THE PARADOXES AND PITFALLS OF MULTILINGUALISM IN LATINO WRITERS

A LECTURE ON LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY BY ILSE LOGIE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE AT GHENT UNIVERSITY

Terms such as “globalization” and “World Literature” suggest that multilingualism rather than monolingualism is a sign of the present times. Celebratory discourse in Comparative Literature (Emily Apter), also related to Latin American Studies (Doris Sommer), seems to confirm this trend in Academia.

In spite of the increased symbolic capital of multilingualism, real literary practices of authors with Latin American roots living outside Latin America only partially reflect this hybridity. Rather, “soft multilingualism” (Brian Lennon) is the norm.

Analyzing examples of German literature, Yasemin Yildiz (Beyond the Mother Tongue) identifies this tension between multilingual realities on the one hand and the persistence of the monolingual paradigm in society and literature on the other as “the postmonolingual condition.”

In this lecture, I will focus on contemporary texts which, to some degree, can be considered as “intercultural autobiographies” (Jan Hokenson), and where language choices are explicitly connected to questions of identity. By doing so, I intend to shed some light on the often paradoxical strategies through which Spanish speaking authors in the US shape their struggle towards literary expression.

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