

Études littéraires africaines



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BAUMGARDT (URSULA) ET BORNAND (SANDRA), DIR., *AUTOUR DE LA PERFORMANCE*. N° SP. DE *CAHIERS DE LITTÉRATURE ORALE*, N°65, 2009, 165 P. – ISBN 978-2-85831-182-8.

A happy coincidence and an invisible thread pervade *Autour de la performance*. First the coincidence : this issue of the *Cahiers de Littérature orale* opens up recalling the vital contribution of Geneviève Calame-Griaule to ethnolinguistics and finishes with a review of the new and third edition of her pathbreaking work *Ethnologie et langage* (1965), which came out just in time to pay a complete homage to the French scholar's work. The core elements of her ethnolinguistic approach, namely, *énonciateur*, audience, space, and time provide the main references to the five essays contained in this special issue.

The first one by Véronique Corinus focuses on the work of « Felix Modock, le conteur écrivain ». It illustrates the neglected tension between written and oral traditions: Modock's love for the word in all its forms grants him a unique position between these two traditions. He is an example of « oralité tierce » (p. 27). The Antillean storyteller collected the stories he used to tell himself and, on writing them down, manipulated them, conferring his personal, creative imprint and thus creating a further tension between collective and individual authorship.

The « énonciateur » is also the catalyst of Sandra Bornand's study. During a radio programme, Djado Sékou, a well known Songhay-Zarma griot from Niger, made up for the missing interaction with the audience by employing a *coénonciateur* (co-speaker). This is an original strategy that enriches the recorded narrative text with a series of interventions analysed in detail in their functions.

The dissemination of storytelling in cultural radio programs in Mali has very distinct consequences and Leguy's « Quand "la radio réveille les contes". Temps du conte et temps des ondes » points out at the effects of this phenomenon on the performers, on the stratified time of the performance, as well as its implications for the Malian cultural heritage.

The last two essays, respectively by Jean Derive (« Des modalités de l'énonciation en littérature orale ») and Ursula Baumgardt (« L'espace en littérature orale africaine ») are of a more theoretical nature. But it is perhaps at this point that the attempt at understanding the mechanism at work in the performance becomes most intriguing. Both scholars pay particular attention to space. And, whilst Derive highlights how space constrains the performance, providing a taxonomy of the ways in which it encloses *la parole littéraire*, Baumgardt considers its construction and its multiple meanings, which are often difficult to detect because they are almost imperceptible, despite their impact and importance in conveying the space outside the performance itself.

Interesting and thought provoking, in spite of their diversity, the articles are, in my view, connected by a kind of invisible thread. This could be conceptualized by the notion of the *border*, in the sense of limit and frontier. Modock's attempts to bend the written dimension to that of

orality blurs the *border* between the two, generating thus a subversive potential that definitely calls for further investigation. Similarly, in « Narration à deux voix », the very presence of the *coénonciateur* blurs the *border* between the performers and their audiences. The example of Radio Parana in Leguy's article shows instead how radio story telling softens the *borders* of the genre, as well as expanding those of the local identity. In Derive's analysis the *borders* are those set by tradition to creativity. Whereas, coincidentally, *borders*, that is, *la frontière* (admittedly in a different, physical sense) is a significant example of space codification in Baumgardt's study.

In my opinion, the presence of this invisible thread can be attributed to the fact that the performance praxis challenges theoretically clear-cut categories. Yet, this does not prevent them from being useful and even from contributing to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at work in the performance.

■ Cristina BOSCOLO

BEKERS (ELISABETH), HELFF (SISSY), MEROLLA (DANIELA), DIR., *TRANS-CULTURAL MODERNITIES : NARRATING AFRICA IN EUROPE*. AMSTERDAM-NEW YORK : RODOPI, COLL. MATATU, N°36, 2009, 442 P. – ISBN 978-90-420-2538-7.

Dans ce volume, les auteurs proposent de traiter, au-delà de l'aspect économique, de l'intégration des migrants africains dans le monde culturel de l'Europe (p. XIII). Il s'agit en effet de les envisager dans une réalité transculturelle et plurielle en privilégiant un corpus relevant des arts visuels, du cinéma et de la littérature. De là, ils posent la question de savoir comment les artistes et les écrivains vivant en Europe explorent l'environnement postcolonial et transculturel et comment ils contribuent à la construction de mondes modernes euro-africains (p. XIII). Pour répondre à cette question, nous ne retiendrons que les exemples littéraires.

Quelques pistes sont dès lors proposées. Ainsi, l'on voit que ces agents culturels développent un discours qui s'écarte de l'opposition entre l'Occident (Lumière) et le reste du monde (Obscurantisme), ce qui permettra de retravailler l'imagination dans un sens plus transculturel (p. XIV) et de réadapter l'anthropologie moderne. Il se crée par conséquent un nouvel espace littéraire euro-africain. Il s'y développe des écritures d'Africains vivant en Espagne, en Italie, aux Pays-Bas, en Flandre, en Finlande et en Suède. Pour ce qui est de l'Espagne, par exemple, l'article de Sabrina Brancata nous apprend que la représentation de l'Afrique dans ce pays se limite à des images anachroniques (p. 4) : elle est mystique, dangereuse, peuplée de tribus meurtrières, aux prises avec le cannibalisme. Et cette représentation est largement nourrie par les médias qui véhiculent une image de peuples voués aux troubles ethniques. Sans oublier l'effacement de la mémoire collective de la présence espagnole en Afrique dans les