RETHINKING EKOMO BY MARÍA NSUÉ ANGÜE: AN EQUATOGUINEAN CHALLENGE TO SPANISHNESS

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Ekomo by María Nsué Angüe has widely been considered the first post-independence feminine novel of Equatorial Guinea.1 Scholars from three continents have tried to define this literary work linguistically, culturally, politically, structurally and thematically. Yet I maintain that the value of this piece lies not in its ability to fall into old conventions rather in its capacity to break with literary boundaries and fixed identities. The work does not preoccupy itself with affirming rigid identities rather it examines themes of colonization, patriarchy and ethnic identity in a hybrid fashion by focusing on the moments of encounters (Homi K. Bhabha’s so-called liminal spaces)2 of competing identities. Demonstrating that identities do not exist in monolithic isolation rather in constant interactions, redefinitions and (re)creations.

In Ekomo, I explore gender, ethnic, race, national and linguistic identity issues and aim to demonstrate that the book does not indoctrinate the reader with a particular and well-defined perspective on feminism, Equatoguinean identity and “Africaness.” Nor is it trapped in the Modern discourse of dialectic opposites introduced by Cartesian thought and promulgated through the binaries established by colonial discourses. Instead the author employs the text as a space to examine the intersection of borders and boundaries of various identities.

The book’s inquiry into identity and its rejection of rigid categories join seamlessly with emerging Post-colonial theory. The concept of “connected histories” developed by Sanjay Subrahmanyanam is rearticulated in Gurminder Bhabra’s Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination,3 in which Bhabra reexamines the phenomenon of European Modernity and concludes that Modernity is not inherent nor exclusive to Europe. Using the novel’s implicit inquisitive model and these explicit theories I will examine how this “Equatoguinean” work written and published in Spain by an exiled Equatoguinean female author can begin to put into question not only African hybrid identities but also can propose a postcolonial view of Spain as a hybrid Afro-Hispanic society and culture. Demonstrating that a European identity is not inherent in Spanish culture rather it is created through active processes of “Europeanization” and “De-africanization.”4 In conclusion I study the implications of this pluriversality in contemporary Spanish society that struggles with the racial and cultural anxiety brought on by an augmentation in African immigration.

2 Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture. (New York: Routledge, 1994).