

A STUDY OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN GUILLAUME OYONO MBIA'S
PLAYS

by

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List of abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this study:

DTS : Descriptive Translation Studies

HEST : His Excellency's Special Train

JNA : Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis

LTSSE : Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence

TC : Tertium Comparationis

TPUM : Trois Prétendant ... Un Mari

TSOH : Three Suitors: One Husband

UFN : Until Further Notice

Please note:

In this study the generic *he* is used to refer to both male and female.

Abstract

This thesis is focused on a study of translation strategies in Guillaume Oyono Mbia's plays. By using the sociological, formalistic and semiotic approaches to literary criticism to inform the analysis of the source texts and by applying descriptive models outlined within the framework of descriptive translation studies (DTS) to compare the source and target texts, the study establishes the fact that in his target texts Oyono Mbia, self-translating author, has produced a realistic and convincing portrait of his native Bulu culture and society depicted in his source texts by adopting the same default preservation and foreignizing strategy employed in his source texts. Oyono Mbia's works, his translation strategies and translational behaviour are situated in the context of the prevailing trend and attitude (from the sixties to date) of African writers writing in European languages and it is posited that this category of writers are in effect creative translators and that the strategies they use in their original compositions are the same as those outlined by translation scholars or effectively used by practitioners. These strategies enable the writer and the translator of this category of African literature to preserve the "Africanness" which is the essence and main distinguishing feature of that literature. Contrary to some scholars (cf. Bandia 1993:58) who regard the translation phenomenon evident in the creative writings of African writers writing in European languages as a process which is covert, semantic and secondary, the present study of Oyono Mbia's translation strategies clearly reveals the process as overt, communicative and primary. Taking Oyono Mbia's strategies as a case in point, this study postulates that since for the most part, the African writer writing in a European language has captured the African content and form in his original creative translation, what the translator simply needs to do is to carry over such content and form to the other European language. (301 words)

Key terms:

African literature in European languages, culture-specific elements, cushioning, default preservation strategy, descriptive translation studies, drama communication chain, drama text as incomplete entity, drama translation, formalistic approaches, performability, semiotic approaches, sociological approaches, speakability.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION | <i>Page</i> |
| 1.1. Background to the research problem and choice of corpus | 1 |
| 1.2. Statement of research problem | 3 |
| 1.3. Aims of the study | 4 |
| 1.4. Research methodology | 5 |
| 1.4.1. Descriptive aspect of the research | 6 |
| Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) | 6 |
| The role of norms in translation | 7 |
| 1.4.2. Analytical aspect of the research | 10 |
| 1.4.2.1. Sociological approaches to literary criticism | 11 |
| 1.4.2.2. Formalistic approaches to literary criticism | 12 |
| 1.4.2.3. Semiotic approaches to literary criticism | 13 |
| 1.5. Hypothesis | 14 |
| 1.6. Structure of the study | 14 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 16 |
| 2.1. Drama and drama translation | 16 |
| 2.1.1. Drama and theatre translation | 16 |
| 2.1.2. Performability and speakability | 21 |
| 2.1.3. The drama text as an incomplete entity | 26 |
| 2.1.4. Drama translation principles and strategies | 38 |
| 2.1.4.1. Drama translation principles | 38 |
| 2.1.4.2. Drama translation strategies | 43 |
| 2.1.5. Compatibility and integration of translated drama in the receiving culture | 50 |
| 2.1.6. Methodological framework for the comparative analysis of source and target text | 54 |
| 2.2. The source language system | 65 |
| 2.2.1. Socio-political context | 67 |
| 2.2.2. Literary context | 70 |
| 2.2.2.1. Historical perspective | 70 |
| 2.2.2.2. Literary and textual characteristics of Cameroonian drama | 75 |
| 2.2.2.3. Oyono Mbia's works and motivations | 80 |
| Oyono Mbia's educational background | 81 |
| Oyono Mbia's literary works and ideas | 81 |
| Oyono Mbia's communication strategies | 86 |
| Conclusion | 88 |

CHAPTER 3: THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL CATEGORIES

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3.1. Introduction | 90 |
| 3.2. On the definition of culture | 92 |
| 3.3. The centrality of culture in translation | 99 |
| 3.4. Translation principles and strategies | |
| for the translation of cultural categories | 106 |
| 3.4.1. Translation principles for the transfer of cultural categories | 110 |
| 3.4.2. Translation strategies for the transfer of cultural categories | 113 |
| 3.4.2.1. Adaptation | 117 |
| 3.4.2.2. Borrowing | 122 |
| 3.4.2.3. Communicative translation | 127 |
| 3.4.2.4. Addition | 128 |
| 3.4.2.5. Omission | 130 |
| 3.4.2.6. Globalization and localization | 130 |
| 3.4.2.7. Compensation | 131 |
| 3.4.2.8. Footnotes | 132 |
| 3.5. Conclusion | 135 |

CHAPTER 4: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| | 137 |
| 4.1. Introduction | 137 |
| 4.2. Synopsis and structure of Oyono Mbia's plays | 139 |
| 4.2.1. <i>Trois Prétendants ... Un Mari</i> | 139 |
| 4.2.2. <i>Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis</i> | 141 |
| 4.2.3. <i>Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence</i> | 142 |
| 4.3. Micro-textual analysis of Oyono Mbia's source texts | 144 |
| 4.3.1. Ideophones | 145 |
| 4.3.2. Distorted words and names | 147 |
| 4.3.3. Loan words from Oyono Mbia's native Bulu language | 149 |
| 4.3.4. Proverbs and wise sayings | 154 |
| 4.3.5. Swearwords | 160 |
| 4.3.6. Allusions and symbolic signifiers | 163 |
| 4.3.7. Repetition | 170 |
| 4.3.8. Forms of address | 172 |
| 4.3.9. Stylistic calques | 176 |
| 4.4. Macro and micro-textual comparison of Oyono Mbia's | |
| source and target texts | 180 |
| 4.4.1. Macro-textual comparison | 180 |
| 4.4.2. Micro-textual comparison | 182 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION | 197 |
| 5.1. Introduction | 197 |
| 5.2. Oyono Mbia's plays in the context of the prevailing literary trend and attitude of Cameroonian and African writers | 197 |
| 5.3. Oyono Mbia's source text and target text strategies | 206 |
| 5.4. Reception of Oyono Mbia's target texts in the target culture | 209 |
| 5.5. Oyono Mbia's target texts as page and stage translations | 213 |
| 5.6. Oyono Mbia's strategies in the mainstream of those Outlined by translation scholars | 217 |
| 5.7. (In)Consistency in Oyono Mbia's translational behaviour | 218 |
| 5.8. Conclusion | 222 |
| CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION | 224 |
| 6.1. The aims of the study | 224 |
| 6.2. Contribution of the present study | 226 |
| 6.3. Suggestions for further research | 229 |
| LIST OF SOURCES | 231 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the research problem and choice of corpus

Research carried out so far on the translation of African literature has tended to remain too broad in perspective with the result that the focus on each of the literary genres has been rather sketchy. More significant contribution to the development of African literature could be made and deeper insights into that literature gained by carrying out specific, detailed and in-depth studies on the translation of each of the genres.

In this regard, it is worth noting that translation activity as well as theoretical reflection on the translation of African literature has so far focused mainly on the novel and short stories at the expense of the other literary genres. Having noted this imbalance in the course of their research, some researchers (cf. Nintai 1993) have recommended that translation practitioners and theorists should increasingly orient their activities towards the other literary genres such as drama and poetry. By focusing on drama, this study seeks to respond to that recommendation.

Also worthy of note is the fact that literature of the African continent is often broadly referred to as “African literature”. However, this perception needs to be refined considering that literature is usually both region – and country – specific. That is why drama critics (cf. Yemi 1981, Mateso 1986, Eyoh 1988, Butake and Doho 1988, Pavis 1992, Fischer Lichte 1996) and drama translation scholars and researchers (cf. Lefevere 1970, Ade 1986, Aaltonen 1993, 2000; Laliberté 1995) maintain that a play is essentially culture-bound and meant essentially for performance - that “a theatre production is always closely tied to its own specific audience in a particular point in time” (Aaltonen 2000:8), and that the translator of a play “must aspire to reproduce in the target language both the linguistic and especially the cultural elements which constitute its stageworthiness” (Edebiri 1993:577).

These assertions definitely place the cultural dimension of plays at the centre of drama translation difficulties. Given that the cultural elements in plays are most often country-specific, it is obvious that for a study to provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of the African reality, it is necessary for all these specificities to be considered.

It is as a result of the above considerations therefore that my research, while considering the broad problems of translating African drama from French into English, will focus more specifically on the particular problems of translating Cameroonian drama from French into English and vice versa.

However, given that there are very many types of drama that exist in this country (for instance, sacred dramas that include ancestral or myth plays, masquerades, ritual drama; secular dramas that include civic dramas, dance and song dramas; mixed dramas), each with its own distinct characteristics, I have further limited the scope of this study to secular drama, which is the drama type written by Guillaume Oyono Mbia, the playwright chosen for research in this study.

The choice of the above author amongst many other Cameroonian playwrights is for several reasons. Firstly, according to certain literary and drama critics (Eyoh 1988:130–1), until Guillaume Oyono Mbia's *Trois prétendants, un mari* was produced in 1959, contemporary Cameroonian drama was virtually nonexistent and his influence on the Cameroonian dramatic scene has since been profound and extensive. He is considered Cameroon's best known playwright to date, and his *Trois prétendants, un mari* was considered in 1988 to rank as Africa's second most performed play, after Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (Eyoh 1988:130).

Secondly (but more importantly from a translation perspective), he is the only Cameroonian playwright who is both director and translator of his own plays. For a country like Cameroon which has two official languages, namely English and French, it is interesting and worth noting that unlike the case of novels and short stories where there exists a fairly rich translated corpus, there are as yet no translated and published

versions of plays written by the other Cameroonian playwrights either in English or French.

Thirdly, *Three Suitors, One Husband* (the translated version of *Trois Prétendants un mari*), has become an integral part of the literary polysystem of the Cameroon Anglophone culture. It is in the syllabuses of Anglophone schools at both the secondary, high school and university levels. Several aspects of it (socio-political, anthropological, literary, stylistic, etc.) constitute the subject of numerous research papers, postgraduate dissertations and other scholarly write-ups in English by Anglophones (cf. Atebong 1972, Mbunwe-Samba 1972, Abety 1975, Butake 1988, Eyoh 1988, etc.). We might infer from this the success and acceptability of Oyono Mbia's translations in the receiving culture.

Finally, considering that his source texts are deeply rooted in his native Bulu culture and society (Lee Nicholas 1981: 236-7), that the literary and stylistic devices in his plays are culture-bound and constitute the leitmotiv of his art, and that his target texts enjoy considerable success and acceptability in the receiving culture, we deemed it worthwhile to examine the translation strategies in his translated versions.

The above culture-oriented considerations thus led to the research problem addressed in this study as stated below.

1.2. Statement of the research problem

The translation from French into English and vice versa of certain cultural categories from African languages, especially as evidenced in literature, has often been a cause for concern particularly when the translator has insufficient or no knowledge of the source culture. In effect, as Edström (1991:159) rightly asserts, “cultural concepts are embodied in words which we may never fully understand if we are not bred in the culture and society that has moulded and shaped the language”. Cultural concepts are thus represented by signs and symbols of the world in the source text confronting the translator with a world which is often very different from the one to be created in the target text. Would a writer and translator of his own texts therefore be in a better

position to offer more appropriate renderings in the target texts of cultural categories contained in the source texts, since he is expected to be familiar with the source culture?

This main problem could be more concretely articulated by relating it to a given context. For instance, in the specific context of Cameroon as exemplified by the translated plays of Oyono Mbia, what can be considered to constitute the culture-bound stylistic and literary devices that Oyono Mbia has used in his source texts to produce an authentic, vivid and convincing portrait of his native Bulu/Cameroonian society? Are such devices found in his target texts? What translation strategies has he used to convey them in the target texts? What are the possible motivations for his choice of these strategies? How can his strategies be appraised in the light of those that have been proposed by various translation theorists and researchers for handling such devices?

These questions determine and give focus to the aims of the present study as stated below.

1.3. Aims of the study

This study aims to:

- identify and analyse the culture-bound stylistic and literary devices used by Oyono Mbia in his source texts;
- perform a comparative text analysis of his source and target texts in order to determine the strategies used to convey the various devices in the target texts;
- compare these strategies with those that have been proposed by translation theorists and researchers for handling such aspects;
- seek possible explanations that underlie Oyono Mbia's choice of strategies.

The achievement of these aims, it is hoped, will shed more light on what some translators (self-translating authors) actually do when they translate.

Secondly, it is hoped that the attainment of the above aims, will enable us to better understand the constraints that dictate their action.

1.4. Research methodology

In this section I outline the procedure followed in the present study in order to achieve the stated aims.

At the macrolevel, I begin by situating and examining the works that are the subject of this study within the broader cultural context that shaped their production. This context comprises the author's background, his ideas and literary works as well as his socio-political environment. These aspects definitely inform the researcher on the social, cultural, political and literary and textual constraints that influenced Oyono Mbia. It is indeed familiarity with the author, the Cameroonian and, more specifically, the Bulu people's culture and idiom that adequately informs the researcher about the author's intent and the peculiar nature and coloration of Cameroonian drama from the Centre and South Provinces of Cameroon (inhabited by the Bulus) distinct from the other regions of this country. This background study therefore sheds light on how in his plays Oyono Mbia achieves a transposing of Bulu/Mvoutessi culture, habits, practices and traditional thought patterns into French/English. It equally sheds light on how his European/Western or metropolitan exposure probably informed the form, shape and language of his drama as well as the living experience captured in it. Data pertaining to these aspects is gathered from what is explicitly stated in the sources consulted or inferred from the information contained in them.

At the microlevel, in order to present a coherent, systematic and consistent picture of the translation strategies used by Oyono Mbia in his target texts, I have adopted an approach which is descriptive and analytical.

1.4.1. Descriptive aspect of the research

With regard to the descriptive aspect of our research, the present study draws on the domain of descriptive translation studies (DTS), in particular, as concerns the adoption of a framework for the comparison of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts and the description of translation strategies employed. In order therefore to foreground the descriptive approach used in this study, it is necessary to briefly expose the principles underlying DTS.

1.4.1.1. Descriptive Translation Studies

Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) broadly refers to a non-prescriptive type of translation study distinct from the prescriptive approaches that largely dominated the study of translation up to the 1980s. In these prescriptive approaches scholars discuss translation problems in the light of a specific theory by prescribing "what translation in general should be" and then developing "a taxonomy of rules and laws for all translations" (Heylen in Kruger 2000:29) which translators are expected to follow or adhere to. They are based on the notion of equivalence (thought to ensure accuracy) between source and target texts in which the source text is considered primary while the target text, which is only secondary and derivative, should reproduce all aspects of it. They are thus characterized by a judgmental and prescriptive attitude whereby translations are thought of and evaluated in terms of binary oppositions of "faithful" or "free", "right" or "wrong", "good" or "bad", etc. Descriptive approaches on the contrary go beyond the sole concerns of equivalence and take into account the socio-historical conditions influencing the translator's activity, thereby offering a clear insight into the mechanisms that allow translations to function in the receiving culture.

The distinction between descriptive and prescriptive approaches has been clearly outlined by Kruger (2000:39):

Contrary to prescriptive theorists who theorize about translation and then attempt to prove these theories in practice, descriptive translation theorists start with a practical examination of a corpus of texts and systems and then attempt to extrapolate the norms and constraints operating on those texts in a specific culture and

at a specific historical moment. In other words, the aim of DTS theorists is not to prescribe how translations ought to be done, but to observe how translations have been done in practice (in a specific culture and at a specific historical moment).

The notion of norms and constraints as highlighted in the above citation stands out as important and central to DTS.

1.4.1.2. The role of norms in translation

In a descriptive framework (such as the one adopted in this study) norms are understood not to mean “orders or prescriptions which are issued” to be obligatorily followed (Bartsch 1987:76) but to be descriptive of particular practices guiding behaviour within a given community, sub-group or domain of activity. Translation norms can thus be considered as the constraints at both the macro and microlevels (i.e. at the extratextual and textual levels) that determine and influence the decisions as well as the translation strategies that the translator adopts among the possible options at his disposal.

The role of norms in translation can be underscored both from the standpoint of the translator and from that of the translation scholar. As pointed out by Toury (1980:57) and Kruger (2000:36), from the translator’s point of view, every instance of decision-making in the translation process is governed by certain norms and from the researcher’s standpoint norms are a category for descriptive analysis of translation phenomena. Aaltonen (1996:182) equally reiterates the central role of norms in the translation phenomenon when she asserts that “even though manipulation and rewriting are the gist of translation, translational behaviour is not erratic. Rather, it is always governed by norms and conventions”. In the present study the characteristics of Oyono Mbia’s translations are determined, analyzed and his translation strategies described in the light of the source text and target text norms and constraints that probably influenced and shaped them. In other words, starting with a practical examination of the corpus of Oyono Mbia’s translated texts, we analyze his translation strategies and attempt to extrapolate the norms and constraints operating on the texts at

the time they were translated. In this regard, Gideon Toury's (1980:53-56) distinction between initial, preliminary and operational norms is of relevance.

An initial norm has to do with what governs the basic choice that the translator makes between the requirements of the source language/culture and those of the target language/culture. In other words, a translator may decide to subject himself "either to the original text with its textual relations and the norms expressed by it and contained in it, or to the linguistic and literary norms active in the target language and in the target literary polysystem" (Toury 1980:54). If the translator subjects himself to the source text, the translation will tend to subscribe to the norms of the source text, and through them to the norms of the source language and culture. Such a choice results in what has been characterized as "adequate" translation (Even-Zohar 1990:46). If, on the other hand, the translator subjects himself to the norms in the target culture, the result would be what has equally been referred to as an "acceptable" translation (Even-Zohar 1990:46). Consequently, adherence to source norms determines a translation's adequacy as compared to the source text while subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability.

Viewed from this perspective, the notion of initial norm implies two extreme poles in which adequacy and acceptability are set at each end. From a theoretical and methodological point of view, it is deemed appropriate in this study to retain this opposition and treat the two poles as distinct in principle, as this enables us to more effectively distinguish and account for the translator's compromises differing in type or in extent. In effect, in practice, actual translation decisions, the results of which the researcher seeks to confront, necessarily involve some ad hoc combination of, or compromise between the two extremes implied by the initial norm.

Preliminary norms for their part have to do with translation policy in a given culture: what works of literature are deemed by publishers and others to be worth translating, and whether or not these can be translated through an intermediate language. Preliminary norms thus involve questions of social, cultural, economic and political policy.

Operational norms “direct actual decisions made during the translation process” (Toury 1980:54). They include all the norms that affect the matrix of the text, its segmentation and verbal formulation. They are textual norms and are generally either linguistic/stylistic or specifically literary (determining appropriate genres etc.).

On the whole, it may be said that the role of norms in translation and their implication in a descriptive framework implies that, on the one hand, the translator’s strategic decisions and decisions of detail and, on the other, the researcher’s considerations are clearly oriented towards the target language and culture. Toury (1985, 1995) in effect stresses the fact that a translation is a translation in the target culture and not the source culture. Consequently, the norms defining its acceptability range are primarily target-culture norms. In other words, even though some translation norms may have their origin in the source culture and in the intercultural state inhabited by the translator (as stressed by Pym 1992:163f; also cf. Chesterman 2000:59), it is the target culture which nevertheless confirms translation status.

The exploitation of the notion of translation norms in this study thus enhances the achievement of our fourth objective of determining the possible motivations that underlie Oyono Mbia’s choice of translation strategies in the target texts (cf. 1.3).

Thus, concerning the analysis of the target texts proper and as Kruger (2000:10) adequately points out, using DTS to inform the analysis of translated drama (as is the case in this study) “ensures that the translated product is used as the means by which to investigate the translation process and the function of translations”. Consequently, DTS ensures that:

Instead of providing guidelines for the next translation to be made and passing judgment on any number of existing ones, ... the translated text [is taken] as it is and [an attempt is made] to determine the various factors that may account for its particular nature. This position implies that the researcher has to work without preconceived notions of what actually constitutes ‘translation’ or where exactly the dividing line between translation and non-translation is to be drawn, for such notions would inevitably reveal themselves to be normative and restrictive (Hermans 1985, in Kruger 2000:10).

She further points out that in the framework of DTS attention is focused on the completed translations as elements in a larger system where the systemic constraints dictate how texts are translated.

However, given that DTS provides a rather broad framework for translation criticism and in the case of this study does not provide us with adequate and specific literary analytical tools, we have complemented it with tools from the sociological, formalistic and semiotic approaches to literary criticism discussed below. A more detailed review of the descriptive methods for the comparative analysis of source and target texts proposed by Ladouceur (1995) and Kruger and Wallmach (1997), which we have adopted for the macro and micro analysis in this study, is presented in Chapter 2, par. 1 below.

1.4.2. Analytical aspect of the research

Concerning the analytical aspect of the research, literary translation scholars and researchers (cf: Van den Broeck 1985, Krause 1993, Gaddis Rose 1977, 1997; Bassnett & Lefevere 1988, Boase-Beier & Holman 1999) have established a definite and direct correlation between literary analysis and literary translation. In this respect, translating literature has rightly been described as a kind of critical intercourse with the literary work since it has been observed that such translation implies a form of criticism of its original (Van den Broeck 1985:61).

In effect, the literary translator is an informed, attentive reader and literary critic who is sensitive to the relation between the source language text and the linguistic and cultural environment in which it was exposed. The literary translator will:

Want to know what role SL audience expectations and understanding played in the original writer's concern to earn the approval of his or her readers. Was the SL text, for example, perceived as representative of its genre or typical of its time, or did it, perhaps, without external commentary, stand out against its literary and cultural context as special? It is no bad thing for the translator to be aware, too, in so far as this is ever possible, of authorial intentions and of the particular personal constraints under which the author was operating. Was he or she concerned

[...] to communicate something to the reader whilst at the same time hiding it from the censor? And did the chosen form [...] emerge out of the impossibility of saying directly all that might have been expressed had social and political circumstances been different?” (Boase-Beier and Holman, 1999:8)

According to the above scholars, the translator may further ask questions with respect to the author’s overriding aims and, if necessary, with respect to the hierarchy of those aims to be taken into consideration and mapped on to the target text. Finally, it could be useful for the translator first of all to find out the extra-literary concerns that might have played a part in the author’s desire to release the result of his creative activity into the world.

In order to address these questions with respect to Oyono Mbia’s plays, in this study therefore, a literary analysis is first of all carried out of Oyono Mbia’s source texts from the standpoint of the sociological, formalistic and semiotic approaches to literary criticism. It is thus necessary to briefly discuss each of these approaches.

1.4.2.1. Sociological approaches to literary criticism

Scholars have long been interested in the ties between a literary work of art, the writer and the social milieu, and very often their studies contain implicit judgments based on those associations (Scott 1962:126). They have sufficiently demonstrated that the relations of a literary work of art to society are vitally important, and that the investigation of these relationships may organize and deepen one’s aesthetic response to the work of art considering that a literary work of art is not created in a vacuum. In effect, it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community of which s/he is an important and articulate part.

Ellis (1989:53) has referred to this social dimension of the literary text as “the relevant context of a literary text”. He asserts that the question of the relevant context of a literary text is an important one, because it is the basis of the more familiar question of what knowledge is necessary for the understanding of a literary work of art. He maintains that criticism should make the literary work more understandable by recreating the original circumstances of its composition such as the historical situation

in which the author wrote and the response of the contemporary audience. More specifically, the relevant context comprises biographical, social, historical as well as other relevant facts and information necessary for the understanding of the literary text and from which the intent of the text can be inferred.

In line therefore with the considerations of sociological approaches the original circumstances of composition of Oyono Mbia's plays examined in our research are recreated by investigating and eliciting information on Oyono Mbia's background and ideas as well as his literary and socio-political context (cf. 2.2 below).

1.4.1.1 Formalistic approaches to literary criticism

Formalistic approaches which are also frequently referred to as aesthetic, textual or ontological approaches (Scott 1962:179), consider that a literary piece exists in its own way, with its own kind of life. The focus is on its "literariness, i.e. that which makes a given work a literary work" (Newton 1989:21). These approaches concentrate on the aesthetic quality of the work and are chiefly concerned with the internal analysis of the work of art which calls for a close textual study. The literary critic effects such a close study by asking and finding answers to the following questions: What is the literary work? What is its structure? What are the elements of this structure and what are their artistic functions? What is its genre, plot, theme, motif, hero, etc.? What is its rhythm, melody, tone, etc.? What are the figures of speech, literary and stylistic devices used? Concerning the latter list of elements, Jakobson (1989:26) further specifies that the focus should be on literary and stylistic devices or other devices which have become dominant in a literary text and taken on a defamiliarising role in relation to other devices or aspects of the text which are perceived in familiar or automatic terms. Totzeva (1999:26) on her part refers to such devices in the text as "aesthetic dominants". The problem for the translator is not only to retain and render them into the target language but first of all to recognize and select them. She points out that aesthetic dominants are not fixed in the text structures and as such it is a matter of interpretation.

It is thus necessary to also examine the corpus of this study from a formalistic point of view considering that the author intentionally chose this literary genre (i.e. drama and more specifically, comedy) instead of another to creatively and artistically express his views. In effect Oyono Mbia (1985) himself declares that “I chose comedy in order to sweeten the pills of social criticism; apart from the fact that it pulls a larger audience to a show...”.

1.4.2.3. Semiotic approaches to literary criticism

Drama critics and drama translation scholars (cf. Pavis 1976, Ubersfeld 1978, Elam 1980, Zuber-Skerritt 1988, Koustas 1988, Culler 1989) have sufficiently highlighted the importance of semiotics in drama criticism and translation. Semiotics investigates the various systems of signs that create the shared meanings that constitute any culture. Language being the fundamental sign system for human beings, non-verbal signs in drama/theatre such as gestures, forms of dress, numerous conventionalized social practices like eating, drinking, accessories, etc., can be considered akin to language in that they are constituted by signs which take on meaning and communicate by virtue of the relations between signs.

Semiotic analysis enables the reader or drama/theatre translator not only to identify the signs and situate them within the sign systems of the play but also to explain the interdependence of sub-systems and their role in drama/theatre communication.

Drama/theatre semiotics thus enables the mapping and subsequent transfer of the spatio-temporal setting, personal localization of the dramatic action, parameters of the communicative situation, relationing of the characters with each other in terms of their social identities (relative status, group membership and general attitudes obtaining between interlocutors), extralinguistic information, etc., all of which are articulated through a large repertoire of verbal (lexical, grammatical, prosodic, paralinguistic) and non-verbal codes.

Thus, by allowing for a multi-leveled and multi-layered reading of the drama text and analysis of the signs contained therein, the semiotic approach enables the drama

translator to take into consideration the greatest number possible of all the elements to be transferred to the target text and target audience/culture.

The sociological, formalistic and semiotic approaches to literary criticism informed our analysis and were therefore instrumental in our determination and choice of dominant elements in Oyono Mbia's plays retained for the macro and micro analysis and which we used as 'tertium comparationis' (cf. Kruger and Wallmach 1997:122-4) in the source – target text comparison of his plays.

The above research methodology will enable us to verify the following hypothesis which derives from the aims stated above (par.1.3).

1.5. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized in this study that in his translated versions Oyono Mbia has produced a convincing portrait of his traditional Bulu/Cameroonian society depicted in the source texts by preserving in the target texts the source text ideophones, swearwords, cushioned loan words, transliterated Bulu proverbs, distorted words and names (all of them culture-bound).

1.6. Structure of the study

Following the above introductory chapter, the rest of this study is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on drama and drama translation. Such review is necessary given that this study focusses on drama translation, and as such a detailed discussion of the translation phenomenon involving this literary genre is required.

In order to ensure a better understanding and more effective interpretation and analysis of the plays that constitute the corpus of this study, Chapter 2 also provides an overview of the literary and socio-political context in which the plays are set.

Chapter 3 reviews more specifically the literature on the translation of cultural categories in order to underpin the analysis of the central phenomenon investigated in this study, namely, the translation of literary and stylistic devices in Oyono Mbia's plays which are culture-bound and constitute the *leitmotiv* of his art.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the analytical framework and research procedures adopted in this study and effects a comparison of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts at the macro and micro levels using appropriate examples to highlight and describe the strategies used to transfer cultural categories from the source texts to the target texts.

Chapter 5 presents the research findings from the discussions and analysis effected in this study.

Chapter 6 makes a synthesis of the findings and briefly assesses the contribution of this study to the translation of Cameroonian drama in particular and African drama in general. Limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As stated above, this chapter provides an overview of the literature on drama and drama translation. Such review is considered necessary given that this study is focused on drama translation and as such a detailed discussion of the translation phenomenon involving this literary genre is deemed indispensable. Some of the major issues reviewed include: drama and theatre translation, terms such as ‘performability’ and ‘speakability’, the drama text as an incomplete entity, strategies that have been employed in drama translation, compatibility and integration of translated drama in the receiving culture, and a methodological framework that has been proposed by drama translation scholars within which drama translation can be studied.

In order to ensure a better understanding and more effective interpretation, description and analysis of Oyono Mbia’s plays that constitute the corpus of our study, this chapter equally provides an overview of the literary and socio-political context in which the plays are set.

2.1. Drama and drama translation

2.1.1. Drama and theatre translation

Kruger (2000:20) has pertinently systematized the abundant terminology often used in drama studies by drama specialists and drama translation scholars and practitioners alike. Some of the terms that she highlights and of which she outlines the differences or similarities in their meanings include: ‘play’, ‘script’, ‘dramatic text’, ‘theatre text’, ‘performance’ and *mise en scène*.

In a bid to stem further proliferation as well as the rather confusing and overlapping use of terms in this area and for reasons of consistency with the systematization of terminology already made by the above scholar, the present study has adopted her

systematized terminology. The problem of use of abundant and sometimes confusing and overlapping terminology in drama translation studies is discussed in greater detail below (cf. section 2.1.4).

In this study therefore ‘drama’ will be used together with ‘play’ to refer generically to either performance or printed copy. Aaltonen (2000:33) corroborates by saying that the double tie of dramatic texts to the literary and theatrical systems is present in the way in which the word ‘drama’ is used to refer to both a written text and a theatrical performance. Consequently, the expressions ‘drama translation’ (but not ‘theatre translation’), ‘translated drama’, ‘drama translator’ and ‘the translation of plays’ will be used. Similarly, the term ‘dramatic text’ will be used to refer to texts composed for the theatre and written prior to performance and not during or after rehearsals. The dramatic text which is the source text that the translator works from is distinguished from the performance text which is the textual material produced in the theatre during a performance. Finally, ‘performance’ will be used in this study to refer to the concretization of the dramatic text on stage and *mise en scène* to “the network of associations or relationships uniting the different stage materials into signifying systems, created both by production (the actors, the director, the stage in general) and reception (the spectators)” (cf. Kruger 2000:21).

Having provided the above explanations on the adoption of the already systematized terminology to be used in this study, it is worthwhile to examine the discussion on drama and theatre translation by drama translation scholars.

Zuber-Skerritt (1988:485), in an encompassing definition which includes both the translation of the written text into another language and its transformation into performance, states that “drama translation is defined as the translation of the dramatic text from one language and culture into another and the transposition of the original, translated or adapted text onto the stage”. This definition can be considered to place dramatic texts and theatre texts at the same level. While acknowledging, however, that, whereas the published drama text remains irrevocable and permanent, each theatre

performance based on this text is different and unique, she still asserts that “drama translation science must be concerned both with the text as the basis for the stage production and the individual theatrical performance”.

In contrast, Aaltonen (2000:33) for her part considers that theatre texts are not necessarily synonymous with dramatic texts and that the two may, in some cases, function as objects or elements in different systems and be governed by different systemic conventions. The distinction between the two systemic memberships is therefore made by calling dramatic texts used in the theatre ‘theatre texts’. She argues that although drama and theatre are interrelated concepts, they have to be kept separate as they do not refer to the same phenomenon. She therefore asserts that “‘drama translation’ as a term includes translation work for both the literary and theatrical systems, whereas ‘theatre translation’ is confined to the theatrical system alone”. For her, what is common to all theatre translation is that theatre texts are conceived for a particular context and for the immediate here and now. Thus drama translation is not necessarily synonymous with theatre translation given that not all translated drama is produced or intended for production on stage and some may exist only in the literary system as printed text. Similarly, many outdated dramatic texts have become elements of the literary system and are no longer produced on stage. In drama translation therefore the medium remains the same, that is, a written text is translated and published as a written text whereas in theatre translation in the theatrical system there is a change of medium whereby the text becomes an element of a performance on stage.

The distinction between drama and theatre translation as distinct from each other by some scholars can be considered to underline the distinction of translated drama texts into those meant to be read only and those meant to be performed. This dichotomy has been characterized by such terminology as ‘aesthetic’ (Bassnett 1991:105), ‘retrospective’ (Van den Broeck 1993:105), ‘page-oriented translation’ (Habicht 1993, in Kruger 2000:1-2), or ‘reading edition’ (Merino 2000:359) to refer to translated drama texts meant to be read only, on the one hand, and ‘commercial’ (Bassnett

1991:105), ‘prospective’ (Van den Broeck 1993:105), ‘stage-oriented translation’ (Habicht 1993, in Kruger 2000:1-2), or ‘acting edition’ (Merino 2000:359) to refer to translated texts meant to be performed on the other hand. Again Kruger (2000:1-2) has systematized this terminology (which as she points out is rather cumbersome) to ‘page translation’ and ‘stage translation’ respectively, which we have equally adopted in this study. Apart from being cumbersome, some of the terms could even be considered misleading and not quite transparent. ‘Aesthetic’ translation, which Bassnett (1991:105) ascribes to the history of the translation of poetry, perceives drama as essentially a literary text to be read on the page and translated as a literary text. The distinction between ‘aesthetic’ and ‘commercial’ translation by Bassnett therefore leaves the impression that a ‘commercial’ translation is inferior, void of aesthetic characteristics or quality and that it is not worthy of literary or scholarly appreciation and attention. Bassnett’s (1991:106) reaction against a prevailing situation, particularly in northern Europe, which led to what she qualifies as “a rapid turnover in speedy hack translations that could be adapted for performance in the new theatre by the emergent companies” and where “texts were [...] reshaped according to very basic needs—audience expectations, size of company, repertoire of performers, limitation of time and space, etc” is perhaps understandable. However, such a situation could be circumscribed in time and space and regarded as an exception rather than the rule. Besides, such translations could be considered as endowed with their own aesthetic qualities in conformity with and as dictated by the prevailing tastes, expectations, norms and constraints at the time. Furthermore, such translations were accepted, consumed and became integrated in the literary polysystem of the target cultures concerned.

In order for a ‘stage’ translation to attract the public and pull a large audience and guarantee its success it must have an appeal, such that after watching the play the audience can say it was a beautiful play. Consequently, rather than describing or characterizing page and stage translations as aesthetic and commercial respectively, it could be more elucidating for the drama translation scholar to regard both types as

endowed with aesthetic qualities but differing in the rewriting or recreation strategies used by the translator to meet different (though sometimes incompatible) objectives.

The incompatibility between page and stage translation has been underscored by Pavis (1992:145-146) who asserts that there are two opposite views on drama translation. According to the above scholar, “the tension between translating for the page or for the stage often involves separate distribution circuits which condition the translation strategies used”. For instance, he asserts that if the act of translating is considered as prior to and autonomous from the *mise en scène*, the translator will seek not to offer a specific interpretation of the text, thus attempting to convey the ambiguities and different readings in the translated playtext. This tendency is preferred in translations for the page, especially because of publishing policies and for financial reasons as one ‘authorized’ translation which can be used for many productions is bound to be more profitable than a translation per production.

However, as Pavis (1992:146) equally points out, even though it is very important to take into consideration the deliberate ambiguity in a text, no reading or translation can avoid ‘interpreting’ it. The very intention of trying to maintain the indeterminacy of the text implies a positioning towards it and will condition a specific reading, *mise en scène* and reception of the text. Consequently, translating the drama text can be seen as intrinsically related to *mise en scène* and therefore as an operation already containing an interpretation, a view which is usually defended by drama practitioners and theoreticians. Thus, Pavis (1992:146) has asserted that “translation or *mise en scène*: the activity is the same; it is the art of selection among the hierarchy of signs”. While corroborating with this, Espasa (2000:52), however, specifies that it is not to deny the existence of translations intended primarily for the page. These two views on drama translation thus generate two different types of translation according to two notions of performability, one more related to the text and the other to the specific style of presentation of the company. According to this scholar therefore, the ‘page/stage’ controversy is useless if the expression ‘page/stage’ reflects just different and sometimes compatible distribution circuits rather than two aesthetic and ideological

practices. Besides, it could further be argued that theoretical issues concerning the translation of plays meant only for reading could be conveniently resolved within the framework of the other genres destined essentially for reading such as the novel or the short story as illustrated in Figure 2 below. Consequently, the treatment of such plays ought not be specific to drama as a distinct genre.

2.1.2. Performability and speakability

Drama translation scholars have been interested in the specific characteristics of drama which distinguish this genre from the other literary genres and are thus expected to have an incidence on its translation. Prominent amongst such characteristics are performability and speakability. These two notions, often regarded as fundamental to and characteristic of drama, and which represent the gestic/action and oral/acoustic dimensions of the drama text, have animated discussion amongst drama translation scholars over the past three decades and indeed continue to sustain active debate amongst them.

As Bassnett (1991:99) has pointed out, in the twentieth century, the notion of a gestural dimension that is seen as inherent in the language of a theatre text has become an issue of considerable importance. And this is evident from the fact that many scholars and theoreticians (cf. Wellwarth 1977, Ubersfeld 1978, Elam 1980, Helbo 1987, Bassnett 1991, Moravkova 1993, Aaltonen 2000, Upton 2000) have successively, over the years, attempted to define the nature of the relationship between the verbal text on the page and the gestic dimension somehow embedded in the text waiting to be realized in performance.

Susan Bassnett stands out as one of the scholars who has consistently given this aspect in-depth and critical thought (cf. Bassnett 1980, 1991, 1998). The first issue raised by this eminent scholar with respect to the notion of performability is that of its definition. In effect, she asserts that:

the term 'performability' is frequently used to describe the undescribable, the supposedly existent concealed gestic text within the written. [...] It has never been clearly defined, and indeed does not exist in most languages other than English. Attempts to define the 'performability' inherent in a text never go further than generalized discussion about the need for fluent speech rhythms in the target text. What this amounts to in practice is that each translator decides on an entirely ad hoc basis what constitutes a speakable text for performers. There is no sound theoretical base for arguing that 'performability' can or does exist (Bassnett 1991:102).

Several years later, still rejecting the term performability altogether, she declares, "it seems to me a term that has no credibility, because it is resistant to any form of definition" (Bassnett 1998:95). In stating that in practice what this amounts to is that each translator acts on an entirely ad hoc basis she does not seem to sufficiently take into consideration the two important factors of general context and situational context surrounding any dramatic text or its translation. Interestingly, as she herself (cf. Bassnett 1991:109) points out, theatre anthropology has established the fact that all forms of theatre vary according to cultural conventions and what needs to be done in each case is to investigate and determine the elements that constitute performance in different cultures. In this connection, Melrose (1988, in Bassnett 1991:110), theatre analyst and translator, has argued that *gestus* is culture-bound and cannot be perceived as a universal. In research conducted, which involved working with a multicultural group in workshop conditions, she discovered that the gestic response to written texts depends entirely on the cultural formation of the individual performer, affected by a variety of factors, including theatre convention, narrative convention, gender, age, behavioural patterns, etc.

It is Bassnett's very assertive and categorical position with respect to the notion of performability as highlighted in the above quotations that have probably prodded and led other scholars to equally accord the notion in-depth reflection. Espasa (2000:49-61) for instance, and in contrast to Bassnett, examines and analyzes the notion of performability from textual, theatrical and ideological perspectives. In an attempt to clearly circumscribe the notion which Bassnett considers to be "resistant to any form

of definition”, she starts by synthesizing the terminology related to it. She thus asserts that, “from a textual point of view, performability is often equated with ‘speakability’ or ‘breathability’, i.e. the ability to produce fluid texts which performers may utter without difficulty” (Espasa 2000:49). Similarly, she points out that performability is synonymous to and interchangeable with theatricality, playability, actability and theatre specificity (cf. Espasa 2000:49-50). Having related all these terms to the notion of performability she asserts that performability is firstly conditioned by textual and theatrical practices, and that the following definition of theatricality by Pavis is perfectly applicable to performability:

Theatricality does not manifest itself [...] as a quality or an essence which is inherent to a text or a situation, but as a pragmatic use of the scenic instrument, so that the components of the performance manifest and fragment the linearity of the text and of the word (Pavis 1983, in Espasa 2000:52).

Definitely, the above view of theatricality or performability, contrary to Bassnett’s view on the same notion, opens up the debate on this issue. In effect, instead of viewing performability as the “gestic dimension embedded in the text, waiting to be realized in performance” (Bassnett 1991:99), Pavis and Espasa consider that it is not a quality or an essence inherent to the text but rather a pragmatic use of the scenic instrument. According to this “pragmatic use of the scenic instrument”, one cannot therefore talk about an abstract, universal notion of performability and this is bound to vary depending on the ideology and style of presentation of the company or the cultural milieu. It can thus be said that Bassnett’s (1991:102) preoccupation with the notion that “if a set of criteria ever could be established to determine the ‘performability’ of a theatre text, then those criteria would constantly vary, from culture to culture, from period to period and from text type to text type” need not be regarded as negative but could rather be considered a characteristic of drama and a constraint manifested by this genre which should be taken into consideration in its treatment by the drama translator.

