HU15

Literature in Translation: THE BI-CULTURAL DILEMMA

Syllabus Spring 2000

MWF 11-12, 127 Fisher

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Office hrs: 1-2 Wed. or by appt.

Texts: 5 novels, listed below in daily schedule, by Sebbar, Kane, Salih, Schwartz-Bart and Chralbi.

Course Description: This is a Literature in Translation course. Except for the novel by Salih, which was originally written in Arabic, the novels we will read for this course are translated from the French. During this quarter, we will be reading these novels, discussing issues of multi-culturalism, and thinking about the constraints certain political and economic situations put on francophone Africa’s indigenous peoples, especially in light of the French educational system within which most of these writers (and their characters) developed.

Goals: To broaden our understanding of the world by reading and responding to (in discussion and in writing) novels and films produced in what is being called the “post-colonial era”. To try to make some useful comparisons between what we see represented in these novels and what we have experienced or what we have learned in an American classroom. To bring what is represented in novel and film together with our own history and goals in order to help make sense of how diversity of experience functions to shape identity.

Questions to guide our discussion of every text/film:
1. What is overall organization of the book/film itself? (length, cover info. additional info about author, pictures...)
2. Map the narrative: who, what, where, when, relationships between characters, chronology, style. Also: what can you find out about the location of the action or the circumstances of the novel’s writing in the library, on the Internet, etc.?
3. Whose story is it? Who is narrator, what is point of view, how is reader implicated in narrative, what voices do we hear, how does memory work?
4. What are the parameters of the main characters’ lives? (nation, culture, language, economic class, education, politics, gender, race....)
5. How do representations of diverse experience in a novel or a film engage our own experience? What makes a novel believable? Must it be in order to impact our way of thinking? What, in narrative, do we find useful in order to understand how the world works, even when that may be vastly different (or relatively similar) to what we know as we begin to read?

Your Grade will be based on the following:
33%: Participation including short writing assignments, question generation and group discussion
33%: mid-term paper
34%: final paper

NOTE: (MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, (2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (3310).)
Syllabus, HU315, page 2: daily schedule

Week 1:
- 6 March: Intro. to course, Sebbar, *Shérazade*
- 8 March: Others perceive us: questions of identity
- 10 March: France/Algeria: questions of place

Week 2:
- 13 March: Sebbar/Kane: similar agenda?
- 15 March: Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*
- 17 March: France/West Africa: a question of education.

Week 3:
- 20 March: Kane: Implications of choosing the multicultural school
- 22 March: Film: *Afrique, je te plumerai* (English subtitles)
- 24 March: Film

Week 4:
- 27 March: Discussion of film: representing Africa
- 29 March: Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*
- 31 March: Discuss mid-term paper: Sudan/England: a question of returning home

Week 5:
- 3 April: Salih: the bi-cultural narrator
- 5 April: Salih: the post-colonial in the courtroom
- 7 April: Legal representation

Week 6: Mid-term paper due
- 10 April: Schwartz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*
- 12 April: Schwartz-Bart

Week 7:
- 17 April: Guadeloupe/France: a question of influences (Africa, Eur., N. Amer.)
- 19 April: Film: *Sugar Cane Alley*
- 21 April: (Good Friday)

Week 8:
- 24 April: Film, cont’d
- 26 April: Discussion of film and Schwartz-Bart: representations of education
- 28 April: Chraibi, *Mother Comes of Age*

Week 9:
- 1 May: Arab/French: a question of technology
- 3 May: Discuss final paper, return to *Shérazade*
- 5 May: Discussion: Cultural representations

Week 10:
- 8 May: Arab/French: a question of relations
- 10 May: Living the dilemma
- 12 May: (evaluations)

Final paper due before 5:00pm, Tues, 16 May 1996.
(In my mailbox, 3rd floor Walker)

Note: ---This syllabus subject to change at any time for pedagogical and/or unexpected circumstances. You will be notified of such changes if they take place.---
Individual group discussion activities (5-7 students per group):
1. Create 4-5 questions about the text. Answer one together, then present discussion and/or conclusions to the whole class. **(turn in list of questions with all group members names on sheet of paper)**

2. Choose a passage from the novel (or scene from film) for discussion in small groups, then present one or two findings/items to entire class. **(turn in list of passages--page # and paragraph, with book title--and all group members names on sheet of paper)**

HU315, Spring 2000. Questions:

1. What does the title of this novel lead you to expect about the narrative? Discuss the cover of the English edition. (The French edition has no picture)

2. The publishers of the text include the introductory materials (Vocab and Intro. - not included in French edition). Discuss the importance of this choice. Would a Table of Contents be important?

3. First impressions: how do we come to understand a new character? How does the author help us in this novel?

4. If we look at the Chapter titles, we notice that they are all proper names. Some are repeated. Some are the names of Sherazade’s friends, some of famous French painters, etc. How might you organize your understanding of the novel with the titles as a guide?

5. Write a discussion question with your group for this novel.