Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora


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Abstract or Description

Crossroads in the Black Aegean is a compendious, timely, and fascinating study of African rewritings of Greek tragedy. It consists of detailed readings of six dramas and one epic poem, from different locations across the African diaspora. Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson ask why the plays of Sophocles’ Theban Cycle figure so prominently among the tragedies adapted by dramatists of African descent, and how plays that dilate on the power of the past, in the inexorable curse of Oedipus and the regressive obsession of Antigone, can articulate the postcolonial moment. Capitalizing on classical reception studies, postcolonial studies, and comparative literature, Crossroads in the Black Aegean co-ordinates theory and theatre. It crucially investigates how the plays engage with the ‘Western canon’, and shows how they use their self-consciously literary status to assert, ironize, and challenge their own place, and that of the Greek originals, in relation to that tradition. Beyond these oedipal reflexes, the adaptations offer alternative African models of cultural transmission.

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Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora. Barbara Goff & Michael Simpson. In Crossroads in the Black Aegean, Goff and Simpson examine the dramatization of postcolonial identity as it emerges through adaptations of the Theban plays (Oedipus Rex and Antigone) by the Athenian tragedian Sophocles. Through an intricate discussion of six plays and one epic poem from Africa and the African diaspora, they argue that these works challenge European culture's smooth colonial transmission of itself from classical antiquity to modernity by substituting a model of violent transmission (p. 4) based on the incestuous family ties of Oedipus and Antigone, at once father and daughter. It consists of detailed readings of six dramas and one epic poem, from different locations across the African diaspora. Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson ask why the plays of Sophocles' Theban Cycle figure so prominently among the tragedies adapted by dramatists of African descent, and how plays that dilate on the power of the past, in the inexorable curse of Oedipus and the regressive obsession of Antigone, can articulate the postcolonial moment. Capitalizing on classical reception studies, postcolonial studies, and comparative literature, Crossroads in the Black Aegean co-ordinates theor...