Since drama is essentially rooted in a given culture, it could further be asserted that universal applicability of a set of criteria established to determine performability need

not be the main issue. Instead the focus could be on the predictability of such established criteria for a given culture, period or text type. For instance, in the Cameroonian context and more specifically in the case of Oyono Mbia's Bulu culture (as examined in this study), the immediate concern of the researcher could first of all be to establish performability criteria in Bulu drama and to determine the predictability and possible generalization of such criteria to all types of Bulu drama. Only subsequently could attempts be made to further extend the generalization to the entire country, i.e. to Cameroonian drama as a whole drawn from all the other diverse regions of this country. And pursuing his investigation still further, the researcher could keep broadening the circle, depending on the results obtained, to include the entire African continent and possibly the world. In other words, instead of seeking to determine universals of performability in all drama texts indistinctly, the researcher could attain more pertinent findings whose syntheses and applicability could be more readily and fruitfully related to the given culture, period and text type in question. Obviously, such a case by case approach as advocated here seems to confirm and justify the prevailing situation which Bassnett (1991:105) rather highlights with disapproval whereby "most of the existing literature on theatre translation consists of case studies of individual translations and translators, translators' prefaces [...]".

Espasa (2000:49-56) also further opens up perspectives on performability by asserting that performability involves negotiation and by placing theatre ideology and power negotiation at the heart of performability. For her, performability is thus shaped by consideration of status and the 'crucial' question from this perspective then becomes who has power in a theatre company to decide what is performable and what is ruled out as unperformable. However, analyses of the distinct roles of the drama translator and the director as well as the drama communication chain (cf. Section 2.1.3 below) seems to suggest that the above question is not that 'crucial' or does not even arise as it is evident that such power naturally and logically devolves upon the director and the company, and not the translator except the latter, after effecting the translation, were to go on to direct or perform the play himself.

The issue of the performability and speakability of the drama text may not be simply discarded as advocated by Bassnett (1991, 1998). In effect, as prominent Cameroonian playwright and scholar Bole Butake (1988:202) has pointed out, “the ultimate aim of writing a play is usually to see it performed even though it is not always that a play script which is even published finds its way on stage for a number of reasons”. In the same vein Makon (1988:262) asserts that:

Un texte théâtral qui n’a pas la possibilité d’être représenté scéniquement est semblable à un monde imaginaire, à un projet (aux grandes idées peut-être) dormant dans un tiroir. Il sera lu, relu, mais pas vécu. Il ne sera jamais un ‘moment de vie partagé’. Aussi, un créateur théâtral qui se veut constructeur, écrit-il dans la perspective d’une réalisation concrète pour un public. [A play that cannot be staged is like an imaginary world, a scheme (perhaps with lofty ideas) lying in a drawer. It will be read and reread but not lived. It will never be a ‘moment of shared life’. Thus, a playwright who wants to be constructive writes with the aim of seeing the play actually performed for a particular audience.]

In this regard, Totzeva (1999:81) has rightly described the play as “a text conceived for possible theatrical performance” and she too has examined the issue of performability or theatrical potential of the dramatic text from a semiotic perspective stating that “in recent semiotic approaches, theoreticians refer to theatricality as a relation between dramatic text and performance”. Theatrical potential is understood to mean the semiotic relation between the verbal and nonverbal signs and structures of the performance. She goes on to assert that:

in a dramatic text this semiotic relation is already to some extent present as a concept through given theatrical codes and norms, although the performance does not need to follow it. [...] Theatrical potential (TP) can be seen as the capacity of a dramatic text to generate and involve different theatrical signs in a meaningful way when it is staged. [...]. The problem for translation as an interlingual transformation of the dramatic text is therefore how to create structures in the target language which can provide and evoke an integration of nonverbal theatrical signs in a performance. (Totzeva 1999:81-82)

The form of the play itself thus demands dramaturgical capacity to work in several dimensions at once, incorporating visual, gestural, aural and linguistic signifiers into

the text. As Brater (1994) points out in his book *The Drama in the Text*, much of the material in drama often makes more sense when spoken and heard than when simply read and silently digested. It can thus be argued that when a play is written it contains the characteristics/qualities of performability and speakability which the drama translator equally strives to identify and to preserve in the translation, even when, for reasons deemed justified or not, such characteristics are subsequently subjected to various manipulations by the other persons intervening downstream in the drama communication chain. In effect, it is a well known reality that the original drama text itself as well as its translation are also affected by interpretation on the part of the director, actors and staging devices which influence the mood and atmosphere of the production, such as stage type, pace/movement, light/colour, costume, mask/make-up, music, etc. In this regard, Bassnett (1998:101) has also pointed out that there are a whole range of different ways of reading of the drama text: the director's reading which may involve a process of decision making and the constraints and possibilities offered by the text would be foregrounded in his/her interpretation of it; the actor's reading which would focus on a specific role such that an individual's role is highlighted and other roles perceived as secondary or instrumental; the designer's reading which would involve a visualization of spatial and physical dimensions that the text may open up; the dramaturgical reading and readings by any other individual or group involved in the production process; the rehearsal reading which is subsequent to initial readings and will involve an aural, performance element through the use of paralinguistic signs such as tone, inflexion, pitch, register, etc.

2.1.3. The drama text as an incomplete entity

Bassnett (1991:100) has argued that if the notion of the gestic text is maintained and considered as fundamental to theatre texts then "the task of the translator becomes super-human – he or she is expected to translate a text that a priori in the source language is incomplete, containing a concealed gestic text". And to her, what compounds discussion on this issue amongst scholars is the fact that whereas some consider that the responsibility for decoding the gestic text lies with the performers,

the assumption in the translation process is that this responsibility can and is often assumed by the translator sitting at a desk and imagining the performance dimension.

Demarcy (1973:369) and Koustas (1988:131) consider the *mise en scène* as the pivotal element around which all the other theatrical elements are structured and other scholars like Pavis (1989:25-45), maintain that where translation for the stage is concerned, “real translation takes place on the level of the *mise en scène* as a whole”, adding that:

Translation in general and theatre translation in particular has changed paradigms: it can no longer be assimilated to a mechanism of production of semantic equivalence copied mechanically from the source text. It is rather to be conceived of as an appropriation of one text by another. Translation theory thus follows the general trend of theatre semiotics, reorienting its objectives in the light of a theory of reception.

Bassnett (1991:100-101) disagrees with the above assertions by Pavis arguing that:

Pavis still insists on a hierarchical relationship, repeating the notion that ‘real’ translation takes place on the level of the *mise en scène*, in other words, that a theatre text is an incomplete entity. This means that his unfortunate interlingual translator is still left with the task of transforming unrealized text A into unrealized text B, and the assumption here is that the task in hand is somehow of a lower status than that of the person who effects the transposition of written text into performance [...]. Translation is and always has been a question of power relationships, and the translator has all too often been placed in a position of economic, aesthetic and intellectual inferiority.

In this section it is argued, contrary to Bassnett, that the drama text is indeed an incomplete entity. Furthermore, the issue of the status of the drama translator is viewed from a different perspective. It is asserted that, though operating at different stages in the drama communication chain, the communication roles of the drama translator and director are distinct but identical and that the relationship between these key persons ought to be viewed from the perspectives of collaboration and complementarity rather than of inferiority or superiority of status.

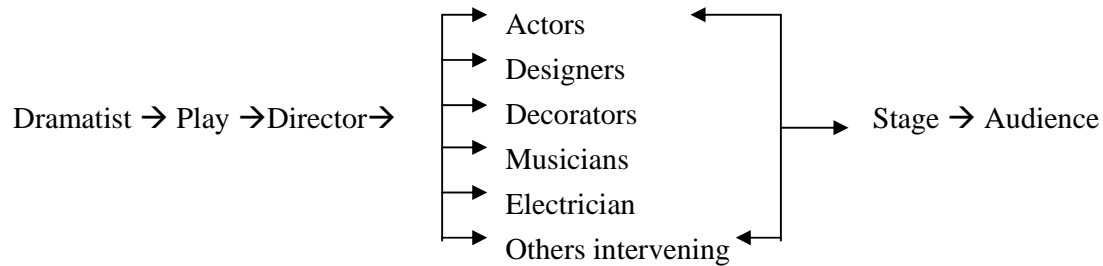
Drama specialists and scholars are unanimous in asserting that a play is an incomplete composition and that “le dramaturge écrit pour qu’un autre (ou une collection d’autres) parle à sa place et actualise par les gestes le sens de son œuvre” [The dramatist writes for another person (or group of persons) to speak in his place and actualize the message of his work through gestures] (Ubersfeld, 1996 :18). Thus, the dramatist writes the play for someone else or other persons to speak in his place and actualize the message of his work through action. In the same vein, Batty (2000:68) too has pointed out that “conventionally the playwright’s authorship of the theatrical event ends with the production of a written text and s/he is subsequently reliant upon groups of interpretative artists to complete the work and produce the performance text”. Similarly, Mbom (1988:197) asserts that:

L’oeuvre dramatique représentée n’appartient plus à son auteur initial seul. Elle est le produit collectif de quatre créateurs : l’auteur, le metteur en scène, les acteurs et les spectateurs. Ne pas comprendre cette réalité aujourd’hui, c’est continuer à se vautrer dans l’empirisme irresponsable et complètement dépassé. Une entente parfaite doit donc s’installer entre les trois premiers créateurs s’ils veulent conquérir le quatrième qui en toute évidence conserve le dernier mot car, la plupart du temps, de sa sanction dépend le succès ou l’échec des trois premiers. [The play when performed no longer belongs to the author alone. It is the collective product of four creators: the author, the producer, the actors and the audience. To ignore this reality, today, is to continue to wallow in irresponsible and completely superseded empiricism. There must, therefore, be a complete understanding and symbiosis between the first three creators if they want to win over the fourth creator who, quite obviously, has the last word, given that most of the time the success or the failure of the first three creators depends on his verdict.]

Thus, the actualization of the play, in other words, the concretization of the message and intention of the playwright as well as the aesthetic dimension of the play, depends on the concerted action of several intervening persons. The situation may be diagrammatically represented as follows in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1

Drama communication chain in a unilingual situation



Consequently, the problem of performability or speakability notwithstanding and whether the drama translator adequately resolves it or not in the written drama text he has translated, the fact remains that, contrary to a novel, a short story or a poem, in order for the translated version to be performed and for it to be consumed by the target audience just as in the case of the original, it must transit through the other persons involved in the drama communication chain (director, actors, designers, musicians, electricians, etc.) who manipulate, tailor and fine-tune it in accordance with the specific circumstances of each theatricalisation or in order to position the dramatic text within a proposed *mise en scène*. Zuber-Skerritt (1988:485) underscores this situation by asserting that “as well as being a literary text, the translation of drama as a performing art is mainly dependent on the final production of the play on the stage and on the effectiveness of the play on the audience. A theatre performance is subject to changes according to audience reaction, acting, performance, physical environment, and other factors”. Moravkova (1993:35) corroborates Zuber-Skerritt’s assertion by stating that:

L’auteur de la traduction n’est pas capable d’influencer complètement le résultat de sa création; c’est un des traits spécifiques du travail des traducteurs de drames. Ce sont les autres participants de la réalisation scénique, le metteur en scène, les acteurs, l’auteur de la musique, l’auteur des décorations, qui influencent le résultat final. [The author of the translation cannot completely influence the result of his creation; this is one of the specific characteristics inherent in the task of the drama translator. They are the other participants involved in the staging

of the play- the producer, the actors, the musician, the decorator- who influence the final result.]

It is for this reason therefore that one can argue that the distinctive characteristic of the dramatic text as an incomplete entity is fundamental to this genre and ought to be sufficiently highlighted by drama translation scholars and equally placed at the centre of the debate in the same stead as performability and speakability which have been the focus of drama translation scholars for over three decades. In this section, therefore, we analyze the distinct roles of the drama translator and director, and we examine in greater detail from a theoretical stand-point the communication situation of the drama translator and the director in order to highlight the implications on the communication of the contents and form of the play by both of them to the target audience.

Unlike the unilingual director, actors, other persons in the communication chain as well as the source text audience who are ignorant of the foreign culture and are unaware of the problems of intercultural communication, the drama translator is an expert in cross-cultural communication and his bicultural competence is a basic prerequisite for his work. He effects intercultural communication professionally to communicate the contents and beauty of what is being transmitted through the work and the intention/purpose behind the communicative act of the playwright. In professionally interrelating the two cultures, the translator is in a position to compensate for any possible inappropriate preconceptions and projections on the part of the target audience as well as the inadequate active behaviour patterns such preconceptions and projections may lead to.

Apart from the drama translator, the focus here is specifically on the director of the play (to the exclusion of the other persons in the drama communication chain) for several reasons. In effect, the various components of a theatrical performance involving the intervention of different artists (actors, designers, musicians, electricians, etc.) are brought together and coordinated by the director. Concretely, the production of a play goes through a stage of directing in which the director guides them by ensuring that all body movements, intonation, speech rhythm, lighting effects, stage

decorations, etc. conform to the entire discourse of the production and ties in with the various parts of the play (acts, scenes, tableaux, sequences, etc.) in order to communicate to the audience the effect intended by the dramatist. In this regard, Batty (2000:68) again points out that “the ultimate control over the manner in which the performance text will achieve its utterance lies, of course, in the hands of the director, and it is s/he who authors the play as it is offered to the public”.

In addition to the roles of coordination and directing ensured by the director, the latter can equally be considered the real interpreter of the play considering that his reading of the text and his manner of relating the various scenic elements is very determining in revealing the full potential of the message/effect of the play and its communication to the audience. The director interprets the words of the original play or those of the translated version into the language of movement and gesture, of voice and facial expression. In short, he ‘translates’ them into visible and audible human emotion.

Drama specialists have sufficiently underscored this central and prominent role of the director in the drama communication chain. Pavis (1987:246), for instance, asserts that “toute mise en scène est une interprétation du texte (ou du script), une explication du texte en acte ; nous n’avons accès à la pièce que par l’intermédiaire de cette lecture du metteur en scène” [Every production is an interpretation of the text (or the script), a transformation of the text into action. We only have access to the play through this reading of the producer]. Dort (1971:55-56) on his part equally emphasizes the primordial role of the director by stating that, “il devient l’élément fondamental de la représentation théâtrale: la médiation nécessaire entre un texte et un spectacle” [He is the fundamental element in the performance : the mediation necessary between the text and the performance]. The dramatist thus writes his play for a target audience but does not necessarily go on to direct or act it out for them. Rather, he entrusts the director and others with the responsibility of interpreting and communicating the work to the target audience through action.

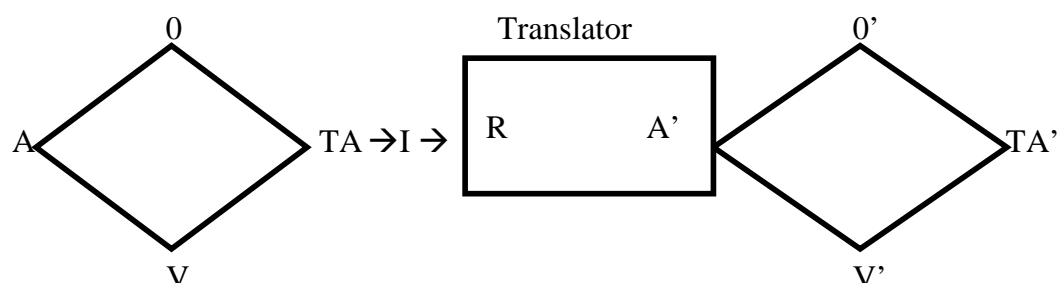
In effect, in drama communication the director occupies, in an intralingual situation, a mediating and communication position similar to that of the translator in an

interlingual situation. He is the intermediary between the playwright and the audience. He is the one who is responsible for interpreting the message/effect to be transmitted to the audience through staging and theatrical performance. To this effect he, in principle, in his conception and endeavour to stage the play strives to capture the dramatist's ideas and message in order to concretise them on stage. In so doing he ensures that it is his actors who are transformed in function of the play and not the play in function of the director, or else the outcome would be the performance of another work and no longer that of the dramatist interpreted. In this regard, his mission and responsibility towards the dramatist, the text and the audience could be considered identical to those of the drama translator.

However, in an interlingual communication situation the communication process is more complex. After translating the original incomplete/unrealized play, the drama translator (as the new author) is also obliged in his turn, just as the dramatist did with the original, to entrust the director with the responsibility of completing, actualizing and communicating through the voices and gestures of the actors the message/effect which he has painstakingly interpreted and re-expressed in the target language. It is evident in such a scenario as illustrated in Figure 3 below that the mediating communication roles of the drama translator and director between the dramatist and the audience are complementary given that in the final analysis, the message/effect of the original play as received by the audience in the target language/culture is the fruit of the joint transfer endeavour of the drama translator and the director.

Figure 2

Normal translation communication circuit from one language to another



A = Author of the source text (i.e., original text)

TA = Target Audience (of the source text)

O = Object communicated by A to TA (e.g. message, feelings, effect, etc.)

V = Vector (i.e., the language as well as the spatial and temporal conditions through which O is communicated to TA by A).

I = Initiator (i.e., the person who has commissioned the translation).

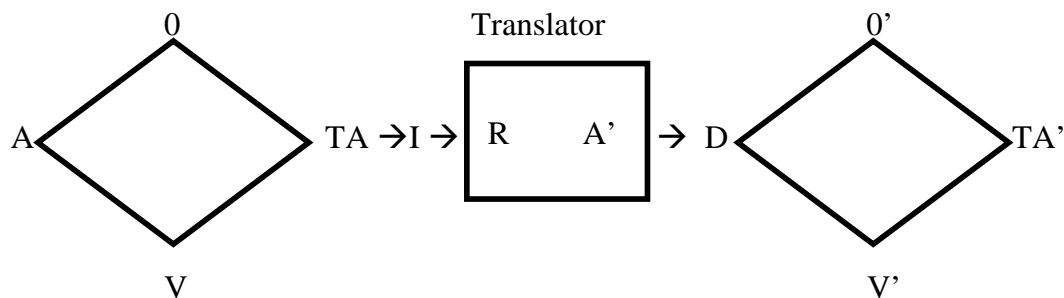
R = Receptor. The translator is a receptor as he is only an incidental TA given that the message is not originally intended for him.

A', TA', O' and V' are the author, target audience, object and vector respectively in the foreign language/culture.

Figure 2 represents a normal translation communication circuit from one language to another in which the translator is both TA and R as well as A' in the foreign language/culture. This could be considered the normal translation communication circuit in the translation of a novel, poem, short story or a play that ended up not being performed but simply read like any of the other literary genres.

Figure 3

Drama translation communication circuit from one language to another



D = Director.

In Figure 3, in addition to the communication parameters already described in Figure 2, there is a new parameter D (the director of the play) as well as actors, designers, decorators, musicians, electricians, etc. (not included in the diagram for purposes of simplification). This diagram makes it apparent that in the material conditions (V') employed by the director (D) to communicate the message/effect (O') there are different communication techniques that come into play between the translator and the new target audience (TA') introduced by D and no longer the translator as was the case in the normal communication situation presented in Figure 2.

The above diagram, from a theoretical stand-point, shows in effect that while the drama translator bears in mind and indeed strives to visualize TA' at the time he is effecting the translation, in the final analysis the first person to receive the translation is the director (D) who substitutes himself for the translator and in turn communicates the message/effect, according to his own personal interpretation, to the audience initially targeted by the translator. This prevailing situation is underscored by Gravier (1973:41) when he asserts that “chaque auteur stylise à sa manière le langage qu'il emploie, [...]. Il appartient donc au traducteur de percevoir cette stylisation et cette individualisation et de les rendre sensibles dans le texte qu'il va proposer au metteur en scène et aux différents comédiens” [Each author stylizes the language he uses in his own way, [...]. It is up to the translator to detect this stylization and idiosyncratic usage and to make it manifest in the text he offers to the producer and the various actors]. The most immediate focus of the drama translator is therefore the director and the actors with the audience taken into account only through them. Thus, one of the implications of the incomplete nature of the drama text is its dual destination which is often not sufficiently discussed and highlighted by drama translation scholars. When writing the play, the dramatist targets both the director and the audience. Given that everything being equal a play is normally meant to be performed, the dramatist normally targets in the first instance the director (and actors, etc.) with specific instructions in the form of stage directions detailing and indicating to the director the orientation to adopt in his conception of the production and eventual theatrical performance before the audience.

Some drama specialists (cf. Helbo 1987, Pavis 1992, 2000, Ubersfeld 1996) consider stage directions as an essential and integral part of the drama text and even as a sort of metatext which determines and conditions the rest of the text. Consequently, the director is considered “faithful” to the dramatist when he respects them in his interpretation and staging of the play. It is therefore only after attaining the first target (the director) that the play continues its journey and ends up before the audience (the second target).

This dual destination of the drama text implies an incidence on the manner in which the drama translator would communicate the message to each of the targets insofar as, on the one hand, he would have to visualize the director and the actors at work and word the message in such a way that the text is performable to them and, on the other hand, the audience and their reaction at the time they watch the play. Thus, he would not translate in the same way the instructions (stage directions) meant only for the director (and his actors) and the story together with its aesthetic embellishment meant for the audience. In this regard, Hamberg (1969:91-92) has pointed out that “a translator who is careless with stage instructions often places the stage manager in an unfavourable position”.

Unfortunately, when drama translation scholars talk about drama translation, the tendency quite often is to consider only the audience as the target of the drama piece to the exclusion of the director, who is thus relegated to the background, whereas the appropriate/accurate reconstitution and actualization of the message and aesthetic quality of the work by the latter equally depends on his perfect understanding and meticulous and strict execution of the dramatist’s instructions contained in the stage directions.

From a theoretical perspective therefore, the communication situation of the drama translator is quasi identical to that of the director in that, even though intervening at different stages of the drama communication chain, the translator is both receptor and new author of the message of the play, and the director on his part is also both the

target and new author of the message of the same play. In other words, a director usually stands in-between the written text and the performance text as a sort of surrogate author; his role is therefore analogous to that of the translator.

Such a situation implies close collaboration and complementarity between them, given that, as stated earlier, in the final analysis the message and full potential of the original play as received by the audience in the target language/culture is the result of their joint transfer endeavour.

In this regard, Gravier (1973:48) underscores the nature of the relationship between the drama translator and the director by maintaining that:

une sorte de complicité devrait s'établir entre le traducteur et le metteur en scène. Le traducteur doit aider le metteur en scène à élucider les questions que lui pose le texte. Mais le metteur en scène a une idée de manœuvre, au moment où il s'attaque à la pièce. Et le traducteur doit assister aux répétitions, il tente d'entrer dans les vues du metteur en scène, dont il est devenu le collaborateur. [a sort of symbiosis ought to exist between the translator and the director. The translator should help the director to elucidate the issues that the play raises. The director, on his part, must have an idea of how he is to manoeuvre when putting on the play. And the translator who is his collaborator should attend the rehearsals and try to share his conception of the performance.]

This view is supported by Moravkova (1993:36) who also asserts that :

Chaque oeuvre dramatique propose au traducteur plusieurs possibilités. Il a la possibilité de choisir l'une des plusieurs interprétations. Dans cette phase du travail, il ressemble à un metteur en scène qui choisit une des possibilités d'après sa vision de la mise en scène. Dans le cas idéal, un traducteur de drame est en contact avec le metteur en scène et les participants de la réalisation scénique. Un résultat réussi dépend d'une conception unique de tous les participants. [Each play offers the translator several possibilities. He has the possibility to choose one of the many possible interpretations. During this phase of his work, he is like the director who chooses one of the many possibilities according to his conception of the production. Ideally, the drama translator is in contact with the director and the production team.

A successful performance depends on a convergent conception by all the intervening parties.]

Another implication of such collaboration and complementarity for the drama translator and drama translation researcher is that it could be more fruitful to examine closely and analyze what directors and performers actually do to the text for it to be performable or for it to be performed and then from that stand-point to determine and describe the criteria that render the text performable. It is, thus, underscored here that the drama translator or scholar definitely stands to gain deeper insight into the drama translation phenomenon by getting involved in the process of transforming the translated text into a dramatic event which is what the audience actually live when they go to watch a performance.

Finally, the incomplete nature of the drama text gives rise to various levels of reading of the same text by the different persons involved in the drama communication chain, a situation which further underlines the need for collaboration between them. In effect, recent work in theatre semiotics (cf. Bassnett 1991:106) has revealed variations in the reading of drama texts, for example, the pre-performance literary reading which involves an imaginative spatial dimension by the individual as in the reading of a novel, the director's reading which involves shaping the text within a larger system of theatrical signs, a performer's reading which focuses on one role and other similarly focused readings by lighting technicians, designers, etc. In yet a more recent study Aaltonen (2000:6) corroborates and reiterates this by asserting that "readers, translators, directors, actors designers and technicians all construct their own readings, which are then coordinated in the stage production for audiences to use as basis for their meaning construction". Also emanating from this variation in the reading of the drama text and therefore equally conferring on this genre its distinct nature are the resultant models of expression or 'languages' inherent in the same text which have to be decoded and actualised. In effect, in drama communication, in addition to the words or utterances, there are also the languages of gesture, costumes, make-up, décor, props, sound effects, lighting, etc. to be taken into account by all those involved (including

the drama translator) in the drama chain. In this regard, it can, therefore, be asserted that this clearly suggests that drama translators and drama translation scholars could increasingly focus their attention (thereby ceasing to concentrate exclusively on the performability dimension of the play) on the reading strategies of the other persons involved in the chain and to determine to what extent the translator can draw from them in the more effective formulation of his own reading and transfer strategies.

Given the distinct but complementary roles of the drama translator and director as described and highlighted above, and the fact that in interlingual communication the director accedes to the original work only through the translator, it equally implies that it is the duty of the drama translator as a true specialist at translating to talk to the director, if the need arises, into accepting his expert view of textual reality and securing from him maximum formal leeway. In other words, in his professional relationship with the director it is necessary for the translator to secure or earn the director's trust and respect as a specialist at mediated interlingual communication.

2.1.4. Drama translation principles and strategies

Drama translators and drama translation scholars have suggested various ways in which drama translation should or could be effected and how the attendant problems should or could be tackled. The various ways suggested can be broadly classified into two main categories: principles and strategies.

2.1.4.1. Drama translation principles

Principles could simply be defined here as guiding rules for the drama translator's translational behaviour or action. These principles will be examined from a historical perspective for the period spanning the last four decades and only the most representative scholars are examined.

In the sixties, in an article entitled “Some practical considerations concerning dramatic translation”, Hamberg (1969:91-94) outlined certain principles for the drama translator. He states that:

drama is action [...] and in translating for the radio, television and the theatre it is important to realize what the dramatic theoreticians above all *demand* from the spoken line. It *must* characterize the speaker and thus seem genuine; it *must* characterize time and place as well as social class; it *must* not be ambiguous; and it *should* have been given or one *should* be able to give it the right emphasis so that it leads the attention of the audience in the desired direction. [...] It *goes without saying that* an easy and natural dialogue is of *paramount importance* in a dramatic translation, otherwise the actors have to struggle with lines which sound unnatural and stilted. [...] Even where the author does not indicate in brackets how a line is to be spoken, the translator as well as the stage manager *must* be able to know how. [...] A translator *must* be especially careful with entrance lines and exits. [Emphasis in italics is mine.]

Following suit in the seventies, Gravier (1973:41-43) in his article “La traduction des textes dramatiques” states that:

Le traducteur *ne doit pas* oublier non plus que le texte dramatique, débité à la vitesse normale de la parole, n’est capté qu’une seule fois par le spectateur. [...] Chaque allusion *doit* être transparente, [...] *Il faut* éviter les tournures grammaticales qui tombent en désuétude (par exemple : les verbes au passé simple) et, presque partout les questions présentées sous forme d’inversion sont difficilement acceptables. La proposition énonciative directe suivie d’un point d’interrogation qui *se traduira par* une intonation appropriée, dans la bouche du comédien, est, dans presque tous les cas, *à préférer*. De même *on proscrire, bien entendu*, toute traduction mot à mot qui déclencherait une crise de fou rire chez les spectateurs. [...] *Que le traducteur* des textes dramatiques *regarde* un peu à ce qui se passe au cinéma. Le doublage des films n’est rendu possible que par une minutieuse étude des mouvements que font les lèvres des acteurs, quand ils prononcent les répliques originales. [The translator *must not* also forget that the words of the play text when spoken at normal speed are captured only once by the audience. [...] Each allusion *must* be transparent, [...] Archaic grammatical turns *must* be avoided (for example: verbs in the preterite) and, in almost all instances inverted question forms are hardly acceptable. A direct statement followed by a question

mark which *should* be pronounced by the actor using the appropriate intonation is *to be preferred* in virtually all cases. Similarly, any word-for-word translation likely to provoke the giggles in the audience *must obviously* be proscribed. [...] The drama translator *should* pay some attention to what takes place in the cinema. Dubbing of films is only possible through a very careful study of the movements of the actors' lips when they pronounce the lines of the original play.] [Emphasis in italics is mine.]

In the eighties Wellwarth (1981: 140-146) equally outlines a series of principles to be followed by the drama translator, categorically asserting that “there are some guidelines that he *must* follow”. According to this scholar therefore:

The dramatic translator [...] *must* have a sense of the rhythm of speech patterns, particularly colloquial ones, as well as the ability to recreate the tension of dramatic situations without falsifying the playwright's intention or losing dramatic credibility within the new context. [...] It is *absolutely imperative* when translating a play to translate it aloud and to listen carefully to—even to savour—the various versions into which every conceivable line can be translated in English. Having done that, he *should* read his translation aloud to someone totally unacquainted with the play, preferably an actor. [...] What the dramatic translator *must* watch out for particularly is an excess of sibilants in a sentence, or awkward consonantal clusters that may make a line hard to pronounce rapidly and thus may cause difficulties in sound projection [...] the language *must* fall easily and familiarly on the ears of the audience. [Emphasis in italics is mine.]

Another representative scholar of the eighties, who has clearly enunciated principles to be followed by the drama translator, is Zuber-Skerritt (1988:485-486). He too asserts that:

A play written for a performance *must* beactable and speakable. Therefore, non-verbal and cultural aspects and staging problems *have to* be taken into consideration. [...] Entfremdung is dealienation of the foreign language by translating it into a language which the author would have used if he/she had lived in the time and place of the target language. There is *no doubt* that the latter is *preferable*, if not *mandatory*, in drama translation for the audience *must* be familiar with the language in order to understand its meaning immediately.[Emphasis in italics is mine]

From the above review it can be said that on the face of it these principles seem feasible to be followed. However, one may wonder to what extent some of them can be successfully applied in practice by the drama translator, particularly in the case of Wallwarth's principle which states that "it is absolutely imperative when translating a play to translate it aloud and to listen carefully to—even to savour—the various versions into which virtually every conceivable line can be translated". Furthermore, the principle that the drama translator must watch out particularly for "an excess of sibilants in a sentence or awkward consonantal clusters that may make a line hard to pronounce rapidly thereby causing difficulties in sound projection" does not tell the drama translator what to do in cases where certain sound effects are intentionally introduced in the speech of some characters by the author of the play either to portray them, for exotic effects, to preserve local colour or for some other reasons. Besides, it can be argued that the issue of transferring sounds from one language to another could ideally be handled within the framework of principles and guidelines outlined in phonological translation wherein source language (SL) phonology is replaced by equivalent target language (TL) phonology but there are no other replacements except such grammatical or lexical changes as may result accidentally from phonological translation (cf. Catford 1965:22). For example, a plural such as in "pens" may in phonological translation come out as singular "pen" if the target language has no final consonant clusters. We know of course that above all else phonological translation is practised deliberately by actors and mimics, particularly when they want to assume foreign or regional accents. It could therefore be said that the drama translation principles offer mainly hypothetical solutions. Most of the time they implicitly attribute a global nature to such principles and seem to apply to translations between all languages. When one talks of principles it implies that they should not be breached by individual drama translators. However, the reality is that there can hardly be global principles in translation between all languages. Furthermore, in actual translation practice, whether in translating between two different languages or translating the play for different audiences between the same two languages, the drama translator may use non-identical methods or strategies.

Also, the drama translation principles outlined mainly highlight and project to the forefront the aptitudes the translator should possess in order to transfer to the target text the gestic/action and oral/acoustic aspects of the source text thereby relegating to the background the equally important analytical and interpretative aptitudes that the drama translator should possess, particularly in the case of the African drama translator. In effect, most African playwrights still use European languages to present or describe the cultural and socio-political experiences of their different countries and villages in which their inspiration and creativity is rooted. Their writings in these European languages could be said to constitute a form of translation from their mother tongues for which there is no corresponding written original but rather only an oral one. The playwrights' texts therefore often carry a double language: the European language and the playwright's mother tongue. The African playwright's special use of language resulting from and reflecting this ambivalent situation is often evident in their plays at various levels (lexical, syntactic, imagery, proverbs, dialogue, rhetorical and other stylistic devices). All this of course has an incidence on the translation of the plays as the playwright's indigenous thought patterns and linguistic features in the source text would require that the translator analyses and interprets them appropriately in order to transfer them adequately to the target text.

Another observation with respect to the drama translation principles highlighted above is their prescriptive nature. This is very evident from and illustrated by the abundant use of words and expressions (highlighted in italics by me in the various passages quoted above) that carry an injunctive and imperative tone and which converge to give the principles a rather heavily prescriptive tone. It is probably as a result of observation by scholars that these translation principles are rather theoretical in nature and are not often readily applicable in concrete situations that they have found it necessary to direct their investigations in another direction, that of strategies which are effectively used by the translation practitioner in given circumstances. The most prominent of these strategies are examined in the next section.

2.1.4.2. Drama translation strategies

As from the nineties, drama translation scholars began to examine the drama translation phenomenon from a different paradigm, that of strategies rather than principles. Contrary to the purely theoretical and prescriptive approach that characterised the drama translation principles, their approach is pragmatic and descriptive, examining patterns of translational behaviour through a comparative analysis of performed and published translations of plays of given authors. In other words, instead of prescribing what the drama translator should do, they rather identify and highlight through a contrastive analysis of playtexts what does in reality happen when drama is translated. This shift in focus probably came about as a result of the realisation by scholars that drama translation principles ought to serve rather as solid guidelines to make strategic decisions for every specific context or situation.

Before proceeding to examine in detail the main drama translation strategies that have been identified and highlighted by drama translation scholars and in order to enable a better conceptualization of the notion of strategy with respect to drama translation, the following definition is hereby proposed. Drama translation strategies may be defined as actions or procedures on the part of the drama translator either to overcome the problems and obstacles in the way of drama communication through translation or to ensure that the translation fulfils desired specific objectives or functions. Drama translation strategies can therefore be said to be goal-oriented lines of action which operate towards solving a local or global problem or achieving a goal. Obviously, the strategies are carried out within the framework of some specified principles although they do not necessarily have to observe all these principles in their operation.

As pointed out by Aaltonen (2000:4), the study of strategies employed in drama translation shows that while some texts follow their sources carefully and translate them in their entirety, others involve degrees of divergence from them through omissions and additions. In this regard, in research carried out involving a macrostructural analysis of about 100 target and source text pairs of plays Merino

(2000:357-365), for instance, has come up with a useful classification of the texts studied into page and stage translations and has been able to determine the main translation strategies used by the translators. She also discovered that these strategies correlate directly with her dual classification of the texts studied into page and stage translations. For the stage translations the strategies range from deletion, reduction, merging, omission, adaptation, to other manipulations to conform to specific acting fashions. It is worth noting, however, that these strategies identified by Merino are also used in page translations. In the page translations the main strategy she identified is a very close (though not literal) translation of the original, such that the target text when compared with its original every utterance/turn of the original has its counterpart in the translation, and this parallelism is found within each utterance/turn at lower syntactic levels. The page translations favour the source culture and try to get the reader closer to the source author and play. Just as in the case of the stage translations above, it is equally worth noting that the strategies for page translations identified and highlighted by Merino (2000) are also used in stage translations. In this regard, it is clearly shown in Chapter 4 below how Oyono Mbia's target texts are on the whole very close translations of the originals, heavily favouring the source culture, with the aim of getting the target readers closer to the source author and plays. Despite this, it is established beyond doubt in Chapter 5 below that Oyono Mbia's target texts serve both as page and stage translations in the receiving Cameroonian Anglophone culture. Other scholars have equally highlighted some or all of the above strategies identified by Merino (2000) and Aaltonen (2000:4) (cf. Moravkova 1993, Upton 2000, Espasa 2000, Kruger 2000).

According to drama translation scholars, these strategies reflect two main opposing trends: foreignization (characteristic of page translations) and domestication (characteristic of stage translations). In her research on the manipulation of otherness in translated drama, Aaltonen (1993:27) asserts that "in translation, foreign drama is transplanted into a new environment, and the receiving theatrical system sets the terms on which this is done. A play script must communicate and be intelligible at some level, even if it should deviate from existing norms and conventions".

Similarly, Ladouceur (1995:31) in her study aimed at evolving a descriptive analysis model for the translation of dramatic texts states that:

Cette étude descriptive de la traduction n'a donc plus pour objet de déterminer une façon idéale de traduire, mais de voir plutôt comment on traduit, à quelles modalités translatives est soumis le texte afin de pouvoir fonctionner dans la langue et la littérature d'accueil comme équivalence d'un texte d'une autre langue, appartenant à une autre littérature. De ce point de vue, toute analyse de la traduction doit nécessairement se rapporter à la fonction assignée à l'oeuvre traduite dans son contexte adoptif. [The objective of this descriptive translation study is no longer to determine an ideal way of translating but rather to see how translation is actually done and to what translation methods the text is subjected in order for it to function in the receiving language and literature as an equivalent of the text in another language and literature. From this point of view, any analysis of the translation must necessarily take into account the function assigned to the translated work in its new context.]

For her part, Moravkova (1993:35) in a study of the specific problems of drama translation states that, "chaque oeuvre dramatique se situe par l'intermédiaire de sa traduction, à l'aide du médiateur - le traducteur - dans un contexte culturel nouveau" [with the help of the translator, acting as mediator, each translated play is placed in a new cultural context]. In the translation of African drama for an African readership/audience there is clear indication to the contrary whereby the translated drama is not placed in an entirely new cultural context but rather in a more or less "same" cultural context. In effect, the primary target consumers of the translations are most often African as explained in Chapter 5 below. It can thus be posited that rather than being target-text oriented, translated African drama (and indeed African literature in general) is essentially source-text oriented. Other proponents of the target text/target culture and reception-oriented approach in drama translation include Brissett (1990), Déprats (1990), Bassnett (1991), Lefevere (1992) and Laliberté (1995).

The resultant translations emanating from this trend have been described and labelled in various ways. Researchers have, for example, referred to them or described them variously in English as *adaptation*, *acculturation*, *rewriting*, *version*, *transplanting*, *naturalising*, *neutralising*, *integrating foreign works*, *large-scale amendments*, *recreation*, *transposition*, *reappropriate*, and in French as *transposer complètement*,

traduction ethnocentrique, traduction-assimilation, traduction totale, déplacement, déraciner de son contexte, l'assimilation, etc. (cf. Koustas 1988:129, 132, Bassnett 1991: 101-2, Aaltonen 1993: 26-7, Laliberté 1995: 519-21, Koustas 1995: 529, Ladouceur 1995: 31, 36).

This proliferation of terminology suggests that scholars and researchers in the area of drama translation have been working (and will probably continue to do so) in isolation. Research in this area could experience significant strides forward if researchers carried out investigations or analyses with prior knowledge of others' works. That way they would be able to decide, based on sufficient justification, whether or not to coin new words to describe translation phenomena which are probably not unique to their own individual experiences.

What further compounds the proliferation of terms in this area is the fact that these researchers do not even bother to define the terms coined. While it could be supposed that all the above terms broadly refer more or less to the same translation reality or phenomenon, it could equally be argued that they have different semantic shades thereby suggesting various degrees of manipulation of the source text to meet the expectations of the target language audience as well as the requirements of the receiving culture. If these terms were clearly defined by their inventors it would probably enable other researchers to map them on a continuum and even refine the various degrees or shades of this "same" phenomenon. It would probably also enable the manipulations involved in each case to be characterised.

As it is, the absence of clear and precise definitions for this abundant terminology sometimes leads to confusion. If we consider just the term "adaptation" for instance, Bassnett (1985:93) declares that "the distinction between a 'version' of an SL text and an 'adaptation' of that text seems to me to be a complete red herring. It is time the misleading uses of these terms were set aside". For other researchers such as Ladouceur (1995:37), the difference between adaptation and translation proper is only quantitative in that it makes more frequent use of certain strategies which in any case are not unique to adaptation. Following research carried out to establish the relationship between drama translation and the receiving literary polysystem and socio-cultural context, she observed that none of the strategies considered to belong to adaptation are unique to it. Her descriptive and systematic analysis of a significant body of literary translations revealed that the texts translated and those adapted

resorted to the same kind of translation strategies although not to the same degree and frequency. She thus arrived at the conclusion that far from being a method of translation that is qualitatively distinct, adaptation is rather characterized quantitatively by its more frequent use of certain translation procedures which, in any case, are not unique to it.

The above observation by Ladouceur (1995) equally raises the issue of defining the transfer strategies involved in each of the operations described by the coined terms in addition to characterising the respective elements or aspects involved. For example, if we consider the term "adaptation", it would be necessary to know specifically what is being adapted. Is it the action, space, time, culture-bound expression, style, etc. that is being adapted or does the process involve all of these aspects taken together? Do all these aspects call for the same strategies and procedures? And then, how are these strategies and procedures different from those used to effect translation proper?

