West Africa

compiled and introduced by
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Introduction

The Criticism section features recurrent themes on feminism, and especially questions of identity. While some of the works reflect familiar arguments, a few stand out for situating those themes within new or broader frames. There is a trend toward discursivity and the “writing form” in African feminist criticism. This is happening alongside engagement with materiality and the archives of African literature. Digital media and futurism, while not always conjoined, constitute exciting new objects. Perhaps not surprising is the return of the grotesque, which once dominated African postcolonial critique and has been making a periodic comeback. Tribute to Abiola Irele dominates the criticism of individual authors. The Journal of African Literature Association has been foremost in memorializing him.

Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani continue to provide major access for a new generation of Africa poets with the annual publication of poetry collection volumes as a book set.

This year’s fiction is chasing behind reality. While our writers could not foresee the pandemic or the total global stoppage of life as we know it, Akwaeke Emezi’s The Death of Vivek Oji and Yaa Gyasi’s Transcendent Kingdom are among the finest works that earnestly explore the transcendence of grief and loss.

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