora in providing an important cushion to the minimal support it receives from the in- ternational community for its reconstruc- tion process.

It is a classic analysis of how a society can retract itself from chaos and establish a relevant and rooted social contract.

While the rest of Somalia seems to have failed to move forward from Hobbesian chaos, Somaliland’s remarkable success is rooted in its bottom-up approach that has employed local traditional norms and structures. The descriptive analysis gives us adoptable format to execute a social contract where such is required.

Although Prof Ali Mazzini suggests in his forward to the book, that the study sig- nificantly contributes to our understand- ing of the Somaliland predicament, I am of the view that in terms of its theoretical contri- bution, there are bits where most African post-conflict societies can reflect on and

Rift Valley will not be healed by the establishment of a flimsy alliance of personalities

Unlike the rest of Somalia where chaos reigns, Somaliland is a remarkable suc- cess. Business as usual in Harresia (above), the capi- tal of Somaliland.

Poets and their poetry

Malkiat Singh’s titles approved

Malkiat Singh, the indefatigable one-man publisher-editor-critic, has secured a rare first by having a whole series of social studies books approved by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) for use in primary schools. The series, Review Social Studies, all au- thored by Mr Singh, from Standard 1 to 7, received approved status to be used in primary schools starting next year. This means that all the seven titles will be in- cluded in the Orange Book for schools to choose from. Submission for social studies titles to be used by Standard 8 pupils will be done next year. “Hopefully, our title will receive approval, and we shall have a complete primary school series in the Orange Book,” says Mr Singh. “This approval is testimony to the strength of our books.”

Making people laugh through their suffering

EAPF, Google enter into deal

Title: The House of Doom
Author: Wahome Mutahi
Publisher: Africaweave Network
Year of Publication: 2004;
Latest Impression: 2009
Reviewed by JULIUS SIGEI

When Wahome Mutahi passed on in 2003, Kenya lost one of its most brilliant humor- ists. Various referred to him as Wipers, Son of the Soil and Son of Nyaituga from the Slopes – names which he called himself in the Sunday Nation – he connected with the average man with his refrain, “being neither too clever nor too foolish.”

It was his love for literature and creativ- ity that motivated Wahome to turn his analy- sis into literary gems and made many people laugh through their suffering.

For example when in 1966 he was ar- rested together with his brother Njuguna Mutahi and detained at Nyayo House for raffling the government of the day with

SUNDAY NATION
December 20, 2009
BOOKS & CULTURE

Lessons from Somaliland on self reclamation from mayhem

Even find useful and relevant, to their own projection.

As an academic and activist with wide connection with continental actors, his analysis of the external factors constraining Somaliland’s aspiration for international legitimacy those interest- ed with African diplomacy a mine full of geo-political nuances.

This is not to mention the very interest- ing analysis of the interaction between disintegrating forces with the paradigm change on integration of the African con- tinent. Closer home, the relevance of this study to our post-election reconciliation process is what he terms “quadrilateral framework” that constitutes, inter alia, reconciliation and reconstruction.

The analysis of the bottom-up process of Somaliland reconciliation and recon- struction recognizes that peace is not only a lastin amount. Somaliland has not been healed by the estab- lishment of a flimsy political alliance of personalities but rather an elaborate in- tegration of the communities concerned and a honest and serious commitment by the government in the reconstruction of the economic lives of those affected.

A public dance of political heavy weights of any kind is highly unlikely to ever constitu- tute reconciliation and reconstruction of the volatile region. I am of the view that whoever is inter- ested in deep-rooted reconciliation and recon- struction of a polity such as the inhab- itants of the Rift Valley, Jhaarhay’s study is a must-read.

ahmed.aideed@gmail.com

EAPF, Google enter into deal

Title: The House of Doom
Author: Wahome Mutahi
Publisher: Africaweave Network
Year of Publication: 2004;
Latest Impression: 2009
Reviewed by JULIUS SIGEI

When Wahome Mutahi passed on in 2003, Kenya lost one of its most brilliant humor- ists. Various referred to him as Wipers, Son of the Soil and Son of Nyaituga from the Slopes – names which he called himself in the Sunday Nation – he connected with the average man with his refrain, “being neither too clever nor too foolish.”

It was his love for literature and creativ- ity that motivated Wahome to turn his analy- sis into literary gems and made many people laugh through their suffering.

For example when in 1966 he was ar- rested together with his brother Njuguna Mutahi and detained at Nyayo House for raffling the government of the day with

hisor theatre activities, he came out and wrote his two masterpieces of satire, Three Days on the Cross and Juibirds. The former won the prestigious Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in 1992. Yet one of the most precious gems he left for posterity is a 254-page book titled The House of Doom. The story, published posthumously and serialised in the Nation newspaper, is set in the capital of an African country during the early years of the discovery of HIV and Aids.

Unlike the 2004 edition, the latest ver- sion has friends font and short titled chapters, hence a friendly read for sec- ondary school students. A masterpiece of suspense, it lists in the Orange Book as a class reader for Forms one to Four. Rich in language and dialogue, it can be used for teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the current integrat- ed syllabus.

It is the story of Bloggs Mbela, an in- vestigative journalist who discovers with heartache that his theatre activities, he came out and wrote his two masterpieces of satire, Three Days on the Cross and Juibirds. The former won the prestigious Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in 1992. Yet one of the most precious gems he left for posterity is a 254-page book titled The House of Doom. The story, published posthumously and serialised in the Nation newspaper, is set in the capital of an African country during the early years of the discovery of HIV and Aids.

Unlike the 2004 edition, the latest ver- sion has friends font and short titled chapters, hence a friendly read for sec- ondary school students. A masterpiece of suspense, it lists in the Orange Book as a class reader for Forms one to Four. Rich in language and dialogue, it can be used for teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the current integrat- ed syllabus.

It is the story of Bloggs Mbela, an in- vestigative journalist who discovers with heartache that his