Rey's (1991:23) definition of "adaptation" has equally raised argument amongst scholars. For him, it is a "traduction très libre d'une pièce de théâtre, comportant des modifications nombreuses qui la mettent au goût du jour ou la rajeunissent" [very free translation of a play with several modifications to make it suit the prevailing taste or to give it a new and different look]. Some scholars (cf. Laliberté 1995:526) consider this definition rather pejorative and carrying a negative connotation. In their view adaptation precisely ought not to be (and is not) a very free translation involving several modifications. They assert that, "il est possible d'adapter tout en demeurant fidèle au texte et à la pensée de l'auteur" [it is possible to adapt while remaining faithful to the text and the author's thought] (Laliberté 1995:526). In other words, one can adapt and yet remain faithful to the source text and the author's ideas.

It is thus evident from the examination of only one of the many coined terms and expressions above that there is need to clearly define and clarify the notions they carry. It equally reveals the need for researchers and translation practitioners to stem further proliferation of terms which would only contribute in compounding the situation even further.

As a consequence of the two main conflicting trends highlighted in this research, there has been (and there still is) a theoretical debate as to whether when translating a play

the translator should preserve the foreign and exotic characteristics of the text or whether he should adapt and assimilate them into the target language and target culture. There seems to be no consensus yet among researchers and practitioners over this issue. Taking the Canadian context as an example, Laliberté (1995:520) observes as follows: "faut-il traduire le discours des personnages de pièces de théâtre en québécois, ou même en joual selon le cas? Il apparaît que les opinions sont partagées". [Should the speech of the characters of the play be translated into Quebecois, or even into Joual as the case may be? It is evident that opinions are divided on this issue]. Similarly, Koustas (1995:538) says the issue of whether or not to transpose and reappropriate "raises the much studied yet never resolved dilemma of allegiance [...]; should the translator 'invade, extract and bring home' [...] in order to attract a wider audience or 'traduire, oui, mais sans traduire'". Elsewhere she says:

Il est évident qu'en ce qui concerne la traduction de la mise en scène les deux démarches - "déraciner" la pièce de son contexte culturel et "n'y rien toucher" - ont toutes les deux leurs mérites ainsi que leurs praticiens (Koustas1988:132-3).

[It is evident, with respect to the translation of the *mise en scène*, that the two approaches - either to "uproot" the play from its original cultural context or to leave it "untouched"- both have their merits and their advocates].

Theatre semiotics has also contributed significantly to this debate. Elam (1980:1) first of all asserts the repercussions of semiotics in all domains by stating that:

Of all recent developments in what used to be confidently called the humanities no event has registered a more radical and widespread impact than the growth of semiotics. There scarcely remains a discipline which has not been opened during the past fifteen years to approaches adopted from [...] the general theory of signs.

In the same vein Pavis (1989:25-45) states that:

translation in general and theatre translation in particular has changed paradigms: it can no longer be assimilated to a mechanism of production of semantic equivalence copied mechanically from the source text. It is rather to be conceived of as an appropriation of one text by another. Translation theory thus follows the general trend of theatre semiotics, reorienting its objectives in the light of a theory of reception.

Without going into details of slight differences in perception by various semioticians, what is evident is that semiotic analysis provides the audience, reader or theatre translator with a method not only of identifying the signs and situating them within the

sign systems of the play but also of explaining the interdependence of sub-systems and their role in theatre communication.

By allowing for a multi-levelled and multi-layered reading of the drama text and analysis of the signs contained therein, the semiotic approach enables the drama translator to take into consideration the greatest number possible of all the elements to be transferred to the target text and target audience/culture. Some scholars (cf. Ladouceur 1995:35-6) have thus evolved models of descriptive analysis of drama texts which enable the translator to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the text at the levels of the micro and macrostructures of the text as well as at the extralinguistic and metatextual levels.

However, it could be argued that the very multiplicity of dimensions and features to be taken into consideration in the analysis of theatre texts could, on the contrary, prove rather inhibiting when applied to a single text alone.

This notwithstanding, the semiotic approach could be considered a sort of bridge between the two conflicting trends in that while some researchers consider that in the final analysis, the decision whether to adapt or not is determined by ideological, political or artistic considerations, theatre semioticians are of the opinion that such a decision ought not to be based purely on the above factors but rather on the result of a systematic and objective analysis to determine and explain the importance and incidence of the "foreignness" as a sign and, where and how it is manifested. Theatre semiotics thus enables the mapping and subsequent transfer of the spatio-temporal setting, personal localisation of the dramatic action, parameters of the communicative situation, relationing of the characters with each other in terms of their social identities (relative status, group membership and general attitudes obtaining between interlocutors), extralinguistic information, etc., all of which are articulated through a large repertoire of verbal (lexical, grammatical, prosodic, paralinguistic) and non-verbal codes. In this regard, studies have revealed that different transfer strategies would be used by the translator depending on whether the translated play is intended only for reading or for performance, i.e., page or stage translations (cf. Bassnett 1980:120-132, 1991:101-110, Merino 2000:359-360, Aaltonen 1993:27-32, Moravkova, 1993:35, Koustas 1998:131).

Whatever the case, the debate as to whether the translation of a play should be source-text or target-text/reception oriented seems to us rather polarised and does not make allowance for various intermediate translations between the two extremes to meet other specific requirements or objectives. Furthermore, the arguments in support of each trend do not take into consideration the initiator who, in drama translation in particular, can often rightly be considered the driving force behind the act of translation and whose identity and express wishes could exert a fundamental influence on the translation operation. For example, and with reference to the contemporary British policy as practised by the National theatre, Susan Bassnett (1991:101) states that, "translators are commissioned to produce what are termed 'literal' translations and the text is then handed over to a well-known [...] playwright with an established reputation so that larger audiences will be attracted into the theatre". Elsewhere, Aaltonen (1993:31) talks of the common practice for the stage director to order a tailor-made translation for a particular *mise en scène* or cases where the translations are revised and fine-tuned by the stage team (stage director, dramaturge, playwright, etc). These examples suggest that quite often in drama translation the strategic decisions or choices are not made by the translator but by someone else, i.e. the translation initiator who is one of the factors in the drama translation chain.

The decision either to “uproot” the play from its original cultural context or to leave it “untouched” definitely has an incidence on the compatibility and integration of the play in the receiving culture. Consequently, the issues of compatibility and integration of a play in the receiving culture are examined in the next section.

2.1.5. Compatibility and integration of translated drama in the receiving culture

Drama translation practitioners as well as scholars have all along been preoccupied by the fate of the translated drama text in the receiving culture, in other words, by its compatibility and integration in the receiving culture. This is clearly evident in the various manipulations to which the translated text is subjected as testified by the abundant terminology characterizing such manipulation as highlighted in section 2.1.4 above.

Scholars (cf. Aaltonen 2000:53-54) consider that considerations of compatibility and integration of translated drama in the receiving culture are very determining in the choice of the text to be translated and the translation strategies used. Concerning the choice of texts, they state that foreign plays are selected on the basis of some discursive structures which either need to be already in line with those in the target society or can be made compatible with them. For instance, foreign plays which represent either empiricist or emotional reality familiar to the target culture are admitted into its theatrical system more easily than those that are not compatible with its way of looking at the world. Both the choice of texts and the adjustments are carried out in the interests of the integration of the foreign play into the aesthetics of the receiving theatre as well as the social discourse of the target society.

With regard to the translation strategies used, Bassnett (1998:93) states that Romy Heylen has suggested that in drama translation there is a sliding scale of acculturation that runs from one extreme, where no attempt is made to acculturate the source text that may result in the text being perceived as exotic or bizarre, through a middle stage of negotiation and compromise, and finally to the opposite pole of complete acculturation. But Brisset (1990:5) views the situation differently and asserts that drama texts, perhaps more than any other genre, are adjusted to their reception and the adjustment is always socially and culturally conditioned. According to her, drama as an art form is social and based on communal experience. It addresses a group of people in a particular place at a particular time. It grows directly out of a society, its collective imagination and symbolic representations, and its system of ideas and values. Also taking a contrary stand to Heylen, Aaltonen (1993:27) on her part considers that in translation, foreign drama is transplanted into a new environment and the receiving theatrical system sets the terms on which this is done. She argues that the translated play must communicate and be intelligible at some level, even if it should deviate from the existing norms and conventions. For her therefore, “neutralisation or naturalisation makes the foreign more manageable and homely; it makes it possible for the audience to comprehend what is happening on the stage; it removes the threat”. Several years later, she reasserts that “acculturation is inevitable in the translation of a

playtext and certainly if that written text is seen as one element in the total process that makes up theatre, then it would follow that some degree of acculturation cannot be avoided and is perhaps more visible than with other types of texts” (Aaltonen 1997; and 2000:55). She further states that in order to make foreign texts compatible with other texts in the target system as well as with the reality of the target society, translation can make use of either acculturation or naturalisation in an effort to disguise what is perceived as an obstacle to integration. Acculturation is understood to mean “the process which is employed to tone down the Foreign by appropriating the unfamiliar ‘reality’, and making the integration possible by blurring the borderline between the familiar and the unfamiliar” (Aaltonen 2000:55). In her opinion, the drama translator, like any writer of plays, uses a suitable strategy to bring the discourse of the source text in line with that of the receiving theatrical system and the entire target society and thus guarantees its acceptance and integration.

It may be argued that scholars who are preoccupied with the fate of the translated drama text in the receiving culture solely from the point of view of its acculturation and integration in that culture are rather restrictive in their approach and therefore fail to take into consideration other instances of drama translated and performed for reasons that could be referred to as exotic to simply entertain and inform the target audience about a foreign culture without any attempt to integrate such drama in the receiving culture. Such is the case of Oyono Mbia’s plays examined in this study and which were translated in Britain, staged in Britain before a British audience and published by Methuen, a British publishing house whose prime objective is to extend the range of plays in print by publishing work which is not yet known but which has already earned a place in the repertoire of the modern theatre (cf. Oyono Mbia 1968). Oyono Mbia’s translated plays have been integrated in the Cameroon Anglophone culture, literature and school syllabuses and not those of Britain or the United Kingdom. While Oyono Mbia’s original plays are rooted in his native Bulu tribe and while Cameroon is a bilingual country made up of Francophones and Anglophones, his original plays and their translations are nonetheless rooted in the same

Cameroonian culture. Oyono Mbia can thus be broadly described as translating within a mono-cultural background.

There is also the case of the abundant pre- and post-independence literature (drama and other genres alike) by Cameroonian and other African writers which, even though targeting the European colonial intruders, is integrated and is rooted in the Cameroonian and African culture. Both original and translated versions of this literature are normally referred to as Cameroonian literature or African literature. This rather militant literature often attacks the colonial regime and satirizes through the eyes of the Cameroonian or African the European intrusion, invasion and interference with the Cameroonian or African traditional society and its customs. Obviously the best way for anyone to get a message successfully across to another is to first capture his attention and interest in depicting the subject matter. And since it is with the colonialist readership/audience in view that these writers write, naturally therefore, the best means to capture the interest of their readers/audience is to depict the foreign Cameroonian/African society with its exotic culture. Their curious target readers/audience, after having enjoyed reading about or watching on stage the way of life of another society different from theirs, and despite their cultural presuppositions, consciously or unconsciously proceed to a second phase by analyzing in what ways actually that society is different from their own. During this probing stage they come face to face with certain realities, that is, the outside/external and adverse factors affecting that society. And again this may naturally lead them into a third phase, that of self questioning and introspection, i.e. would they like their own culture to be interfered with or even completely destroyed? And of course the ultimate question: How would I react if I were in such a situation? The answers to these questions may be varied from reader to reader or from audience to audience but chances are that feelings of sympathy (and of remorse as the case may be) would converge towards the affected society and galvanize a change of attitude or policy on the part of the intruder.

Also, when viewed from another perspective, Cameroonian literature in particular and African literature in general is generally considered less developed than Western

literatures that have a very long and established oral and written tradition and until recently have continued to serve as creative models for the younger literatures of the African continent.

In the African pre- and post-independence context it seems very unlikely therefore that a play written in French with anti-colonial motives and targeting a French audience in France would be translated for an English audience in Britain with the objective of acculturating or naturalizing it in order to integrate it in the English literature and culture.

2.1.6. Methodological framework for the comparative analysis of source and target texts

A diachronic study of drama translation over the last three decades reveals that research in this area has changed paradigms from a predominantly and heavily prescriptive approach to a generally more descriptive one with drama translation scholars inspired by, and drawing on, the works of descriptive translation scholars such as Even-Zohar (1980), Toury (1980), Hermans (1985) and Lambert and Van Gorp (1985). The above-mentioned eminent scholars consider literature as a complex dynamic system and are convinced of the reciprocal action between theoretical models and existing texts. They, therefore, advocate an approach to translation studies which is descriptive, systemic and semiotic based on a functional notion of equivalence and oriented towards a study of the target text. This is particularly due to the realisation by them that there was a systematic disparity between what is theoretically possible in translation and what one observes in specific domains of translation activity and within certain socio-cultural situations, certain types of translation behaviour occur repeatedly with translators choosing to employ only some of the broad range of translation strategies actually available (cf. Toury 1980).

Thus, instead of continuing to prescribe more ideal ways in which the drama translator should effect the translation of a play, drama translation scholars today increasingly

focus their attention on what actually happens when the drama translator translates under given conditions. Their objective is to determine and describe the norms and constraints to which the translated text is subjected in order for it to function in the target language and the receiving literature as the equivalent of a text in another language belonging to another literature. In this descriptive paradigm, the notion of equivalence is thus governed by norms which condition the translation such that it is viewed as a work in its own right in the target language occupying a position in the literary polysystem concerned while at the same time representing a text in another language which itself occupies a position in another literary polysystem. Drama translation scholars are not only interested in the norms and constraints which govern the production and reception of a text but also the relationship between translated drama and other categories of texts as well as the role played by translation in a given literature.

In the new paradigm therefore, they draw on descriptive translation studies to inform their analyses of translated drama texts and the translated texts are used as a means to investigate the translation process and the function of translations. This means that instead of confronting passages from originals and translations in an effort to demonstrate the superiority of the source texts and the glaring deficiencies of the target texts or being preoccupied with the discovery of omissions and inaccuracies in the target texts, the translated texts are taken as they are and an attempt is made to determine, describe and explain the various factors that might account for their particular nature.

It is within this paradigm therefore that descriptive drama translation scholars have evolved methods for the comparative analysis of source and target texts which take into account the greatest number possible of the intervening elements in the translation process.

In this section therefore, we make a detailed review of the descriptive methods proposed by Ladouceur (1995), Kruger and Wallmach (1997), and Merino (2000)

which we draw from to underpin our comparative analysis of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts in the present study.

Ladouceur (1995:35-36) has proposed a descriptive analysis model which she considers appropriate for studying translated drama texts as well as the relationship between translated drama and the receiving literary and entire socio-cultural system of which it is part. Her model is adapted from Lambert and Van Gorp's (1985:52) model for the description of translation. She has refined it as regards the specificity of drama and presented it in the form of a synthetic table, which we reproduce below, designed to serve as a frame of reference for the analysis and comparison of translated drama.

**Ladouceur's (1995) model for the descriptive and comparative analysis
of translated drama:**

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Preliminary data</p> <p>a) Presentation of the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - title of the translation - name of the translator - original title of the play - name of the author - indication of the genre - date, place, production team <p>b) Metatexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introductory pages - prefaces - notes included in the text or presented separately - footnotes <p>c) Indication of general translation strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete - partial - amplified <p>Macrostructural level</p> <p>2. Macrostructural analysis</p> <p>a) Layout of the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prologue - epilogue <p>b) Divisions of the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acts and scenes - titles of acts and scenes <p>c) Stage directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - characters - places - epoch - stage setting and props - costume - description of the action <p>Microstructural level</p> | <p>3. Microstructural analysis</p> <p>a) Language variety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - literary, sustained, current, familiar, popular, slang - dialects <p>b) Dominant grammatical patterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elisions, repetitions, - inversions, omissions, etc. <p>c) Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - graphic divergences - lexical and semantic divergences <p>d) Dominant stylistic procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - narrative modes - stylistic devices <p>e) Semantic divergences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - additions - omissions - substitutions - other modifications <p>(Correlation of the results of the various levels of analysis and comparison with the systemic context.)</p> <p>2. Comparison with systemic context</p> <p>a) Comparison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - translated text - extratextual data <p>b) Intertextual relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - other translated works by the same author - other creative works by the same author. <p>c) Intersystemic relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structures of the different genres - stylistic peculiarities |
|---|--|

It is thus by using the descriptive analysis model presented above and by taking into account the conditioning systems which shape the translations depending on the operational norms of the target language and the prevailing literary and discourse codes in the receiving/target context that she was able to determine from analysis of a translated drama corpus that none of the translation strategies traditionally attributed to adaptation are unique to it. In effect, her research revealed, contrary to expectation, that texts translated and those adapted resort to the same kind of translation strategies, in other words, that the difference between adaptation and translation proper is only quantitative in that it makes more frequent use of certain strategies which in any case are not unique to adaptation.

The above table which she devised exclusively for drama provides us, in the framework of the comparative analysis effected in the present study, with a fairly comprehensive listing of the various elements to take into account in our analysis of Oyono Mbia's plays and their translations. It further guides us with respect to the various levels at which we situate and analyse the various culture-bound elements in Oyono Mbia's plays retained as *tertium comparationis* in the comparative analysis carried out in this study.

Kruger and Wallmach (1997) have also proposed a research methodology for the description of a source text and its translation(s). As in the case of Ladouceur (1995), the method proposed is equally based on some practical guidelines provided by Lambert and Van Gorp (1985:47-48) for the comparative analysis of translations and their originals. It comprises two phases: theoretical and practical. The first step involves theoretical considerations which lead the researcher to collect information about the general macrostructural features of the translation by asking and seeking answers to the following questions:

- Is the translation identified as such? Or is it identified as an adaptation or an imitation?
- What is the prevailing attitude towards translation in the given period?
- Is the translator's name mentioned anywhere?

- Can the text be recognised as a translation (linguistic interference of the source language, neologisms, and socio-cultural features)?
- What is the translator's general strategy? Is it a complete or a partial translation (i.e. have large sections been omitted from the translation)?
- Does the translator or the editor provide any metatextual comment in the form of a preface or footnotes? (cf. Kruger & Wallmach 1997:122).

According to the above scholars, preliminary data obtained in response to these questions lead to hypotheses for a comparative analysis of texts on both macrotextual and microtextual levels.

The second step involves practical comparison of source and target texts. Here the researcher first of all starts by determining the basis of comparison i.e. the *tertium comparationis* (TC) which comprises “an independent, constant (invariable) set of dimensions in terms of which segments of the target texts(s) and source text can be compared or mapped onto each other” (Kruger & Wallmach 1997:123). It is, however, necessary to point out that these two scholars have drawn sufficient attention to the fact that their use of the concept of *tertium comparationis* is different from that of Toury (1980:112, 116) who introduced the concept of “Adequate Translation” (a hypothetical analysis of the source text) to serve as TC for any comparison of target and source text in the early 80s. They use the TC in the sense suggested by James (1980:169) in contrastive analysis (cf. Kruger 2000:11). For instance, if the researcher wants to examine the transfer of culture in the English translations of Guillaume Oyono Mbia's plays as it is the case in this study, then aspects of the Bulu/Cameroonian culture such as ideophones, swearwords, cushioned loan words (cf. section 4.2.1. below), transliterated Bulu proverbs, distorted words and names would constitute the *tertium comparationis*.

The above-mentioned scholars further underscore the fact that in a comparative analysis such as that undertaken in the present study, one has to take into account a complex network of relations between, on the one hand, the source text and the

political, social, cultural, literary and textual norms and conventions of the source system, and, on the other hand, the target text(s) and the political, social, cultural, literary and textual norms and conventions of the target system.

It is worth noting that Kruger and Wallmach (1997:123) have pertinently underlined certain realities underlying a comparative analysis of a source and target text. First, the researcher has to make sure he is comparing like with like, i.e. that the two (or more) entities to be compared, while differing in some respect, must share certain attributes. Secondly, that while in general descriptive translation theorists recommend that the researcher analyse the target text first, it however makes more sense to describe the source text in the source system first in order to carry out a meaningful comparative analysis between the source text and the target text, in other words, to explain translation decisions and the constraints under which they were made. This is further buttressed by the fact that the translation critic or researcher needs a thorough knowledge of the source text and the source system in which it is embedded and thus takes into account constraints imposed upon the text by relevant political, social, cultural, literary and/or textual norms and conventions and then concentrates on a category or categories that will serve as the *tertium comparationis*.

After gathering preliminary data deriving from the theoretical considerations mentioned above and after determining the *tertium comparationis*, the researcher then starts analysing the texts at both the macro and microtextual levels. Still drawing from Lambert and Van Gorp (1985:52-3), Kruger and Wallmach (1997:123-4) indicate the following mainly literary aspects which would provide the researcher with information regarding each of the levels while, however, stressing the fact that it is the subject of the research that will determine from which discipline the researcher will draw and it is therefore essential that every researcher determine his/her own specific categories:

Macrotextual level:

- division of the text (in chapters, acts and scenes, stanzas, etc.);
- titles of chapters, presentation of acts and scenes, etc;

- relation between types of narrative, dialogue, description, etc;
 - internal narrative structure (e.g. episodic plot, open ending, etc), dramatic plot (e.g. prologue, exposition, climax, conclusion, epilogue), poetic structure (e.g. contrast between quatrains and tercets in a sonnet);
 - authorial comment (e.g. stage directions, prefaces, etc).
-
- Microtextual level (for Kruger & Wallmach (1997:123) the terms ‘microtextual’/‘microstructure’ refer to shifts on the phonic, graphic, syntactic, lexical, stylistic level):
 - selection of words (lexical sets, semantic fields, terminology, etc);
 - dominant grammatical patterns and formal literary structures (metre, rhyme, etc);
 - forms of speech representation (e.g. direct, indirect, free indirect speech);
 - metaphors and figures of speech;
 - terms of address;
 - modality (passive/active voice, ambiguity, etc);
 - language variety (sociolect, archaic/popular, informal/formal, jargon, etc);
 - cohesive patterns (lexical cohesion, reference, substitution, conjunction, ellipsis);
 - coherence;
 - text structure (e.g. narrative structure, layout, etc);
 - aspects of culture;
 - translation procedures (e.g. substitution, repetition, deletion, addition, compensation, etc).

In the research model outlined by Kruger and Wallmach (1997) determination of the preliminary data as well as the comparative text analysis at the macro- and microtextual levels constitute the descriptive phase of the research and it is only after this that the researcher embarks on the explanation phase of the research.

The explanation phase sort of completes the circle whereby the researcher goes back and contextualises his/her analysis in terms of its broader cultural context and consists in reporting on the source and target systems by examining textual, political, social, cultural and literary norms and conventions in both the source and target systems. The explanation phase enables the researcher to gain systemic insight into text rules and conventions as well as translation rules and conventions thereby leading him/her again to pose the following questions amongst others suggested by Lambert and Van Gorp (1985:50):

- Does translator Y always translate according to these rules? If not, can we explain the exceptions?
- Does s/he write his/her own creative work according to the same rules? If not, why?
- Does the translator conform to the same rules as his/her fellow translators?
- Does the translator show conscious awareness of rules, norms, models? Does s/he theorise about them? If so, is there a discrepancy between theory and practice? On which points?
- Is the translator's work innovative, or does it conform to existing translation conventions?
- Is there any conflict between the translator's norms and the expectations of the target readership?

According to Kruger and Wallmach (1997:124), it is only once the researcher has completed the comparison at this level by taking into consideration translation decisions and political, social, cultural, literary and/or textual constraints imposed upon the translator, the translating process and the text, that it will be clear what the translator's initial norm is. In other words, only then will the researcher be able to establish whether the translator has subjected him/herself to the original text with the norms it has realised, to the norms of the target culture or, as often happens, whether the translator has managed to effect a cultural compromise.

The notion of *tertium comparationis* as outlined in Kruger and Wallmach's (1997:123) model and their specification that in a comparative study "the first thing we do is make sure that we are comparing like with like" are particularly useful and instrumental in the context of our study as they foreground the principle behind our choice, identification and confirmation of those elements which serve as basis of comparison of Oyono Mbia's plays and their translations. We equally draw from the explanation phase of the model proposed by the above scholars in our attempt to seek possible explanations that underlie Oyono Mbia's choice of translation strategies.

While Kruger and Wallmach's (1997) model hinges on the notion of a *tertium comparationis* as the basis for comparison of source and target texts and which is applicable to all types of texts including drama, Merino's (2000) model is rooted in the notion of 'réplica' (roughly 'utterance' or 'turn' in English) as a unit of description and comparison of specifically drama texts.

According to Merino (2000:358):

the réplica is the minimal structural unit by means of which drama (written and performed) can be described and analysed. Acts and scenes are further subdivided into réplicas and plays which are not conventionally divided into acts or scenes are always presented by means of réplicas, in such a way that the replica is the only intrinsically dramatic unit without which drama would not exist as such. [...] The réplica reflects the two main levels of dramatic language: dialogue and frame (also called primary and secondary text).

Merino further points out that the réplica is found on the page as well as on stage and as such it accounts for the twofold nature of drama and its specificity. Graphically the réplica is distinctly presented on the page, introduced by the name of the character whose turn to speak and act is reflected in this way. Part of the frame or secondary text of the réplica is the name of the character and all stage directions and comments that are not to be verbally represented on the stage. The dialogue or primary text to be uttered verbally on the stage by the actor is also graphically differentiated on the page.

In order to study and analyse a corpus of plays she devised a four-stage scheme which enabled her to study the texts at textual and non-textual levels. The four stages, also taken from Lambert and Van Gorp (1985:42-53), equally comprise the preliminary, macrostructural, microstructural and systemic levels respectively. In the first stage (preliminary) she observed and studied all non-textual information rendered by the edition of the play (the way it was presented, the commentaries or blurb accompanying the text, the relevance given in the edition to the name of both source and target authors, and who held the copyright, together with any references to the source or target performances of the play. In the second stage (macrostructural), a textual comparison on a macrostructural level of target texts and their corresponding originals was carried out, and she goes on to state that in the microstructural stage a textual comparative study of a small selection of translations led to further analysis in the systemic stage where extratextual elements such as other editions or performances of the plays and criticisms were considered.

With respect to the role of the *réplica* in the comparison exercise, she asserts unequivocally that this minimal unit was of vital importance in the macrostructural and microstructural stages. In the macrostructural stage the total number of *réplicas* in the target text was compared with the number of *réplicas* in the corresponding source text. The purpose of this global comparison of total numbers of minimal dramatic units was to discover whether there were any general identifiable translation strategies used in producing the target texts in the corpus. In the microstructural stage, equivalent pairs of source text-target text *réplicas* were searched for and starting from target text *réplicas* numbered consecutively, source text equivalent units were looked for. The microstructural comparison took place at lower textual levels affecting syntactic units such as the sentence or phrase and the two levels of dramatic language: dialogue and frame. This enabled the researcher to corroborate the global impression determined at the macrostructural level, and other processes, which could not be accounted for in the global comparison were revealed here. In the systemic stage the reception of the texts was taken into consideration, critics' statements relating to the performance and

edition of the plays were checked and socio-cultural circumstances surrounding the reception of the written texts and performances were taken into account.

Merino's (2000:358) definition of the notion of *réplica* could be considered clear and explicit. The notion is equally comprehensive and encompassing in that it takes into account both the verbal and non-verbal elements of the drama text as well as the structure of the play, all of which could have an incidence on the translation of the play to varying degrees. Furthermore, the method devised by Merino for the comparative analysis of a corpus of plays and their translations can be considered to be operational and practical in that not only does it enable her to handle a large corpus of texts but also to come up with a useful classification of the plays studied into stage and page translations. The method also enabled her to determine the main translation strategies used by the translators whereby she was able to establish a direct correlation between the strategies and her dual classification of the texts studied into stage and page translations.

For stage translations the strategies range from addition, reduction, omission, adaptation, to other manipulations to conform to specific acting fashions. In page translations the main strategy is a very close (though not literal) translation of the original, such that when the target text is compared with its original every *réplica* of the original has its counterpart in the translation, and this parallelism is found within each *réplica* at lower syntactic levels. Thus, the page translations are more heavily oriented towards the source culture and try to make the reader approach the source author and play while the stage translations are more oriented towards the target culture and audience.

In the present study, while we exploit the notion of *tertium comparationis* in determining the culture-bound elements used in the comparative analysis of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts, we equally make use of Merino's (2000) structural notion of *réplica* as the minimal structural drama unit (written and performed) by means of which the determined culture-bound drama elements are described and

analysed. We equally use the results obtained (i.e. translation strategies identified) through Merino's model to underpin our appraisal of Oyono Mbia's translation strategies with respect to those proposed by translation theorists for handling culture specific elements.

Generally therefore, in the comparative study of Oyono Mbia's plays and their translations effected in the present study, we draw eclectically from the three models proposed by Ladouceur (1995), Kruger and Wallmach (1997), and Merino (2000) respectively and adopt the levels/phases of analysis outlined in them: preliminary, macrotextual, microtextual and systemic.

2.2. The source language system

Ade Ojo (1986:293-4) has pertinently asserted that:

Every literary object, definitely bound by a distinct geo-political specificity and conditioned by a particular creative ingenuity and affectivity, reflects a peculiar national temperament, a specific cultural tradition, a particular artistic convention and definite historical and economic determinants. It is a product of a culture and therefore of a people's way of life and of the values or norms inherent in the society in which it is rooted.

In the Cameroonian context, as is the case in the works examined in the present study, this therefore means that, on the collective level, Oyono Mbia's literary works reveal the spiritual, emotional and ethnic particularities of the Cameroonian society from which the works have taken their root. They reflect the thinking pattern, the psyche and the mind of the Cameroonian people as well as their extra-linguistic realities. Obviously, a non-Cameroonian translator or translation scholar/critic unfamiliar with these historical and experiential realities of the Cameroonian context would find it difficult to understand and appreciate them in the literary works in which they are reflected and would consequently also find it difficult to translate them adequately in a different/foreign language.

In the same vein, Bassnett (1998:136) asserts that:

A writer does not just write in a vacuum; he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time, and the writing reflects those factors such as race, gender, age, class, and birthplace as well as the stylistic, idiosyncratic features of the individual. Moreover, the material conditions in which the text is produced, sold, marketed and read also have a crucial role to play.

Again this clearly shows the need for the translation scholar/critic to recognise the importance of identifying and understanding these parameters and their incidence on the manipulatory processes that are involved in the source text production as well as their mapping onto a foreign target language.

Similarly, Megrab (1999:62) corroborates the above assertions by stating that:

Discussion of interpretation [of a text] as a part of translation involves such matters as the writer of the source language [SL] text, the translator, and the socio-political conditions of the production, as well as those of its translation. Readers apply various patterns of selection, retrospection, anticipation, and formulation of their own expectations in the process of making sense of a text.

Finally, in the same vein, Peter France (2000:6) also emphasizes the need for the translation scholar/critic to refer to the social, political and cultural context which surrounds and in part determines the act of translation if he is to describe or analyse what actually goes on in translation without seeking to adjudicate between performances.

All the above reasons, therefore, determine and explain the need in this section to examine the network of relations between Oyono Mbia's source texts and the social, political, cultural and literary context in which they are created so as to adequately and effectively take into account the constraints imposed upon the texts and the translator by the above relevant parameters. In the next sections, therefore, these aspects are examined in detail.

2.2.1. Socio-political context

The socio-political climate prevailing in Cameroon at the time Oyono Mbia wrote his plays has been described in detail by various prominent Cameroonian scholars (cf. Mfoulou 1988, Bole Butake 1988a, 1988b, Gilbert Doho 1988).

From the annexation of Cameroon by the Germans at the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 to its participation and rule by the British and the French from 1945 to 1960 following the defeat of the Germans in the Second World War, the colonial administration through the trio consisting of the forces of law and order, the missionaries, and the merchants, ensured the serenity of the established colonial order. The expression of local culture was completely stifled and Western civilisation was exalted through its literature and drama performances. Any nationals who attempted to think differently from the colonial masters or put to question the established order met with the same fate, i.e. they were eliminated. Such was the fate suffered by national heroes such as Paul Martin Samba, Douala Manga Bell and Sultan Njoya. In such a context it was not possible therefore for Cameroonian creative writers living in the country to produce and publish works or to perform plays that criticised the order advocated by the colonial administration, missionaries and merchants.

On 1 January 1960, Cameroon became independent, although independence was immediately followed by a full-scale protracted armed struggle between government forces and guerrillas of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (Cameroon People's Union) whose partisans were commonly referred to as *upécistes*. The direct consequence of the bloody years following independence was the tendency of the political leadership and elite to conserve power which gave rise to unnecessary suspicion and high-handedness. Not only was a state of emergency clamped on the entire nation but also every citizen had to carry identification papers and movement from one part of the country to another had to be warranted by a *laissez-passer* (i.e. a pass). Political opposition to the regime in power was viewed as subversive and treasonable, especially after the imposition of the one-party state on 1 September 1966

with the founding of the Union Nationale Camerounaise (the Cameroon National Union Party). All the political parties in the English and French-speaking parts of the country were dissolved and merged into the sole Cameroon National Union Party. A sole workers' trade union (l'Union Nationale des Travailleurs Camerounais) was put in place whose officials were appointed by the government through a Presidential Decree; a single organisation for women (l'Organisation des Femmes de l'Union Nationale Camerounaise) was also put in place to keep a close eye on the women who constituted a majority of the country's population and whose temperament was deemed to be uncertain and uncontrollable. Finally, a single youth organisation (la Jeunesse de l'Union Nationale Camerounaise) was formed to resolve once and for all the problem of student agitation within the country and by Cameroonian students studying abroad. With all these measures, the regime in power was totalitarian and monolithic. To further entrench totalitarian dictatorship, a school for the training of party officials of the Cameroon National Union Party was created to ensure a single way of thinking; press freedom was also heavily restricted and a law on subversion was enacted in 1966.

Apart from the heavy military presence in urban centres and other areas suspected of harbouring guerrillas of the Union des Populations du Cameroun or members of the resistance, there were also the gun-toting gendarmes and policemen who were always eager to strike terror into the already terrified citizenry. In addition, there were the secret police (DIRDOC) with its chain of torture chambers; the *Brigades Mixtes Mobiles* (BMM) - some of them veritable concentration camps - located all over the national territory ready to pounce on anyone on the barest suspicion. Public confessions were extorted by them from suspects, summary executions were carried out, suspects were beheaded and heads displayed in public squares. While the state-owned spoken and print media were constrained to play the role of court poets, the private press was frustrated and gagged through institutionalized censorship personified in the Prefect (i.e. Senior Divisional Officer) in every administrative Division.

It is often said that an oppressive and stifling political climate conditions, influences or rules over the mind and creativity. It often leads the writer to censor himself or herself even before being officially censored by the regime in power. It is in this socio-political context, as well as against the backdrop of the colonial period that Oyono Mbia wrote his plays. The incidence of these contexts on the orientation of his dramatic compositions is manifested by the fact that, while he can be considered a realistic writer who is concerned with the social problems and who wants to describe the contemporary life of his people, he, however, refuses to treat political issues in his plays. He says:

I don't write about politics, and I'm not a man of slogans. I don't believe in clear-cut solutions to problems. I simply want to show people the social problems we are faced with. I leave it to the audience to suggest the solution (Lee 1981:237-8).

Despite the above assertion and even though he does not write about politics in his plays, it is, however, also evident that he definitely does not treat any of the major and burning social problems of his time engendered by the prevailing oppressive political climate. He is well aware of the fact that some of his contemporary playwrights, like René Philombe, who also openly declared that he was not interested in politics but who nevertheless dared to deal with it and other important social issues in some of his works, were immediately pounced upon and thrown in jail and the works banned, following reports on the works by censor agents. Oyono Mbia was never jailed or harassed because he steered clear of committed writing, as he himself also admits elsewhere in an interview with African Literature Specialisation Students of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences of the University of Yaounde (cf. section 2.2.2.3. below).

Considering that it is not only the writer's socio-political context that conditions his creative activities but also his literary environment, it is, therefore, also necessary to examine Oyono Mbia's literary context in the next section.

2.2.2. Literary context

However, in order to provide a comprehensive and chronological picture of Oyono Mbia's literary context, it is necessary to first of all examine it from a historical perspective.

2.2.2.1. Historical perspective

Before the official annexation of Cameroon by the Germans in 1884/85, missionaries from the British Isles and America who had been active for a long time in Cameroon found that drama was a very effective means of communicating the Christian religion to the natives. Their method consisted mainly in dramatizing passages from the Bible during such festive occasions as Christmas and Easter. These performances were usually done in churches and were very similar to the morality plays of the Middle Ages in Europe. They were generally staged in the missionary settlements in the towns of Bojongo, Victoria, Douala, Yaounde, Foulassi, etc. Bible stories such as "The Parable of the Ten Virgins", "The Birth and Death of Christ", "The Treachery of Judas", were dramatized in local languages.

In this period drama was used to propagate Christianity and to curb so-called heathenish attitudes in the natives. From thematic and formalistic perspectives, the goal is to ridicule aspects of ethnic values while upholding and celebrating the virtues of the foreign culture. This ideological brainwashing and the influence of a benevolent environment which gives rise to rather leisurely existence tended to orientate drama towards the comic.

Later on, with the creation of schools, the missionary teachers felt the need to use drama as a teaching method. The acquisition of literacy led to the staging of works of European playwrights such as Molière, Corneille, Racine and Shakespeare.

Today, when we talk of Cameroonian drama, there are certain landmarks that characterise it. First, it should be noted that Cameroonian drama in the native languages is nonexistent because these languages are only now being reduced to writing, mainly by missionary organisations with a view to translating the Bible.

Secondly, there is Cameroonian drama written in English. Before the country achieved independence there were only two playwrights of English expression: Charles Low, a British playwright, who wrote *White Flours the Latex* in 1940 and Sankie Maimo, a Cameroonian, who wrote *I am Vindicated* in 1942, in which he exalts the triumph of the Western civilisation over traditional civilisation. After independence and with the advent of multiparty politics and freedom of expression in the eighties, Sankie Maimo published *Succession in Sarkou* (1982); Bole Butake published *Betrothal without Libation* (1981), *The Rape of Michelle* (1984) and *Lake God* (1986); Victor Elame Musinga, *Njemen* (1974) and *The Tragedy of Mr No Balance* (1976); Bate Besong, *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* (1985) and Sammy Kum Buo, *For Self, For Tribe, For Country* (1973).

All these plays published after independence and mainly after the post-independence totalitarian and monolithic political period, depict contemporary problems of Cameroonian society: corruption, abuse of power, moral decadence, inefficiency of the administration and political elite in solving the problems of the masses.

Thirdly, there is the more abundant Cameroonian drama written in French. The period before independence records about eleven playwrights, all of whom are former seminarians whose teachers were missionaries who naturally taught the drama of their country of origin and sought essentially to entertain and not to portray Cameroonian values. These playwrights thus applied to the letter the models of Corneille, Molière and Racine taught to them in school. Their plays do not depict Cameroonian problems and serve instead to disseminate or propagate the ideology of the colonizing or “civilizing” French nation.

The post-independence period between 1960 and 1969 witnessed an even greater number of playwrights of French expression. The most prominent and representative playwrights of this period are Guillaume Oyono Mbia with *Trois prétendants, un mari* published in 1959, Stanislas Awona with *Le Chomeur* in 1961, René Philombe with *Africapolis* in 1968 and Patrice Ndedi Penda with *Le Fusil* in 1969. The playwrights of this period while breaking away from the earlier playwrights in some respects are not fundamentally different from their predecessors in that Molière and the other prominent French playwrights still mainly served as models. For instance, Oyono Mbia maintained the classical structure of the play into acts and scenes in *Trois prétendants, un mari* and *Le train special de son Excellence*, although he breaks away from this in *Jusqu'à nouvel avis* by ignoring acts and scenes and rather presenting the play as one long sequence.

The period between 1970 and 1979 witnessed an even greater number of plays written in French and the drama of this period is characterised by plays with a text and plays without a text. With regard to plays with a text, the introduction of a drama competition by Radio France Internationale (the Concours Théâtral Interafricain) for African French-speaking countries saw the production of a significant number of plays with texts produced on stencil and which were duplicated and circulated. This was motivated by the fact that prize-winning plays were also broadcast over Radio France Internationale throughout its entire network covering all African French-speaking countries.

However, a significant number of drama performances during this period equally consisted of plays without a text. These plays are characterised by a curious combination of elements drawn from Cameroonian oral tradition and European drama recorded and continue to record a huge success before the Cameroonian audience.

The period between 1980 to the present date is a very rich and prolific one for Cameroonian drama particularly of French expression. The playwrights are more daring and innovative than their predecessors. All problems of the Cameroonian

society are mirrored in their plays without fear as a result of the much relaxed political atmosphere. The plays pull huge crowds and the audience is composed of all the social classes: the ordinary man on the street, college and university students, traders, civil servants, intellectuals, etc.

From the above brief socio-political and historical survey it is evident that the relationship of Cameroonian drama with the society which it tries to depict has always been particular, circumstantial and very bound in time and space. Indeed, this relationship has always changed or evolved through the periods surveyed dictated by the education and level of the playwrights, the nature and composition of the audience, the aspirations and demands of the audience and the general state of the society in its socio-political evolution.

