



The Twelve Best Books by African Women: Critical Readings (Ohio RIS Africa Series)

Chikwene Okonjo Ogunyemi, Tuzyline Jita Allan

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In 2002, at the annual Zimbabwe International Book Fair, twelve literary books by African women were included for the first time in the category of “Africa’s 100 Best Books of the Twentieth Century.” This was an important but belated affirmation of women writers on the continent and a first step toward establishing a recognized canon of African women’s literature.

The Twelve Best Books by African Women is a collection of critical essays on eleven works of fiction and one play. The titles by African women that were included in the list of “Africa’s 100 Best Books of the Twentieth Century” are: *Anowa*, Ama Ata Aidoo (1970); *A Question of Power*, Bessie Head (1974); *Woman at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi (1975); *The Beggars’ Strike*, Aminata Sow Fall (1979); *Burger’s Daughter*, Nadine Gordimer (1979); *The Joys of Motherhood*, Buchi Emesheta (1979); *So Long a Letter*, Mariama Bâ (1980); *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, Assia Djebar (1983); *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988); *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*, Sindiwe Magona (1991); *Butterfly Burning*, Yvonne Vera (1998); *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, Ken Bugul (1999).

This collection of original essays recognizes the gesture of inclusion as an important shift in consciousness and creates a fresh awareness of the literary works by African women writers. Each essay offers a penetrating analysis of individual texts and opens up a fresh perspective that allows scholars and students alike to explore new dimensions of these writers’ work.

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