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Fertile Crossings

Metamorphoses of Genre in Anglophone West African Literature

In retracing some of the routes followed by West African literature in English over the course of the last three decades, this book employs an original multidimensional approach whereby the three main genres - narrative, poetry and drama – are considered in the light of their intricate web of fecund rapport and mutual influence. Authors such as Tutuola, Armah, Aidoo and Awoonor translated the fluid structures of orality into written prose, and consequently infused their works with poetic and dramatic resonance, thereby challenging the canonical dominance of social realism and paving the way for the birth of West African magical realism in Laing, Okri and Cheney-Coker. Starting in the 1970s, poetry on stage has become a mainstream genre in Ghana, thanks to performances by Okai, Anyidoho and Acquah. Boundaries between literary theatre and other genres have undergone a similar dissolution in the affirmation of the concept of 'total art' from Efua Sutherland to ben Abdallah, Osofisan and others. Fertile Crossings offers a study of these topics from various viewpoints, blending in-depth textual analysis with reflections on the political import of the works in question within the context of the present state of African societies, all supported by interviews with most of the authors.

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