Plays of the colonial and pre-independence period ignore problems of the Cameroonian society owing to the stifling atmosphere in which the colonized lived. In the period immediately following independence (1960-1969) the plays simply imitate the European model while depicting social issues but they did not dare to attack or criticize the prevailing political and social conditions owing to the omnipresence of a political machinery of oppression and repression. Despite the relatively more relaxed political atmosphere during the 1970-1979 period the playwrights are still afraid of the forces of repression. Most of them take refuge in plays without a text given that “*verba volant, scripta manent*” (i.e. the spoken word is evanescent while the printed word remains). Those playwrights whose plays have a text and who even dare to talk about political issues do so from a rather general and evasive perspective without actually focussing on the Cameroonian situation, since they know that despite the apparently relaxed political atmosphere, the sword of Damocles is still hanging over their heads, ready to drop at the slightest prank.

It is worth mentioning here that while on the whole Cameroonian playwrights refrained from criticising the colonial administration and the post-independence oppressive political regime, some Cameroonian novelists did, however, take the bull

by the horns by daring to criticise the political situation in their novels. For instance, all Ferdinand Oyono's three novels: *Une vie de boy*, *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* and *Chemin d'Europe* focus on the colonial period. They sharply criticise the colonial administration and Christianity, exposing the immense damage caused to Cameroonian society and its traditional values. On his part, Mongo Beti in *Ville cruelle*, *Main basse sur le Cameroun*, *Mission terminée*, *La ruine presque cocasse d'un polichinelle* as well as other novels by the same author, level very sharp and caustic criticisms at the post-independence repressive political regime and the decadent socio-economic situation it has engendered. The titles of all these works are in themselves very telling. However, it should also be indicated that these writers wrote from abroad in exile where several attempts were even made on their lives by agents of the oppressive forces targeted in their novels.

From 1980 to the present date, with the advent of multiparty politics and freedom of expression, Cameroonian drama has really flourished both from the point of view of its themes and its structure. It addresses all issues and nothing is taboo. Its structure is innovative and there is a marked departure from the traditional classical division into five acts and six scenes per act. While some playwrights now structure their plays into two, three, seven and even ten acts, others structure theirs into sequences, tableaux, movements and in certain cases, only scenes. Mbassi (1988:122) equally sums up this prevailing situation as follows:

Trois sillages se dessinent dans cette diversité. Ceux qui restent attachés à la tradition classique occidentale et dont Joseph Ngoué peut être présenté comme le chef de file. Ceux qui encore marqué par le théâtre classique s'emploient à le dépasser par de sensibles innovations. Dans cette tendance peuvent être cités René Philombe, Guillaume Oyono Mbia, David Ndachi Tagne. Ceux qui, comme A.Kum'a Ndumbe III sachant que le théâtre classique s'impose encore, oeuvrent de toute leur énergie pour le combattre. Ceux qui enfin se comportant comme s'il n'avait jamais existé un théâtre classique. Il s'agit de Were Were Liking et de Manuna Mandjock. [Three trends stand out of this diversity. Those who have remained attached to the Western classical tradition with Joseph Ngoué considered as the most prominent figure. Those who are still marked by classical theatre and are striving to transcend it through significant innovations. In this

category can be cited René Philombe, Guillaume Oyono Mbia, David Ndachi Tagne. Those who, like A. Kum'a Ndumbe III, conscious of the fact that classical theatre is still dominant, do everything to combat it. Finally, those who behave as if classical theatre had never existed. These include Were Were Liking and Manuna Mandjock.]

With respect to the above prevailing situation, it is necessary to consider what, today, can be considered to constitute the literary and textual characteristics of Cameroonian drama.

2.2.2.2. Literary and textual characteristics of Cameroonian drama

In general, Cameroonian drama is identified by certain main characteristics. First, there is the introduction by playwrights of certain characters who often feature regularly and prominently in their plays. For instance, there is the narrator/commentator whose role is to render the play in a lively manner and to constantly sustain the attention of the audience. In most plays this character constitutes the heart of the action. He evolves both on the stage and in the hall amongst the audience. He thus serves as a physical bridge between the imaginary world of the actors and the real world of the audience thereby eliminating the barrier that separates the two distinct spaces traditionally reserved for actors and the audience in Western theatres (cf. Doho, 1988:70-1).

Another regular and prominent character in Cameroonian drama and whom Oyono Mbia uses in his *Trois prétendants, un mari* is the witchdoctor. René Philombe (in Doho, 1988:76) notes that:

Qu'il s'agisse de comedies ou de tragédies, le sorcier-guérisseur et diseur de bonne aventure y est presque toujours présent. Dans 70/100 des pièces de théâtre camerounaises on le voit apparaître et jouer un rôle important. [Whether in comedies or tragedies, the witchdoctor and teller of tales of good fortune is almost always present. He features and plays an important role in 70% of Cameroonian plays.]

From the textual point of view or from that of staging, the Cameroonian dramatist always distinguishes this character from the others by making use of certain signifiers.

First, there is the costume, which is usually made of Hessian and old blackened synthetic bags. Then there is the hair-style of long unkempt plaits. Both the costume and hair-style are completed with other apparel such as animal skin and accessories such as cowries, animal horns, snakes, etc. The witchdoctor's appearance is designed to conjure up something strange, unusual and out of the ordinary. Thirdly, there is the speech which comprises two dimensions, depending on whether he is talking to visible or invisible beings, in which case it is either ordinary speech or incantations respectively. If incantations, the language is symbolic and can only be decoded by those who have been initiated into it, since it is such language that he uses to communicate with spirits in the invisible world. The incantations are usually poetic and onomatopoeic and take the form of songs.

Apart from the introduction of the narrator/commentator and the witchdoctor in Cameroonian plays, a third characteristic of this drama is the introduction of songs and dancing by the dramatists. Anyone travelling across the Cameroonian national territory will notice that there is no event in the life of the Cameroonian that is not accompanied by singing and dancing. In the Bafut, Bamileke, Bassa, Bulu, Douala and other tribes the Cameroonian sings and dances in times of joy and in times of sorrow. One can therefore understand how difficult it is for the Cameroonian playwright not to take into account this reality in his/her dramatic composition(s). Oyono Mbia (1964) definitely takes this reality into account in his *Trois prétendants, un mari* the focus in the present study. In this regard he states in his preface to the play:

Mon souhait le plus vif est donc que mes pièces puissent être jouées en plein air en Afrique ou ailleurs, devant un public qui prendrait spontanément part aux chants et aux danses, suivant les adaptations locales auxquelles les metteurs en scène voudront bien procéder. Lors des représentations de *Trois prétendants, un mari* que j'ai données en Angleterre au cours des deux dernières années, le public britannique qui est flegmatique par définition, m'a comblé de joie en venant se joindre en masse à la grande danse de la fin. [My ardent wish, therefore, is that my plays be performed in the open air, in Africa or elsewhere, before an audience which would spontaneously take part in the singing and dancing, according to the local adaptations the producers might want to make. During the performances of *Three Suitors: One*

Husband in England during the past two years, the British audience, which is phlegmatic by nature, filled me with joy by massively joining the actors in the closing dance.]

The fourth characteristic of Cameroonian drama and resulting from the introduction of the narrator/commentator and the witchdoctor, is the bridging of the gap between actors and spectators. In the classical set-up as mentioned earlier, the theatre is composed of two distinct areas: the stage and the hall. The hall is for the audience, for those watching the play, while the stage is the space for the actors where the micro universe of the play is reconstituted. There is usually a barrier that separates the two spaces. In Cameroonian drama on the contrary, there is no barrier separating the actors from the audience such that the narrator/commentator or the witchdoctor can freely move from the stage to the audience in the hall, or for the audience to freely move to the stage and join in the singing and dancing. Gaining inspiration from the oral tradition, Cameroonian dramatists and directors therefore strive to eliminate the communication gap between actors and the audience such that the latter not only watches and listens but also actively participates in the drama event.

The unity of place of action as it obtains in classical drama is also violated in Cameroonian drama, particularly as in their dramatic compositions most Cameroonian playwrights tend to be fluid in the use of space and time and the plays when performed may sometimes go on for hours on end. In this connection, Mbassi (1988:109) has pointed out that:

Il y a lieu de retenir que la tendance générale dans le théâtre Camerounais est celle non du lieu unique, mais celle d'une géographie éclatée. L'action, mobile selon les événements se déroule sur une scène multispaciale et renie du coup toute parenté avec la scène classique.[It is worth noting that the general tendency in Cameroonian drama is not that of unity of place but that of several locations of place of action. The action, which is mobile and shifting depending on the events, takes place on a scene made up of several locations and has nothing in common with the classical scene].

This tendency is noticeable in Oyono Mbia's *Trois prétendants, un mari* and *Le train spécial de son Excellence* examined in the present study.

It is therefore evident from the above characteristics and as asserted by Doho (1988 :80) that:

Le personnage de sorcier est une donnée dramaturgique importante sur le plan de l'écriture et de la représentation. Il entre donc, tout comme le conteur, l'espace scénique éclatée, etc. dans la grammaire dramaturgique que proposent les dramaturges Camerounais.[The character of the witchdoctor is one of the important dramatic elements in dramatical composition and performance. Just like the narrator/commentator, the multiple locations of the action, etc., he is an integral part of the dramatic language that Cameroonians dramatists present to the public.]

For his part, also talking about the content of Cameroonian plays and the way it is expressed or articulated, Eyoh (1988:138) points out that:

In Cameroonian drama, comedies and social satire abound, but while the thematic breadth is vast, the constraints are equally many. But these have led the playwrights to develop a rather subtle and elliptical style in which they work largely through allusion, implication and innuendo, often integrated into rather simple and straight-forward plots. In appreciating this drama, one has constantly got to be aware of those verbal touches which draw one's attention to events outside the framework of the plays themselves.

Other characteristics of Cameroonian drama, some of which are clearly manifest in Oyono Mbia's plays examined in this study, are stylistic devices and techniques, such as personalisation, song, idiophone, topical conclusion, stylistic/linguistic calques, borrowings, etc. Personalisation occurs through audience and performer identification with the story which is unravelled while song is used to enhance the quality of the performance, provide relief and audience participation as well as underline the major themes of the performance. Song is also used to indicate the passage of time, remind the audience of what has happened, suggest what will occur, and indicate the different emotional moods. Idiophones are used to describe such acts as are beyond the scope of words. These could be colour, texture, movement, state, quality, or any other thing that is not describable using words. The topical conclusion to which the play or the performance has to be brought is to give it immediacy and relevance, although this is not necessarily didactic. Stylistic/linguistic calques also abound in Cameroonian plays.

These consist of expressing a Cameroonian cultural or linguistic phenomenon/device in the mould of a French or English expression. This often confers a peculiar and distinct local colour and taste to the play. Cameroonian playwrights also borrow considerably from the Cameroonian local languages and this often consists of the direct transfer or transliteration of the local word or expression into the French or English text. The effect produced by such a stylistic device is similar to that produced by stylistic/linguistic calques.

In conclusion, one may say that it is important for any critic or researcher on Cameroonian drama as well as any translation scholar/researcher of this Cameroonian literary genre, to constantly bear all this in mind. As asserted by Cameroonian drama specialists and scholars, he should equally bear in mind that:

Le théâtre Camerounais a pour référence constante la réalité économique, sociale, politique et culturelle comme but immédiat, intermédiaire et ultime l'enseignement et le divertissement, mieux, l'enseignement par le divertissement. [...] Le théâtre Camerounais, c'est la vie Camerounaise qui se prolonge en regardant et en se regardant, pour voir et se voir, analyser et s'analyser, comprendre et se comprendre, assumer et s'assumer. C'est la totale, partielle et partielle assumption du destin de ce pays. [...] Reflet de la société Camerounaise dans son irrésistible mutation spécifique, le théâtre camerounais sera ce que seront le Cameroun et les Camerounais, celui qui tout en préservant et en gardant son assurance historique, économique, sociale et culturelle privilégie l'auto-révolution [Cameroonian theatre has as constant reference the economic, social, political and cultural reality, and as immediate, intermediate and ultimate objective education, entertainment, better still, education through entertainment. [...] Cameroonian theatre is the portrayal of Cameroonian life as it scrutinizes reality and in turn looks back at itself in order to contemplate and in turn mirror itself, perceive and introspect, assume its responsibilities and in turn come to terms with itself. It is the total, partial and incomplete assumption of the destiny of this country. [...] A reflection of the Cameroonian society in its irresistible specific mutation, Cameroonian theatre will become what Cameroon and Cameroonians will become, a theatre which while preserving and maintaining its historic, economic, social and cultural self-assurance accords greater importance to self-revolution.] (cf. Mbom 1988: 200-1).

Considering, as asserted in the above quotation, that Cameroonian drama has as constant reference the country's economic, social, political and cultural realities, and that its ultimate objective is didactic and entertainment or, better still, education through entertainment, it is necessary, beyond these general considerations, to examine the specific motivations behind Oyono Mbia's plays.

2.2.2.3. Oyono Mbia's works and motivations

As Ade Ojo (1986) has pertinently pointed out, apart from the extra-linguistic factors portrayed in a work of art, the other most important literary phenomenon is the personal style of the artist, i.e. his choice of words and expressions, and his arrangement of these language components. These have to be thoroughly grasped in order to properly and fully appreciate the strategies/techniques used and before any successful translation of the text can be effected. In order to do a correct translation of each word or expression in the text, its conceptual context and emotional thrust must be understood. This is particularly indispensable because every work is chosen by the original creative writer for reasons varying from the emotional to the intellectual and the ideological. This is particularly so as the writer is never oblivious of the fact that the language he is using is linked to a community which has a distinct world-view and a peculiar language identity. He also knows that every word is polysemous in nature in that it has a first meaning, a synchronic pertinence and a value depending on the conceptual context or plane in which it is placed. This, therefore, means that despite the fact that a word or expression is arbitrarily conditioned by the writer's society or his language community to designate something, its use is determined by the writer's private code or idiolect dictated by the peculiar circumstances or context in which the creative process is taking pace, and also by the writer's personal intellectual and experiential background as well as his ideology or conception. For these reasons, in the next section Oyono Mbia's educational background, his works and ideas as well as his communication strategies in the source texts are examined. The examination

effected is detailed and anecdotal in order to give a comprehensive picture of the specific setting of the plays studied.

- **Oyono Mbia's educational background**

Guillaume Oyono Mbia was born in the French-speaking part of Cameroon, in 1939 in Mvoutessi II, a small village of the Bulu tribe near Zoetele and Sangmelima in the South Province of Cameroon. His native language is Bulu. His parents were peasant farmers and he received his primary education in Mvoutessi, after which he attended secondary school at the Collège Evangélique de Libamba, near Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon. After obtaining his Baccalauréat, he was recruited to teach French, English and German in the same college. In 1964 he was awarded a British Council scholarship to undergo a diploma course in London as a translator/interpreter, and from 1965 to 1969 he studied English and French at the University of Keele, Staffordshire, England, where he graduated with a B.A. He then returned to Cameroon in 1969 where he took up a teaching appointment that same year as an Assistant Lecturer of English Language and Literature at the University of Yaounde. From 1972 to 1975, in addition to his academic duties, he was appointed Head of the Cultural Affairs Division of the Ministry of Information and Culture, and in 1977 he helped organise a colloquium on Cameroonian literature and literary criticism at the University of Yaounde. He is now retired from the public service and spends most of his time in his native village Mvoutessi II.

- **Oyono Mbia's literary works and ideas**

Oyono Mbia's literary and humorous inclination stems from the oral literature of his village childhood and story-telling tradition, as he admits in an interview with Lee (1981:236):

We had in our family a tradition of story telling. My mother was and still is a good story-teller. Every evening she used to gather us small children around her and tell stories in a rather humorous fashion. Her stories were usually meant to criticise our bad

habits, to educate us. We got into the habit of using stories as a means of showing people what we thought they ought to be doing ...

It was during his secondary school years in Libamba that Oyono Mbia began his writing career. He says: “I was preparing for the French baccalauréat and this, in fact, led me to write in dramatic dialogue” (Zell 1983:461)

The first play by Oyono Mbia is a five-act comedy entitled *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari* and it is indeed the first play by a Cameroonian writer. It has as theme rival suitors and bargaining parents who want to “sell” their daughter for a bride price to the richest suitor. The author himself clearly states the genesis of this play as follows:

I went home to Mvoutessi from school. It was just before Cameroon independence. And one of my cousins, a girl, got married under about the same conditions related in my *Three suitors: One Husband*. I wrote the whole thing down but not yet as a play. When I went back to school I told my school fellows what had happened and they were so amused we used to sit up late at night reading the story. It happened that one of our teachers, hearing the noise, came by to punish whoever was making noise. And he took away my notebook; before punishing me he wanted to find out what it was all about. So the next morning, whereas I was expecting to be punished, the teacher said to me, “Why don’t you try and write this as a play?” And so I did ... (Lee 1981:232)

Subsequently, therefore, the story was written as a play, a comic satire that treats the theme of marriage within a traditional cultural context wherein the woman has no choice and is refused the right of expression by her male counterpart. The above testimony from Oyono Mbia leaves no doubt that he thought of drama in Western terms. Apart from being concerned with the subjection of women, the play also treats issues such as traditional nepotism, superstition as well as confrontation of the rural Cameroonian with his/her westernised city counterpart and with the benefits of modern consumer society.

According to his preface to the published text, this play was written when he was a twenty-year old student to divert his classmates and thank them for having helped him with his maths assignments. It was staged for the first time in Libamba and Yaounde in 1960 and published four years later by Editions CLE, Yaounde. Since then, it has been staged in Britain and France with great success. Encouraged by the success of his first literary work in French, Oyono Mbia wrote its English version, *Three Suitors: One Husband*, which was published in 1968 in a Methuen play script. *Until Further Notice* is his second play, a radio play written in English that received first prize in a drama competition organised by the BBC African service and even before its publication by Methuen in 1968, a stage adaptation of this comedy of manners had been produced at the Edinburgh Festival of 1967. Its French version, *Jusqu'à nouvel avis*, also written by the author himself, was published by Editions CLE and that same year it won the EL Hadj Amadou Ahidjo literary prize. Like *Three Suitors, One Husband*, it is also set in the village of Mvoutessi. The action of this second play centres on a group of villagers waiting in vain for the triumphal return of an educated daughter of the village who has married an important government official. The villagers want to “cash in” on their “investment” as those who paid for the girl’s education but in the long run a driver and his companion arrive in a vehicle to announce to the villagers that their daughter and her husband will not be coming until further notice because he has accepted an appointment as Secretary of State.

Oyono Mbia’s third play, *Notre fille ne se mariera pas!* is the only one of his four plays that has not yet been translated into English. This play won the 1969 Inter-African theatre competition sponsored by Radio-France Internationale, and comically reverses the theme of *Three suitors: One Husband*, in which the educated daughter had to be married at all costs to the “highest bidder”. In *Notre fille ne se mariera pas!* the family’s concern is to prevent their daughter’s marriage in order to make sure that her earnings as an educated person will be channelled directly into the family coffers. Both plays therefore examine the rift that separates the old and young generations in Oyono Mbia’s society, but from opposing viewpoints.

The fourth play, *Le train spécial de son Excellence/His Excellency's Special Train*, published in French and English, was originally conceived and written as a radio play. It was broadcast by the BBC African Service in London in 1969 and in 1971 it won the Inter-African theatre competition organised by Radio-France Internationale, scoring yet another success for the author. The comic element in this play lies in the wide gap between the people's expectations and their perceptions as they anxiously await the arrival of a very important dignitary, only to be extremely disappointed when he turns out not to be an important person at all. The play is a social satire which focuses mainly on the unbecoming behaviour of government employees vis-à-vis their less fortunate compatriots in the cities and villages throughout the country. It is in this play that Oyono Mbia comes closest to commenting on the political and economic situation of his society. However, rather than present the situation as being orchestrated by a central political machinery that is morally depraved and absolutely decadent, the author chooses to treat his audience to trivialities for fear of being arrested, and probably because he takes advantage of the fact that the various evils and shortcomings are already common knowledge. Indeed, some of the observations about the evil practices are even made in such a naive manner that the vice could easily pass for virtue. A clear example is this reaction by one of his characters in the play:

Bikokoe Mendegue: You're right, ah Mezung! Tell my niece to try and become
a white woman! She must try all the big men in Yaounde!
A girl's future's between her own legs nowadays, you know!
(*His Excellency's Special Train*, p. 61)

Even though Guillaume Oyono Mbia is rather well-known as a dramatist, he has also published three collections of short stories, entitled *Chroniques de Mvoutessi* I, II and III. In these short stories, Oyono Mbia continues the humorous portraits of the inhabitants of Mvoutessi that he had begun in his plays.

According to Zell (1983:461), this essentially comic playwright believes that the theatre is "the only means which can reach illiterate as well as literate people" and he even once expressed the wish to specialise in a kind of participatory theatre where people are "allowed to take part".

It can be asserted that, clearly, Oyono Mbia wrote for the Cameroonian and African audience which contains both illiterate and literate people who all need his message. He himself affirms that:

I'm chiefly a satirical writer and it wouldn't have done me any good to do satirical writing about someone else's village. But it would be a mistake to say it concerns only my village. My village is taken as a typical village in Southern Cameroon. (Lee: 237).

His wider Cameroonian target audience beyond his native village could be further inferred from the precautions he took in choosing the mode of writing following the post-independence oppressive and repressive socio-political situation in Cameroon at the time. In an interview with African Literature Specialisation Students of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences of the University of Yaounde (January 1985), he states that:

I started writing when I was a schoolboy. Therefore, I had to be very careful with what I wrote lest I be misunderstood and taken for a subversive element. Moreover, I chose comedy in order to sweeten the pills of social criticism; apart from the fact that it pulls a larger audience to a show than tragedy. Lastly, it was a personal choice, like anyone can choose between joy and sorrow.

The above declaration also clearly shows, together with the foregoing discussion, that although a writer chooses freely the genre in which he will communicate his ideas to his audience, the social environment in which he lives and writes will not only condition his mode of writing but might actually dictate it.

Elsewhere in his preface to *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari* (1969:6-7) he states his objectives in his plays as well as his preference for comedy in the following terms:

Je voudrais donc rappeler aux lecteurs, acteurs et metteurs en scène que mon but, en écrivant, est non de moraliser, mais de divertir. [...] Ce n'est qu'en le divertissant réellement qu'on peut espérer amener le public à prendre conscience de certains aspects de notre culture ou de notre vie sociale et si, ce faisant, on parvient à semer en terrain fertile la graine appelée à se multiplier et à produire au centuple des réformes utiles, tant mieux ; mais si le public rit aux éclats et s'en retourne sans avoir songé à battre

sa coulpe, on aura toujours le mérite d'avoir essayé de la divertir. [I wish, therefore, to remind readers, actors and directors that my objective, in writing, is not to give moral lessons but to entertain. [...] It is only by really entertaining the public that we can hope to make them aware of certain aspects of our culture or of our social life and if, by so doing, we succeed in sowing the seed on fertile soil for it to multiply and produce a hundredfold the necessary reforms, then good; but if they laugh their heads off after reading or watching the play and do not repent openly, then we would have still had the merit of having tried to entertain them.]

Oyono Mbia's literary bent for theatre as earlier indicated and, more specifically, for a specific type of drama (i.e. comedy), is thus clearly revealed.

He does not have an inflated idea about the role of the writer. For him, the writer is neither a guide nor a messiah but an objective person who can demonstrate intellectual honesty in literary creativity and criticism. In this regard he says:

I think a writer is a reporter, a man who perhaps has a gift not only for seeing but also for telling people what he saw and they may have missed. I think a writer ought to be true not only to himself but to his age, and nothing pleases me more than to have people with no literary pretensions pick up my book and say, "Yes, this is what happened in my village" (Lee 1981:238-9)

- **Oyono Mbia's communication strategies**

The fact that Oyono Mbia's primary target audience is Cameroonian like himself may be reasonably expected to have certain implications on the style and strategies adopted to communicate the message in his plays. For instance, by using his plays as a means of entertaining his audience while at the same time making them aware of the practices he is criticising, he often achieves his objective by making only passing references to the customs and practices of the people he is describing. He does not need, therefore, to provide his audience with detailed explanations and descriptions of these practices because the audience is an integral part of his background. Such detailed descriptions

could only render the plays boring to the public, thereby defeating one of his main objectives of entertainment. The possible implications of this shared background by both source and target text Cameroonian audiences on Oyono Mbia's translation strategies are examined in Chapter 4 of this study.

With regard to his communication strategy in the source texts, his themes are organised around a number of symbolic signifiers (i.e. items that acquire symbolic value) to which he makes only passing references. In *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari*, for instance, the first scene opens with two of the characters, Ondua and Oyono, seen leisurely playing an indoor game and drinking palm wine. The author equally uses palm wine as a symbolic signifier in his other plays considered in this study. Palm wine is symbolic of the indigenous culture and its traditional practices such as ancestor worship, illiteracy, a life of bondage for women who must work all day long while the men just sit at home drinking their wine and only going out once in a while to hunt or fish for the family. The local and illegally distilled spirit drink, *arki*, symbolises the negative aspects of tradition in the face of the administrative laws of the modern government. The *Préfet*, *Sous-préfet*, *Gendarmerie*, *Commissaires de police* are other symbolic signifiers in the plays that symbolise the repressive instruments of the government. Their extensive powers, very brutal methods and excesses are such that just the mere thought of coming into conflict with any of them normally sends a chill down the citizen's spine (cf. section 2.2.1 above.)

The village in the plays also symbolises the indigenous culture with its negative aspects such as nepotism, polygamy, strong family and tribal ties expected to yield material benefits, poor living standards of the villagers, illiteracy, etc. The city as a symbolic signifier stands in contrast to the village and symbolises education, cars, concrete houses with cemented floors, soft beds and chairs, imported goods and foodstuffs, cutlery, etc. The seven forks in *Jusqu'à nouvel avis* (p. 19-44) symbolise the new modernised life of the western world, education, progress and material riches and a higher standard of living. Thus, Mezoe eats with his hands in the village but eats with forks in the city in Matalina's house.

2.3. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has examined some of the main issues with respect to drama translation that have been the subject of recent and constant debate among drama translation scholars. The issues examined include the distinction between drama and theatre translation, the notions of ‘performability’ and ‘speakability’ in drama and drama translation, the drama text as an incomplete entity, strategies that have been employed in drama translation, compatibility and integration of translated drama in the receiving culture, and methodological frameworks that have been proposed by drama translation scholars within which drama translation can be studied.

In the course of the review, it was argued and asserted, amongst other things, that the drama text is indeed an incomplete entity and that, though operating at different stages in the drama communication chain, the communication roles of the drama translator and director/producer are distinct but identical. Consequently, the relationship between these key persons ought to be viewed from the perspectives of collaboration and complementarity rather than of inferiority or superiority of status. It was also argued and asserted that since drama is essentially rooted in a given culture, universal applicability of a set of criteria established to determine performability need not be the main issue. Instead the focus could be on the predictability of such established criteria for a given culture, period or text type.

With respect to the compatibility and integration of translated drama in the receiving culture, it was equally argued that scholars who are preoccupied with the fate of the translated drama text in the receiving culture solely from the point of view of its acculturation and integration in that culture, are rather restrictive in their approach, thereby failing to take into consideration other instances of drama translated and performed for reasons that could be referred to as exotic to simply entertain and inform the target audience about a foreign culture without any attempt to integrate such drama in the receiving culture.

Finally, this chapter has examined the various factors in the source language system that have an incidence on Oyono Mbia's plays thereby conferring on them a strong culture-specific coloration.

Since this study focuses more specifically on the translation of the culture-specific elements in Oyono Mbia's plays, it is, therefore, necessary to examine in the next chapter the various strategies that have been identified and highlighted by scholars for translating cultural categories.

Chapter 3: The Translation of Cultural Categories

3.1. Introduction

Following the review in the previous chapter of the main issues of drama translation and of the factors in the source language system that are considered to have an influence on Oyono Mbia's works, this chapter examines translation strategies that have been proposed or identified and highlighted by translation scholars and practitioners for the handling of cultural categories. Such an examination serves as a backdrop to the way Oyono Mbia has handled culture-bound aspects in the translated versions of his plays, which is examined in Chapter 4. In this regard, it is worth noting that efforts towards translating African literature into European languages are sometimes frustrated by lack of correspondence for cultural details which predominate in the African texts. The problem can be found even in original texts in which writers using a foreign medium have to rely on approximations of these cultural traits. Lack of equivalents for aesthetic features derived from African languages/cultures is also a barrier.

In effect, the aspect of Oyono Mbia's plays which makes the study of their translation particularly interesting is the amount of culture-specific content in the source texts. The plays are set against a very markedly Bulu/Cameroonian cultural background, reflecting the fact that the plays are certainly aimed initially at a Bulu/Cameroonian audience/readership and not necessarily expected to go further beyond Africa to other countries.

The cultural context of Oyono Mbia's plays studied herein is a framework built of objects, processes, institutions, customs, practices and ideas peculiar to the Bulu/Cameroonian people among which the plays are set. In Oyono Mbia's plays, the cultural context is very strong and inseparable from the plot. Indeed, all the events and all the characters' experiences are a consequence of a certain social, political, economic, etc. situation, i.e. of the cultural context. It could even be asserted that if the

plays were to be stripped of their references and allusions that would mean depriving them of their *raison d'être*.

Oyono Mbia's first play *Trois prétendants, un mari* (Three Suitors, One Husband), in particular, is clearly an example of original intracultural communication full of references to aspects of Bulu/Cameroonian life that are expected to be perfectly familiar to the original audience, yet one which has successfully been transmitted to Anglophone readers of quite a different cultural background. And in this respect, it is necessary to point out that in the French-English bilingual and bi-cultural Cameroonian context, it is habitual to talk of and describe Anglophones as Anglo-Saxons whose culture is distinct from that of the Francophones, both Western cultures having been inherited respectively from the British and French colonial masters who ruled the English and French-speaking parts of the country before independence. Whether the success of Oyono Mbia's translations has in part been achieved because of their treatment of these culture-specific references, or in spite of it, is an issue examined in the next chapter; but there is no doubt that the plays offer a rich source of material for anyone interested in looking at how translators choose to deal with culture-specific content.

There are a number of respects in which the Bulu/Cameroonian cultural concepts scattered across the pages of Oyono Mbia's plays studied herein may be problematic for readers from outside this culture. Furthermore, it is perhaps necessary to also point out that these issues concern not only translators but also editors seeking to present the plays for a different group of English-speaking readers as certain adjustments in the translated versions of the plays published in Britain by Methuen and Co. Ltd, and Big O Press Limited seem to suggest. This is perhaps owing to the fact that in some cases the concepts referred to in the plays may simply not have any recognizable meaning for the new audience or the new audience may be able to recognize the entity referred to, but lack the background knowledge necessary to grasp the significance of this reference in context. And even where they are able to relate the entity to something

similar in their own culture, this may not allow them access to the same associations as those made in the source culture.

But before examining therefore how translation scholars and practitioners have so far grappled with the problems of transferring culture-specific items it is, however, necessary to examine the concept of culture in some detail.

3.2. On the definition of culture

Katan (1999:16) has remarked that people instinctively know what ‘culture’ means to them and to which culture they belong, and that even though we all know to which culture we belong, definition of the word has been “notoriously elusive and difficult”. In the same vein, Hietaranta (2000:87) observes that “the concept of culture is one that many people, at least in everyday life, use very loosely and in several unequivalent senses”. This difficulty no doubt explains the record long list of 164 definitions compiled by American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn by 1952, to which was added their lengthy 165th contribution as follows:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional, i.e. historically derived and selected, ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning elements of future action (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952:181).

The American ethnologist Goodenough (1964:39-40) looks at culture from a somewhat different and more restrictive perspective, stating that:

As I see it, a society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition we should note that culture is not a

material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions.

It is evident from this assertive and emphatic declaration, particularly of the last part of his definition, that Goodenough does not consider culture as also embodying things such as dress, food, drink, methods of greeting, artefacts, etc.

However, according to translation scholars (cf. Nord 1997:24), Goodenough's definition has served as a general starting point for functionalist approaches to translation (cf. Göhring 1978:10, Vermeer 1986a:178, Amman 1989c:39, Nord 1993:22). According to Nord (1997:24) it was Göhring (1978) who first introduced it into the study of cross-cultural communication and slightly modified it in order to address issues of translation. In his definition, Göhring (1978, in Vermeer, 1986a:178) states that:

Culture is whatever one has to know, master or feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behaviour shown by members of a community in their various roles conforms to general expectations, and in order to behave in this community in accordance with general expectations unless one is prepared to bear the consequences of unaccepted behaviour.

Göhring stresses the fact that in intercultural encounters the individual is free either to conform to the behaviour patterns accepted in the other culture or to bear the consequences of behaviour that is contrary to cultural expectations. Culture in this sense is perceived as a complex system that can be subdivided into paraculture (norms, rules and conventions valid for a particular group within society, such as a club, a firm or a regional entity) and idioculture (the culture of an individual person as opposed to other individuals). However, just like Katan (1999:16), Nord (1997:24) equally points out the difficulties of defining the concept by stating that "the borderlines between cultural systems or sub-systems are notoriously difficult to define".

Vermeer's (1987a: 28) own definition focuses even more on norms and conventions as the main features of culture. For him:

Culture is the entire setting of norms and conventions an individual as a member of his society must know in order to be 'like everybody' – or to be able to be different from everybody.

According to Vermeer, therefore, every cultural phenomenon is assigned a position in a complex system of values, and every individual is an element in a system of space-time coordinates. If this is accepted, then transcultural action or communication across culture barriers has to take account of cultural differences with regard to behaviour, evaluation and communication situations (cf. Vermeer 1990b:29).

Definitions of culture that are norms/conventions-oriented are especially relevant in the study of the translation phenomenon, particularly within the framework of descriptive translation studies (DTS) where translational behaviour as well as translation strategies are studied from the viewpoint of the norms and constraints at play during the translation process, and which condition and dictate the translator's decisions, choices and strategies. In effect, culture in language and translation is something that can be handled properly only if we are aware of the relevant norms which in fact constitute much of our culture and language. Since much of culture (linguistic and non-linguistic alike) exists through and in norms, much of what we do makes sense only if we recognize the power of norms.

This probably explains why definitions of culture by some scholars could be considered too summary and too broad to be readily, meaningfully and practically exploited by the translation practitioner or scholar. Such is the case for the definitions of culture proposed by Snell-Hornby (1988:40) as "a totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception" and Nida (1994:157) as "the total beliefs and practices of a society". Similarly, in rather broad and abstract terms Katan (1999:17) proposes a definition of culture which he says is "in terms of a shared mental model or map of the world", whereby culture is perceived as "a system of congruent and interrelated beliefs, values, strategies and cognitive environments which guide the shared basis of behaviour".

Apart from norms/conventions-oriented definitions which we consider useful, particularly within the framework of our study of Oyono Mbia's transfer strategies of cultural categories in the translated versions of his plays, other definitions of culture which may be regarded as equally useful to the translation scholar and practitioner are those that focus on and itemize in some detail those aspects/elements that constitute culture. This is the case with the definitions proposed by the linguists Scollon and Scollon (1995) and Brake et al. (1995). Scollon and Scollon (1995:126), for instance, state that:

When we use the word 'culture' in its anthropological sense, we mean to say that culture is any of the customs, worldviews, language, kinship system, social organization, and other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices of a people which set that group apart as a distinctive group.

Brake et al. (1995:35) too, on their part, assert in an explanatory definition that:

Laws, customs, rituals, gestures, ways of dressing, food and drink and methods of greeting, and saying goodbye ... These are all part of culture, but they are just the tip of the iceberg.

Such definitions are helpful in that they draw the attention of the translator or scholar to specific aspects of culture that are portrayed or alluded to in a text by the author given that language is not an isolated phenomenon suspended in a vacuum but an integral part of culture. Besides, the message conveyed in a text is usually composed of what is explicitly stated as well as the out-of-text reality that is implicit or alluded to. Furthermore, translation takes place in concrete, definable situations that involve different cultures and members of those cultures.

In effect, concerning the relations between culture and translation, any or all of these aspects of culture may be manifested in the text a translator is called to work on. Various values and beliefs may be implicit in such aspects as the genre of the text, its organization, discourse patterns and communicative strategies. The customs and norms of a culture may be adopted by the author of a text or protagonists featuring within it; and of course references to culture-specific artefacts in situations and traditions may be present to a greater or lesser extent.

Other scholars have, still in an attempt to better circumscribe the concept of culture and render it more operational, focused on the organization of the various approaches to culture by grouping the various definitions into basic levels. Robinson (1988:7-13) has, for instance, grouped them into two basic levels: external and internal. Culture definitions relating to the external level are, in turn, grouped into two sub-levels: behaviours and products. Behaviours comprise aspects such as language, gestures, customs and habits while products include literature, folklore, art, music and artefacts. Definitions relating to the internal level comprise ideas which in turn include beliefs, values and institutions.

Trompenaars (1993:22-23) has identified three concentric levels which he refers to as “layers of culture”. For him, the outer layer includes artefacts and products; the middle layer, norms and values; and the core, basic assumptions. According to Trompenaars, the outer layer is the most visible layer which he calls “explicit”. The middle layer differentiates between norms and values. The norms relate to social rules of conduct. They concern, and to a large extent dictate, how one should behave in society. Values, on the other hand, are aspirations. The core, unlike the outer layer, is not visible and Trompenaars calls this “implicit”. He considers the core the heart of culture and the most inaccessible. As mentioned earlier, the notions of ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit’ are of particular relevance to translation and the translator in that the totality of what is conveyed in a text by an author is made up of what is expressly stated and what is not said, i.e. the total meaning of the source text to be mapped on to the target text is made up of both what is explicit in it and what is implicit.

Hofstede (1991:7, 9) too, has grouped culture into two main layers: practices and values. Practices constitute the outer layer while values constitute the core. The main difference between Trompenaars’ and Hofstede’s models is that the former has a tripartite view of culture while the latter describes two main layers of culture. Hofstede groups’ symbols, rituals, etc. under practices (as compared with Trompenaars’ artefacts and products, norms and values) and makes it clear that the core of culture is formed by values. For Hofstede, ‘symbols’ represent the first level of practices and

they are semiotic signs recognized as belonging to a particular group, such as words, gestures, pictures, objects, dress, food, etc. A symbol is any perceivable sign that communicates a meaning in a given culture.

Similarly, Hongwei (1999:121-2) has divided culture roughly into three categories: material culture which refers to all the products of manufacture; institutional culture which refers to various systems and the theories that support them such as social systems, religious systems, ritual systems, educational systems, kinship systems and language; finally mental culture which refers to people's mentality and behaviours, their thought patterns, beliefs, conceptions of value, aesthetic tastes. For Hongwei, language, which possesses all the features of culture, belongs to institutional culture. Language mirrors other parts of culture, supports them, spreads them and helps to develop others. This special feature of language distinguishes it from all other facets of culture and makes it crucially important for the transfer of culture. Indeed, with respect to the intermingled nature of language and culture, Hongwei (1999:122) asserts that "language is the life-blood of culture and culture is the track along which language forms and develops". And furthermore, that "a careful study of the meaning of words and how these change demonstrates how material culture, institutional culture and mental culture influence the formation and development of language".

Katan (1999:30-2) has divided culture into three levels: technical, formal and informal. According to Katan, technical culture is communication at the level of science, that which can be measured accurately, and has no meaning outside itself. For instance, "time" has a variety of meanings depending on context and culture. Technical time refers only to the technical understanding of the concept and can be broken down into its basic isolates (such as a second, a minute) which we all have a feel for. However, very few would be able to define a second or a minute. A technical 'second' or 'minute' has no feeling but a clear unambiguous scientific definition. Technical culture is thus scientific, analysable and having only one right answer which is based on an objective technical principle.

Formal culture, on the other hand, is no longer objective but forms part of an accepted way of doing things. This is the culture of traditions, rules, customs, procedures, etc. We are generally not aware of the conventions surrounding the routines of life, but awareness is immediate when the convention is flouted. In linguistics, the language of these routines of life would be referred to as genres.

Finally, according to Katan, informal culture has no 'rules' and is acquired informally 'out-of-awareness'. It is this out-of-awareness level that we respond to emotionally and identify with. It is the "not what-he-said but how-he-said it" level (cf. Katan 1999:32). It is the level where we judge and react to connotative meanings of words and these are "the culturally or socially determined value judgements that are implicit in the semantics of a word".

Despite the abundant definitions of the concept of culture and despite the many shades of differences in the perception of the concept, most anthropologists agree on the following features of culture:

- a) Culture is socially acquired instead of biologically transmitted;
- b) Culture is shared among the members of a community rather than being unique to an individual;
- c) Culture is symbolic, where symbolizing means assigning to entities and events meanings which are external to them and which cannot be grasped alone.
Language is the most typical symbolic system within culture;
- d) Culture is integrated, i.e. each aspect of culture is tied in with all other aspects.

In view of the foregoing discussion on some of the various definitions of the concept of 'culture' and with regard to translation, it could be posited that what is more practical and can be more readily exploited by the translation practitioner is the classification of culture into levels, layers or categories as the case may be. Concretely and practically, it is these categories or the various aspects contained in them that the translator in the course of reading the source text can more easily identify and distinguish in the text in order to develop corresponding specific transfer strategies to

overcome the translation problems posed by the culture-specific aspects. There is no doubt that different cultural categories will not necessarily call for the same strategies and solutions. However, it is more probable that strategies evolved to transfer a given aspect within a given category could be generalized or extended to other aspects of the same category or sub-group.

3.3. The centrality of culture in translation

Katan (1999:1) remarks that “‘translating across cultures’ and ‘cultural proficiency’ have become buzz words in translating and interpreting”, and Baker (1996:17) warns that “many scholars have now adopted a ‘cultural’ perspective ... a dangerously fashionable word that almost substitutes for rigour and coherence”. However, this fact notwithstanding, some of the most exciting developments in translation studies over the last twenty five years have been part of what has been called “the cultural turn” and it is often taken as an axiom of translation studies that the translator mediates between cultures as well as languages. That is why the translator has been referred to as a “cultural mediator” (cf. Bochner 1981).

