10 June 2013: Travel and Theory II

Readings

Main discussion points

- Hermeneutics: what do you have to do to something to make it mean something else? Ideas of the remote and ideas of the primitive: different aspects for Synge on Aran Subjectivity as conditioning factor for writers and artists (e.g. here Synge and Gauguin). Came into anthropology in 1970s with the publication of Malinowski’s diaries.
- Synge/Gauguin vs anthropologists: similar motivations but the anthropologists’ approach is scientific; they seek to categorise and their subjectivities don’t matter. Think about comparison between anthropology and New Criticism: the culture itself vs the text itself. Interesting also to note that Cambridge is shared centre of departure for early anthropologists and for New Crit—Leavis and Malinowski etc. Can a wider metaphor be extracted from this comparison—that each project shares ideas to get at a truth; believes there is a truth.
- Cave: archipelagic model for his argument, Montaigne at centre with things surrounding/emerging
- Hofmeyr: also takes a geographical model, following Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress but it is specificity which she gets at. She emphasises materiality: the material object in its social relations.
- Is there something in a structuralist approach—take e.g. Ibsen’s Doll’s House and the structure to which people respond/which they interpret: in the UK, gender conflict; in China, social conflict etc
- But where is Bunyan—the thing itself—when there are so many approaches to it? Is the text indivisible from the experience of the text? But what is the experience? How do you talk about it?
- Cf Belgian scholars under Lefebvre: what does it mean to have read Shakespeare? What is the experience of Shakespeare? Cf the example of Poland and 27 translators of Shakespeare.
- Is it in Bunyan the fact that there is a central metaphor—that of pilgrimage—to respond/relate to? Cf Arabic title—“The Journey of a Christian” What are the elements of e.g. Hamlet that you need for it to be Hamlet? Cf the export of Sherlock Holmes: the deerstalker, pipe and magnifying glass were the inventions of a US illustrator
- Interpretation—categories—accompany the text
- But even in a culture (e.g. Sherlock Holmes in Britain) there is not a stable idea—there is only the usage of it
- So it’s a question of emphasis: different features of a text are important in different places
- Still a potential original in the sense that Sherlock Holmes is British Have any texts transcended this? Maybe Pilgrim’s Progress. But is that because it has a didactic purpose? Certainly that was true for the missionaries.
So is it that Bunyan is not really English lit but belongs to Christian proselytising? So that is what a text is for—the conditions of use determine its travel?

Cf the 16th C idea of an “open” translation of the Bible—the idea of getting it/making it open for people and their lives.

Translators of the Bible: St Jerome and his reception—resistance to Bible in the “new” Latin. Cf to references to translations of the Bible “from the original English”

Translations of the Bible into Arabic—cavalier about the languages worked from—the motivation is millenarianism, an anxiety simply to get the word of God out there as quickly as possible. Almost the opposite kind of project: taking the “true” text to “primitive” peoples and giving them something which is not true, vs the attempt to go and discover, observe and recover something from the “primitive”.