

“On Not Translating Africa” Jennifer N. Makumbi and the Production of Literary Value

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17:00 hours s.t.

Centre for British Studies
Mohrenstr. 60, 10117 Berlin

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Registration necessary at: events.gbz@hu-berlin.de

This talk engages with the role of Jennifer M. Makumbi's works in the world literary field, focusing on the ways in which they are imbued with value by critics, publishing houses, translators and prize committees. What role do vernacular speech, multilingualism and non-translation play in the construction of literary value? Makumbi explicitly states that she refuses to translate Africa for western, metropolitan readerships and is primarily writing for African readers. While vernacular elements and untranslatables have long since been seen as central to the articulation of aesthetic value, it seems that they are no longer incompatible with the logic of the book market. How does Makumbi, writing from the Northern metropole of Manchester, position herself as a Ugandan author and how does she energize African contexts, vernacular speech, myth and folklore to construe her author-persona in the world literary field?

Birgit Neumann is Chair of Anglophone Literatures and Translation Studies at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf; she is founder and director of the Centre for Translation Studies. Her research engages with the poetics and politics of Anglophone world literatures, intermediality and postcolonialism, memory studies and cultural translation. She is the author of books on Canadian fictions of memory (de Gruyter, 2005), on nationalism in 18th-century British literature (WVT, 2009) as well as on verbal-visual configurations in postcolonial literatures (Routledge, 2020).

Due to changing COVID-19 restrictions, the details and the format of the events are subject to change: www.gbz.hu-berlin.de