The very purpose of translation – its “carrying across” texts between cultures – raises the question of the extent to which communication is possible from one culture to another and of what is or can be communicated. In this regard, translation scholars (cf. St. Pierre 1997:423) have argued that if there are limits to translatability, and if these limits are social, cultural and historical in nature, then the translation of texts is put into question by the obligation to translate. In other words, translation is made necessary by the fact that culture and languages differ, but it is also made difficult (though not necessary impossible) by this very difference.

Translation scholars have adopted two extreme views on this issue. While some assert that everything can be translated without loss, others maintain that nothing can be translated without loss, such as illustrated by the Italian expression *traduttore/traditore* (translator/traitor). Both views may, indeed, be considered correct and can be

discussed at three levels: technical culture, formal culture and informal culture. For instance, it may be argued that with the advent of globalization and the world being increasingly reduced to a global village, conceptual terms will become easier to translate as different cultures come together under the global communication umbrella. It can, therefore, be asserted that translating or interpreting new technology across cultures, whether for the technicians themselves or for the ordinary end-user will not pose a problem. At the technical level where communication is explicit (and not implicit) it is the proposition, the dictionary denotative meaning which needs to be translated. Indeed, as Katan (1999) has pointed out, technical culture is now global, with business and industry working to the same standards throughout the world. This implies that at the technical level little or no loss or distortion of meaning need occur given that communication at this level has no extra-linguistic context: the text is the authority and it is clearly spelled out.

However, while technical culture has been used on the one hand to argue the case for the possibility of translating without loss of meaning, the formal and informal levels of culture have been used on the other hand to demonstrate and assert the inevitable loss inherent in translation. This implies that the more culturally embedded words are, the less easily they can be translated.

Some scholars (cf. Sherry Simon 1995) have, however, taken exception to the idea of cultural embeddedness as a given, arguing that it is the extent to which language carries cultural meaning that is always negotiable. Furthermore, they object to the idea of culture as a unified field, generally organized along national lines, asserting that the debate on culture today is marked by the realities of our intellectual and social context, post-colonialism and post-modernism. Post-colonialism and post-modernism have to do with hybridity and mixing. Post-colonialism refers to the political, demographic, economic and cultural consequences of colonialism, and in particular to the migrations and displacements which have resulted in increasingly mixed populations in many countries. Post-modernism refers to a specific cultural aesthetic in literature, architecture, dance, etc. in which hybridity, repetition, recycling and parody play an

important role, and in which originality is considered particularly suspect (cf. Simon 1995:46-7).

Translation is therefore considered to be influenced by post-colonialism, which frames the social and historical realities within which translation takes place, and by post-modernism, where translation is considered a valid device of literary production and where post-modern sensibility, convinced that there is little that is new anywhere in the world, is particularly drawn to those areas where creation and translation, erudition and fiction, original and copy, blur into each other. Such scholars thus argue that culture and cultural identity are not fixed realities but that texts propose different versions of cultural identity and translators activate them in accordance with their particular project. Consequently, they advocate a reframing of our understanding of the cultural mission of translation and its implications for the translation process.

It could be argued and asserted that the fact that culture and cultural identity may not be fixed realities and that texts propose different versions of cultural identity which translators activate in accordance with their particular project does not in any way invalidate the status of culture as a fundamental constituent of language and of any text, and consequently, of translation. Indeed, the texts translators work on often contain elements whose significance to communication cannot be made clear to the addressees unless the readers are somehow cued about the role of such elements in the original source text culture. This is particularly the case for texts that make use of concepts referring to objects or phenomena that only exist in the world of the source text. Bassnett (1998:79-81) expresses a similar view when she asserts that:

It is important to recognize that the task of the translator is not to ignore cultural difference and to pretend that there is such a thing as universal truth and value free cultural exchange, but rather to be aware of those differences. Through awareness, translators may find a way of helping readers across frontiers, some of which are heavily armed and dangerous to approach. [...] Try as I may, I cannot take language out of culture or culture out of language.

Other scholars have equally underlined the importance of culture in translation from various perspectives. Newmark (1995), for instance, considers translation as the most economical method of explaining one culture's way to another and that it mediates cultures. Gentzler (1993:77) adds to this idea with the point that a text is always a part of history. So, the goal of translation as seen by him is to mediate between cultures as follows: "Its mediating role is more than synchronic transfer of meaning across cultures; it mediates diachronically as well, in multiple historical traditions". For Nord (1997:34), "translating means comparing cultures". According to this scholar, translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture, from either the inside or the outside, depending on whether the translation is from or into the translator's native language and culture. A foreign culture can only be perceived by means of comparison with our own culture, the culture of our primary enculturation. There can be no neutral standpoint for comparison, given that everything we observe as being different from our own culture is, for us, specific to the other culture. The concepts of our own culture will thus be the touchstones for the perception of otherness. Furthermore, our attention tends to focus on phenomena that are either different from our own culture (where we had expected similarity) or similar to our own culture (where difference had been expected).

While Wang (1985) asserts that the greatest difficulty in translation lies in the difference between two cultures and that even those who take a linguistic approach to translation have devoted much attention to cultural problems, Vermeer (1986), on his part, is vehemently opposed to the view that translation is simply a matter of language: for him translation is primarily a cross-cultural transfer. And Lotman (1978:211-2), the former Soviet semiotician, declares that "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre the structure of natural language". In other words, language and culture are intimately connected: language is the heart within the body of culture. The analogy employed by Bassnett (1980:14) aptly illustrates the relationships of language, culture and the translator: "In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect

the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril”.

With respect to the incidence of culture on the analysis and comprehension of the source text to be translated, scholars have equally abundantly underlined its primordial role. Olubunmi (199:218) has pointed out that cultural shifts, ever so slight or radical, lead to inapt lexical choices which distort the original meaning of the text. He further asserts that since literary texts involve matching at the syntactic and phonological levels, any interpretation of the text based on socio-cultural context underscores the need for a keen awareness of:

the socio-cultural significance of the place, time, society, register and purpose of the original work. For a thorough stylistic analysis of the text, an insight into the context, and an awareness of the author’s syntactic and stylistic intentions, as well as the socio-cultural associations conjured up by the lexeme are paramount. Because language operates within and as part of culture, the context of the language of the text inevitably valorizes the meaning of the (culture bound) text.

And, using concrete examples to illustrate this, Simon (1995:45) states that “to understand the words ‘snow’ or ‘high school’ or ‘Holy Ghost’ and translate them adequately, you must understand the culture from which they emerge and the cultures to which they are destined”.

Katan (1999:128-9), on his part, asserts that one of the problems that faces a translator whose mother tongue is different from the language of the source text, is that of recognising the presence of implicit information in the original and that for the cultural mediator, both that which is implicit and absent is part of the message, and must be accounted for. He goes on to indicate the three areas translators should look at in their search for evidence of implicit or absent material as follows:

- a) The immediate context of the original (and translated) text: the same paragraph or adjacent one;
- b) The remote context elsewhere in the document, and in other related texts;
- c) The cultural context, i.e. the implicit information which lies outside the document,

in the general situation which gave rise to the document, the circumstances of the source language writer and source language readers, their relationship, etc.

At the level of re-expressing the message of the source text into the target text, culture is again seen to play a crucial role as pointed out by Wen-Le (1996:212) that “an ideal translation would be one which is idiomatic and can convey cultural as well as linguistic messages and connotations, i.e. the relationship between culture and Idiomacity in translation is very well handled”.

Finally, the incidence of culture on the translator who is the key actor in the translation process cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Hatim and Mason (1990:11) have pointed out that “inevitably we feed our own beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and so on into our processing of texts, so that any translation will, to some extent, reflect the translator’s own mental and cultural outlook, despite the best of impartial intentions”. This implies that translators should therefore be extremely aware of their own cultural identity, and for this reason will need to understand how their own culture influences perception. This equally means that the translator needs to tread very carefully when it comes to active participation in the communication process, particularly where any idea of deliberately making changes to the form of the text and manipulating the words to aid further understanding across cultures is still largely viewed by some with suspicion. The above scholars consider that the translator is uniquely placed to identify and resolve the disparity between sign and value across cultures, and that he is a ‘privileged reader’ of the source language text: he will have the opportunity to read the text carefully before translating, and therefore is in a position to help the target reader by producing as clear a text as the cultural context would warrant.

With regard to the translator’s cultural impregnation, Séguinot (1995:56) stresses that “translators need to understand the cultures from which and towards which they are translating”, while Katan (1999:10) on his part points out that differences in technical consumer information provide just one example of the fact that each culture has its own appropriate ways of behaving. Consequently, translators and interpreters, whether

or not they are involved in labelling or advertising, need to be well versed in the customs, habits and traditions of the two cultures between which they are mediating. Both the translator and the interpreter will also need solid background information about the cultures they are working with, particularly the geography and contemporary social and political history, all of which form the backbone of a culture's cognitive environment.

The 'cultural turn' highlights the fact that the translator is fully engaged in the literary, social and ideological realities of his/her time, and that this engagement is transmitted through the translation itself. Berman (1984) very clearly and aptly demonstrated this in his *L'épreuve de l'étranger: culture et tradition dans l'Allemagne romantique* and the ensuing analyses. Berman showed how the ideas of an emerging cultural nationalism among the German Romantics framed and informed the practice of translation in 19th Century Germany. On her part, Brisset (1990) has shown how the nationalist and ethnocentric bent of theatre translation in Quebec during the 1960s and 1970s was part of a larger expression of nationalist ideology in literature in Quebec. Feminist translators like Lotbinière-Harwood (1991) have stressed the cultural meaning of gendered language and proposed a translation practice which foregrounds gender.

Translators' understanding of cultural difference will evidently have an effect on the way that they translate a text. Furthermore, translations may be understood as a decision-making, goal-oriented process with specific aims to fulfil. This means that translations are writing practices which are fully informed by the tensions which traverse all cultural representation. Translators must therefore constantly decide what cultural meaning language carries, which words belong to which language and which cultural terms can cross the linguistic border. Implicit to many acts of translation are a set of assumptions about the ways in which linguistic forms carry cultural meanings and translations can be consciously driven by social and ideological projects, as they can (and do often) implicitly or unconsciously reveal relations and attitudes towards cultural identity. It can thus be rightly asserted that all translators, whether they are

conscious of it or not, have a theory of culture and that in some cases these theories are very explicit or overriding and come to determine translation practice.

In the next section, therefore, it is necessary to examine the translation principles and strategies identified and highlighted by scholars for the translation of cultural categories which result from such implicit or explicit theory of culture.

3.4. Translation principles and strategies for the translation of cultural Categories

Problems posed by cultural content have been approached from different perspectives by translators. On the one hand, cultural manifestations at the text level, such as discourse structure, rhetorical devices and genre-specific norms, have often been addressed within the frameworks of contrastive rhetoric, text linguistics and contrastive pragmatics, drawing on general theories of such phenomena as politeness, coherence, etc. On the other hand, problems at the lexical or semantic level arising from the presence of references to culture-specific entities such as customs, traditions, clothes, food or institutions have often been discussed within the framework of taxonomies of cultural categories and lists of possible procedures and strategies for dealing with them, the most significant and most recurrent of which are examined in this section.

Aixela's (1996:57) own characterization of these categories stresses that a culture-specific item can be identified only with reference to a particular source text and a particular target language, i.e. that:

In translation a culture-specific item does not exist of itself but as the result of a conflict arising from any linguistically represented reference in a source text which, when transferred to a target language, poses a translation problem due to the non-existence or to the different value (whether determined by ideology, usage, frequency, etc.) of the given item in the target language culture.

Discussions of alternative treatments for culture-specific items often make the distinction between two basic goals of translation, namely that of preserving the characteristics of the source text as far as possible, even where this yields an exotic or strange effect, and that of adapting it to produce a target text which seems normal, familiar and accessible to the target audience. These two concerns are often regarded by translation scholars as constituting opposite ends of a continuum and have been designated by various labels. Toury (1980), for instance, distinguishes adequacy from acceptability while Holmes (1988) talks of retention and re-creation, and Venuti (1995) of foreignization and domestication (cf. section 2.1.4.2. above).

Many factors may be invoked in deciding how far to go in either domesticating or foreignizing the target text. In certain cultures and during certain historical periods a particular approach may be conventional. For instance, concerning the Chinese culture, Chang (1998a, 1998b) stresses the extent to which the Chinese translation tradition has emphasized faithfulness even at the expense of readability, while Nord (1991) notes that in sixteenth century Spain the norm was for translations to incorporate extensive supplementary information which could result in their being twice as long as the source text.

Other factors include the text type (the norms for literary translation often contrasting with those for other text types), the nature of the target audience, and the relationship between the source and target languages and cultures. Venuti (1995) argues that domestication in translation into a dominant language such as English may be seen as a kind of cultural imperialism while Kwiecinski (1998:203) states that in translation from a dominant to a dominated culture, domestication may serve as “a means of resistance, a ‘strategic intervention’ against cultural domination”. Similarly, Hatim and Mason (1997:145-6) point out that “if a domesticating strategy is adopted in the case of translating from a culturally dominant source language to a minority-status target language, it may help to protect the latter against a prevailing tendency for it to absorb and thus be undermined by source language textual practice”. Holmes (1988:49), on his part, observes that among contemporary translators, while there is a general

tendency to favour domestication at the linguistic level, there is an opposing trend towards “historicizing and exoticizing in the socio-cultural situation”.

As pointed out by Davies (2003:70), practical discussions of ways of handling culture-specific items have tended to list sets of cultural references and enumerate a number of alternative procedures for dealing with individual cases. Newmark (1988:75-77), for instance, distinguishes five cultural categories and lists twelve procedures for handling them, Hervey and Higgins (1992:28-33) identify five solutions for dealing with what they refer to as cultural transposition, while Aixela (1996:54-60) distinguishes eleven procedures. Katan (1999:148), on his part, adopts a rather different approach and proposes the concept of chunking which involves moving between cultural frames, either to a more general level referred to as ‘chunking up’, to a more specific one referred to as ‘chunking down’ or to an equivalent frame at a similar level referred to as ‘chunking sideways’.

There seems to be considerable overlap between the procedures identified by all these authors. For instance, Newmark’s (1981:28-30) componential analysis corresponds to Katan’s (1999:148) chunking down. Componential analysis is often set in the context of a semantic field or domain. It concentrates on the nucleus meaning and how many of the components of the meaning the translator will require to use will depend on the importance of the word in the context and the requirement for brevity. Some of its main uses are to expose and fill in gaps in the target language lexis due to cultural distance between the source and target language, and to explain cultural differences between one word with one common main component but different secondary components in the source and target language. Just as componential analysis focuses on the nucleus meaning, chunking down is an operation whereby the translator moves from the general to the specific. For example, chunking down may lead the translator from furniture, to chair and armchair and can descend further to a particular type of armchair and contextualize it geographically. It could be said, therefore, that in a sense both componential analysis and chunking down have to do with intrinsic meaning and the re-organisation of information. Besides componential analysis and chunking down,

overlap is also discernable in the other procedures. For instance, Hervey and Higgins' (1992:31) cultural borrowing corresponds to what Newmark (1981:154) terms transference and Aixela (1996:60) repetition, and their notion of cultural transplantation corresponds to what Baker (1992) calls cultural substitution, Hewson and Martin (1991) geographic transposition and Hickey (1998) recontextualization.

Attempts have been made by some scholars to rank the procedures identified on a scale according to their degree of adaptation. Hervey and Higgins (1992:29) for instance, range their five procedures "along a scale between the extremes of exoticism and cultural transposition" and Aixela (1996:60) orders his "based on the degree of intercultural manipulation". Ghazala (2002:209), with regard to translation from English into Arabic, states that his sixteen procedures are ordered unequivocally from best to worst, the best being to use what he calls a "cultural equivalent" while the worst is the use of gloss, glossary or footnotes, which he describes as "a bad, poor, boring and hence inadvisable procedure of translation, which should be avoided wherever possible".

According to Davies (2003:70), one of the most clearly expounded taxonomies is that of Aixela (1996), whose eleven procedures are divided into two major groups. At the lower end of the scale are conservative strategies which comprise procedures which stay closer to the source text and which he lists in order as repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic (non-cultural) translation, extratextual gloss and intratextual gloss. At the upper end of the scale, where more importance is given to the validity of the text, are the substitutive procedures of synonymy, limited universalization, absolute universalization, naturalization, deletion and lastly autonomous creation.

However, as Davies (2003:70) rightly observes, some of the assumptions implicit in Aixela's taxonomy are questionable in that some of the distinctions made are somewhat blurred. For instance, Aixela defines limited universalization as what happens when translators replace a culture-specific item which is judged too obscure for the target audience with another which still belongs to the source culture but which

is more accessible to this audience. Absolute universalization is when the obscure culture-specific item is replaced by “a neutral reference” with no foreign connotations while naturalization is when it is replaced by an item specific to the target culture. Davies (2003:70) observes furthermore that the label ‘universalization’ suggests something more dramatic than simply replacing one source text culture-specific item with another. Further questions could also be raised about the ordering of Aixela’s procedures, as it could be argued that an extratextual gloss constitutes a further move away from the source text than an unobtrusive intratextual one. It is also not clear why deletion should necessarily be ranked further along the scale of intercultural

Manipulation than naturalization, but lower than autonomous creation, which inserts a new culture-specific item.

A consideration of the various ways of handling culture-specific elements in the translation process may be viewed from the perspectives of principles and strategies employed by the translator. In the next section, principles are examined first before strategies are examined, because it is considered that principles serve as guidelines for evolving strategies to handle specific problems.

3.4.1. Translation principles for the transfer of cultural categories

Prescriptive translation theorists such as Nida (1982:73) have pointed out that:

The most serious problems involved in transfer derive from the fact that the same objects or events may have quite different symbolic value. In translating a particular text with different symbolic values, it is neither necessary nor wise to change one symbolic value in the source language into another in the target language, but it is certainly necessary to provide some supplementary footnote or as to identify the different cultural values involved.

In the same vein, other scholars have outlined guidelines within which the translator should operate in the translation process. For instance, Newmark (2001:62) asserts that:

It is surely useful to set up some general principles or guidelines of adaptation,

Particularly in the increasingly important fields of translating drama and children's literature. In both cases, my principle is: the more important the language of the play or the story, and usually the more serious the text, the more closely it should be translated, and the less is adaptation in this or that particular specific item(s) warranted; contrariwise, the less serious or the lighter the play or the story, the more justified a full or partial adaptation [...]. Bear in mind moreover, that in general, adaptation should be kept to a (comfortable, not strict) minimum.

Adaptation as a strategy for translating culture-specific items, based on the above principle outlined by Newmark or on any other principle, is examined in detail below (cf. section 3.4.2.1.).

Kwiecinski (1998:186) has pointed out that much of the recent writing on translation which draws on functional linguistics in the broadest sense adopts domestication as a default translation strategy. Snell-Hornby (1988:53), for example, advocates a model of translational practice which strives to recreate those dimensions of the source text that are deemed significant by the translator after considering factors such as readership and purpose, from the perspective of target readers in their own cultural sphere. This is achieved chiefly through creating target culture-specific imagery, in accordance with target language textual conventions. As a practical aid to translators in "creating a natural and idiomatic translation", she advocates that they consult parallel texts, i.e. independent texts in the two languages, conceived and functioning in similar situations.

Talking about the translation of children's literature and with specific reference to Germany, Nord (1991) states that in modern German translations for children, translators are expected to replace proper names and culture-specific references with more familiar ones. Similarly, Oittinen (1993) declares categorically that foreignness and strangeness should be avoided at all costs in translations of children's literature. Nord (1991, 1994) recommends a detailed analysis of intratextual and extratextual factors with the aim of either recreating or altering these factors in the translation on the basis of a hierarchy of target functions. This hierarchy is formulated by the

translator and guides his/her work. In principle, Nord's approach is dynamic and open to the possibility of adopting foreignizing strategies. With the frames advocated by Snell-Hornby (1988:53) and Nord (1994:63), the 'foreignness' of some culture-specific aspects is considered justified if, for instance, the initiator of the translation stipulates that a literal translation is required, or if the source text itself has some deliberately foreign, unidiomatic or culturally exotic qualities which the translator deems necessary to be preserved. Nord (1994:63) clearly states that "translational conventions which ask for 'literal translation' (in a given culture community) have to be taken into account as seriously as translational conventions which allow an adaptation of some or all text dimensions to target culture standards". She equally envisages a situation where the purpose of a translation is primarily to produce "a target-culture document of a source- culture communication" (documentary translation) rather than "a communicative instrument for the target culture" (instrumental translation) (cf. Nord, 1991:11).

It could, however, be remarked that functionalist approaches normally take it for granted that even when foreignizing strategies are justified, they must include the necessary degree of either covert or overt explication in order to avoid obscurity and reduced intelligibility. Besides, as Nord (1994:63) asserts, they must conform with established target language conventions of exoticism. Consequently, the production of normalized or domesticated target texts remains the recommended norm of competent translating. It could further be remarked that the extratextual conditioning factors listed by functionalist approaches do not seem to account for the overwhelming tendency to foreignize some textual aspects of texts produced in some cultures rather than others, particularly as concerns the rendition of culture-specific items.

In this regard, we have already cited the example of the abundant pre- and post-independence Cameroonian and indeed African literature (before 1960 and 1961-1980) written in European languages targeting the European colonial colonizers and intruders (cf. section 2.1.5 above). This militant literature depicts the very rich African culture and sharply satirizes the European violation of the customs, traditions, values

and indeed the entire cultural heritage. This literature has as *leitmotiv* the portrayal of the desecration of a culture. A translation of such literature, if it has to achieve the intended objective, must capture such portrayal for the consumption of the intended (European) target audience. It could therefore be posited here that the translation of the abundant militant pre- and post-independence Cameroonian/African literature for the European/Western target audience would have as principle the adoption of a foreignizing default strategy which preserves in the target texts the exotic culture depicted in the source texts and which constitutes the *leitmotiv* of the authors of that literature. This point is further buttressed below in Chapter 5 by the concrete examples drawn from Cameroonian and African literature wherein Oyono Mbia's translation strategies are explained in the light of the prevailing trend and attitude with regard to literary creation at the time he wrote his plays.

3.4.2. Translation strategies for the transfer of cultural categories

A writer writing, for instance, a play for an audience/readers of his own society (i.e. an audience or readership which is part of his own society and background) normally assumes certain things about them. He assumes their familiarity with the setting of the play and their familiarity with the references and allusions made in it, a knowledge on which an understanding of the message or appreciation of the play may largely depend. In effect, as a result of such assumption the author intentionally leaves certain blank spaces or gaps in the text because in his textual strategy he foresees and expects that the audience/reader is capable and will, in his exegesis, actualize the text and fill in the elliptical information. He thus expects the audience/reader who is part and parcel of his background to cooperate consciously and actively in actualizing and bringing to life the play.

On the other hand, a translator translating this play for a particular audience/readership which is not part of the author's background, particularly a foreign one, normally assumes that his target audience/readers are not familiar with the setting, the references and allusions made in the original. And he has to make an initial decision to convey them (or not) to his audience/readers. In fact, he may, as Mounin (1976:119)

says, choose to naturalize the play, in which case the setting, the references and allusions are adapted to the audience's/readers' culture. In this case, his choice does not only result in the dropping of the local colour of the original but also in giving a new and different local colour to the translated text quite different from the original. Secondly, he may also choose to "dépayser le lecteur" [deprive the reader knowledge of the local reality], i.e. to maintain the local colour of the original, in which case the setting, references and allusions of the original are translated literally and he does not care very much whether the audience/readers understand them or not. And thirdly, he may decide to simply take away the local colour of the original by making it as "everyday as possible". Mounin further considers these three options mutually exclusive unless there is a real legitimate reason in the original to warrant the coexistence of the three in the same translation.

Ideally therefore, in the case where the setting, the references and allusions of the original constitute a determining factor in the understanding of the message of the play and the appreciation of its beauty, it may be said that the translator has to decide not only to convey but also how to convey them to his audience/readers, i.e. he is faced only with the second option. But then, where he is faced only with this option, the question arises as to how he succeeds to make his audience/readers understand the aspects peculiar to the society for which the original was intended.

In response to the above question, translation theorists have proposed various solutions. Mounin (1976:52, 82) suggests that in the first place the translator may transfer the source language word to the target text without translating it but glossing it with an explanation usually in the form of a definition. Secondly, that he may simply transfer the source language word to the target text without translating it, hoping the context in which it is used would provide enough gloss for the target audience/reader to guess what it stands for, for example, that the animal referred to is a bird and not an elephant. And thirdly, that he may transfer the word to the target text and add a footnote to explain it.

Nida (1964:172), while also suggesting the first and third solutions proposed by Mounin, proposes two others. According to him, the translator may also use a term for the formal equivalent in the target text and describe the function in a footnote. The translator may further use descriptive expressions employing only words of the receptor language, e.g. “phylacteries” in the source language may be translated as “small leather bundles with holy words in them” in the target language.

Nida’s last two suggestions may be considered even more ideal in a situation where the translator is translating for a target audience/readers who are resistant or who have anti-feelings towards borrowed words. As he points out in his book (even though with specific references to readers of the Bible) a readership made up of largely partially educated persons may tend to regard foreign words in a text as barbaric. Another example, this time not attributed to lack of sufficient education, is revealed in the attitude of the venerated and revered French Academy (Académie française), one of whose avowed missions is to uphold the purity of the French language by ridding it of foreign words and expressions. There is no doubt that such stereotyped attitudes by a culture, a body or a readership will influence their reception or rejection of a translation. Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1953) is a case in point. This African novel was initially rejected by its target European readership and literary scholars alike because the language was considered barbaric or uneducated, whereas it was intentionally written in that language, deliberately adopting a sustained modification of the conventions of the English language in order to effectively capture and depict a given cultural reality through that medium.

However, all the various procedures proposed above seem to apply ideally for the handling of problems relating to references to objects, artefacts, animals and all other aspects that can meaningfully be referred to or explained briefly, but not to certain types of settings and allusions which require lengthy explanations in, say, a preface. The different solutions suggested also seem to focus mainly on the translation of works which were intended by the author for readers of his own society and background.

But then, another situation obtains whereby a writer may decide to write for another readership (i.e. one different from his own society and culture as is the case of most pre-independence African authors mentioned in sections 2.1.5 and 3.3. above). His objective may be to inform and acquaint such a readership about his own society, in which case, unlike the first writer, he has to assume that his readers are not familiar with his setting and allusions made in the literary work. Unlike the first writer who would expect his readers to grasp these through exegesis and other extratextual associations, he has to build in additional information for them. A further problem arises when he has to express concepts or describe objects, animals, artefacts, etc. peculiar to his culture. How does he overcome these problems? Again we may assume that he would naturally resort to the solutions suggested above. But to what extent? The probabilities are that he would select his ideas in terms of the facility of expressing them in a second language (which is often the case with most African authors writing in a European language), so that some of the measures adopted to overcome certain problems would tend to remain hidden in his brain. He is, in fact, a special writer unlike the first: he is both an original author and translator whose literary work(s) might in turn be translated, this time by a “real” translator for another audience.

Obviously, a real translator (the professional one) translating the work of such a writer would not simply be content with the procedures proposed above; he would also be interested in knowing how the author overcame or succeeded in handling certain problems in the first place. Therefore, if he has to do a good job, it may be supposed that he would not simply rely completely on the way the author himself attempted to overcome the problems, nor ignore the author’s efforts and rely solely on procedures suggested by translation theorists, but would on the contrary take into account both the strategies used by the author and those suggested by theorists (which probably the author could have used if he knew them). As concerns the translation of works of African authors written in European languages (the languages of the former colonial powers of their respective countries and which are their second languages learnt only much later on in school) it seems, therefore, important for the translators to bear in

mind all these considerations, and particularly that they are dealing not with “pure” source texts but with “pre-translations”.

The above strategies or procedures suggested by Mounin, Nida and Newmark, as well as other strategies, most of which are indeed a refinement of those proposed by the above scholars, are examined in some greater detail below. The strategies thus examined include adaptation, borrowing, communicative translation, addition, omission, globalization and localization, and footnotes. The first strategy to receive attention is adaptation.

3.4.2.1. Adaptation

Adaptation, in principle, is the broadest and freest form of translation. It may be practiced in varying degrees of fidelity and various modes. According to Newmark (2001:62), “it is forced on the translator where no corresponding cultural or institutional custom or object, idiom or expression exists in the target culture or language, and a smooth, natural translation is required”. He asserts that adaptation as a translation method is the equivalent of paraphrase on the text level and that its purpose is normally to make the source language text easily comprehensible to the target readership; commercial considerations are therefore inevitably important in deciding on the method of many adaptations, including their titles, if the publisher of the translation wants or has to secure a large number of customers (who are not necessarily the same as readers). The main techniques of adaptation include:

- a) Simplification of language, particularly for children’s literature and for less literate Readerships than those of the original;
- b) Transposition of time, place and characters, therefore of culture;
- c) Transfer or normalisation of dialect, accompanied by paraphrase or cultural idioms.

Within the framework of this study, the focus is on cultural adaptation which amounts to textual compensation for socio-cultural differences between the source language and target language communities, and it is understood that various adaptations at the lexical, orthographic and phonetic levels have at their origin cultural differences at the heart of which are the respective languages. With time, such adaptations could become naturalized in accordance with target language patterns of writing and speaking thereby giving them the status of loan words. However, they generally tend not to be naturalized in accordance with the target language patterns of writing and speaking. This is particularly the case for adaptations in works of African writers writing in European languages rather than in their native languages. Usually the adapted African culture-specific elements do not really blend into the European language and end up still carrying a foreign aspect, except in some regionalized African variety of the European language such as in Cameroonian Standard English or Pidgin English. For instance, as pointed out below (cf. section 4.3.1.) with respect to Oyono Mbida's adaptation of the Bulu ideophones into English at the phonetic level, the sounds ended up remaining untypical of standard UK English. Furthermore, the adaptations of the distorted words of the source text (French) into the target text (English) continued to remain foreign in standard British English, whereas they have become naturalized in Cameroonian Standard English. Such naturalization is facilitated by the co-existence in Cameroon of Cameroonian Standard English and Pidgin English, which means that the standard variety of English which suffers a rather heavy influence of linguistic interference from the pidgin variety has become very accommodating and easily adopts expressions from Pidgin English. In his plays, Oyono Mbida has adapted the source texts distorted forms of address *Sieur* and *Messié* into English by the Cameroonian Pidgin English equivalents *Sah* and *Massa* respectively (cf. section 4.3.2.). Indeed, it is not uncommon, for instance, to hear the form of address *Massa* in the speech of an educated English-speaking Cameroonian. It might, therefore, be inferred from this that the fate of adapted elements into the target language largely depends on the socio-cultural and linguistic context as well as on the pre-disposing conducive and accommodating environment.

With regard to the respective status of the source and target languages, Rudvin (1994:199-211) points out the relevance of the relative status of the two cultures involved and argues that it is usually in translation from a minor to a dominant culture that such freedom is exercised; in this case the source text is frequently extensively manipulated and adapted to conform to the target culture's conventions and promote a desired image of the source culture among the target audience. However, the above argument and assertion by Rudvin seem to be clearly contradicted by the situation observed between the Western dominant cultures/languages and the African minor cultures/languages, where it is rather the African culture/language that often exercises much freedom and manipulates and adapts the European culture-specific reality to conform to the native African culture's conventions, so as to suit the expectations of the indigenous populations. This can be attributed, as explained below, to the prevailing trend and attitude of African writers of the post-independence era with regard to literary creation and also by the ambivalent situation whereby these African writers do not write in their native languages but in European languages (cf. section 5.2.). Indeed, without any fore-knowledge, a non-Cameroonian/African would not recognize as European (or even as distortions) the European names in Oyono Mbia's plays which his native Bulu villagers have modified and adapted to the phonology of their native Bulu language. These modifications have been made to sound as natural as possible and easy to pronounce just like other local names (cf. section 4.3.2.). In effect, this reality is a widespread phenomenon across Cameroonian villages and other African villages that have been exposed to similar colonial experience to that of Cameroon.

A form of adaptation often used in the translation of names is transliteration, whereby conversion conventions are used to alter the phonic/graphic shape of a source text name so that it is more in line with target language patterns of pronunciation and spelling. Hervey and Higgins (1992:29) have pointed out that transliteration is the standard way of coping with, for example, Chinese names in English texts. How a name is transliterated may be entirely up to the translator, if there is no established precedent for transcribing the name in question, or it may require following a standard

transliteration created by earlier translators, and it is worth noting that standard transliteration varies from language to language. Some names do not need transliteration, but have standard indigenous target language equivalents. Where such conventional equivalents exist, the translator may feel constrained to use them as not to do so would either display ignorance or be interpreted as a significant stylistic choice.

Another alternative in translating names is cultural transplantation, which is the extreme degree of cultural transposition wherein source language names are replaced by indigenous target language names that are not their literal equivalents but have similar cultural connotations. Hervey and Higgins (1992:249) define cultural transplantation as “the highest degree of cultural transposition, involving the replacement of source-cultural details mentioned in the source text with cultural details drawn from the target culture in the target text - that is, cultural transplantation deletes from the target text items specific to the source culture, replacing them with items specific to the target culture”. They caution that when translating names, one must be aware of three things: first, existing options for translating a particular name; second, the implication of following a particular option; and third, all the implications of a choice between exoticism, transliteration and cultural transplantation. In this regard, it is perhaps interesting to examine how in his translation of the Cameroonian novel *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956) by Ferdinand Oyono, John Reed has handled some names in the translated version *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967).

The names “Ignace Obebé”, “André Obebé” and “Gosier-d’Oiseau” refer to three of the novel’s characters. The existing options for translating “Ignace” and “André” into English are “Ignatius” and “Andrew” respectively which, in effect, John Reed has chosen to use in the target text. However, the question that may be asked is to what extent these options are appropriate in the Cameroonian context. In order to determine whether the use of the translated names is appropriate or not in the said context, it is necessary to place the names “Ignace” and “André” as used in Cameroon in their historical and social context.

Cameroon, whose official languages are French and English, is a French-English bilingual country since the country's independence in 1960 and following the reunification of the former French and English administered territories. The reunification led to the intermingling of the French and English-speaking components of the country's population and it became customary for obvious practical reasons not to translate an individual's Christian or European names into the other official language. For instance, a Cameroonian Francophone known by the name "Ignace Obebé" would be referred to by that French appellation by a Cameroonian Anglophone. He would not be referred to by the English equivalent "Ignatius Obebé" as by so doing another Anglophone who does not know the addressee or is not aware of the latter's French linguistic background could take him for an Anglophone and expect him not only to speak in English but to behave as an Anglophone would normally do. Indeed, it would be strange for an English-speaking Cameroonian to actually hear someone talking in French and then to call that person by an English name and vice versa. In order to clearly identify a person's former colonial linguistic background and to avoid situations of misplaced expectations and social misunderstanding, therefore, it is habitual (and this has become very established) for a Francophone Cameroonian to be referred to by his French Christian or European names and the Anglophone by his English Christian names so as to signal their Francophone or Anglophone identities respectively.

At the literary level, in his novel Ferdinand Oyono is castigating the French colonial administration and the role of the missionaries in the French-speaking part of Cameroon. To achieve his objective, he uses characters who bear French and Cameroonian names. Given that there are Anglophone writers too who in their works also castigate the British colonial administration by using characters who bear English and Cameroonian names, it is, therefore, necessary when translating Cameroonian literature of French or English expression, particularly that depicting the colonial context, that the French or English names be preserved untranslated in order to signal and reflect the context and colonial system portrayed in them. Furthermore, to translate

the names would also probably entail, for credibility and consistency, that the entire source text context and setting be equally transposed or adapted in the target text.

Similarly, John Reed's translation of the name "Gossier-d'Oiseau" as "Gullet" is equally problematic for the reasons just stated above. First, the character Gosier-d'Oiseau is a superintendent of police of French nationality and symbolizes the very high-handed and brute manner in which the French colonial authorities enforced law and order in the French administered part of the country before independence (cf. section 2.2.1.). In contrast, the British superintendents of police in the Anglophone part of the country were more gentlemanly and well-mannered in the enforcement of law and order. Thus, while the preservation of the French name "Gosier-d'Oiseau" would have immediately connoted in the target text the reality portrayed in the setting of the source text, the English translation "Gullet" does not.

Secondly, whereas the character's name in French describes a part of his body (his unusually long thin neck) which is likened to that of a bird commonly found in the locality depicted and not that of any other type of animal with a long neck, say a giraffe, the English name does not capture such contextual detail of the source text. Even though the French name could be considered tongue-twisting for the English-speaking target reader, a more effective strategy could have been to preserve the French name in the target text accompanied by some form of cushioning within the text or by a footnote. And since the name refers to one of the main characters of the novel and recurs frequently in the novel, its initial occurrence might understandably be quite strange to the non-Cameroonian English reader, but its successive abundant occurrences in the novel would cause the strange effect to dwindle and for the name to take on more familiar aspect to the reader as he progresses in his reading.

3.4.2.2. Borrowing

Borrowing may be defined here as the transfer of source language lexemes or lexeme combinations into the target language, normally without formal or semantic

modification. The word 'borrowing' is used here as a cover-term for the various degrees of preservation of the culture-specific item that one may resort to in the process of transferring the contents of a source text into the context of a target culture. This translation strategy has been variously referred to as preservation (Davies 2003), repetition (Aixela 1996), exoticism, cultural borrowing (Hervey & Higgins 1992), and transference (Newmark 1988).

Faced with a reference to an entity which has no close equivalent in the target culture, a translator may simply decide to retain the source text term in the translation. This strategy is at the heart of the process of lexical borrowing through which elements of one language pass into another and may over time become fully integrated into the host language. Languages and speech communities vary in the extent to which they tolerate this process, and some types of audience may be more ready to cope with it than others. Unlike adaptation which can be described as essentially target text-biased, borrowing can be considered to be source text-biased.

Exoticism, one of several types of borrowing is defined by Hervey and Higgins (1992:250) as "the lowest degree of cultural transposition of a source text feature, whereby that feature (having its roots exclusively in the source language and source culture) is taken over verbatim into the target text; that is, the transposed term is a recognizably and deliberately 'foreign' element in the target text". A target text translated in an exotic manner is therefore one which constantly resorts to linguistic and cultural features imported from the source text into the target text with minimal adaptation, and which, thereby, constantly signals the exotic source culture and its cultural strangeness. This could constitute one of the target text's main attractions. However, such a target text would have an impact on the target language audience which the source text would not have on the source language audience for whom the text has no features of an alien culture.

A second type of borrowing is what has been referred to as cultural borrowing, which is the process of taking over a source language expression verbatim from the source

text into the target text and the borrowed term may remain unaltered in form or may undergo minor alteration or transliteration. The translator will resort to it when it proves impossible to find a suitable target language expression of indigenous origins for translating the source text expression. A vital condition for cultural borrowing is that the textual context of the target text should make the meaning of the borrowed expression clear. Cultural borrowing only presents translators with an open and free choice in cases where previous translation practice has not already set up a precedent for the verbatim borrowing of the source text expression. In this regard, Hervey and Higgins (1992:31) cite the example of the Saussurean linguistic terms ‘*langue*’ and ‘*parole*’, where the option of translating ‘*langue*’ and ‘*parole*’ as ‘*language*’ and ‘*speaking*’ does not exist, but the fact that English texts frequently resort to the borrowed terms ‘*langue*’ and ‘*parole*’ in the precise linguistic sense prejudices the issue in favour of borrowing. We may equally cite the example of the French term ‘*calque*’ used in English to designate one of the translation strategies described below. Furthermore, where terms with source language origins have already passed into the target language without significant changes of meaning, thus constituting standard conventional equivalents of the original source language terms borrowed, the translator may not be faced with a significant decision at all.

A third type of borrowing is what Newmark (1981:154) refers to as ‘transcription’ or ‘transference’. It is said to be the easiest method and involves transferring a source language word or lexical unit into the target language text by graphic means (and in some cases it involves transliteration). This method works successfully in narrative texts considering that it can be accompanied by a footnote. It is not, however, a very practical solution in drama. In a rather prescriptive tone, Newmark states that transcription is mandatory in all the following cases, unless there is already a generally accepted translation likely to be accessible and acceptable to the reader:

- a) proper nouns, particularly names of people and of geographical features;
- b) addresses;
- c) names of private firms;
- d) names of national public and private institutions, unless they are transparent;

- e) terms peculiar to the institutions, ecology and general culture of the source language countries where there are no equivalents in the target language countries;
- f) titles of newspapers, periodicals, books, plays, films, articles, papers, works of art, musical compositions.

He further states that in all the above cases, particularly where a cultural reference receives a literal translation, the translator may add a translation or gloss, if he thinks this will assist the reader. Concerning the translation of names in particular, it is worth noting that while Hervey and Higgins recommend transliteration as a strategy for the translation of this cultural category, Newmark, on the other hand, recommends transcription for the same category.

A fourth type of cultural borrowing is what is referred to as ‘calque’, and like cultural borrowing proper, and for similar reasons, translation by creating calques does occur in practice. Furthermore, as also happens with cultural borrowing proper, some originally calqued expressions become standard target language cultural equivalents of their source language origins. A calque is a form of cultural transposition whereby a target text expression is modelled on the grammatical structure of the corresponding source text expression. It respects target language syntax but is unidiomatic in the target language because it is modelled on the structure of the source language expression. In essence, therefore, calque is a form of literal translation.

