Translating Hybrid Identities: The Cultural and Linguistic Layering of Francophone Senegalese Women’s Literature

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Objectives

• to define hybridity and show how it has occurred
• to analyse writers opinions on hybridity
• to show how hybrid identities are translated into Francophone Senegalese women’s works
• to break down the different forms of hybridity in language
• to draw parallels between the postcolonial and the diasporic writer
• to demonstrate how can this study help define translation strategies
Situating this Paper in my Thesis

• Key themes:
  ➢ a culture of change
  ➢ power games
  ➢ issues of gender
  ➢ hybridity, mediation and the native language
  ➢ the influence of orature

• Resources:
  ➢ source texts
  ➢ theories and models
  ➢ primary research

Hybrid Forms

“In transitional social realities, the need to write often leads to the search for new forms of expression. Most often, existing art forms are recovered, reformulated, and revalued. The ‘threshold,’ ‘aftermath,’ or ‘watershed’ literatures of francophone production express their blurred realities and borderline living in mixed genres or hybrid forms” (Walker, *Postscripts* 252)
Hybrid identities

• colonial/postcolonial realities
  ➢ two cultures
  ➢ two histories
  ➢ two educations
  ➢ two languages (at least)
• tradition and modernity
• home and the workplace
• travel across boundaries
• what makes Francophemme Senegalese writers unique?

Interviews with Writers

• Mame Seck Mbacké
  ➢ cultural hybridity does not exist
  ➢ hybridity in globalisation
• Sokhna Benga
  ➢ French cannot always express Wolof
• Amadou Lamine Sall
  ➢ linguistic hybridity
  ➢ the culture of the ‘Other’
• Khadi Fall
  ➢ global enrichment
  ➢ unconscious hybridity
Defining Hybridity

• “Anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements.” ("hybrid")
• Negative associations
• Alternative expressions
  ➢ multicultural (Bhabha)
  ➢ cross-cultural (Ashcroft)
  ➢ globally enriched/bicultural/bidentity/in-between

The Diasporic / Postcolonial Writer

• issues of identity – reality / memory / postmemory
• multiple contact zones – borders / mediation
• cultural difference / forms of ‘Otherness’
• power and authority
• discrimination and domination
• voice and control of the word
• travel – associations / migrations
A Search for Compromise

“This specific use of colonial languages to express African sociocultural reality is neither the result of an entirely foreignizing nor a domesticating strategy. Rather, it is the product of a search for a compromise between African and European language expression, a middle passage, a blend of source and target language translation strategies, fine-tuned and adapted to deal with the linguistic and cultural hybridity, or métissage, characteristic of the postcolonial text” (Bandia, Translation 5)

Hybrid Literature

- Yves Clavaron – two types of hybridity
  - genre
  - language
- Jean-Marc Moura
  - three types of generic hybridity
    - negotiating oppositions eg religion, technology, mythology, opinions
- Hybridity of subject-matter
- Hybridity of viewpoint
- Hybrid literature – emotional decision or regaining power?
Hybrid Language

• Bill Ashcroft et al.
  ➢ appropriation
  ➢ abrogation
• Selective lexical fidelity (Ashcroft)
• Semantic hybridity (meaning)
• Syntactic hybridity (arrangement)
• Non-standard French

Hybrid Language - Examples

• Previously untranslated texts:
  ➢ Mame Seck Mbacké – Poèmes en Etincelles
  ➢ Sokhna Benga – La Balade du Sabador
  ➢ Fatou Ndiaye Sow – Fleurs du Sahel
• Translated text:
  ➢ Mariama Bâ – Une si Longue Lettre
  ➢ Translation by Modupé Bodé-Thomas
The Role of the Translator

“…when the two cultures come together the hybrid product that results from this encounter poses additional problems in the act of translation. Because of these factors, there is a subjective dimension since the translation depends on the translator’s reading of the cultural and ideological concepts and social history that produced the African text. However, despite the obvious difficulties, the main aim of the translator of African literature is to preserve, as much as possible, the cultural value systems of African thought” (Gyasi Francophone 29)

The Translator as Negotiator

“...the translator has not only a bilingual ability but also a bi-cultural vision. Translators mediate between cultures (including ideologies, moral systems and socio-political structures), seeking to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning. What has a value as a sign in one cultural community may be devoid of significance in another and it is the translator who is uniquely placed to identify the disparity and seek to resolve it” (Hatim, Discourse 223-224)
Translation Strategies

- Norms and conventions (Toury)
- Semiotics (Chandler)
- Translation Methods (Newmark)
- Foreignisation / domestication (Venuti)
- Visibility / Invisibility of the Translator (Venuti)
- The Translation Commission / Skopos (Vermeer)
- The turns of Translation Studies (Snell-Hornby)

Conclusions

- in-depth analysis of texts
- field research
- interviews with writers
- postcolonial texts
- understanding of hybridity
- from theory to practice
- interdisciplinarity
- the role of the literary translator
- translation criticism / evaluation
Future Areas for Research

- my research is ongoing
- influence of orality and issues of genre
- gender and language
- analysis of additional Translation Studies theories
- interdisciplinary study – linguistics / sociology
- analyse further texts / wider range of writers
- working with a writer on the translation of her text

Questions and Comments?

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