



A Space for Translation: Thresholds of Interpretation

Presentation Details	
Title of Paper:	A Space for Translation: <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> and The Language of J.M. Coetzee
Speaker:	Maya KLEIN, PhD Candidate, Department of English and American Studies, Tel Aviv University
Abstract:	<p>This paper offers an exploration of the central role of translation and the multilingual aesthetic in Coetzee’s <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> (1980). Translation in this novel operates in both real and metaphorical space, perhaps even as a conflation of the two. Firstly, the novel is set in a fictitious geographical location on the outskirts of an unnamed empire, and translation is instrumental to the colonial encounter depicted. Secondly, translation also hovers in the aesthetic realm, evident by the unique language of the novel, which has been described as “already translated” and the various examples of “translation with no original” present in the novel.</p> <p>A thematic analysis of translation within the novel will demonstrate its gendered nature and detail the manner in which translation both determines and is complicit in the colonial encounter. Emphasis will be placed on the role of translation in regulating and exerting power, including the magistrate’s view of the sexualized female body as a text to be deciphered.</p> <p>Secondly, I will examine the unique way that this allegorical novel both resists and lends itself to translation. A consideration of the novel’s language will include the ambiguous features that may facilitate its translation (such as lack of regional dialect) or complicate it. Attention will also be paid to Coetzee’s own remarks on translation and <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>. I will argue that the resistance to allegory, as identified by Derek Attridge, also mirrors Coetzee’s multilingual aesthetic, going beyond language and at the same time, being trapped within it.</p> <p>Reference Coetzee, J.M. (1980). <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>. New York: Penguin Books.</p>

Author's Biography

Maya KLEIN is a PhD candidate at The Shirley and Leslie Porter School of Cultural Studies at Tel Aviv University. Her research in literary theory incorporates major tenets of translation theory, focusing on three twentieth-century multilingual writers and the presence of translation within their work as an aspect of their ethical visions. It is the first study combining these three writers, who share many of the same literary influences and a background in translation and literary criticism. Her study centers on works by Cynthia Ozick, W.G. Sebald, and J.M. Coetzee, emphasizing the various manners their works exhibit performances of translation (intra-textual translation), outlining their multilingual aesthetics and addressing the ethical demands each writer places on the reader.