The major danger in using calque as a translation device is that the meaning of calqued phrases may not be clear in the target text. It is therefore necessary in some cases for the target text to shed more light on the calqued expression. However, it is not sufficient for the target text to make it clear that a particular phrase is an intentional calque. The meaning of the calqued phrase must also be transparent in the target context. Successful calques need no explanation, whereas less successful ones may need to be explained in a footnote or a glossary.

Like all forms of cultural borrowing, calques exhibit a certain degree of exoticism, bringing into the target text the cultural foreignness and strangeness of the source culture. Often they look and sound odd, although sometimes they become assimilated or adopted into the target language. In translation and in drama translation in particular, this strategy is believed to have the advantage of not neglecting or changing the cultural context or what Newmark (1988:94) refers to as “cultural words”. On the whole, calques, although comprehensible, do not provide any information about the nature of the original term or its associations in the source culture as they do not bring those immediate connotations and images in the minds of the target audience, which they do for the source text audience.

The strategy of borrowing or preservation may also have other incidences on the translation. For instance, the preservation may result in a situation where something banal and everyday in the source culture becomes strange for the target audience. Furthermore, the result of preserving the original culture-specific content may sometimes be quite confusing to the target audience such that some background knowledge is definitely required if the reference is to be understood. Where a name contains clearly recognizable descriptive elements, translators often opt to preserve the descriptive meaning of the name rather than its form and use a literal translation. In other cases, however, a straightforward translation of the meaningful element(s) of a name may actually lead to a loss of communicative effect.

The above possible situations definitely illustrate the conflicts that may arise in the adoption of a preservation strategy such as borrowing. The desire to preserve the meaning of an element may lead to a loss of other aspects of the name, such as sound patterning or connotations, while the preservation of the form of a name may lead to loss of recognizable meaning. And it is worth noting that decisions as to whether to opt for formal or semantic preservation may be influenced by the differing translation conventions of the different target cultures and differences in audience expectations. It is also worth noting that once the initial decision has been made to preserve a culture-specific item in the target text, the initially foreign effect may dwindle as the item

recurs throughout the series or collection such as is the case in Oyono Mbia's collection of plays examined in this study, a situation which possibly explains the reason(s) underlying some of his translation strategies. For example, the names of people or places as well as the references to Bulu/Cameroonian foods and other aspects of that society, while initially strange in his first play *Three Suitors, One Husband*, may soon become quite familiar, so that the effect of their appearance in the second and third plays may not be the same as when they were first mentioned.

3.4.2.3. Communicative translation

Instead of resorting to borrowing as a translation strategy, the translator could opt for what Hervey and Higgins (1992:21) refer to as communicative translation. In this strategy, where, in a given situation the source text uses a source language expression standard for that situation, the translator in the target text chooses a target language expression standard for an equivalent target culture situation. The above scholars state categorically that "communicative translation is mandatory for many culturally conventional formulae that do not allow literal translation". It is thus used, for example, in the translation of proverbs, idioms, clichés, etc. They further assert that only special contextual reasons can justify opting against a communicative translation in such cases. The argument here is that, the very fact that the source text uses a set phrase or idiom is usually part and parcel of its stylistic effect, and if in the target text the translator does not use corresponding target language set of phrases or idioms this stylistic effect will be lost. However, it often happens that set phrases in the source text do not have identifiable communicative target language equivalents. In such cases the translator may be considered to have a genuine choice between a literal rendering and some kind of communicative translation.

It must be noted, however, that before Hervey and Higgins proposed the use of the communicative translation strategy to resolve specific translation problems, Newmark (1981:23-24) had several years earlier made the significant distinction between communicative and semantic translation. According to Newmark, in communicative

translation the translator attempts to produce the same effect on the target language readers as was produced by the original on the source language readers. In semantic translation on the other hand he attempts, within the syntactic and semantic constraints of the target language, to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the author. Newmark (1981:39) further states that in theory there are wide differences between the two methods of translation. Whereas communicative translation addresses itself solely to the second reader who does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary, semantic translation remains within the original culture and assists the reader only in its connotations if they constitute the essential human (non-ethnic) message of the text. It attempts to recreate the precise flavour and tone of the original. However, Newmark himself acknowledges that in practice the two methods may overlap in whole or in part within the same text (Newmark 1981:23, 47). Unlike Hervey and Higgins (1992), communicative translation as perceived by Newmark falls within the realm of a theory of communication and is, therefore, not restricted to a single literary genre or text type but is applicable to a wide range of discourse and related problems. It may, thus, be said that the tenet of Newmark's communicative and semantic translation as outlined in 1981 already encompassed the communicative translation strategy outlined by Hervey and Higgins several years later.

3.4.2.4. Addition

Another strategy that the translator could resort to (and indeed often does) is addition. When simple preservation of the original culture-specific item may lead to obscurity, the translator may decide to keep the original item but supplement the text with whatever information is judged necessary. Such information may be inserted directly into the text in the form of a gloss or elsewhere in the text in the form of a footnote. Hickey (1998:228) stresses the importance of not allowing such explanations to lead to divergence from the style of the original, noting the advantage of using short adjectival or adverbial phrases rather than notes or additional explanatory sentences. However, when more detail is required, a skilled translator may succeed in incorporating it

unobtrusively. In the case of a play, for instance, the translator can integrate such information very conveniently by making one character to ask another for clarification on the obscure culture-specific item.

However, it is worth noting that some translators do not go to such pains to integrate their explanations so unobtrusively into the text and would rather make extensive use of footnotes to explain the terms which are simply transliterated in the text, and the target reader is expected to pause and consult these in order to make sense of the otherwise undecipherable terms.

As concerns the provision of supplementary information for the target reader/audience, it can be asserted that, in either case, translators need a good knowledge of the background of their target audience if they are to gauge accurately exactly what supplementary information it is necessary to include. Furthermore, the choice of how and when to incorporate additions into the translation must take into consideration the expectations of the particular target audience. While the translator may use a combination of preservation of the original term and addition of explanatory information, sometimes, however, the explanatory insertion may make the original item redundant and it may accordingly be omitted. For instance, in Ferdinand Oyono's novel *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956), the author uses the word *arki* to refer to the illegally distilled indigenous alcoholic drink. This local word is preserved in all the several instances of its occurrence in the source text, sometimes cushioned by the explanatory phrase "alcool indigène" [indigenous alcoholic drink] or by the expression "l'africa-gin" [the African gin]. In the translated version *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967), John Reed equally initially preserves the indigenous word *arki* but subsequently in the novel he simply refers to this indigenous drink as "indigenous alcoholic drink" or as "the African gin".

3.4.2.5. Omission

Another strategy that the translator could adopt is to omit the problematic culture-specific item altogether so that no trace of it is found in the translation (cf. Davies 2003:79-82). Such a decision could also simply be an act of desperation on the part of the translator who is unable to find an adequate way of conveying the original meaning or who is simply unable to interpret the original. In contrast, it could be a reasoned decision where the translator could have provided some kind of paraphrase or equivalent but decided not to do so because the amount of effort such a solution would require, on behalf of either the translator or the target reader, does not seem justified. There is equally the possibility that explaining or paraphrasing something in the translation will give it a prominence it did not have in the original, thereby distorting the original emphasis. In some cases omission could be exploited to produce an overall effect which is harmonious and in keeping with the original tone whereas the inclusion of the problematic culture-specific item might create a confusing or inconsistent effect. Finally, sometimes the cost of finding an effective alternative for a cultural reference which is not readily transferable may be judged to outweigh the benefit which would be gained by providing one. In this regard, it is suggested below (cf. section 5.3.) that such considerations of the cost entailed could have been at the basis of Oyono Mbia's decision not to provide the translation and corresponding analysis of the local songs in a glossary as he does in the source text.

3.4.2.6. Globalization and localization

Davies (2003:82, 83) also suggests as strategies that the translator could use to translate culture-specific items 'globalization' and 'localization'. Globalization refers to a strategy whereby the translator replaces culture-specific references with ones which are more neutral or general in the sense that they are accessible to audiences from a wider range of cultural backgrounds. For instance, the translator may replace the names of foods from a given culture with more generic labels with fewer cultural associations. Globalization is a convenient method of opening up the text to a wider

audience, since it succeeds in conveying the essential characteristics of a referent while avoiding what might be disconcertingly unfamiliar. In many cases, however, it may be considered to result in loss of association, local colour or, even worse, in the loss of subtexts and hidden meanings. In this respect, Newmark (1988:83) points out that it is “deculturalising a cultural world”.

The translator may, on the other hand, decide to opt for the opposite strategy which is localization. In order to avoid loss of effect therefore, the translator may, instead of aiming for culture-free descriptions, try to anchor the reference firmly in the culture of the target audience using naturalization. This could be particularly motivated by the initiator of the translation. For instance, website editors sometimes request their potential clients to make sure that their translated texts sound as if they originated in the culture of the target language. With regard to localization, it is necessary to point out that any subtle modifications introduced to a culture-specific item by a localizing adaptation requires careful consideration of any further ramifications of this choice in order to avoid inconsistencies elsewhere. Another strategy that has been outlined or suggested by scholars is compensation.

3.4.2.7. Compensation

According to Hervey and Higgins (1992:35), it is when faced with apparently inevitable, yet unacceptable, compromises that translators may feel the need to resort to the technique referred to as compensation, which they describe as a technique of making up for the loss of important source text features through replicating source text effects approximately in the target text by means other than those used in the source text. The above scholars highlight four types of compensation which include compensation in kind, compensation in place, compensation by merging and compensation by splitting (Hervey & Higgins 1992:35-40). Compensation in kind involves making up for one type of textual effect in the source text by another type in the target text. They cite as example an area where compensation in kind is often needed to show the difference between French and English narrative tenses. The

difference between the African and Western cultures in their perception of time may also be cited here. In effect, “time” in most African cultures, unlike in Western cultures, is presented in the way the “months” were calculated by the ancestors of the villagers. The natives are not interested in knowing whether there are 28, 29, 30 or 31 days in a month, as the case may be, but rather the focus is on the face of the moon (i.e. quarter, half or full moon). The use of “lune”[moon] instead of “mois”[month] in African literary works to refer to time, therefore, has a powerful cultural effect which cannot simply be captured in the text by the mere use of the standard equivalent “mois”[month] (cf. section 4.3.9. below).

The second type of compensation is compensation in place which, according to Hervey and Higgins (1992:37), consists in making up for the loss of a particular effect found at a given place in the source text by recreating a corresponding effect at an earlier or later place in the target text. For instance, the translator may compensate for an untranslated pun in the source text by using a pun on another word at a different place in the target text. The third type which is compensation by merging consists in condensing source text features carried over a relatively long stretch of text (e.g. a complex phrase) into a relatively short stretch of the text (e.g. a single word or a simple phrase). Finally, the fourth type of compensation, compensation by splitting may be resorted to in cases where there is no single target language word that covers the same range of meaning as a given source text word. Hervey and Higgins (1992:39) cite the example of “les papillons” usually translated as “butterflies and moths”.

3.4.2.8. Footnotes

It is evident from the examination of the above strategies that in order for them to be effective, most still rely on supplementary explanation and information in the form of a gloss or notes. In effect, where a literal or close rendering would result in a meaningless expression or wrong interpretation, the necessary adjustments could be made in the text. However, there are other circumstances in which more or less literal renderings are preserved in the text and the required adjustments are explained in

footnotes. For instance, when the translator notices in the process of translating that the modification of the text would introduce anomalies not in keeping with the temporal or cultural distance between source and target languages, he may be justified in retaining a more or less literal equivalent in the text and explain it in a footnote.

According to Nida (1964:238) in a translated text footnotes have basically the following two principal functions:

1. to correct linguistic and cultural discrepancies by:
 - a) explaining contradictory customs,
 - b) identifying unknown geographical or physical objects,
 - c) giving equivalents of weights and measures,
 - d) providing information on plays on words,
 - e) including supplementary data on proper names; and
2. to add information which may be generally useful in understanding the historical and cultural background of the document in question.

It should, however, be noted that notes are not only placed at the bottom of the page where the object or event is mentioned but the substance of such notes may also be summarized in the form of tables or glossaries placed at the back of the book. However, it could be said that tables and glossaries are usually intended to help rather sophisticated readers.

The inconvenience of gloss, footnotes and glossaries is that there is the danger that such additions may (and one could even say they often do) hold up the narrative and in some cases burden the reader with irritating detail. Furthermore, their application to certain genres such as drama is limited to page translations whose readers can refer to them whereas audiences of stage translations have no possibility of resorting to footnotes to elucidate unfamiliar or opaque culture-specific aspects while watching the play on stage.

However, on this issue, Rozhin (2000:140) insists and maintains that when in a play there are words and combinations of words denoting objects and concepts characteristic of the way of life, the culture, the social and historical development of a people alien to another and where all those elements or concepts in the original are intimately bound up with the universe of reference of the original culture, it is still possible for the drama translator to preserve the cultural context by providing a glossary of all the alien terms as well as some historical information, all of which are incorporated into the programme. She proposes that the drama translator could create a 'manual' to the play for potential directors and actors. The manual could equally be useful to the audience in that such a document produced and circulated to the public prior to the show would provide them with background reading and at least studying the programme notes prior to the show would be an ideal preparation. This gives the audience a chance to broaden their knowledge and makes their theatre experience more exciting through their discovery of the unknown.

While the above proposed solution could be considered a laudable one, the problems posed by the transfer of the cultural context in drama to the target audience still remain an obstacle as testified by the above solution which could be considered as being somewhat far-fetched, unconventional and rather costly. Besides, it is not certain that everyone will be willing to accept the 'otherness' of such a production.

The use of footnotes requires care and discernment on the part of the translator. As pointed out above, not only is it necessary for the translator to possess a good knowledge of the background of the target audience but he must also take into consideration the expectations of the particular target audience and be able to gauge accurately exactly what supplementary information it is necessary to include. Unfortunately this is not always the case as in some translated works there are instances of footnotes that could be considered superfluous, irrelevant or unenlightening and sometimes downright misleading (cf. Suh 1995, Davies 2003).

3.5. Conclusion

There is no doubt from the examination of the role and place of culture in the translation phenomenon in this chapter that culture is fundamental and central to translation. It is also evident from the foregoing that there are many strategies at the disposal of the translator to transfer culture-specific realities from one language/culture to another.

An examination of the strategies reveals a fundamental binary opposition between foreignizing strategies on the one hand and domesticating strategies on the other. There is, for instance, foreignization versus domestication, exoticism versus cultural transplantation, preservation versus globalization, etc. This situation confronts the translator with a contradiction: that of remaining faithful to the source text and at the same time being intelligible to the target audience, i.e. doing justice to the original text and producing an acceptable target text. In other words, when what is to be translated is strongly culturally loaded, the tendency for the translator is either to sacrifice the original cultural connotations and associations in order to translate idiomatically or to convey the cultural content and flavour at the expense of idiomaticity. In this regard and with particular reference to drama translation, Pavis (1989:37) in his essay entitled “Problems of translation for the stage” says that:

By maintaining the source culture by refusing to translate its terminology [...] we could isolate the text from the public and we would run the risk of incomprehension or rejection on the part of target culture: by trying too hard to maintain the source culture, we would end up by making it unreadable.

Rozhin (2000:139), however, believes such a risk is worth taking, arguing that the text will be isolated from the public only when the public isolates itself from the text, and that if no effort is taken on the part of the target audience to prepare themselves for the ‘journey towards otherness’, then obviously the foreign play might as well be treated as culturally untranslatable. Thus, culture-specific realities, cultural transfer and idiomaticity in translation may be regarded as contradictory and it is this contradiction

that makes translation to be strewn with recurrent cross-cultural transfer problems and difficulties.

One way for the translator to solve this contradiction is to seek the optimal balance point between them, i.e. to carefully weigh and take into account all the determining considerations and factors. Holmes (1988:48) corroborates by noting that “in practice, translators ... perform a series of pragmatic choices, here retentive, there recreative, at this point historicizing or exoticising, at that point modernizing or naturalizing”.

In addition to considering the relevance of particular culture-specific items to their immediate context, the translator also needs to see them within a wider perspective where individual cases are evaluated in terms of their contribution to the global effect on the whole text. Consequently, before deciding how to deal, for instance, with cultural allusions it is necessary for the translator to assess the significance of such references at the macro-level of the work or collection of works as a whole. In the analysis of the work before translating, the translator could find it elucidating to first of all distinguish the various networks of culture-specific items which make different contributions to the success of the whole work.

Considering the individual culture-specific items as components of these larger sets of references could lead to a more systematic and coherent treatment. For instance, in Oyono Mbia's plays which constitute the subject of study in this project and which we analyse in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 4) one such network is composed of the frequent references to details of the typically Bulu background against which the plays are set, such as food, drinks, traditions and customs, etc. which Oyono Mbia considers to be perfectly familiar to his immediate audience. The accumulation of these culture-specific references builds up a solidly real and typical Bulu setting which helps to make the stories in the plays really believable.

Chapter 4: Analytical Framework and Research Procedures

4.1. Introduction

Some translation critics maintain that translation is impossible, arguing those cultural values are not shareable and that the dialogue of cultures is impossible (cf. Olubunmi Smith, 1993:218). Against the backdrop of this assertion, we examine in this chapter the various translation strategies Oyono Mbia has used to make the cultural values in his original plays shareable in the translated versions of his plays, thereby rendering the dialogue of cultures possible while at the same time achieving in the target texts an authentic and convincing portrait of the source texts' society and culture.

In order to more effectively examine Oyono Mbia's strategies, a comparative study of his source and target texts is done at both the macro- and micro-textual levels. However, in order to carry out a meaningful comparative analysis of the source and target texts, a description and analysis of the source texts is first of all made in the source system (cf. Kruger and Wallmach, 1997:123).

The source texts are analyzed from the perspectives of the sociological, formalistic and semiotic approaches to literary criticism (cf. sections 1.4.2.1, 1.4.2.2 and 1.4.2.3 above). Thus, from the sociological perspective, and by exploiting and relating to the source texts the information provided in section 2.2 above, we focus on the biographical, social, historical as well as other relevant facts and information that we consider necessary for the understanding of the source texts and from which their intent can be inferred.

Secondly, from the formalistic perspective, we focus on figures of speech, literary and stylistic devices as well as other devices which are perceived as dominant in the texts and as performing a defamiliarizing role in relation to the other devices or aspects of the texts perceived in more familiar and automatic terms.

Thirdly, from the semiotic perspective, we focus on the non-verbal signs in the texts such as gestures, forms of dress, accessories, conventionalized social practices like drinking as well as extra-linguistic information articulated through verbal codes (prosodic, paralinguistic, grammatical, lexical).

Finally, our analysis is equally informed and guided not only by the materially visible and readable texts but also by the paratexts which consist of the prefaces, glossaries, critical works on the plays, interviews granted by the author in which he talks about the works, the various interpretative layers which over the years have been and continue to be grafted on the original texts: commentaries, analyses, past productions, critical reception, and stereotypical images, all of which work to a greater or lesser extent to render the culturally unfamiliar aspects of the plays less so and more accessible to the researcher, particularly the non Bulu/Cameroonian researcher.

However, the point of departure for determining what constitutes cultural elements of the Bulu/Cameroonian milieu in the plays studied is our profound familiarity with the Bulu/Cameroonian history, geography, politics, religion, customs, practices, belief and value systems, etc. The culture-specific elements retained as *tertium comparationis* in this study are thus based on their reference to the Bulu/Cameroonian reality that has produced them and also on their dramatic function in the plays.

Oyono Mbia's plays studied herein include *Trois Prétendants...Un Mari* (1969), *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* (1970) and *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence* (1979), abbreviated and referred to hereinafter respectively as TPUM, JNA and LTSSE for purposes of economy and in order to avoid a cumbersome presentation of and reference to these works particularly at the source and target text comparison phase of the study. We begin by first of all presenting a synopsis and the structure of each of these plays before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of the plays at the micro-textual level.

4.2. Synopsis and structure of Oyono Mbia's plays

4.2.1. *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari*

This play is a comic satire that treats the theme of marriage within a traditional cultural context where the woman has no choice and is refused the right of expression by her male counterpart. Juliette's father sends her to secondary school despite objections from the rest of the family members, who believe that such education will only help to make her headstrong and disobedient. While she is away in school her parents begin to make arrangements to give her away in marriage, first to Ndi, a prosperous farmer, and then to Mbia, a civil servant, depending on how much bride price each of them is ready to pay. Coincidentally, Juliette arrives back from school on the same day that Mbia, the second suitor, is expected in the village. She is informed about her great fortune and worth as there are already two suitors vying for her hand in marriage. The exasperated Juliette expresses her indignation and frustration as she exclaims: "What? Am I for sale? Are you trying to give me to the highest bidder? Why can't you ask my opinion about my own marriage? (TPUM:14). This remark prompts the following response from Abessolo, her grandfather, who is strongly against new and strange ideas: "Your opinion? Since when do women speak in Mvoutessi? Who teaches you girls of today such disgraceful behaviour? Why are you always trying to have a say in every matter? Aren't you happy that your whole family made such a wise decision in your favour?" (TPUM:14).

The culture of silence which traditional society is propagating against the womenfolk is obnoxious to Juliette who, due to the training she has received at school, believes in individual liberty and freedom of choice. As a result, she has been making her own arrangements to marry a peer who does not have any money at all. Confronted with the opposition from her entire family, and aided by Kouma, one of her cousins, Juliette hatches a plot in which she steals the money which her father has already received from the first two suitors and hands it over to Oko, her fiancé, who, pretending to be a

strange suitor, comes in grand style with an orchestra and praise singers, to pay the money to Juliette's desperate family.

Oyono Mbia dramatizes this story in five acts with no subdivisions into scenes. As regards the place and time frame of action, the events take place only in Atangana's residence, even though the action proper alternates between the yard in front of the house and in the kitchen, while all the events take place in a single day.

Concerning the material presentation of the work, immediately following the title of the play there is a clear indication by the author that the play is a comedy presented in five acts. Then there is a rather lengthy and elaborate five-page preface to the play in which the author gives the genesis of the play, outlines his objectives in writing the play, states what he expects from stage directors and actors, and provides other practical information with respect to the setting and staging of the play. Following the preface and before Act One is a wordy and explanatory dedication to his mentors, secondary school teachers and classmates for their contribution to the writing of the play.

At the end of the play, there is a glossary which defines and explains some of the local words and expressions whose meanings cannot be readily grasped in context or which could be wrongly interpreted. There is also what the author himself refers to as a "Traduction approximative des chansons" (i.e. approximate translation of the songs) in the local language into French accompanied by supplementary explanations on their significance as well as analysis of their rhythm and poetic port.

Finally, there is a section titled "Dossier" whose purpose is stated as follows:

Le present Dossier ne se veut pas une étude exhaustive de l'oeuvre. Il vise plutôt à présenter au public certains faits et repères utiles pour une bonne compréhension de la pièce, de son contexte, et de ses personnages (TPUM:123). [This Dossier is not an exhaustive study of the play. Rather it aims at presenting to the public certain useful facts and landmarks for a better understanding of the play, its context and its characters.]

In effect, it analyzes in detail each of the acts as well as each of the characters of the play.

All the above metatextual authorial comments accompanying the text of the play proper are thus definitely quite useful to both the stage director, actors, readers, critics, researchers, students or any other persons interested in this play.

4.2.2. *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis*

Like *Trois Prétendants...Un Mari*, *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* is set in the author's village, Mvoutessi, where Abessolo's family is expecting the visit of their daughter, Matalina and her husband. The couple who have only recently returned from France are living in Yaounde where Matalina's brother, Mezoe, has already visited them and experienced the opulence and luxury in which they live. It is Mezoe who informs the gullible villagers of Mvoutessi that Matalina's husband, who is a medical doctor and who would like to work in the bush, is likely to be appointed a minister, a job he does not seem to appreciate very much, although one which could make him boss over everyone else. Apart from the doctor himself, the rest of the people in this society are only thinking of the advantages they would reap from his appointment. In the long run, a driver and his companion arrive in a vehicle to announce to the villagers that Matalina and her husband will not be coming until further notice because he has finally accepted the appointment as Minister of Health. This of course is most delightful news for the villagers who immediately begin to make plans to decamp from the village from time to time in order to spend a few months in Yaounde, and now and then eat vitamins with seven forks like rich people do.

With regard to the structure of this play, the author ignores the classical division into acts and scenes and rather dramatizes the action in one long sequence. The action takes place in one location, Abessolo's home, and the entire events evolve within a time frame of an afternoon. Concerning metatextual comments, unlike the first play, this second play includes only a brief dedication to a friend and a brief preface outlining

the genesis of the play as well as providing an interpretative insight into the title of the lay.

4.2.3. *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence*

The third play is a social satire which focuses mainly on the unbecoming behaviour of government employees towards their less fortunate compatriots in the cities and villages throughout the country. Oyono Mbia identifies the source of the malaise in his society and proceeds to caricature it so that the problem can be seen in its stark enormity and ultimately bring about change in the guilty parties. Although this play, like the first two, is set in the village, the villagers have gained more knowledge about the activities of government servants. The characters are made to volunteer information about themselves and about other people with earnest naivety. Yet behind this is the biting satire of the author.

The central theme of the play is His Excellency's supposed visit to the village which does not take place, although through a process of mistaken identities he is thought to be in the village. Because of the misinterpretation of information received through his transistor radio, Bikokoe Mendegue misleads the other villagers into feverish preparation to impress the visitor from the city, a man of hardly any consequence who is mistaken for a high government official who must be impressed so that development can come to the village. Oyono Mbia's message here is very clear: duty consciousness should not only be exhibited to impress a superior, and development in different parts of the country should not be limited only to the visit of top government officials to those places.

Taking refuge behind such trivialities as the dice game and the quality of news coming from various sizes of radios, the playwright engages himself in battle against such malpractices as corruption and moral decadence, particularly in high places, prostitution and skin bleaching in young women, excessive lust and greed for money, abusive use of power, the lack of duty consciousness in workers, hypocritical

behaviour, etc. He equally criticizes the prevalence of unemployment, low wages, the almost complete absence of such basic facilities as roads, hospitals and schools, and the prevailing misery of the rural masses.

It is in this play that Oyono Mbia comes closest to commenting on the political and economic situation of his society. However, due to the prevailing oppressive socio-political climate (cf. section 2.2.1 above), rather than present the situation as being orchestrated by a central political machinery that is morally depraved and absolutely decadent, the author chooses to give his audience glimpses of diverse tableaux of such abuses and the corrupt use of power by taking advantage of the fact that the various evils and shortcomings are already common knowledge.

In this two-act play all of the action from the beginning to the end takes place in a few hours of a single day. The action is chronological and without any complexities, yet one action follows upon another, resulting in a closely woven and tight plot without any loose ends. The action is concentrated in the railway bar which is run by Missa Majunga, and the railway station which is administered by the Station-master. These two characters are the moving force behind all of the action and even the structure of the play bears witness to this, with each of these two characters presiding in his own domain.

With respect to metatextual comments this play, like the first two, also has a preface giving the genesis of the play and in which Oyono Mbia dwells lengthily on his understanding of drama whereby he asserts especially that:

...It is almost impossible to give a play its final publishable shape without one actually seeing it on stage and adding such essential things as adequate stage directions without which no producer, however imaginative, could properly tackle a piece of drama. Let us not therefore glibly talk and write about insufficiencies or inadequacies in the field of dramatic writing without paying attention to the vital problem of the absence- and keenly felt absence too- of theatre buildings. There should be at least one such building in every major centre in Cameroon. (HEST:11)

Still on the performance dimension of the play, and this time directing his attention to those who might only be interested in reading the play instead of watching it performed on stage he states as follows:

His Excellency's Special Train is a play and should be treated as such. I have tried to give as many detailed stage directions as possible to make it clear to the casual reader that he is not normally expected to get much out of the work if he does not also try to see it on stage, or at least to visualize it as something that was essentially meant to be performed (HEST: 10).

The above authorial comments and others included in the prefaces clearly situate the context of the plays and give focus to the way the author expects the plays to be comprehended, appreciated and exploited by all interested persons.

4.3. Micro-textual analysis of Oyono Mbia's source texts

At the micro-textual level, Oyono Mbia's works examined herein share very many common features. In effect, the plays were written around the same period and it is observed that the playwright uses virtually the same literary and stylistic devices in all the plays. Consequently, rather than analyzing a given feature with respect to only one of the plays, the feature is analyzed with respect to its manifestation and role in the three plays taken together. As indicated earlier, in order to avoid being cumbersome by referring to the full title of the play each time a feature is analyzed and examples cited from each play, *Trois Prétendants...Un Mari*, *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* and *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence* are henceforth referred to by their abbreviations TPUM, JNA, LTSSE respectively.

The features analyzed in this section include ideophones, distorted words and names, loan words from Oyono Mbia's native Bulu language, proverbs and wise sayings, swearwords, allusions and symbolic signifiers, forms of address, repetition, and stylistic calques. These features (all of them culture-bound) have been retained as *tertium comparationis* for the comparative study of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts in the following sections.

4.3.1. Ideophones

Ideophones as used in Oyono Mbia's plays are special types of words which convey a kind of idea-in-sound. They are used by the author to inject emotion or vividness to the dialogue and descriptions. They are thus effective rhetorical and emotive tools which further dramatize the action of the play. They enable the speaker to sustain and heighten the audience's interest in what is said. In the plays studied, they are used to express a very wide range of things and effects including feelings of fear, awe, apprehension, disappointment, disgust, admiration, scorn, contentment, surprise, impatience, irritation, exasperation, mockery, nostalgia, incredulity, horror/abject fear, discouragement, urgency, etc., some of which are illustrated below and highlighted in bold.

Ideophones in Oyono Mbia's plays are mainly in the form of interjections. When used as interjections, ideophones are cries or inarticulate utterances expressing the speaker's emotions/feelings or simply to convey the prevailing atmosphere. Consider the interjection “**Eé é é kié**” in the following examples:

i) Mezang: (Un peu gêné d'avoir à le dire dans un bar) Euh...Il m'a donné dix mille Francs !

Tous : (Ahuris) **Eé é é kié** ! Dix mille francs ! (LTSSE:16).

- Emotion expressed is that of awe and pleasant surprise at such largesse and magnanimous display of wealth.

ii) Missa Majunga: (Il élève encore la voix) Ah Folinika ! (Folinika entre avec grand fracas... tout en cherchant un chiffon derrière le comptoir, elle invective son mari)

Folinika: **E é é é kié!** Quand vas-tu donc cesser de me faire courir à droite et à gauche? Tu crois que je suis encore jeune moi? Je suis déjà vieille, tu m'entends? (LTSSE:22)

- Emotion expressed is that of exasperation at being pestered by her husband.

iii) Missa Majunga: (Après un coup d’oeil du côté de la gare) Ah !...Le voilà qui arrive ! Tu peux y aller, Folinika ! (Folinika se met bruyamment au travail).

Folinika : **Eé é é kié** ! Regardez-moi cela !...Des mégots de cigarettes, des biscuits, toutes ces saletés-là qu’on laisse traîner sur la table spéciale de Monsieur le Chef de Gare ! (LTSSE:23)

- Emotion expressed is that of irritation and disgust at the dirty habits of some of her customers.

iv) Mezoé: (Cherchant des mots moins compliqués) C’est son bureau qui serait climatisé, Na’Cécilia ! Non pas lui-même ! Cela veut dire, en somme, que mon beau-frère ne respirerait plus le même air que nous autres, les ignorants, respirons un peu partout. Il respirerait de l’air européen sortant d’une espèce de boîte métallique...

Tous : (Incrédules) **Eé é é kié** ! (JNA:31)

- Emotion expressed is that of incredulity at Mezoe’s revelations.

v) Mbia: (Même jeu) Tu mettras que les gens de ce village sont insolents à l’égard des grands fonctionnaires...(S’indiquant, majestueux) Comme moi !

Tous : **Eé é é é kié é** ! (TPUM:78)

- Emotion expressed is that of apprehension and fright at the impending danger looming over the entire village following Mbia’s threats.

vi) Sanga-Titi: (Brandissant sa corne d’antilope) Si quelqu’un d’autre ose douter de moi, je jette un sort à tout ce village !

Tous : (Reculant, terrifiés) **Eé é é é kié** ! (TPUM:96)

- Emotion expressed is that of extreme fright following the threats from the witch-doctor to bewitch the whole village.

In the above six examples it is worth noting that the same sound “**Eé é é kié**” is used to express awe and surprise, exasperation, irritation and disgust, incredulity, apprehension and fright, and extreme fright. We equally observe that varying degrees of the same emotion (i.e. fear) may be expressed by simply stretching the length of

the vowel (the “é” sound is longer in (v) and (vi) above than in (i) to (iv)) or by not articulating the sound fully. For instance, in *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari*, when Mbia points an accusing finger at the Chief Mbarga, the latter is stricken with fear and cries out “Eé é é é!” (p. 79) instead of “Eé é é é kié!”. Elsewhere, in the same play and in the same scene, real fright and apprehension are expressed in yet another way by modifying the vowel placed in the initial position of the sound. For example, when Mbia directly threatens the villagers for failing to make adequate preparations in honour of his visit they react by crying out in real fright “Yé é é é é!” (p. 78).

All the above variations as well as the many others not highlighted here obviously imply that the audience/listener, particularly the non Bulu/Cameroonian audience, must be attentive enough to grasp the intended meanings of the sounds from their diverse contexts of usage. Similarly, the readers must pay particular attention to the cushioning devices of the sounds, particularly in the stage directions, in order to correctly relate or associate the proper intended emotions to the corresponding sounds. “Cushioning” is a procedure involving the use of explanatory tags or parentheses to explain a culture-specific element or by fashioning the immediate co-text into a careful context of explanation (cf. Young, 1971:40). The stage directions for instance in examples (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi) above clearly cushion the sound “Eé é é kié” in those respective contexts thereby enabling the readers to comprehend the corresponding emotions expressed. In examples (iii) and (v) it is the co-text that enables them to understand the corresponding emotions expressed by the sound.

4.3.2. Distorted words and names

In the source texts a number of words have been distorted such as “Sieur” for “Monsieur” (TPUM), “doïche” and “jaman” for “Dutch” and “German” respectively (TPUM), “Haut...Comm...euh” for “Haut-Commissaire” (TPUM), “Un secrec...un gene...” for “Un secrétaire general” (JNA), “Clima...quoi” for “Climatiser” (JNA), “Missa” for “Mister” (TPUM and LTSSE), “Messié” for “Messieurs” (LTSSE) and

“Majunga” for “Marjoca” (the label of a Spanish red wine produced in the Spanish wine-producing region of Marjoca) (LTSSE).

Names too have been distorted and these include “Matalina” for “Madeleine” (TPUM, JNA and LTSSE), “Makrita” for “Margherita (in the Italian language) (TPUM and JNA), “Cécilia” for “Cécile” (JNA), “Sinabé” for “Sheramy” (JNA) and “Folinika” for “Véronique” (LTSSE). These distortions further dramatize the action of the play by producing a comic effect.

In his plays, in addition to depicting the traditional society with its naïve and unsophisticated ways and beliefs and whereby the villagers are mostly illiterates, Oyono Mbia also portrays the conflict between the indigenous and imported European/Westernized cultures. The fundamental issue addressed by the author is the ability of the indigenous society depicted to cope with modernity, particularly with the imported Western style of life and ways of doing things. The author persistently deforms the way some of the characters say European names or pronounce certain words. The effect thus produced by this massacring of words and names is humour. But beneath this humour is the author’s message. Due to the difficulties faced by the villagers in pronouncing the words or in handling these foreign names properly, they are forced to modify them and adapt them to the phonology of the native Bulu language thereby making them as natural as possible and easy to use just like any other local word or name. This apparent failure at the level of mere names poses a more profound question: Is there no risk that the foreign ways/ideas, which the traditional, simple and unsophisticated Cameroonian societies are increasingly and inevitably exposed to, would also be modified and interpreted in terms of the local habits? The words and names are modified into a hybrid which is neither European nor Bulu/Cameroonian. Are the Western ways/ideas therefore not subject to the same fate?

This preoccupation of the author thus runs through the three plays studied and in order for the readers/audience to grasp and appreciate it they need in the first place to be aware of these distortions and then to unearth the message underlying the many

instances of the distorted elements strewn across the plays. With respect to the ability of the readers/audience to interpret his message, it was pointed out above (cf. section 2.2.) that Oyono Mbia's primary readers/audience is Cameroonian. As such, he assumes their familiarity with the context and expects them to readily understand the message underlying the literary and stylistic device of distorting words and names. Consequently, he does not need to provide (and indeed has not provided) any cushioning or supplementary explanatory information that would otherwise be helpful to the non-Cameroonian readers/audience. In effect, the non Bulu/Cameroonian readers/audience who are not familiar with the local realities depicted in the plays are likely to place, for instance, the distorted names "Folinika", "Makrita" and "Matalina", etc. on the same plane with the other natural indigenous names such as Atangana, Bella, Kouma, Bilomba, etc., thereby missing out on the message conveyed by the distorted ones.

4.3.3. Loan words from Oyono Mbia's native Bulu language

The influence of Oyono Mbia's mother tongue is also evident in his plays as testified by the numerous Bulu language signifiers embedded in the plays. For instance, the words "Oyenga", "Nyeng", "Mvet", "Mbôlô ô ô", "Arki", "elum", "balafons", "kpwem", "Bikud-Si", "Ozila", etc. are loan words from Bulu. The pervasive presence of these native Bulu words enable the playwright's primary Bulu and Cameroonian readers/audience to fully identify themselves with the setting and action of the play.

The author renders these many Bulu words in his plays understandable by cleverly glossing them through cushioning. Consider the following examples which illustrate usage of some of these highlighted loan words:

- i) Bella: (Se lève avec autant de vivacité que l'âge lui en permet) Elle a réussi! Ma petite-fille a encore réussi à son examen ! Ah Nane Ngôk ! (Pousse le cri de joie traditionnel des femmes, l' « **Ôyenga** ») Ou-ou-ou-ou-ou... ! (TPUM:18).

The word “Ôyenga” is in apposition to the phrase “le cri de joie traditionnel des femmes” and thus the reader understands that it means the women’s traditional cry of joy.

ii) Mezoé: Est-ce que nous allons boire comme des muets? (Va mettre ses bouteilles en lieu sûr.) Ah Oyôn ! Va chercher les tam-tams de ton père ! (Oyônô obéit, et Mezoé se met à chanter en claquant des mains...Les autres villageois reprennent en chœur, Mezoé lui-même chantant la ligne mélodique. Oyônô revient avec les tam-tams. Ondua et lui attaquant le rythme du « **Nyeng** » et Mezoé danse.) (TPUM:34)

In this example, the phrases “les tam-tams”, “attaquant le rythme” and “Mezoé danse” are descriptors which shed light on the word “Nyeng” and the reader can thus readily guess that the “Nyeng” is a type of dance.

iii) (Au lever du rideau, Sanga-Titi chante une mélodie en s’accompagnant de sa harpe « **Mvet** ») (TPUM:83)

Here again, “Mvet” is in apposition to “harpe”. But then there is further cushioning by the phrase “chante une mélodie en s’accompagnant de”, i.e. Sanga-Titi sings the melody while playing on his harp. This time the reader understands that “Mvet” is a musical instrument and not a dance as in the case of “Nyeng”.

iv) (Matalina entre, portant une assiette posée en équilibre sur la tête. Elle salue les autres joyeusement)
Matalina : **Mbôlô ô ô** ! (TPUM:61)

In this example the phrase “salue les autres joyeusement” provides a clue that the Bulu word is a form of greeting.

v) (La scène est à Mvoutessi, petit village situé au sud du Cameroun Oriental, chez Abessôlô. Les acteurs sont installés sous un petit hangar recouvert de palmes, un « **élum** » érigé temporairement devant la maison principale comme il est d’usage chez les Bulu et les Beti lorsqu’on attend de nombreux visiteurs...) (JNA:11)

Here “élum” is in apposition to the descriptive phrase “un petit hangar recouvert de palme” which gives an idea about the type of structure housing the actors. Then, the phrase “érigé temporairement devant la maison principale” provides further cushioning to the loan word such that in addition to the type of structure, the reader is also informed about its temporary nature and its location with respect to other houses. Finally, the phrase “lorsqu’on attend de nombreux visiteurs” provides even further information about the purpose for which the structure is usually constructed.

- vi) (ça et là sont posés divers instruments de musique locaux: tambours longs et courts recouverts de peau d’antilope, tam-tams d’appel, « **balafons** », etc. ...) (JNA:11)

In this example the loan word “balafons” appears in an enumeration of types of local musical instruments and the reader can thus easily classify the culture-specific element referred to in the broad conceptual range of musical instruments.

- vii) (Trois assiettes communes posées à même le sol devant eux contiennent l’une des boulettes de plantain pilé, l’autre du poulet à la sauce d’arachide, la troisième du « **kpwem** », c’est-à-dire des feuilles de manioc cuites, non salées mais assaisonnées à l’aide de diverses herbes et écorces aromatiques) (JNA:11)

The meaning of the loan word “kpwem” is provided by the explanatory definition «c’est-à-dire des feuilles de manioc cuites, non salées mais assaisonnées à l’aide de diverses herbes et écorces aromatiques» [in other words, boiled cassava leaves, with no salt but spiced with various aromatic herbs and tree barks] which immediately follows the word.

