Polyglot Joyce: Fictions of Translation

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Translations are extensions of original texts that offer new perspectives and make us realize things that we would hardly notice without them. Hence the interest of parallel readings of literary works in one or more translations. In his well-written study, Polyglot Joyce, Patrick O'Neill defends this theory with a vengeance. He argues, radically, that we have now moved on from an 'author-centred prototextual model' to a 'reader-centred metatextual model' and finally to a text-centred 'macrotextual model', in which 'all the possible translations combine with their original to constitute a new but ultimately inaccessible "original"--authority recenred in the polyglot text' (p. 10). This sounds somewhat metaphysical, since by definition no reader can grasp the macrotext, no lifetime being sufficient to master the languages in which a classic has been translated and then start working one's way through such incognita. Besides, this hypothesis could be applied to all kinds of texts, and may well be more revealing if brought to bear on popular literature, e.g. Mickey Mouse, where...

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Peter Turkson (1948–), Ghanaian Catholic cardinal. In addition to his native language, Fante, he speaks a number of other Ghanaian languages, as well as English, French, Italian, German, and Hebrew. He also knows Latin and Greek. Dikembe Mutombo (1966–), Congolese former basketball player. Speaks English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Tshiluba, Swahili, Lingala, and two other Central African languages. "James Joyce's writings have been translated hundreds of times into dozens of different languages. Given the multitude of interpretive possibilities within these translations, Patrick O'Neill argues that the entire corpus of Joyce's work - indeed, of any author's - can be re-"