

# A Nobel Pursuit – The Swedish Publishing of African Nobel Laureates in Literature

**Jana Rüegg**

*Uppsala University*

The Nobel Prize in literature may be conveniently used as a tool for selecting what may be labelled as high prestige literature, i.e. consecrated and canonized literature. The award is the greatest proof of literary consecration within world literature (Casanova, 2007, p. 147), with the greatest impact among literary prizes.

This paper focuses on the published works of the six Nobel Prize laureates with a connection to an African country, 1970–2016 in Swedish translations, as a way to examine the impact of the Nobel Prize on the publishing trajectories of these authors in the Swedish literary market. It enables the study of publishing practices of African high prestige literature in the Swedish semi-peripheral language space. The notion of African literature is based on the simplistic view of the literary and cultural diversity of the continent, where the term has merely been constructed as an export product (Huggan, 2008, p. 106), and the term is often used in the marketing of novels for a foreign audience.

Which publisher introduces the author – and what impact did the Nobel Prize have for these authors in Sweden? Which type of publishing house is the main transmitter of these authors? These questions will be discussed through statistical methodology, using a database over all titles published by the six authors in Swedish.

The publishing trajectory of Wole Soyinka is especially interesting, since he was introduced in Swedish by the independent and prestigious publishing house Cavefors förlag. In general, Cavefors was important as a publisher of African literature in Swedish translation (Svensson, 2018, p. 139–166). Cavefors was also one of the many independent publishers that were able to stabilize their financial situation by the Swedish state support for translated and literary valuable fiction, introduced in 1975 (Steiner, 2006, p. 64).

## References

- Casanova, P. 2007 [1999]. *The World Republic of Letters* (m. B. Debevoise, Trans.). Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA/London.
- Huggan, G. 2008. *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Post-Colonial Studies*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.
- Steiner, A. 2006. *I litteraturens mittfåra. Månadens bok och svensk bokmarknad under 1970-talet*. Makadam, Göteborg.
- Svensson, R. 2018. *Cavefors. Förlagsprofil och medial mytbilder i det svenska litteratursamhället 1959–1982*. Ellerströms, Lund.