- viii) (Tous se regardent, très impressionnés. Missa Majunga met son électrophone en marche : c’est un air de Messi Martin. La femme se lève en titubant et va danser devant le public, sous les yeux amusés des consommateurs qui claquent des mains en cadence...C’est un air de « **Bikud-Si** ». A la fin du morceau...) (LTSSE:18)

In this stage direction the phrases “danser devant le public”, “un air de” and “A la fin du morceau” inform the readers that the loan word “Bikud-Si” refers to a type of music.

ix) Mbarga: (Crie) Ah Oyôn! Ne reste pas planté là à me regarder comme si je dansais l' « **Ozila** » ! Va me chercher un grand fauteuil pour mon gendre ! (TPUM:73)

In this example the verb “dansais” that precedes the loan word “Ozila” enables the readers to guess that it refers to a type of local dance.

x) All the songs in *Trois Prétendants..Un Mari* are in the native Bulu language but the author elucidates them by providing their translation into French in a glossary.

It is worth noting that in all the instances where the author introduces the Bulu words into the plays he really highlights them and makes them stand out from the rest by placing them between inverted commas.

In the above examples as well as other instances of loan words in the plays the author elucidates the meanings of the loan words by using cushioning devices such as apposition, descriptors, explanatory definitions, co-text, glossary and translation. It should be remarked that while some of the cushioning devices used by the author shed sufficient light on the meanings of the Bulu words (such as in (v) and (vii) above), others only shed minimal light on the meanings of such loan words. For instance, in example (iv) above one cannot say at what time of the day this form of greeting is normally used or whether it is used invariably irrespective of the situation and context.

Similarly, most of the local realities conveyed by the local words are types of musical instruments, songs and dances in the society depicted. There are different types of traditional songs and dances reserved for various ceremonies and rituals in that society. The author does not provide any clue about the occasion and atmosphere normally associated with such a song or dance. Such information is necessary for the non-Bulu/Cameroonian readers/audience to fully appreciate the atmosphere evoked by mention of the song or dance. In this regard, the word “Mvet” definitely needs elucidation for a wider audience to be able to grasp the association of meanings

evoked by the word. The word “Mvet” in its habitual usage refers to three separate but related things. First of all, it designates a traditional musical instrument with chords used in the author’s society. It is this instrument that is referred to in the plays. Secondly, the word “Mvet” designates an epic story or any epic song recited with the accompaniment of the above-mentioned instrument. Finally, “Mvet” designates a long-standing type of traditional play comprising traditional epic literature, music and choreography. The “Mvet” epic is therefore recited, sung and danced also with the accompaniment of the instrument designated by the same name.

It is also worth noting that in virtually all the above examples as well as most of the others in the plays, cushioning is mostly effected in the stage directions. Consequently, while it sheds light on the meanings of the Bulu words to readers of the plays, it fails to provide such supplementary information to an audience unfamiliar with the Bulu culture watching the play on stage. Similarly, the glossary and the translation at the end of the play to explain the meaning of the songs and highlight their beauty and poetic charge can be considered useful to the readers and not the audience watching the play on stage.

The author does not seem to find extensive cushioning for a live audience necessary probably because, as indicated earlier, he clearly wrote for a primary Bulu and Cameroonian audience which to a very large extent is familiar with this context and shares it. In effect, a Cameroonian from another part of the country different from the author’s who watches the play on stage and is not furnished with the information contained in the stage directions would nonetheless readily identify “Mbôlô ô ô” as a form of greeting. Similarly, s/he would equally see Sanga-Titi’s instrument on stage and readily identify it as a Bulu musical instrument, the “Mvet”, and the dance performed by Mezoé as a Bulu dance, the “Nyeng”.

4.3.4. Proverbs and wise sayings

Oyono Mbia's plays also contain proverbs from his native Bulu background. In the author's society (and in traditional Cameroonian society in general) proverbs are the kernels in which popular wisdom is stored. They are used for elucidating ideas and impressing listeners. They are philosophical and moral statements condensed to a few words and in society are used by those who have acquired the wisdom of their forefathers and are the upholders of the beliefs and philosophy of the community. Thus, they also signal and reveal the distinct identities of individual characters or character-types in the plays such as Abessolo (in JNA and TPUM), Meka (in JNA), Mbarga and Sanga-Titi (in TPUM), Cecilia (in JNA) and Missa Majunga (in LTSSE). These proverbs also signal and identify the speaker as belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Indeed, in addition to all of the above, some of the proverbs in Oyono Mbia's plays actually carry the author's satire on certain traditional and cultural practices which he condemns. Very often the decoding of these proverbs by the non-native speaker/listener entails prior knowledge of the specific socio-cultural practices and which reflect the thought patterns of the native speakers and their ways of perceiving reality. It is for this reason, therefore, that we provide elucidating explanations to some of the proverbs and sayings used in the plays examined in this study. Consider the following highlighted examples:

- i) Abessôlô: (Hors de lui) Y a-t-il rien de plus exaspérant au monde qu'une vieille femme ? **Ton fils va déjà atteindre le sommet de l'arbre, et toi tu viens lui dire : « redescends »**. Tu ne peux pas écouter ? (JNA:31)

The saying « Ton fils va déjà atteindre le sommet de l'arbre, et toi tu viens lui dire : « redescends » » derives from the indigenous proverb « atteindre le sommet de l'arbre et redescendre », i.e. to reach the peak of progress or of one's career and to drop from there soon after and suddenly. The character Abessôlô uses it to disapprove of the egoistical attitude of the villagers who want to hinder the progress of his son-in-law.

ii) Abessôlô: (Avec un petit rire satisfait) Est-ce que je sais, mon fils! Nous n'avons encore rien vu ! **Ce n'est pas parce que tu entends le bruit que l'éléphant fait dans la forêt voisine que tu peux prétendre avoir vu l'éléphant lui-même.** (JNA:46)

This is simply the indigenous way of saying that seeing is believing. Despite everything, Abessôlô would still like to see his son-in-law and his daughter for himself before believing in anything rather than simply listening to an envoy.

iii) Mbarga: (Encouragé par ce début) Nos ancêtres disaient: "**Les grands fleuves se reconnaissent toujours par l'importance de leurs affluents** ». Je vous demanderai donc : si Mbia nous fait boire tant de vin maintenant, n'est-ce pas la preuve qu'il le fera toujours à l'avenir ? (TPUM:37)

The proverb «Les grands fleuves se reconnaissent toujours par l'importance de leurs affluents» is the indigenous way of saying that an important or wealthy person is usually recognised by their great deeds or by their largesse.

iv) Meka: (Ton de plaisanterie) Pourquoi dis-tu cela, Cecilia? Est-ce que tu oublies la vertu la plus caractéristique des hommes de la tribu Fông ? « **Un vrai Fông aura beau avoir des cheveux blancs sur la tête : jamais il n'en aura sur le cœur !** » (JNA:36)

This proverb is equally understood in the light of the customs of the society depicted in the play in that in this society honour requires that a Fông man always loves his legitimate wife(s) till death even if occasionally he indulges in love escapades with other women.

v) Abessôlô: Un femme mariée doit toujours dire à ses visiteurs: "Ne riez pas si fort, s'il vous plait ! **Mes oreilles sont là où est mon mari !** » (JNA:14)

The saying « Mes oreilles sont là où est mon mari! » requires elucidation in order to enable it to be understood in the right perspective and for the ridicule of the character Abessôlô to be properly appreciated by the non-Bulu or non-Cameroonian reader/audience. In a male dominated society (epitomized by the old Abessôlô) in

which Oyono Mbia's plays are set the woman has no voice and is completely relegated to the background. Among other things, a woman must always obey her husband, pay constant attention to him and always attend promptly to his needs. Considering that in his plays the author ardently advocates emancipation of the woman by systematically criticizing and holding up to ridicule any act that subjugates the woman, the above saying pronounced by Abessôlô should be understood as ironical and carrying the author's satire on the society's customs.

vi) Abessôlô: Elles ne m'entendront pas! Quand Cécilia et les autres femmes de ce village se mettent à rire, c'est comme si personne n'avait versé de dot à leurs parents pour les épouser ! Hé toi, Tita-Mongô ! Cours demander à la grand'mère s'il faut **que nous mangions comme des oiseaux !**
(JNA:13)

The phrase « que nous mangions comme des oiseaux » derives from the indigenous proverb « Manger comme des oiseaux ». The traditional belief in the society depicted is that birds which fly in the air do not drink water. They have no teeth and so do not chew their food before swallowing. Consequently, they do not need to drink water or any liquid to push the food down their throats when it is stuck there or simply to use it to clear their throats after eating. Thus, to talk of eating like a bird means to eat without drinking water.

vii) Mbarga: Qu'est-ce que nos ancêtres disaient à propos du caméléon et du margouillat ?
Abessôlô : « **Quand le caméléon meurt, le margouillat hérite de son sac de kola** » (TPUM:80)

In this exchange between Mbarga and Abessôlô who is the custodian of tradition the latter replies to the former's question with a proverb which provides information with regard to who shoulders what responsibilities and when in that society: when a person is in difficulties or is hit by misfortune it is the duty of their closest relation or friend to step in and bail them out.

viii) Sanga-Titi: Je pourrais facilement vous dire l’auteur de ce vol. Seulement...
(On le regarde d’un air interrogateur, et il ajoute) : Euh...vous savez bien que **quand la rivière est à sec, l’eau ne coule plus !**
(TPUM:86)

The phrase « quand la rivière est à sec, l’eau ne coule plus! » is a proverb which states an obvious truth because it is evident that when a river has dried up, the water no longer runs. In the indigenous society portrayed, it simply means that payment has to be made for a service rendered. Sanga-Titi, however, wants to be paid in advance for the service he is expected to render. Indeed, the custom requires that service should be paid for in advance before it is rendered rather than after it has been satisfactorily rendered as it is the normal practice. In his play the author satirizes such a situation and similar ones that are contrary to the normal way of doing things. In effect, in the play Sanga-Titi exacts his pay before rendering his services to recover the stolen money. However, as it turns out, he does not succeed in finding the stolen money and the villagers cannot on the other hand recover the things they had given him as payment in advance for his expected services. Such a situation is particularly widely exploited and taken advantage of, at the expense of the villagers, by witch-doctors, traditional healers and other traditional practitioners who usually exact much payment before rendering services which very often turn out to be ineffective and inefficient.

ix) Sanga-Titi: (S’asseyant, imperturbable) Tu sais comme nos ancêtres disaient :
« **Les fantômes ne parlent jamais avant que la pluie ne soit tombée !** » (TPUM:84)

The proverb « Les fantômes ne parlent jamais avant que la pluie ne soit tombée » is the indigenous Bulu equivalent of « there is no smoke without fire » or generally, « every effect has a cause ». It reveals some of the spiritual beliefs of the Bulu such as their cult of the ancestors whom they believe can talk to the living at times.

As it is evident from the above examples as well as the other proverbs in the plays, they are literal translations from the native Bulu language whereby the thought patterns and world-view of the Bulu society are consciously adopted by the author

sometimes for plausibility in character depiction, sometimes for humour and sometimes to convey his satire. These literal translations into French could be termed “Bulu French”, i.e. indigenized French.

Oyono Mbia, like any other Cameroonian writer drawing from his background but writing in a European language learnt only much later in school rather than writing in his native language may be said to be often confronted with a difficult choice. He has to decide either to express the local proverb literally in the European language so that stylistically it should at least read and sound as a proverb to the readers/audience in the European language or he has to decide to look for a semantic equivalent in the European language to express it. A semantic equivalent which fully satisfies the author’s intentions is rarely attainable given the cultural gap between the traditional Cameroonian and European sociolinguistic communities.

On the other hand, the literal translations while enabling the local colour to be captured to a large extent often only allow the meanings of the proverbs to be guessed thereby compelling the non-native readers/audience to resort to various textual devices built into the text by the author and extra-textual parameters for elucidation. Thus, while in some of the examples above the author sheds minimal light on the meanings of the proverbs through cushioning as was the case with the use of loan words from the Bulu language, in other cases it is much more difficult to guess their meanings. For instance, in (iv) above the descriptive phrase « la vertu la plus caractéristique des hommes de la tribu Fông » which precedes the proverb enables the readers/audience to at least understand that the proverb has to do with a virtue possessed by Fông men. Similarly, in (i), (ii) and (iii) above the readers/audience can deduce the meanings of the proverbs and sayings in context. However, it becomes more difficult to do so in (v), (vi), (vii), (viii) and (ix) above. This is particularly the case in (vi) where eating by human beings is compared with that of birds or in (viii) where the proverb states an obvious truth. In both cases the non-Bulu/Cameroonian readers/audience definitely require supplementary extra-textual background information to fully understand and appreciate them in the right perspective.

In their desire to portray or capture the cultural realities of their society in their works, most Cameroonian authors, like most other African writers writing in a European language, deliberately opt to express these realities in the European languages literally and in a way as close as possible to the native African languages in an attempt to preserve the images and thought patterns of the indigenous societies.

The handling of proverbs literally in European languages by these authors may be considered a dynamic factor of cultural enrichment, particularly for the non-Cameroonian or non-African readers/audience. However, such literally translated proverbs are rarely read or understood in exactly the same way by both the Cameroonian and non-Cameroonian readers/audience.

For the Cameroonian (and even other African) readers/audience, the proverbs represent a certain reality and in most cases refer to a given socio-cultural reality, even when these readers/audience do not understand the indigenous language in which the proverbs exist. This is especially so when we consider that there is a great affinity between African cultures. For instance, globally speaking, there is affinity between the cultures of the North African Arab countries of the Maghreb and there is affinity between the cultures of Black African countries South of the Sahara. In the Cameroonian context, this cultural affinity is particularly marked between the country's various ethnic groups even though most of the indigenous languages are said to be mutually unintelligible.

Consequently, in the case where the African readers/audience belong to a different linguistic community from the author's, they are still capable of at least understanding or appreciating the literal translations and it is often possible for them to identify the original proverb through the words and images used in the literally translated proverb which is a calque of the original. However, due to fundamental cultural universals and due to the fact that proverbs are sometimes considered to state general truths, the non-Cameroonian/African readers/audience could, in a number of cases, also decode the

meaning or part of the meaning of the literally translated proverb, although they may not be able to appreciate the translation.

4.3.5. Swearwords

Another device which Oyono Mbia uses which introduces local colour in his plays and further dramatizes the action in his plays are swearwords and oaths and this is particularly evident in his first play *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari* where he makes abundant use of such swearwords and oaths. All of them are in the Bulu language and the author has introduced them untranslated in his plays.

The oaths in the names of his Bulu ancestors are used by his characters to express various emotions such as shock, pride, disgust, stress and despair/helplessness at having been overtaken by events. Some highlighted examples include the following:

- i) Bella: (Qui vient de s'installer à côté de Matalina) Qu'est qu'il y a encore dans ce monde d'aujourd'hui mon pauvre mari ? Je vois les femmes manger même des vipères, des sangliers, des...(Claquant des mains, scandalisée) :
Eé é kié **Oyônô Eto Mekong ya Ngozip** é é é ! (TPUM:15)

The expression “Oyônô Eto Mekong ya Ngozip” refers to Oyônô Eto Mekong, an illustrious figure of the past from the Ngozip village. The Bulu people also have as custom to express their surprise, pain or any strong emotion by invoking aloud their most illustrious ancestors. The emotion expressed here is that of shock and consternation at the women's audacity and impudence to violate with impunity such a deeply entrenched custom.

The author ironically puts across his message through the expression of this emotion. In the play, the author is castigating the subjugation of women in the traditional society through outdated and anachronistic customs which impede the emancipation of the women. It is thus ironical that it is Bella, a female character, who disapproves and is scandalized and shocked at such despicable, unbecoming and reprehensible

behaviour of some of the women who dare to eat vipers and wild boars reserved exclusively for men.

ii) Bella: (Fièremment) Un vrai blanc! Ma petite-fille Juliette va épouser un vrai blanc !...Ah **Nane Ngôk** ! (TPUM:16)

“Nane Ngôk!” is the illustrious ancestor invoked here and the emotion expressed is that of pride and satisfaction. Bella feels very proud that her granddaughter will be married to a man who is as civilised as a white man (i.e. a European).

iii) Oko: (Tranquillement) Pour qu’elle m’épouse, il faut qu’elle suive sa volonté à elle.
Abessôlô : (Ecoeuré, aux autres) Qu’elle suive sa volonté à elle ? Une femme ?
Zua Meka ! (TPUM:112)

“Zua Meka” is another Bulu illustrious ancestor. The emotion expressed by Abessôlô by invoking aloud this figure is that of complete disgust and revolt. Indeed, he is utterly disgusted and revolted at the suggestion from Oko that Juliette should be the one to freely choose her husband rather than for one to be imposed upon her by her parents as required by custom.

iv) Atangana: Hi yé é é ...ah **Zua Meka**! Quelle journée! (TPUM:81)

The same illustrious ancestor as above is also invoked here but this time the emotion expressed by the character is that of stress and despair/helplessness at having been completely overtaken by the events of the day.

All these oaths evoke ancestors who the villagers believe exist in the spirit world and can assist them. Since this belief is peculiar to the Bulu culture and the oaths have no direct equivalent in French, it is probably for this reason that the author has introduced in his source texts the Bulu signifiers which reveal the cult of ancestors practised in his native village of Mvoutessi.

It is also observed that just as in the case of Bulu loan words discussed above (cf. section 4.3.3.) Oyono Mbia equally gives the readers an idea of the emotions conveyed by the oaths in each situation by cushioning them with explanatory tags in the stage directions. For instance, in (i) above the word “scandalise” in the stage directions provides the readers with a cue to the emotions experienced by the character. Similarly, in (ii) and (iii) the words “fièrement” and “écoeuré” in the stage directions respectively provide the readers with an idea about the emotions experienced by the characters while in (iv) it is the utterance “Quelle journée!” immediately following the oath that provides the cue to the emotion experienced.

However, while the cushioning within the text provides an idea about the emotions experienced by the characters, the readers are still not informed about what the native Bulu words mean or refer to. To adequately inform the reader about his culture therefore, the author has provided supplementary information about the significance of the Bulu oaths in a glossary at the end of the play.

It is worth pointing out here also that, just as in the case of the Bulu loan words, the cushioning is effected mostly in the stage directions and also elsewhere in a glossary, in other words, out of the play text proper. The device thus essentially benefits readers and not an audience watching the play on stage. However, given that the stage director and actors also constitute part of the readership since they also have to read the script before acting it out, they would exploit the cushioning in the stage directions to inject into their gestures and movements on stage the corresponding emotion highlighted by the cushioning. That way the emotions intended by the playwright and experienced by the characters would then be perceived by the audience watching the play and who have no access to the text. Even then, the audience would still not have access to the supplementary anthropological information provided by the author in the glossary.

4.3.6. Allusions and symbolic signifiers

Oyono Mbia's satire on his society is also embedded in and conveyed through allusions and symbolic signifiers which conjure up some of the customs and practices in his society which he holds up to ridicule. Consider the following examples:

- i) (Tous se regardent, très impressionnés. Missa Majunga met son électrophone en marche : c'est un air de Messi Martin. La femme se lève en titubant et va danser devant le public, sous les yeux amusés des consommateurs qui claquent des mains en cadence. Peu après Bilomba lui aussi se lève et vient se contorsionner devant sa compagne. C'est un air de « Bikud-Si »...) (LTSSE:18)

In the above stage direction, the author mentions "Messi Martin" and "Bikud-Si". Without supplementary information, the uninformed non-Bulu/Cameroonian readers would not readily understand the author's elliptical message behind them. In effect, "Bikud-Si" is a very popular type of music played by the author's native Bulu tribe as well as the neighbouring Ewondo and Beti tribes. The lyrics are often very vulgar infringing upon public decency. The music is danced in a very immoral and highly sexually suggestive and indecent manner bordering on pornography. The church and various religious authorities have on several occasions made futile attempts to ban some of the most obscene records. Such obscene and immoral songs and dances predispose the society to prostitution and even perpetuate the moral decay eating deep into the fabric of the society. "Messi Martin" is a very prominent Bikud-Si musician regarded as a pioneer, monument and reference of this type of music.

- ii) Bikokoé Mendegue: (Goguenard, agitant le petit flacon en matière plastique qui contient le dé de « Ludo ») Je te le répète, ah Mezang ! C'est toi qui vas perdre cette partie de Ludo ! Tu vas perdre pour la huitième fois ! Comment veux-tu qu'un animal de ton espèce ose sortir de sa brousse natale pour venir me défier au Ludo ! Me défier, moi...(Se frappant fièrement la poitrine)...moi, Bikokoé Mendegue, ici même, dans le bar de Missa Majunga où j'ai déjà battu tant de commerçants Bamiléké ! (LTSSE:13-14)

In this play, taking refuge behind such triviality as the dice game on the Ludo by the character Bikokoé Mendegue and an opponent, the playwright castigates idleness and the lack of duty consciousness in his people. The Bamileke people of Cameroon are the most enterprising and business-oriented tribe. They are the backbone of the country's economy and they dominate all the economic sectors of the country. Their industriousness and resourcefulness are upheld by various economic circles and stakeholders as an example to be emulated by the other tribes of the country. They are so enterprising that to challenge or even have an edge over any of them in any undertaking is considered a feat to be emulated. Here the author definitely uses the outcome of the Ludo game to portray the Bamileke person and spirit as a model for his own tribesmen who, unlike the Bamilekes, simply laze around all day drinking wine and doing nothing to improve their living conditions and material welfare.

iii) Bella: (Fièrement) Un vrai blanc! Ma petite fille Juliette va épouser un vrai blanc !... Ah Nane Ngôk ! (TPUM:16)

When in the above utterance Bella, Juliette's grandmother, exclaims proudly saying « Un vrai blanc! » she does not mean that her granddaughter will get married to a white man but rather to an educated and civilized prosperous man. Similarly, in the same play when Atangana, one of the main characters, says proudly that « Maintenant, nous serons reçus comme des blancs dans les grands restaurants de Sangmélina où il nous fera manger et boire » (TPUM:46), the reference to “blancs” means that they would be received like civilized and rich people in the prestigious restaurants of Sangmelima. Also, elsewhere in another play Mezoé asserts with respect to his brother-in-law as follows: « Non parce que, à bien dire les choses, mon beau-frère serait encore plus blanc que le blanc de la scierie » (JNA:31). In actual fact he does not mean that his brother-in-law would be whiter than the white man who owns the saw-mill but that he would be more civilized, sophisticated and richer than the white man who owns the saw-mill. Generally therefore, mention in the plays of “blanc” or “pays des blancs”, in other words, reference to the white man or his country represents civilization, education, sophistication, riches and everything else that comes with civilization.

iv) The playwright makes reference to the « fonctionnaire » (i.e. civil servant) in several instances in all the three plays examined in this study. In post-independence contemporary Cameroonian society and following the departure of the colonial administration, the civil servant symbolizes corruption, abuse of power and inefficiency of the administration and political elite in solving the problems of the masses. Indeed Mbia, a leading character in *Trois Prétendants...Un Mari* and one of Juliette's suitors, typifies the Cameroonian civil servant, in other words, the educated class that took over administration from the colonial masters and who, like the latter, have also tended to wield extensive powers. They often abuse their powers and are feared and respected by the masses whom they look down upon. The image the masses have of the civil servant (and what the latter is capable of) is clearly revealed in the following exchange between two characters in *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence*:

Le Consommateur: (Surpris) Quoi? La table spéciale de Monsieur le Chef de Gare?

Missa Majunga : Oui, sa table spéciale ! Tu ne sais donc pas que c'est le seul fonctionnaire des environs ?

Le Consommateur : Ca va, ça va ! Je vais m'installer au comptoir !

Missa Majunga : (Soulagé, lui apportant sa bouteille de vin et son baluchon) C'est cela !... Tu es un bon citoyen, mon ami ! Un citoyen respectueux de la loi doit toujours craindre et respecter les fonctionnaires partout où il les rencontre ! Ces messieurs-là ont souvent tôt fait d'envoyer de méchants rapports là-haut, tu vois ? Ce serait tout de même trop bête de se faire jeter en prison pour une petite histoire de table, mais s'il s'agit d'une table spéciale ! (LTSSE:21-22)

v) Oyono Mbia equally makes reference to certain institutions in the country's capital city of Yaounde such as "Lycée Leclerc" (TPUM:48,113), "Université de Yaoundé" (LTSSE:19), "L'Ecole d'Administration" (TPUM:49) and certain places such as "Nkôndôngô" (LTSSE:63), "Canon Bar" (LTSSE:63), etc. All of these carry unexpressed meanings which further amplify the author's message.

"Lycée Leclerc" is a renowned High School named after the French General Leclerc who served in Cameroon during the period of French colonial rule. Most of the country's political figures (including two of the country's Heads of State) and top

government civil servants passed through this institution to the “Université de Yaoundé”, the equally renowned and prestigious sole University of the country until 1993, when other State Universities were established. The few privileged Cameroonians who went through these two institutions were guaranteed a well-paid government job and appointment to top administrative positions. After graduation from the University, another chosen few were admitted into the very famous “Ecole d’Administration” and upon graduation were appointed as the very infamous “Sous-Préfets” and “Préfets” to head the country’s administrative Sub-Divisions and Divisions respectively. These government officials are very authoritative and wield very extensive powers which they often abuse with impunity. Besides, they equally have the bad reputation and stigma of always rigging elections in favour of the authorities in power in order to secure their positions.

“Canon” was, and still is, one of the country’s leading football teams with its headquarters in the Yaounde neighbourhood of Nkôndôngô. “Canon Bar” is a drinking spot in Nkôndôngô named after the team and patronized by its staunch football supporters. It plays Bikud-Si music exclusively. Whenever Canon wins a football match, there is all-night celebration and dancing of Bikud-Si. Beer is served free of charge and the prostitutes in Nkôndôngô offer their “services” free of charge. The mere mention of “Nkôndôngô” and “Canon Bar” in the play therefore immediately connotes to the informed reader/audience deviant behaviour and moral decadence.

vi) The distortion of the Christian names of some of the characters in the three plays alludes to the Christianity practice whereby missionaries forced (and today still require) the villagers to abandon their indigenous names (considered to be unholy) and to adopt European names at baptism. Until a villager did that s/he was not considered a convert and was regarded as still having heathen ways. Indeed, without elucidation the non-Bulu/Cameroonian readers/audience would not even know the names are distortions.

vii) *In Trois Prétendants...In Mari*, Oyono Mbia's use of the « Sorcier » (witch-doctor) assumed by the character Sanga-Titi is symbolic. In Cameroon, particularly in traditional society, witch-doctors are still very popular. They claim they can treat all kinds of illnesses, unravel all sorts of mysteries, provide protection, bring good luck, among many other things. The belief in their powers is still so strong and the use of talismans, protective charms, etc. they produce so widespread in both villages and urban centres that very many people consult witch-doctors, perform various rituals prescribed by them in order to attain various objectives, they carry talismans and protective charms before, during and after incidents and events such as illnesses, deaths, accidents, thefts, games, competitive examinations, etc. In certain rural areas the influence of witch-doctors and the belief in traditional healing methods are still so strong that most patients stick obstinately to them and only accept to be taken to a modern (i.e. Western) hospital when it is too late. In other cases, patients' relatives actually come to the hospital stealthily and take them away to native doctors. Unfortunately, in very many cases, such as the one presented in *Trois Prétendants..Un Mari* the powers they claim to possess do not work and they are the ones who benefit in the final analysis given that they demand payment (which is non-refundable) for their services before rendering them. Through the "Sorcier" therefore the playwright holds up to ridicule such negative practices which impede the evolution of the society towards modernism and progress.

viii) Other symbolic signifiers with a local coloration which the author uses in his plays include palm wine, "arki", the "Préfet", "Sous-Préfet", "Gendarmerie", "Commissaires de police", the village, the city, forks, etc. Palm wine is symbolic of the indigenous culture and its traditional practices such as ancestor worship, illiteracy, a life of bondage for women who have to work all day long while the men just sit at home drinking their wine and only going out once in a while to hunt or fish for the family. While "arki", the illegally distilled local spirit drink symbolises the negative aspects of tradition in the face of the administrative laws of modern government, the "Préfet", "Sous-Préfet", "Gendarmerie" and the "Commissaires de police" symbolise the repressive instruments of the government who are vested with extensive powers

which they often abuse using very brutal methods. The village symbolises the indigenous culture with its negative aspects such as nepotism, polygamy, illiteracy, poor living standards and strong family and tribal ties expected to yield material benefits. The city symbolises education, modern houses, modern furniture, imported goods, etc. Forks symbolise a civilised way of living, the modernized life of the Western world, progress, material riches and a higher standard of living.

Basically, native Cameroonians have remained loyal to their traditional beliefs and customs despite Western colonization, foreign religious influences, modern administrative structures, and increasing contact with the outside world. And their loyalty to tradition has tended to slow down the development of their society. This is why Oyono Mbia in his plays holds up to ridicule undesirable practices, abuses and injustices inherent in traditional society. While he does not want the Cameroonian people to abandon completely their traditional beliefs, traditions and customs which are a vital part of their cultural heritage, he does hope that they would temper their “loyalty” with reason and would get rid of abuses and injustices in their society which impede its social, economic and technological development. But then, the vital question: Is it possible to make room for the new while at the same time preserving the old?

With respect to the allusions and symbolic signifiers discussed in this section, as well as several others found in the plays studied herein, the author only makes passing references to them because he assumes that his primary audience, which is Cameroonian, is quite familiar with and capable of grasping the extra-textual reality evoked by such allusions and symbolic signifiers. In some cases he does not even provide minimal cushioning. Such is the case of “Nkôndôngô” and “Canon Bar” discussed above.

Similarly, consider the allusion “histoire verte” which is not cushioned in the following utterance by the character Bikokoé Mendegue:

Bikokoé Mengegue: (Missa Majunga lui a apporté une bouteille de bière) Je te le répète, moi, je suis un homme ! Je ne suis pas de ces villageois-là qui sont obligés de créer des cacaoyères, des caféières, ou des champs d'arachides parce qu'ils n'ont jamais mis les pieds à l'école, eux. Moi, je suis allé à l'école ! Oui ! J'ai même obtenu mon certificat de fin d'études primaires ! Si je voulais, je pourrais travailler dans n'importe quel ministère de Yaoundé. D'ailleurs, si je voulais cultiver la terre comme nous l'avait recommandé le Chef de Poste Agricole le jour où il parlait de je ne sais plus quelle histoire verte, je n'utiliserais pas vos méthodes ancestrales !...(LTSSE:39-40)

It is evident that it would be difficult for the non-Bulu/Cameroonian audience to understand what Bikokoé Mendegue means by « histoire verte » in his ironical and sarcastic remark, which is actually a sharp criticism on the government's agricultural policy. In effect, the former Cameroonian Head of State, Ahmadou Ahidjo, in a bid to prevent Cameroonians from depending solely on the country's oil wealth which is exhaustible, had caused his government to conceive and launch a very ambitious and costly agricultural programme named "La Révolution Verte" (i.e. the Green Revolution). This programme was meant to provide the rural farming population (which accounts for over 80% of the country's population) with incentives such as highly subsidized farming implements, provision of improved and high-yielding planting material, free training to farmers on modern farming techniques, free technical guidance to farmers by well trained agricultural advisers and extension workers, interest-free loans to farmers and even to civil servants who want to embark on large-scale farming, etc. This rather ambitious programme was marred by widespread corruption - the financial resources earmarked for it ended up in the pockets of civil servants and did not reach the farmers in the rural areas who were the intended primary beneficiaries. The ambitious Green Revolution programme thus failed and, indeed, is no longer talked about, despite the colossal sums of money pumped into it by the government at the time.

4.3.7. Repetition

In his plays, Oyono Mbia has also made use of repetitions in order to reflect the spirit and flavour of his native village ways of oratory. These repetitions create a rhetorical effect thereby further dramatizing the action of the plays through the emphatic expression or communication of the speaker's intention as illustrated in the following highlighted examples amongst the very many which abound in the three plays. A literal translation is provided for each example in square brackets:

- i) Abessôlô: (Aux autres) Mariage **impossible! Impossible !** Rendez-lui sa bière !
Parenté ! Parenté ! [(To the others) Marriage impossible ! Impossible !
Return his beer ! A relative! A relative!] (TPUM:33)

The intention expressed is that of emphatic refusal.

- ii) Ondua : **Sans aucun doute ! Sans aucun doute !** [Without any doubt! Without any doubt!] (TPUM:17)

The intention communicated is that of great hope or optimism.

- iii) Abessôlô: (Avec un sourire satisfait) **Tu ...tu** étudies toujours à Dibamba, n'est-ce pas ma petite ? [You ... you are still studying at Dibamba, aren't you my child?] (TPUM:18)

The speaker's intention is to convey doubt.

- iv) Abessôlô: (S'écroule sur le sol, loin de Ndi) Eé é é! **Je suis mort ! Je suis mort !**
[(Collapsing on the floor, away from Ndi) Eé é é! I am dead! I am dead!] (TPUM:74)

The intention communicated is that of total despair and helplessness.

- v) Sanga-Titi: N'avez-vous pas vu un grand vol d'oiseaux se diriger vers Sangmélina un jour? [Didn't you see a large flock of birds going towards Sangmelima one day?]

Tous : **Nous l'avons vu ! Nous l'avons vu !** Le Sorcier a raison ! [We saw the

birds! We saw the birds! The witch-doctor is right!] (TPUM:93)

The expression is that of great anxiety mixed with excitement.

vi) Cécilia: (Aux autres) Mais **elle s'est enfuie! Elle s'est enfuie** parce qu'elle n'était qu'une petite grenouille chétive et ... [(To the others) But she ran away ! She ran away because she was nothing but a little puny frog] (JNA:35)

The intention communicated is that of emphatic derision of a rival.

vii) Abessôlô: (Riant toujours) Mais il a passé **six, six** semaines à Akonolinga! Et le voilà qui ne peut plus fermer l'œil de la nuit depuis son retour ! [(Still laughing) But he spent six, six weeks at Akonolinga! And now he cannot sleep at night ever since he returned] (JNA:36)

The speaker's intention is to underline the duration of stay.

viii) Missa Majunga: [...] Il faut attendre les deux seuls trains de la journée et, le plus souvent, les voyageurs sont bien trop fatigués pour s'intéresser réellement à ce que nous leur proposons. Encore une fois, Monsieur le Chef de Gare, notre bonheur, notre prospérité ne dépendent que **de vous seul. De vous seul !** [One has to wait for the only two daily trains and, very often, the passengers are much too tired to even look at what we have to offer. I repeat, Mr Stationmaster, our happiness, our prosperity depend only on you. Only on you!] (LTSSE:30)

The intention communicated is that of strong supplication.

ix) Missa Majunga: Très bien! Une dernière chose maintenant : tu dois revenir **le plus vite possible. Le plus vite possible**, tu entends ? Si par hasard tu trouves le grand homme en train de manger, **tu vas alors te planter là à le regarder** comme si tu n'avais jamais vu de nourriture de ta vie ; **tu vas te planter là à le regarder**, hein ? [Very good ! Now one last thing. You must come back as soon as possible. As soon as possible, you hear? If you happen to find the great man eating, then you should stand there staring at him as if you had never seen food in your life; you should stand there staring at him, eh?] (LTSSE:35)

In the first instance of repetition the intention communicated is that of insistent instruction. In the second instance, the intention conveyed is that of strong admonition.

x) Missa Majunga: (Ravi, allant étreindre Bikokoé Mendegue) Ah Bikokoé Mendegue ! Tu es **un** vrai **sage** ! **Un sage** ! Tu as sauvé notre village ! [(Delighted, moving over to embrace Bikokoé Mendegue) Ah Bikokoé Mendegue! You are a real wise man! A wise man! You saved our village!] (LTSSE:39)

The expression here is that of fervent compliment.

It is worth noting that in the above examples as well as in many others in the plays, in virtually all the instances of repetition as it is characteristic of native Bulu oratory, the second segment of the repetition comes in immediate and quick succession to the first segment and is juxtaposed to it.

4.3.8. Forms of address

A strong coloration of the playwright's native Bulu society is equally conferred on the plays by his introduction into the plays of forms of address typical of his society. In the author's society, and indeed in most Cameroonian traditional societies, the words used to address people are closely related to the life in those traditional societies. In these traditional societies, it is considered polite and respectful to address one's elders, superiors or people of importance by their titles, for example, Grandpa Abessôlô, Grandma Bella, Father Majunga, Uncle Mezoé, Aunt Cécilia, Chief Mbarga, Teacher Oyono, Witch-doctor Sanga-Titi, etc. These honorifics could be very troublesome for the non-Bulu/Cameroonian person, particularly a European one. For instance, Witch-doctor Sanga-Titi or Teacher Oyono sounds awkward in English. Furthermore, the notion of the extended family in certain African societies (as opposed to the nucleic family characteristic of the West) is stretched even further in the society depicted in the plays, whereby the entire village is considered as one big family, such that a woman old enough to be one's mother is addressed as mother or conversely, a girl young enough to be a woman's daughter is addressed as daughter by the woman.

Consequently, Grandma Bella may well be a neighbour of the speaker and Father Majunga is likely not to be a family member at all as in the following exchange between Missa Majunga and Owoundi in *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence*:

- i) Missa Majunga: (Ahuri) Quoi? Il t'a dit d'attraper une chèvre? [(Astounded)
What? He said you should catch a goat?]
Owoundi : Oui Tita Majunga ! Une chèvre que le grand homme doit emmener avec
lui à Yaoundé ! L'oncle Atangana m'a dit d'aider les autres enfants à
l'attraper. [Yes, Tita Majunga! A goat for the great man to take with
him to Yaounde! Uncle Atangana said I should help the other children
to catch it.] (LTSSE:41).

The word « Tita » means « Father ». Owoundi thus addresses Missa Majunga as “Father” whereas the latter is no blood relation of his at all.

However, in another exchange, this time in *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* between Ada and Meka, the relationship between the characters is different from the example just cited:

- ii) Ada: (A un petit rire sans joie) En paix avec lui? Hum ! ...Pas du tout, Tita Meka !
Mon mari ne cesse de me battre ces jours-ci ! [(Putting on an unhappy
smile) Living in peace with him ? Hum! ... Not at all, Tita Meka! My
husband keeps beating me these days!]
Meka : (Ahuri, s'arrête de nettoyer sa pipe) De te battre ? Le grand fonctionnaire te
bat ? Pas possible ! [(Incredulously, stops cleaning his pipe) Beating you?
The great civil servant beats you? That is not possible!]
Ada : Il me bat, Tita Meka ! [He beats me Tita Meka!] (JNA:23)

In this second example, Ada addresses Meka as “Tita” who is actually her older family relation, though not her biological father.

The other forms of address used in the three plays examined include “Na”, “Tit”, and “Ah” as illustrated in the following examples:

- i) Ada: Tiens, Mezoé! [Take, Mezoé]
Mezoé: (Prenant les deux assiettes) Merci, Ada! ... Hmm ! l'odeur de la cuisine de
Na'Cécilia ! [(Taking the two plates) Thank you Ada ! ...The good
smell of Na'Cécilia's food!] (JNA:19)

- i) Bella : (A Juliette) Qu'est-ce qu'elle t'a envoyé ? De la viande d'antilope ?
 [(To Juliette) What did she send to you? Antelope meat?]
 Juliette : (Se dirigeant vers les étagères) Je crois bien que oui, Na'Bella ! On mangera cela après avoir fini de préparer le repas. [(Moving towards the shelves) I think so, Na'Bella ! We will eat it when we finish cooking.] (TPUM:61)

The form of address “Na” refers to “Mother” or “Grandmother” as illustrated in the above examples. In the first example, Ada and Mezoé are Na'Cécilia's children, while in the second example Juliette is Na'Bella's granddaughter.

Similarly, “Tit” refers to “Father” or “Grandfather” as illustrated by examples (iii) and (iv) below respectively:

- iii) Atangana: Ah Tit' Abessôlô! Tu ne sais donc pas qu'il se passe des choses ici? [Ah Tit' Abessôlô ! Don't you know lots of things are going on here ?]
 Abessôlô : (Indifférent, allant à sa chaise-longue) Quelles choses ?
 [(Unconcernedly, going to his deckchair) What things?] (TPUM:47)
- iv) Abessôlô : (Précipitamment) Ah Ada. Où sont les sept ... euh ... les fourchettes de cette maison ? Va me les chercher pour ... [(Hastily) Ah Ada. Where are the seven ... er ... the forks of this house? Go and bring them for me to ...]
 Mezoé : (Ada qui se dirigeait vers la cuisine) Ce n'est pas la peine, Ada ! Nous sommes en brousse, Tit' Abessôlô ! Je vais me débrouiller avec mes mains. [(To Ada who is going towards the kitchen) Never mind Ada! We are in the bush Tit' Abessôlô! I will manage with my hands] (JNA:19-20)

In (iii), Abessôlô is Atangana's father, and in (iv), he is Mezoé's grandfather.

Examples (v) and (vi) below concern the form of address “Ah” which precedes the name of the addressee and is used for any person as a mark of respect and politeness.

- v) Le Chef de Gare: Merci ... Merci, ah Folinika ! ça suffit comme cela pour le moment. Va me garder le reste au frigidaire. Je dois rentrer à la gare dans un moment. [Thank you ... thank you Folinika! That's enough for the moment. Go and preserve the rest for me in the fridge. I must go back to the station in a moment] (LTSSE:25).

Le Chef de Gare is just a regular customer at Folinika's bar.

- vi) Ondua: Ah Oyôn! Ne dis rien à ta soeur à propos du fonctionnaire! Ton père lui-même s'en char ... [Ah Oyôn ! Don't tell your sister anything about the civil servant! Your father himself will ...] (TPUM:18).

