

French #MeToo?: Francophone African and Caribbean Women's Writing in English Translation

Instructor: Nathan H. Dize (contact: Nathan.h.dize@vanderbilt.edu)

Time: TBA

Location: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Description:

Originally founded by Tarana Burke in 2006, the "Me Too Movement" seeks to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly women of color, "to help find pathways to healing" (["metoomvmt.org/about/](http://metoomvmt.org/about/)). Then, in the fall of 2017, the #MeToo hashtag reverberated throughout the Internet, on the front pages of newspapers, and in the public square as women began to "out" their aggressors for the world to see. The impact of the of the movement and the hashtag has extended far beyond the virtual public square to affect elections, changes consumer choices, and sculpt new markets for storytelling with a focus on women and girls, including literature in translation. While France had its own #MeToo movement, the hashtag #BalanceTonPorc (roughly, "#OutYourPig"), stories by women writing in French has come to greatly shape the literary translation market in the United States.

From 2008-2016, 221 titles by women were translated from French into English, but in the three years since the start of the "#MeToo era" there have been 130 new translations of women authors from French into English (Publisher's Weekly "Translation Database). In this course, students will read recent translations of French and Francophone women's writing in English to determine what the impact the politics of the "Me Too Movement" and the #MeToo era have had on the French translation market. The objectives for this course will be: 1) to consider how Afro-diasporic literature in translation responds to and shapes US debates on citizenship, class, diversity, gender and sexual identity, globalization, and race; 2) to consider how the US publishing industry markets, "packages," and manufactures literature in French to a US English readership, and 3) to determine whether the works in question correspond to the politics of the "Me Too Movement" or the "#MeToo era and if so, to what end?

The assignments for the course will aim to hone and sharpen students' analytical writing and critical thinking skills, they will include the following: 1) a cumulative reading journal, 2) a group presentation and paper on the visual aspects of translation marketing strategies, 3) a comparative essay analyzing the cultural modes of translation of one of the novels from the course.

Assignments:

Cumulative Reading Journal :

Each week students will be responsible for writing **two journal entries** on the week's readings. These journals will be used to assess the student's personal engagement with the works we read for class, they will only be shared with the professor. Although the journal will be written by

hand, students will have to upload pictures or scans of their writing to the course (insert LMS) page by **Friday at 5 p.m.** For guidelines on engaging journal entry styles, please see the rubric available online (insert link to LMS page).

Flash Analysis: You will write **FIVE** page-long (single-spaced) analyses of a portion of the literary work in question for that given week. These “Flash Analyses” will help you hone the close reading and written skills necessary to complete your end-of-term final paper. Further details on the formatting of this assignment to be provided during the first week of class.

Visual Marketing Paper and Presentation :

Scholars of translations of writing from the African diaspora have observed that works of literature are often "packaged" for specific literary markets or publics (e.g. the United States or Canada) and draw on cultural perceptions of the source literature in these local environments to best sell each book. In groups of 3-4 students, you will find a book by one of the authors from the syllabus and you will analyze how the writer and their works are "packaged" for an anglophone audience. What symbols and clichés are drawn on (e.g. exoticism or colorful book covers) to sell the works by these Afro-diasporic authors; consider also to what extent these strategies are embedded in cultures of imperialism or (post)colonialism.

Each group will be responsible for a presentation and a collaborative paper. See the assignment description (insert LMS link) for details on grading and participation.

Final Paper :

This will be comparative essay analyzing the cultural modes of translation of two of the novels from this course. A list of possible topics will be distributed in class to include subjects like domesticization, foreignization, intercultural translation, etc. For more information see the assignment description on the class (insert LMS) page.

Grading:

Participation & Attendance: 20%

Journal Entries: 20%

Flash Analysis: 15%

Visual Marketing Paper & Presentation: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

Required Books:

Appanah, Nathacha. *Waiting for Tomorrow*. Translated by Geoffrey Strachan, Graywolf Press, 2018.

Bey, Maïssa. *Do You Hear in the Mountains... and Other Stories*. Translated by Erin Lamm, University of Virginia Press, 2018.

Devi, Ananda. *Eve out of Her Ruins*. Translated by Jeffrey Zuckerman, Deep Vellum, 2016.

Lahens, Yanick. *Moonbath*. Translated by Emily Gogolak, Deep Vellum, 2017.

Mintsa, Justine. *Awu's Story*. Translated by Cheryl Toman, University of Nebraska Press, 2018.

Mukasonga, Scholastique. *The Barefoot Woman*. Translated by Jordan Stump, Archipelago Books, 2018.

Slimani, Leïla. *Adèle*. Translated by Sam Taylor, Penguin Books, 2019.

Other readings may be included for certain classes to introduce key terms and concepts in the intercultural translation of African and Caribbean literatures from French.

Schedule:

Weeks 1 & 2: Translating Francophone African and Caribbean Women

Selected readings from *Her True-True Name* and *The Heinemann Book of African Women's Writing*

Interview: Esquilín, Mary Ann Gosser. "[A True, True Teacher and Translator: An Interview with Elizabeth \(Betty\) Wilson](#)" *Sargasso: Special Issue* (2010-11): 91-104.

Sandra E. Garcia. "[The Woman Who Created #MeToo Long before Hashtags](#)" *New York Times*, October 20, 2017.

Weeks 3 & 4: Algeria

Bey, *Do You Hear in the Mountains... and Other Stories*

Djafri, Yasmina, and Soumia Osamnia. *Globalization Speaks English: The In(Visibility) of Algerian Literature and Its Resistance to Translation*. SSRN Scholarly Paper, ID 3276456, Social Science Research Network, 1 Nov. 2018. *papers.ssrn.com*, doi:[10.2139/ssrn.3276456](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3276456).

Weeks 5 & 6: Haiti

Lahens, Yanick. *Moonbath*

Glover, Kaiama L. [“‘Blackness’ in French: On Translation, Haiti, and the Matter of Race.”](#) *L’esprit Créateur*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2019, pp. 25–41.

Weeks 7 & 8: Rwanda

Mukasonga, *The Barefoot Woman*

Fletcher, Narelle. “Words That Can Kill: The Mugesera Speech and the 1994 Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda.” *Portal*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–15. doi:[10.5130/portal.v11i1.3293](https://doi.org/10.5130/portal.v11i1.3293).

Due: Visual Marketing Paper & Presentation

Week 9 & 10: Mauritius

Appanah, Nathacha. *Waiting for Tomorrow*

Nathacha Appanah & Elizabeth Sulis Kim [Interview](#)

Weeks 11 & 12: Morocco/France

Slimani, *Adèle*

Lauren Collins ["The Killer-Nanny Novel that Conquered France"](#) *The New Yorker*, December 25, 2017.

Weeks 12 & 13: Gabon

Mintsa, Justine. *Awu’s Story*

Weeks 14 & 15: Mauritius

Devi, *Eve out of Her Ruins*

Waters, J. (2013) *Ananda Devi as writer and translator: in interview with Julia*

Waters. In: Batchelor, K. and Bidsdorff, C. (eds.) *Intimate Enemies: Translation in Francophone Contexts*. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, pp. 117-123.

Due: Final Paper