

The Cameroonian Novel Of English Expression. An Introduction - Shadrach A. Ambanasom

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Initially considered something of a black sheep within the Anglophone Cameroon literary genres, the Anglophone novel has gradually grown to carve out a respectable niche for itself in the Anglophone Cameroon sub-system, imposing itself in a way that makes it impossible for critics to ignore it. Now a vibrant genre, it even threatens to overtake drama and poetry, both of which have enjoyed more critical attention. This book is a study of how Anglophone Cameroon has contributed in extending the possibilities of the novel as a literary form, and of some of the established conventions necessary for a fruitful evaluation of the growing body of the Cameroonian novel in English. In this eclectic and compelling book, Ambanasom sets out to achieve three primary objectives: to introduce the reader to the extensive body of Cameroonian novels in English, to re-examine the distorting and limiting criteria upon which the critical assessment of the Cameroonian novel in English has so far been based, and to bridge the widening chasm between literary theory and actual critical practice. To achieve these objectives, Ambanasom begins by elaborating an alternative and flexible theoretical framework which he christens the 'Socio-Artistic Approach' and which, according to him, is 'concerned with both a text's thematic, moral, cultural or ideological issues, on the one hand, and its central literary analysis, on the other.' He then proceeds to use this new critical framework to examine twenty-seven major Cameroonian novels in English. There are critical voices, already emerging within the Anglophone Cameroonian literary circles, calling for rigorous teaching and practice of theory in the interpretation of literary works, setting in motion a critical discourse. Such a call is salutary, and welcome. Those university lecturers whose responsibility it is to teach theoretical courses should take this call very seriously, moving from theory to hands-on practice. This book is Ambanasom's contribution to that critical debate.

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