

Beyond nativism: Translingualism and Ngũgĩ's engagement with anglophonism

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Abstract

In the face of the controversies surrounding the writings of the East African writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, this article contends that his Gikuyu fictions (also in English translation) are as much an integral part of Ngũgĩ's engagement with the Anglophone tradition as his earlier works published in English. Negotiating through various critical issues raised on Ngũgĩ and his articulations on the language of African literature, the paper uses his works to show that those originally written in English and those in Gikuyu benefit from similar processes of translingualism. It addresses the subject of the relationship between translation and minor languages, arguing that translation involves an inevitable and continuous manipulation of texts in which the words' subjectivity, ideology, visibility and power complicate the very process of translation and reception of texts from minor languages to major languages. Finally, the paper shows that Ngũgĩ's Anglophone and Gikuyu novels (in translation) are complementary in the exploitation of various manifestations of translingualism, despite arguments to the contrary.

Keywords:

Adaptation, cultural diversity, literary translation, translation criticism, form, politics of translation