



Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo Laurence, *The Politics of Translating Sound Motifs in African Fiction*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2020, 170 pages.

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African literature, especially orality, is receiving keen attention in the area of translation studies in the past two decades. This can be seen through a number of articles and books by scholars such as Paul Bandia (2008, 2016) and Kathryn Batchelor (2009) who have published on the subject. *The Politics of Translating Sound Motifs in African Fiction*, a monography by Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo Laurence published in 2020 by John Benjamins enriches this field. The book, of some 182 pages, is made up of five chapters, more or less balanced in length, and is a wonderful monography on the English adaptation of the author's PhD thesis, originally written in French and defended in the University of Montreal (Canada) ten years previously.

Chapter 1 ("Premise and Contexts", pp.5-32) sets the theoretical and methodological backgrounds of the research. Here, the author describes the background to her study and presents a review of Europhone African literature as translation and in translation. Jay-Rayon discusses the issue of dichotomies such as exoticism vs. universalism. This chapter also examines the criticism of African literatures, the relevance and limitations of postcolonial theory in relation to the African literature, the concept of hybridity and its relation to postcolonial theory. The author also states that "postcolonial theory alone has proved insufficient to account for the complexity associated with the translation of specific works of African literatures" (p. 7)

In chapter 2 (pp. 33-66), Nuruddin Farah's *Secrets* (1998) and its French translation *Secrets* (1999) by Jacqueline Bardolph, as well as Abdourahman Ali Waberi's *Le Pays sans ombre* (1994) and its English translation *The Land without Shadows* (2005) by Jeanne Garane are analyzed. The analysis commences with preliminary data such as the background of the writers, Somali oral literature, the methodology used to analyse the corpus and an inventory of sound patterns and their renditions in the target texts. It is discovered that both Somali writers reproduce traditional homeland alliterative practices in their texts, while their

respective translators use different strategies in translating these alliterations and other sound motifs.

Chapter 3 (pp. 67-98) deals with the aesthetics of repetitions and their meaning in the novels *La carte d'identité* (1980) by the Ivorian Jean-Marie Adiafi, *Ancestors* (1996) by Chenjerai Hove from Zimbabwe and their translations, *The Identity Card* (1983) and *Ancêtres* (2002) by Brigitte Katiyo and Jean-Pierre Richard, respectively. Jay-Rayon explores N'zassa literature and Akan poetics to better understand Adiafi's "transgeneric position through the translation lens."

Chapter 4 (pp.99-132) discusses sound motifs and their motivations in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985) and their respective translations. The critic analyses the stylistic choices of the translators Josette and Robert Mane and Dorothy Blair. As in the previous chapter, the bio-bibliographical data of the writers and their translators are presented, as well as the statistics of sound patterns in the source and target texts. Some excerpts of the novels are also analysed so as to evidence how translation strategies are used. The results of the analysis show, among other aspects, that Armah's translator recreates about half of the two core motifs (alliterations and paronomasia) of the source texts, while Blair uses more alliterations in her translation *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (1993) than Djebar, the author of the source text herself (p. 130).

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are, we consider, the core of the research since they all deal with the case studies from which the corpus analysed leads to the findings and interpretation of results presented in the last chapter of the book.

Finally, in chapter 5 (pp.133-148), Jay-Rayon interprets the results found in case studies from chapters 2, 3 and 4 with tables presenting clear statistics, using defined criteria and translation projects implemented and methodologies followed by the six translators, following Antoine Berman's (1995) taxonomy, in which the text is labelled as either poetic, or political. Jay-Rayon suggests the paradigm of intermedial translation as a tool for negotiating plurality in literary modalities and then considers the aural potential of all written texts, no matter their generic categorization. She, therefore, advocates for the renewal of "aural literature" texts, through audiobooks, for example, including translated texts.

To sum up, one can say that Laurence Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo's monography is original due to its subject matter (sound motifs and politics of their translation), the methodological and theoretical tools (postcolonial

theory, Antoine Berman's taxonomy). The book can also be appreciated for the quality and pertinence of analysis (clear statistical data, tables) and the quality of language. The corpus is well chosen and rigorously organised in terms of their geographical settings (eastern, western and northern parts of Africa), as well as their visibility both as original and translated texts. The only regret may be the fact that Central Africa is not taken into consideration within the analysis. But some may find this too much information for a single book. Jay-Rayon should be proud of this book as it is useful both for translation studies scholars and literary theorists and critics, as well as other researchers in various fields of the humanities. We hope that *The Politics of Translating Sound Motifs in African Fiction* will be the first of many future volumes dealing with sound motifs in African literature in translation.

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