

author refers to in the introduction. Additionally, the author's preoccupation with detailed accounts of political and hereditary disputes, together with the internal organization of most chapters according to locales, results in text that is not always easy to follow. In spite of these drawbacks, the volume is set to become required reading for anyone with an interest in the history of the region, as well as a valuable contribution to the history of West Africa and the Atlantic world in general.

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**Littératures africaines et paysage**, Xavier Garnier et Pierre Halen (eds.), *Etudes littéraires africaines* 39, June 2015, 263 p. ISSN 0769-4563

This rich volume brings together nine contributions on the landscape in African literature, considering novels covering parts of the African continent from Senegal to South Africa, in order to examine the relevance of the concept of landscape to the study of African literatures. The volume first surveys the treatment of landscapes in European history from the Renaissance to the Romantic period, alluding to a Western memory bank, a kind of literary and artistic baggage. It reveals the gulf between this European literary and artistic construction and reading of landscapes, informed by Renaissance models, and the African perspective, and shows how inadequate the European reading grid is in its approach of African landscapes, as evidenced by colonial literature. The authors take readers through various types of landscapes, either seen from above or fragmented pictures, highlighting the difference of treatment between African and European approaches, before summarising the listed approaches and considering the place of landscape in the various cultures. This is convincingly illustrated in Malanda's contribution on imaginary Edenic landscapes in children's literature – a study of three books published in the 2000s and presenting a colonial type of rapport between humans and animals - echoing the colonial past in their portraying of heroes protecting wild animals in Eastern Africa. While the author denounces both colonisation and the destruction of nature, her text confirms the huge difference between the African and European perception of landscape. Savannah is presented here as a wild animal habitat, where humans are not welcome, and its destruction as a crime. Natural reserves and animal parks are described as a reparation, restoring the precolonial past, while they were actually initiated by colonials, which makes these novels a product of the colonial enterprise.

While the texts from the colonial period offer visual descriptions of landscapes, influenced by European traditions, Samin's study of the Karoo landscape in South African literature, a beautiful reflection highlighting the writers' desire to penetrate the landscape and identify with it, vividly exposes the challenge posed by these landscapes to Afrikaners. It illustrates these writers' search for a language to adequately recreate the Karoo landscape and the failure of their texts to conjure anything but an empty, utterly alien, unknown and wild space. Rogez's contribution focuses on South African literature and on the farm novel, a genre developed by Afrikaners, signalling the mastery of the land by colonisers inspired by American pioneers and revealing the relationship between identity and land

management. For her, post-apartheid writers now evolve a new vision of landscape, a fusion between urban and semi-rural landscapes.

While Senghor and other Negritude writers have developed a hybrid landscape which, while influenced by Western models, tries to offer a more African version of the concept, the volume, after a brief mention of the Negritude movement, tracks the African authors' fight to extract exoticism from African landscapes, invoking authentic African landscapes in a bid to stem the flow of distorted images misrepresenting the continent. Riesz's study of Couchoro's treatment of landscape in his 1929 novel, *L'Esclave*, reveals the influence of beliefs on people's apprehending of landscapes and establishes a tight correlation between nature, landscape and culture. African writers respond to the Western images of Africa with new, close-up, multi-sensory and different visions of the continent, whose role is to replace the wrong message with the correct one. Landscapes, structured by the peoples' language and culture, and read through their memory database, are powerful identity-boosters and markers. They also sketch the evolution of the literary treatment of landscape, following the development of photography and cinema, and now involves all senses, including touch and smell, as shown in Labou Tansi's multisensory approach of Congo's rivers and forests.

The authors reveal how different this concept is in African literature where people are given the pride of place while landscapes remain in the background. Sela considers the writing down of African landscapes in Ousmane Sembene from the past to the present and writers' political choices, with the introduction of machinery and the new man ushering the continent into modernity. In the end, a number of landscapes - institutional, cultural and identity-marking, literary, political and spiritual - are considered, and presented as a subjective vision and a personal creation of the writer.

The varia which follow, on a Rwandan survivor's testimony and on the myth of Pokou the Ashanti queen, complete the study of landscape with related issues of genocide, migration and exile. The last seventy pages enrich this valuable sum with some forty book and journal reviews, bibliographical notes and abstracts of doctoral theses defended in 2014.

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