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Reading African Literature in Bengali: A Study from Bangladeshi Perspectives

Literature is usually defined by its content, not by its language. Modern African literature has reached the international readership mostly in English language. Africa, with its more than two thousand languages, can be comprehensible to a huge number of monolingual or bi – lingual readers of the world through translation. In Bangladesh a vast majority of readers are monolingual and they can read only in Bengali language. So, to be comprehensible to the Bangladeshi readership African literature requires to be translated into Bengali. Many prominent translators have translated and are still translating a good number of African literary texts. But it is noticed that the speed and impulse which are invested in translating a European or American or Latin American literary text are not employed in translating an African literary text. It may be because of the gap of communication with African cultures and languages and the linguistic limitations to negotiate with the creoles and pidgins used in African literary texts. Besides, it cannot be denied that translation is never apolitical. True, translation brings about re – creation through intertextuality and negotiations between two diverse cultures and languages. Interaction today is possible to a remarkable extent through internet and hi – speed communication media. But in postcolonial situation in context of neo – colonization and crony capitalism, economic realities and psychic boundaries deeply impact the process of fortification of the dialogues between two diverse cultures, inevitable for translatability. How the translators respond to the spatial context of the source texts is also important for the re – creation and authentication of the translated texts. This paper seeks to investigate the reading of African literature in translation in Bangladesh.