



# **Tradition and Modernity in the African Short Story: An Introduction to a Literature in Search of Critics (Contributions in Political Science)**

*F Odun Balogun*

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While the short story has long been treated seriously by scholars in both Europe and America, in Africa the genre has been all but ignored by critics. Despite its popularity on the continent, the African short story has never been the subject of a thorough and systematic study. In this pioneering work, F. Odun Balogun offers a two-part look at the genre, beginning with a general survey of African short stories and an approach for textual analysis, and followed by a detailed exploration of the themes and artistic methods of two representative writers. The book provides an extensive range of coverage, as well as theoretic perspectives on the historical development of African prose, literature of the absurd, and other aspects of literary theory.

The work begins with a four-chapter section surveying theoretical aspects of the African short story. Chapter one examines the critical scholarship, discusses the reasons for neglect and reaffirms the significance of the African short story, while chapter two explores the major thematic preoccupations of the writers working in the genre. Topics covered include art, religion, tradition and culture, urban life, colonial and post-colonial reality, and apartheid. In chapter three, the African short story is judged against the exacting demands of the genre, with particular emphasis on verbal discipline, imaginativeness, and linguistic experimentations. Chapter four concludes the general survey with a discussion of irony, the most dominant element of style and source of appeal. The book's second section offers detailed studies of the work of two writers: Chinua Achebe, who typifies the traditional realistic mode, and Taban lo Liyong, a post-modernist experimentalist. Each author's work is examined for general themes and artistic structures, and is followed by close examinations of Achebe's *Girls at War* and *The Madman* and lo Liyong's *Fixions* and *The Uniformed Man*. A brief summary chapter concludes the work. This important, first-of-its-kind study will be an indispensable resource for courses in African literature, African prose fiction, and twentieth century short stories, as well as a valuable addition to both public and academic libraries.

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