In this turn, Oyôn is a young family relation of Ondua. It is also worth noting here that Oyôn is a pet name of Oyono. The playwright cushions this and there is therefore no risk of the readers/audience assigning the names Oyono and Oyôn to different characters. In effect, the stage direction which immediately follows the utterance by Ondua clarifies the reader as to the identity of the character referred to. Also, the audience watching the play on stage and who has no access to the stage directions, will nonetheless see physically on stage that the person referred to as Oyôn by Ondua is the same one also referred to at some other instance of the play as Oyono.

In the plays, the form of address "Ah" which precedes the name of the addressee, is also often accompanied by an exclamation mark placed after the name as can be seen in the above examples. The non-Bulu/Cameroonian readers/audience could therefore easily take the word "Ah" as marking an exclamation considering that the same word "Ah" is equally used in the plays in other contexts to mark an exclamation and not a form of address as in the following examples:

- i) Mbia: (Flatté) Oui, de grandes médailles ! Mais pour que vous me connaissiez mieux, nous allons boire quelque chose ensemble. [(Flattered) Yes, great medals ! However, in order to enable you to know me better, we will take a couple of drinks together.]
Tous : (Ravis : le moment tant attendu s'annonce enfin) Ah ... quel grand fonctionnaire ! [(Delightedly: this is the moment they had been waiting for) Ah ... What a great civil servant!] (TPUM:30).
- ii) Tous : (Lui venant en aide) Abessôlô ! [(Coming to his aid) Abessôlô !]
Mbia : Ah !...Abessôlô ! Est-ce que je me trompe ? [Ah! ... Abessôlô!
Am I mistaken?] (TPUM:32).

Readers/audiences not familiar with the Bulu culture could also mistakenly consider the forms of address “Tita”, “Tit” and “Na” as part and parcel of the indigenous names they precede, such as “Tita Meka”, “Tit’ Abessôlô” and “Na’ Bella”, respectively.

All the various forms of address in the plays serve to demonstrate the very natural tendency in the traditional society to show respect through the use of such polite terms. The author does not provide any form of cushioning at all for these forms of address because he considers his primary Bulu/Cameroonian readers/audience to be quite familiar with them.

4.3.9. Stylistic calques

In his source texts, Oyono Mbia expresses Bulu cultural and linguistic phenomena through a French syntactic mould, thereby giving the French language in the plays a peculiar and exquisite Bulu coloration and flavour. In other words, he uses French such that it reflects not the French culture but his Bulu culture by trying as far as possible to utilize traditional Bulu thought processes and turns of phrase, as in the following exchange between Juliette and Oko:

Juliette: Ce n’est pas tout: le fonctionnaire a versé deux cent mille francs à ma famille cet après-midi ! [That’s not all: the civil servant paid two hundred thousand francs to my family this afternoon!]

Oko : (épouvanté) Deux cent mille ...**quoi ?** [(Appalled) Two hundred thousand ... what?] (TPUM:52)

Oko’s reaction to Juliette’s revelation looks like a question (as highlighted in bold) but it is in fact a statement expressing his surprise and shock at the amount of money paid as Juliette’s dowry. Other examples of stylistic calques in the source texts which we have equally highlighted in bold include the following:

i) Sanga-Titi: Tu est vraiment **né avec de la sagesse dans le ventre** ! [You were really born with wisdom in your stomach] (TPUM:90)

This is simply a way of telling somebody that s/he is the wisest person in the world. The Witch-doctor Sanga-Titi thus flatters the Chief Mbarga by telling him he is the wisest person in the world.

- ii) Sanga-Titi: (D'une voix inspirée) C'est moi Sanga-Titi, le grand Sorcier qui avait hérité des secrets du passé ! Ah Mbarga, on te dit sage, mais moi je t'appelle fou, car **tu n'as pas plus de deux yeux**. Voici la preuve de ce que j'avance : où est maintenant ton trisaïeul ? [(In an inspired voice) I am Sanga-Titi, the great witch-doctor who inherited the secrets of the past! Ah Mbarga, people consider you a wise man, but I call you a fool because you have got no more than two eyes! Here is proof of what I say: where is your great-great-grandfather now?] (TPUM:88)

The highlighted expression means to be naïve and stupid. The Witch-doctor, Sanga-Titi, reproaches the Chief Mbarga by telling him that he is naïve and stupid.

- iii) Abessôlô: (de l'air du sage qui voit se réaliser ses prophésies) Ha ha ! Tu te fâches encore Ondua ? N'est-ce pas là ce que je vous dis toujours ? Les hommes de votre génération se conduisent tous comme des insensés ! (Fièrement) De mon temps, **quand j'étais encore Abessôlô** et ... (Indiquant Bella qui sort de la cuisine) et **que ma femme Bella était encore femme**, vous croyez que j'aurais toléré des histoires pareilles ? [...] [(With the air of a wise man who sees his prophecy being realised) Ha ha! So you are getting angry Ondua? Isn't this what I have always told you? Men of your generation all behave like foolish people! (Proudly) In my day, when I was still Abessôlô and ... (Pointing at Bella who is coming from the kitchen) and my wife Bella was still a woman, do you think I would have tolerated such nonsense?] (TPUM:14)

The highlighted expressions simply refer to when Abessôlô and his wife Bella were in the prime of their youth. Through these calqued local expressions, Abessôlô thus expresses nostalgia at the good old days and his disappointment with the modern times.

- iv) Nkatefoe: (Mettant ses lunettes rondes) Voilà bien **trois lunes** que Matalina et son mari sont revenus de France ! [(Putting on his glasses) It is now three full moons since Matalina and her husband returned from France!]

Abessôlô: **Trois lunes tout entières** ! Et Matalina n’a jamais songé à dire à son mari : « allons saluer mes pères et mes mères à Mvoutessi, le petit village où je suis née » [Three full moons ! And Matalina has never said to her husband: “Let’s go and greet my fathers and mothers in Mvoutessi, the little village where I was born”] (JNA:16)

The highlighted expressions « trois lunes » and « trois lunes tout entières » evoke the past in that “time” is presented in the way the “months” were calculated by the ancestors of the villagers, a way still very much in use today in traditional Cameroonian society. In this traditional system, the natives are not interested in knowing whether there are 28, 29, 30, or 31 days in a month as the case may be. Rather, what is of importance is the face (shape) of the moon (i.e. quarter, half or full moon). Thus, according to the traditional system, a month stretches from one full moon to the next one.

v) Nkatefoe: (Tandis que le cyclomotoriste ralentit) Ces jeunes gens et leurs engins! Ils **vont plus vite qu’une pierre lancée** ! [(As the motorcyclist slows down) These young people and their machines! They go faster than you would throw a pebble!] (JNA:16)

The highlighted phrase means as fast as light. It expresses the local and unsophisticated way of perceiving and describing extreme speed.

vi) Nkatefoe: **Nos oreilles se refroidissent**, ah Mezoé ! [Our ears are getting cold, ah Mezoé!] (JNA:18)

This is the traditional way of expressing impatience in the society depicted in the plays. Nkatefoe means that they are waiting impatiently to hear Mezoé’s story.

vii) Nkatefoe: **Nos oreilles sont avec toi**, mon fils! [Our ears are with you, my son !]
 Mezoé : (Posant les deux assiettes par terre devant lui) Comme je le disais donc, on ne mange pas avec les mains chez Matalina à Yaoundé [(Putting the two plates on the floor in front of him) As I was saying, you don’t eat with your hands in Matalina’s house in Yaounde]

(JNA:19).

The expression highlighted is the local way of saying “We are all ears”.

viii) Folinika: Laisse-moi tranquille, ah Bilomba! Tais-toi et bois ta bière ! Tu es venu ici pour te moquer de ta vieille mère ? Qui t’a dit de venir me dire ce que les hommes me disaient **quand je m’appelais encore Folinika** ? Tais-toi et bois ta bière ! [Leave me alone, ah Bilomba ! Shup up and drink your beer! Did you come here to make fun of your old mother? Who told you to come here and say the things which men used to say to me when I was still Folinika? Shut up and drink your beer!] (LTSSE:22).

The highlighted expression is a calque of the local way of saying “when I was in the prime of my youth” or “when I was still young and pretty”. Folinika is expressing nostalgia at her good old days.

ix) Missa Majunga: (Nostalgique) Hi i i ! Tout comme à **l’époque où la terre était encore terre** ! Les grands hommes d’alors ne buvaient que du rhum, du cognac, du whisky, du champagne et d’autres boissons importées. On ne connaissait pas encore cette vogue de vin de palme et de boissons distillées localement. Une honte ! [...] [(With nostalgia) Hi i i ! Just the way it used to be when this land was still a land! The great men of the time only drank rum, brandy, whisky, champagne and other imported drinks. Nobody knew palm wine or any of these locally distilled spirit drinks which have become popular today. What a shame!] (LTSSE:24)

The expression highlighted is also a calque of the traditional way of saying « In the good old days ». Missa Majunga expresses nostalgia at the good old days and disappointment at the present situation.

The playwright does not provide any cushioning for these calqued expressions since to a large extent they are transparent or comprehensible in the language of the source text (i.e. French).

From the above examination of the nine different ways in which the playwright introduces cultural elements in his plays, it is evident that the culture-specific elements so introduced actually carry his message or contribute in one way or another in dramatizing the action of the plays.

Having thus identified, described and analyzed the culture-specific aspects of Oyono Mbia's plays which confer a typical Bulu coloration to his plays, thereby making the portrait of his native Bulu society realistic and convincing, and having shown how the author handled them in the first place in the source texts, it is now necessary to examine how he, as translator, has mapped these aspects on to the target texts in the translation process.

4.4. Macro- and micro-textual comparison of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts

4.4.1. Macro-textual comparison

First, with respect to the titles of the plays, *Trois Prétendants ... Un Mari* has been translated as *Three Suitors: One Husband*, *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* as *Until Further Notice*, and *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence* as *His Excellency's Special Train*. The titles of the target texts thus reveal a close rendering of the titles of the source texts.

Concerning the paratext, i.e. the apparatus that surrounds and in some cases mingles with the text, it is observed, first with regard to *Trois Prétendants ... Un Mari* and its translation *Three Suitors: One Husband* that there is dissimilarity between the source and target text. While the source text has a very lengthy and elaborate five-page preface in which the author gives the genesis of the play, outlines his objectives in writing the play, states clearly what he expects from stage directors and actors, and provides other practical information with respect to the setting and staging of the play, the target text, in place of a preface, has what the author refers to as "Author's Notes". These notes consist of a half-page presentation in three paragraphs. The first paragraph

is a sort of stage direction which describes the setting of the play, the second paragraph is a synopsis of the play in three sentences and the third paragraph, an indication of the central problem addressed in the play.

Furthermore, whereas the source text provides at the end of the play a glossary which defines and explains some of the local words and expressions, an approximate translation into French and an analysis of the songs in the local language, and a “Dossier” which highlights certain useful facts and indicators for a better comprehension of the play, its context and its characters, the target text does not include any of the above corresponding paratexts. However, as concerns the structure of the play, the target text is presented in five acts with no subdivisions into scenes just like the source text.

With respect to the second play, *Jusqu’à Nouvel Avis*, dissimilarity is equally observed between the source and the target texts with regard to the paratext. While the source text has a brief preface which outlines the genesis of the play and provides an interpretative insight into the title of the play, the target text does not have any preface. As concerns its structure, it is, however, equally presented in one long sequence like the source text.

Unlike the first two plays, the third play, *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence* and its target text, reveal much similarity with respect to their paratexts. While it is not what could be referred to as a very close translation of the preface of the source text, the preface of the target text, like that of the source text, gives the genesis of the play and dwells lengthily on the author’s understanding of drama and its performance dimension as well as advice to those who might only be interested in reading the play instead of watching it performed on stage. Concerning its structure, it is equally presented in two acts like the source text.

It is also worth noting that besides various articles on Oyono Mbia and his works, all the three plays and their translations have been the subject of various unilingual

literary analyses, commentaries, criticisms and scholarly dissertations, indicated in the bibliography to this study. However, to date there are no translation paratexts which examine or discuss the target texts from a translation perspective.

4.4.2. Micro-textual comparison

In this section we focus mainly on the mapping on to the target texts of the culture-specific aspects of the plays which we have retained as the basis for source and target text comparison and which, as earlier pointed out, actually contribute in conveying Oyono Mbia's message or in dramatizing the action of the plays while at the same time conferring on the plays a realistic and convincing portrait of the Bulu society depicted. We shall therefore examine in turn how the culture-specific aspects described above (cf. section 4.2) have been mapped on to the target texts.

First, with respect to the translation of the ideophones, it is observed that Oyono Mbia has adapted them to the graphology of the English language. In so doing, and in his effort to simulate the Bulu usage, he has come up with sounds whose phonetic structures are very untypical of Standard English as illustrated in the highlighted sounds in the contrastive source text (ST)-target text (TT) examples below:

- i) ST: Tous: (Ahuris) **Eé é é kié!** Dix mille francs! (LTSSE:16)
 TT : All : (Amazed) **A a a a ke aah!** Ten thousand francs! (HEST:16)

- ii) ST: Mbia: (Même jeu) Tu mettras que les gens de ce village sont insolents à l'égard des grands fonctionnaires ... (S'indiquant, majestueux) Comme moi !
 Tous : **Eé é é é kié é !** (TPUM:78)
 TT: Mbia : (Same as above) Write that the people of this village have no respect for important civil servants like ... (Pointing at himself) ...Like me!
 All: **Eeeaa keeah!** (TSOH:56)

- iii) ST: Mbia: (Même jeu) Ajoute que les routes menant à Mvoutessi sont mal entretenues, et que les maisons n'ont pas été blanchies à la chaux à l'occasion de l'honneur de ma visite !
 Tous : **Yé é é é é !** (TPUM:78)
 TT: Mbia : (Same as above) Write also that the roads leading to Mvoutessi are

poorly kept, and that the houses haven't been whitewashed in expectation of the honour of my visit ...
 All: **Yeeeah!** (TSOH:57)

iv) ST: Mbia: (Indiquant ses yeux) J'en ai vu ... vu ... et non pas (Indiquant sa bouche) bu ... bu ... (Pointant un doigt accusateur sur Mbarga)...chez le Chef Mbarga !

Mbarga : (Epouvanté) **Eé é é é ! Tita !** (TPUM: 79)

TT : Mbia : (Indicating his eyes) 'Saw' ... but not ... (Indicating his mouth)... 'Drank', some of it, ... (Now accusingly pointing at Mbarga)... in the Headman Mbarga's house!

Mbarga: (Appalled) **Yeeeah!** ... Tita! (TSOH: 57)

v) ST: Mezoé: (Cherchant des mots moins compliqués) ... Il respirerait de l'air européen sortant d'une ... euh ... d'une espèce de boîte métallique...

Tous : (Incrédules) **Eé é é kié !** (JNA :31)

TT : Mezoé : (Trying to find the right words to use) ... His air would be coming out of a ... a sort of box ...

All: (Almost incredulously) **A a a aah kee ea ah!** (UFN:101)

As can be noticed in the above examples, the sounds **A a a a ke aah**, **Eeeaa keeah**, **Yeeeah**, and **A a a aah kee ea ah** are rather untypical of standard English. In effect, English nationals in service at the British Council office in Cameroon who willingly agreed to read portions of the English versions of the plays aloud to the author found enormous difficulties in articulating these sounds which they clearly qualified as strange and not English, and wondered to what language they belonged. Also, Theatre Arts students in the English Department of the University of Buea who were rehearsing to stage *Three Suitors: One Husband* encountered the same problems in articulating the sounds during rehearsal sessions and subsequently opted to revert to the original Bulu sounds which in any case can be fully identified by the Cameroonian Anglophone audience as belonging to the Bulu language and who can readily perceive the emotions they convey. So what can be said about these adapted sounds is that they are neither English nor Bulu.

It is also observed that the adapted sounds in the target texts do not correspond in intensity to those of the source text. For instance, in (i) above, the sound in the target

text is longer than that in the source text for the same emotion conveyed (i.e. awe and pleasant surprise).

Furthermore, as can be observed in examples (iii) and (iv) above, the sounds, **Yé é é é** and **Eé é é é** have been rendered respectively in the same way in the target text as **Yeeeah** for different intensities of the same emotion (i.e. fright and extreme fright).

In the English adaptations of the source text sounds it can equally be remarked that the sustained high pitch and strident note of the sounds in the source texts as marked by the French “accent aigu (é)” have been lost in the English adaptation.

However, in a few other instances Oyono Mbia has carried over to the target texts the sounds as they appear in the source texts, such as in the following examples:

i) ST: Mbarga: N’est-ce pas que les blancs sont venus nous gâter le pays ?

Tous : **Ah ka ka ka !** (TPUM:80)

TT: Mbarga: Didn’t the white men only come to spoil our land?

All: (Disgustedly) **Ah ka ka ka!** (TSOH:58)

- The emotion conveyed here is that of disgust, disapproval and discouragement.

ii) ST: Bikokoé Mendegue: ... Après ce discours, elle a conduit elle-même Paulette dans la chambre qui avait été réservée pour Monsieur Son Excellence.

Tous : (Approbateurs) **Ya a a ah !** Quoi d’autre ! .. (LTSSE:38)

TT : Bikokoé Mendegue : ... After that speech, she herself led Paulette into the bedroom that had especially been prepared for Mr. His Excellency.

All: (Approvingly) **Ya a a ah!** What else! (HEST:38)

- The emotion conveyed is that of approval and satisfaction.

iii) ST: Mezang: Elle cherche encore du travail, ah Bilomba ! Si je te disais qu’elle ne m’a encore envoyé ni un kilo de bœuf, ni même un vieux pantalon pour ...

Bikokoé Mendegue: (L'interrompt, impatienté) **Ah ka !** Je te l'ai toujours dit et redit, ah Mezang ! Ma nièce ne trouvera jamais du travail à Yaoundé ! Elle n'a pas de visage ! (LTSSE:18-19).

TT: Mezang: She's still looking for a job, ah Bilomba ! Would you believe it if I told you she hasn't as yet sent me one kilogramme of beef or rice, or even one pair of trousers to ...

Bikokoé Mendegue: (Abruptly) **Ah ka!** I keep telling you, ah Mezang! My niece will never find herself a good job in Yaounde! She's got no face! (HEST:18-19).

- The emotion expressed is that of impatience.

iv) ST: Folinika: Eé é é kié! Quand vas-tu donc cesser de me faire courir à droite et à gauche ? ... Je t'ai déjà trouvé deux autres femmes ! ... Pourquoi tu ne les fais pas travailler elles aussi, au lieu de passer ton temps à tourmenter une pauvre vieille ...

Bilomba : (Ton de plaisanterie) **Ah ka**, Folinika ! Qui t'a dit que tu étais une vieille femme. Y a-t-il une femme plus jeune et plus belle que toi dans le monde entier ? (LTSSE:22)

TT: Folinika : A a a a keeah ! When will you stop ordering me about? ... I got you two other wives! ... Why don't you get them to work for a change, instead of tormenting a poor old ...

Bilomba: (Playfully) **Ah ka** Folinika! Who said you're an old woman? Is there any younger and more beautiful woman than you in the world? (HEST:22)

- The emotion expressed is that of a jest or pleasantry.

It is also worth noting here that just as in the case of the sound **Eé é é kié** in the previous examples, the sound **Ah ka** in (iii) and (iv) of the examples above, conveys both impatience and a joke depending on the context of usage.

v) ST: Ondua: "Aya ya Mone Minga a a a !

O lig Ondua a nya' a vé é é!

Aya ya Mone Minga a a a ..." (etc.)

(Les autres reprennent en chœur comme précédemment, tandis que Oyônô et Mezoé jouent le rythme de l' « Anyeng »...)

Mbarga: **Wula wula wula wula a a a !**

Tous: **A a a a ah!** (TPUM:35)

TT: Ondua: (Singing and dancing as above; Mezoé joins Oyônô at the drums, and they play the rhythm of the dance “Anyeng”):

Aya ya Mone Minga a a a!

O lig Ondua a nya’ a vé é é!

Aya ya Mone Minga a a a ... (etc.)

Mbarga: **Wula wula wula wula a a a!**

All: **A a a a ah!** (TSOH:25)

- The traditional Bulu sound **Wula wula wula wula a a a** is an emphatic and injunctive call for total silence while the sound **A a a a ah** marks complete assent to the call for total silence.

Concerning the translation of distorted words and names, it is observed first with respect to the distorted names, that Oyono Mbia has preserved all of them in his target texts. In other words, the distorted names, Matalina, Makrita, Folinika, Sinabé, Majunga, etc., have all been carried over unaltered into the target texts. And just like in the source texts, Oyono Mbia does not provide any cushioning or supplementary explanatory information that would enable the non-Bulu wider readers/audience to identify them as distortions and to try to unearth the message embedded in them. However, with regard to the translation of the distorted words, in some instances Oyono Mbia has preserved them unaltered in the target text such as the distorted word “Missa” highlighted in the following example:

ST: Bikokoé Mendegue: Mon ami vient de la brousse, ah **Missa** Majunga! Il ne peut même pas distinguer un train de marchandises d’un ...
(LTSSE:21)

TT: Bikokoe Mendegue : My friend comes from the bush, ah **Missa** Majunga ! He can’t even tell a goods train from a ... (HEST:21)

In other instances, he has to convey the same socio-linguistic information about the speakers (who are illiterates and are unable to pronounce these foreign words properly) as did the distorted words in the original by rendering them with equivalent distortions in Cameroonian Pidgin English as illustrated by the distorted words “Sieur” and “Messié” highlighted in the following examples:

- i) ST: Mbia: (Ennuyé) ça va, ça va! On va maintenant boire quelque chose ...
Engulu !
Engulu : (Se précipitant) ... **Sieur ?** (TPUM:31)
TT : Mbia : (Positively annoyed now) All right then! Now let's have something to drink! Engulu!
Engulu: (Rushing forward) **Sah?** (TSOH:22)
- ii) ST: Vendeurs et Vendeuses: Bananes, plantains, **Messié !** ... Tomates d'Obala, **Messié!** ... Oranges, **Messié!** ... Ananas, **Messié!** ... (LTSSE :59)
TT : Food Sellers : Bananas, **Massa !** ... Plantains, **Massa !** ... Tomatoes from Obala, **Massa !** ... Oranges, **Massa !** ... Pineapples, **Massa !** (HEST:57)

As concerns the translation of loan words from his native Bulu language, it is observed that in the translated versions of his plays, Oyono Mbia has equally preserved the untranslated Bulu words and, just as in the source texts, has overtly or covertly cushioned them with explanatory contexts as testified by the following highlighted examples amongst many others:

- i) ST: Bella: (Se lève avec autant de vivacité que l'âge lui en permet) Elle a réussi !
Ma petite-fille a encore réussi à son examen ! Ah Nane Ngôk ! (Pousse le cri de joie traditionnel des femmes, l' « **oyenga** ») :
Ou-ou-ou-ou-ou ... ! (TPUM :18)
TT: Bella : (Jumping up as excitedly as she can) She passed again ! My granddaughter passed again! Ah Nane Ngôk! (She utters the women's traditional cry of joy, the "**oyenga**"): Ou-ou-ou ... (TSOH:13)
- ii) ST: Mezoé: Est-ce que nous allons boire comme des muets ? (Va mettre ses bouteilles en lieu sûr) Ah Oyôn ! Va chercher les tam-tams de ton père ! (Oyôn obéit, et Mezoé se met à chanter en claquant des mains ... Les autres villageois reprennent en chœur, Mezoé lui-même chantant la ligne mélodique. Oyôn revient avec les tam-tams. Ondua et lui attaquant le rythme du « **Nyeng** » et Mezoé danse) (TPUM:34)
TT : Mezoé : Are we going to drink like dumb people ? (He puts his own bottles in a safe corner) Ah Oyôn! Go and get your father's drums! (Oyôn goes to get the drums while Mezoé begins singing ... The others join in the chorus, while Mezoé himself sings the solo part. Oyôn comes back with the drums. He and Ondua begin playing the rhythm for the dance "**Nyeng**", and Mezoé dances for some time) (TSOH:24-25)

- iii) ST: (Au lever du rideau, Sanga-Titi chante une mélodie en s'accompagnant de sa harpe « **Mvet** ») (TPUM :83)
 TT : (...When the curtain rises, the Witch-doctor begins by playing a theme on his harp (“**Mvet**”), then he sings the solo part of the melody) (TSOH:59)
- iv) ST: (Tous se regardent, très impressionnés. Missa Majunga met son électrophone en marche : c'est un air de Messi Martin. La femme se lève en titubant et va danser devant le public, sous les yeux amusés des consommateurs qui claquent des mains en cadence ... C'est un air de « **Bikud-Si** ». A la fin du morceau ...) (LTSSE :18)
 TT: (All are deeply impressed, and silently look at one another. Missa Mjunga switches on his record player, and plays a record by Messi Martin. The woman takes a few unsteady steps towards the audience and begins dancing “**Bikud-Si**” much to the amusement of the others ...) (HEST:18)
- v) ST: (La scène est à Mvoutessi, petit village situé au sud du Cameroun Oriental, chez Abessôlô. Les acteurs sont installés sous un petit hangar recouvert de palmes, un « **elum** » érigé temporairement devant la maison principale comme il est d'usage chez les Bulu et les Beti lorsqu'on attend de nombreux visiteurs ...) (JNA :11)
 TT: (We are in Mvoutessi, a little village in the southern part of East Cameroon. This is Abessôlô's home, and the actors will mainly be sitting inside a temporary palm-tree hall “**elum**” which had been erected in front of the main house, as is customary in the Bulu region when important visitors are expected ...) (UFN:88).

It is also worth noting that the songs in the Bulu language in the source text have equally been carried over untranslated into the target text (cf. TPUM:34-35 and TSOH:24-25) but unlike in the source text where Oyono Mbia elucidates them by providing their translation into French in a glossary at the end of the play, he does not provide a glossary with their translation into English in the target text.

With respect to the way Oyono Mbia has handled the proverbs and sayings of the source texts in the target texts, it was observed above (cf. 4.3.4) that the proverbs and sayings in the source texts were in effect literal translations into French from the Bulu language. This gave rise to certain fixed-phrases in his source text language which, it is observed, he equally rendered literally in the target texts as illustrated by the instances highlighted in the following examples:

i) ST: Mbarga: Qu'est-ce que nos ancêtres disaient à propos du caméléon et du margouillat ?

Abessôlô : « **Quand le caméléon meurt, le margouillat hérite de son sac de kolas** » (TPUM :80)

TT : Mbarga : What did our ancestors use to say about the chameleon and the grey lizard?

Abessôlô: “**When the chameleon dies, the grey lizard should inherit his sack of cola nuts ...**” (TSOH:58)

ii) ST: Sanga-Titi: (S'asseyant, imperturbable) Tu sais comme nos ancêtres disaient :
«**Les fantômes ne parlent jamais avant que la pluie ne soit tombée** » (TPUM :84)

TT : Sanga-Titi : (Quietly sitting down) You know what our ancestors used to say: “**Dead men never speak unless it has rained ...**” (TSOH:60)

iii) ST: Sanga-Titi: Je pourrais facilement vous dire l'auteur de ce vol. Seulement ... (On le regarde d'un air interrogateur, et il ajoute) : Euh ... vous savez bien que **quand la rivière est à sec, l'eau ne coule plus !** (TPUM:86)

TT : Sanga-Titi : I could easily tell you who stole that money. But ... (As they look at him questioningly): Well ... you know, **when a river has died up, the water no longer runs!** (TSOH:60)

iv) ST: Abessôlô: Elles ne m'entendront pas! Quand Cécilia et les autres femmes de ce village se mettent à rire, c'est comme si personne n'avait versé de dot à leurs parents pour les épouser ! Hé toi, Tita-Mongô ! Cours demander à la grand'mère **s'il faut que nous mangions comme des oiseaux !** (TPUM:13)

TT : Abessôlô : They won't ! Cecilia and the women of this village always laugh like unmarried women! You Titi-Mongô! Run and ask your grandmother **whether we should be eating like birds!** (UFN:89)

v) ST: Abessôlô: (Avec un petit rire satisfait) Est-ce que je sais, mon fils! Nous n'avons encore rien vu ! **Ce n'est pas parce que tu entends le bruit que l'éléphant fait dans la forêt voisine que tu peux prétendre avoir vu l'éléphant lui-même.** (JNA:46-47)

TT : Abessôlô : (With a self-satisfied sneer) How do I know, my son ? We'll have to wait and see. **Just because you hear the noise an elephant is making in the forest doesn't mean you've seen the elephant itself!** (UFN:112)

In his target texts, Oyono Mbia has handled the swear words in the same way he has handled the Bulu loan words. In other words, he has preserved all of them by carrying them over untranslated to the target texts, probably motivated by the same reason as indicated above that led him to introduce them in his source texts (cf. 4.3.5). He thus translated the highlighted swearwords below as follows:

i) ST: Bella: (Qui vient de s'installer à côté de Matalina) Qu'est-ce qu'il y a encore dans ce monde d'aujourd'hui, mon pauvre mari ? Je vois les femmes manger même des vipères, des sangliers, des ... (Claquant des mains scandalisée) Eé é kié **Oyônô Eto Mekong ya Ngozip** é é é ! (TPUM:15)

TT: Bella: (Now sitting near Matalina) What's left in this world of today, my poor husband? I see women eating even vipers, wild boars, and ... (Clapping her hands in disgust): Aa keeaah, **Oyônô Eto Mekong ya Ngozip** aah! (TSOH:10)

ii) ST: Bella: (Fièremment) Un vrai blanc! Ma petite fille Juliette va épouser un vrai blanc ! ...**Ah Nane Ngôk** ! (TPUM:16)

TT: Bella : (Proudly) A real white man ! My granddaughter's going to marry a real white man! ... **Ah Nane Ngôk**! (TSOH:11)

iii) ST: Oko: (Tranquillement) Pour qu'elle m'épouse, il faut qu'elle suive sa volonté à elle.

Abessôlô: (Ecoeuré, aux autres) Qu'elle suive sa volonté à elle? Une femme? **Zua Meka**! (TPUM:112)

TT: Oko: (Quietly) If she's to marry me, she must do as she wants!

Abessôlô: (Disgustedly, staring at the others) Do as she wants? A woman? **Zua Meka**! (TSOH:80)

iv) ST: Atangana: Hi yé é é ... **ah Zua Meka**! Quelle journée! TPUM:81)

TT: Atangana: Hee yeeaah! **Ah Zua Meka**! What a day! (TSOH:59)

It should be noted here that while Oyono Mbia equally provides cushioning within the text to give an idea about the emotions experienced by the characters and conveyed through these swearwords just like he does in the source text, he does not, however, provide supplementary information about their significance in a glossary as he does in the source text.

Concerning the treatment of allusions and symbolic signifiers in his target texts, it is observed that Oyono Mbida has carried over and preserved in the target texts all the allusions and symbolic signifiers discussed in detail above (cf. section 4.3.6). In the target texts he equally makes only passing references to them without bothering to gloss, explain or explicate them to the target readers/audience probably because he assumes, like in the case of his primary readers/audience, that the English-speaking target readers/audience which is also Cameroonian are quite familiar with and capable of perceiving the message underlying the extra-textual reality evoked by the allusions and symbolic signifiers. Considering that these allusions and symbolic signifiers are many and pervade the plays, we will limit ourselves only to the following three examples to illustrate how the translator equally makes only passing reference to them in the target texts:

i) ST: (Tous se regardent, très impressionnés. Missa Majunga met son électrophone en marche: c'est un air de Messi Martin. La femme se lève en titubant et va danser devant le public, sous les yeux amusés des cosommateurs qui claquent des mains en cadence. Peu après Bilomba lui aussi se lève et vient se contorsionner devant sa compagne. C'est un air de "**Bikud-Si**" ...) (LTSSE:18)

TT: (All are deeply impressed, and silently look at one another. Missa Majunga switches on his record player, and plays a record by Messi Martin. The woman takes a few unsteady steps towards the audience and begins dancing "**Bikud-Si**", much to the amusement of the others. No sooner have the customers begun to clap rhythmically than Bilomba also jumps up, joins the woman and begins enthusiastically dancing in front of her ...) (HEST:18)

ii) ST: Bikokoé Mendegue: (Missa Majunga lui a apporté une bouteille de bière)
Je te le repète, moi, je suis un homme! Je ne suis pas de ces villageois-là qui sont obligés de créer des cacaoyères, des caféières, ou des champs d'arachides parce qu'ils n'ont jamais mis les pieds à l'école, eux. Moi, je suis allé à l'école! Oui! J'ai même obtenu mon certificat de fin d'études primaires! Si je voulais, je pourrais travailler dans n'importe quel ministère de Yaoundé. D'ailleurs, si je voulais cultiver la terre comme nous l'avait recommandé le Chef de Poste Agricole le jour où il parlait de je ne sais plus quelle **histoire verte**, je n'utiliserais pas vos méthodes ancestrales! (LTSSE:39)

TT: Bikokoé Mendegue: (Missa Majunga has now brought him a bottle of beer) I tell you again, I'm a man! I'm not like some villagers who've got to work, to grow coffee or cocoa or groundnuts because they never went to school. I went to school, I did it! I got my first school leaving certificate! I could be employed in any Government office in Yaounde if I only wanted to be! Besides, even if I did decide to become a farmer, I would never be using any of your old methods of tilling the land! You remember our local Agricultural Adviser came here some weeks ago to tell us about some **green business** they're making such a fuss about at the top? ... (HEST:39-39)

iii) ST: Mbarga: Mbia ne va-t-il pas nous faire entrer dans les bureaux administratifs de Sangmélina, chez Monsieur le **Préfet** même, sans nous faire attendre?

Tous: Sans faire attendre! (TPUM:37)

TT: Mbarga: Won't he introduce us in all the offices of Sangmelima, even in the **Prefect's** own office, without delay?

All: Without delay! (TSOH:26)

As already indicated elsewhere, "Bikud-Si" in the first example alludes to the moral decay in the society depicted, in the second, "histoire verte" to the inefficiency and corruption of the administration, and in the third "Préfet" to the repressive instruments of the government who are vested with extensive powers which they often abuse using brutal methods (cf. 4.3.6: i and viii). It is worth noting that while in i the allusion "Bikud-Si" has been preserved in the target text untranslated, in ii and iii the allusions "histoire verte" and "Préfet" have equally been preserved in the target texts but translated literally.

Oyono Mbia has equally adopted the strategy of preservation in the translation of repetition, one of the culture-specific devices identified in his source texts (cf. 4.3.7). In effect, it is observed that he has carried over to the target texts all the instances of repetition in the source texts as illustrated by the following highlighted examples amongst the very many spread throughout the plays:

i) ST: Abessôlô: (Aux autres) Mariage **impossible! Impossible!** Rendez-lui sa bière! **Parenté! Parenté!** (TPUM:33)

- TT: Abessôlô: (To the others) **No marriage ... no marriage!** Return him his beer!
He's related to Juliette! **No marriage!** (TSOH:23)
- ii) ST: Ondua: **Sans aucun doute! Sans aucun doute!** (TPUM:17)
TT: Ondua: **They will! ... They will! ...** (TSOH:12)
- iii) ST: Abessôlô: (Avec un sourire satisfait) **Tu ... tu** étudies toujours à Dibamba,
n'est-ce pas ma petite? (TPUM:18)
TT: Abessôlô: (With a pleased smile) **You ... you're** still studying at Dibamba,
aren't you, my child? (TSOH:13)
- iv) ST: Abessôlô: (S'écroule sur le sol, loin de Ndi) Eé é é! **Je suis mort! Je suis mort!** (TPUM:74)
TT: Abessôlô: (Collapsing on the floor, away from Ndi) Yeeaah!
I'am a dead man!... I'am a dead man! (TSOH:54)
- v) ST: Abessôlô: (Riant toujours) Mais il a passé **six, six semaines** à Akonolinga!
Et le voilà qui ne peut plus fermer l'oeil de la nuit depuis son retour! (JNA:36)
TT: Abessôlô: (Still laughing) And he spent **six whole weeks** in Akonolinga!
Six whole weeks! Now he can't get any sleep ever since he's been back. (UFN:105)
- vi) ST: Missa Majunga: Très bien! Une dernière chose maintenant: tu dois revenir
le plus vite possible. Le plus vite possible, tu entends? Si par hasard tu trouves le grand homme en train de manger, **tu vas alors te planter là à le regarder** comme si tu n'avais jamais vu de nourriture de ta vie; **tu vas te planter là à le regarder**, hein? (LTSSE:35)
TT: Missa Mjunga: Good! Now one last thing! I want you to come back **as soon as possible !** you hear? **As soon as possible!** If you happen to find the great man eating, then **you should stand there staring at him** as if you'd never seen any food in your whole life; **you should stand there staring at him**, eh? (HEST:34-35)

With respect to the way Oyono Mbia has handled the numerous instances of Bulu forms of address in his target texts, it is observed, as concerns *Trois prétendants ... Un Mari*, that out of the 51 occurrences of the Bulu forms of address in this play he has maintained them untranslated in 47 instances and omitted them in only 4 instances. In other words, there is a 92.2% preservation of the Bulu forms of address in the target text. In the second play, *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis*, out of the 45 occurrences of these forms of address 25 have been maintained untranslated in the target text while 20 have been

omitted. In the translated version of the second play there is therefore a 55.6% preservation of the forms of address. Finally, in the third play, *Le Train Spécial de Son Excellence*, out of the 68 occurrences of the Bulu forms of address, Oyono Mbia has very faithfully and religiously preserved all the 68 instances untranslated in the translated version, i.e. there is 100% preservation of the forms of address in the target text.

Lastly, concerning the treatment of stylistic calques in Oyono Mbia' target texts, it is observed that he has translated all of them into English literally just as he initially translated them literally from his native Bulu language into the source texts in French as illustrated by the following highlighted examples:

i) ST: Sanga-Titi: (D'une voix inspirée) C'est moi Sanga-Titi, le grand Sorcier qui avait hérité des secrets du passé! Ah Mbarga, on te dit sage, mais moi je t'appelle fou, car **tu n'as pas plus de deux yeux**. Voici la preuve de ce que j'avance : où est maintenant ton trisaïeul ? (TPUM:88)

TT: Sanga-Titi: (In an inspired voice) I am Sanga-Titi, the great Witch-doctor who inherited the secrets of the past. Ah Mbarga, other people call you a wise man, but I say you're only a fool, because **you've got no more than two eyes!** To prove what I say, I'll ask you: where is your great-great-grandfather? (TSOH:62)

ii) ST: Nkatéfoé: (Mettant ses lunettes rondes) Voilà bien **trois lunes** que Matalina et son mari sont revenus de France !

Abessôlô : **Trois lunes tout entières** ! Et Matalina n'a jamais songé à dire à son mari: « allons saluer mes pères et mes mères à Mvoutessi, le petit village où je suis née » (JNA:16)

TT: Nkatéfoé: (Putting on his glasses) **Three full moons** they've been back from France ...

Abessôlô: **Three full moons!** And Matalina has never said to her husband: "Let's go and visit my fathers and mothers in Mvoutessi, the little village where I was born ..." (UFN:91)

iii) ST: Nkatéfoé: (Tandis que le cyclomotoriste ralentit) Ces jeunes gens et leurs engins ! **Ils vont plus vite qu'une pierre lancée** ! (JNA:16)

TT: Nkatefoe: (As the motorcyclist slows down) These young people and their things! **They can go faster than you can throw a pebble!** (UFN:91)

iv) ST: Nkatéfoé: **Nos oreilles se refroidissent**, ah Mezoé! (JNA:18)

TT: Nkatefoe: (To Mezoé) **Our ears are getting cold!** (UFN:92)

v) ST: Folinika: Laisse-moi tranquille, ah Bilomba! Tais-toi et bois ta bière !

Tu es venu ici pour te moquer de ta vieille mère ? Qui t'a dit de venir me dire ce que les hommes me disaient **quand je m'appelais encore Folinika**? Tais-toi et bois ta bière ! (LTSSE :22)

TT: Folinika: You leave me alone, ah Bilomba! Why don't you shut up and drink your beer? Did you come here to make fun of your old mother? Who told you to come here and say the things which men used to say to me **when I was still Folinika**? Shut up and drink your beer! (HEST:22)

vi) ST: Missa Majunga: (Nostalgique) Hi i i ! Tout comme à **l'époque où la terre était encore terre** ! Les grands hommes d'alors ne buvaient que du rhum, du cognac, du whisky, du champagne et d'autres boissons importées. On ne connaissait pas encore cette vogue de vin de palme et de boissons distillés localement. Une honte ! [...] (LTSSE:24)

TT: Missa Majunga: (With a touch of nostalgia) He e e e! Just the way it used to be **when this land was still a land**! The great men of the time only drank rum, brandy, whisky, Champagne and other imported drinks. Nobody ever even touched palm wine, or any of these locally distilled spirits which have become so popular today. A shocking scandal, if you ask me! [...] (HEST:24)

In this chapter, in the description of the source texts in the source system, and with the help of examples drawn from the texts, it has been clearly shown how the cultural specificity of the author's native Bulu society is persistently projected on to the French language through nine different literary and stylistic devices heavily tinted by the native Bulu language, to the extent that one can clearly discern a deliberate intent on the part of the author to indigenize the European language. Indeed, one does not need to understand Bulu, Oyono Mbia's native language, to understand that in his plays the mother tongue influences and disrupts the French language.

Having thus highlighted the specific characteristics and the culture-specific aspects in Oyono Mbia's source texts and the way in which he has mapped them on to his target texts, in the next chapter we examine the various factors of the Cameroonian and British milieux that provide a better understanding and possible explanation of the motivations that underlie Oyono Mbia's choice of strategies.

Chapter 5: Findings and Interpretation

5.1. Introduction

On the whole, examination of the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays shows that the translations are close to the originals whereby plot and characters flow in much the same way as they do in the originals. More specifically, analysis of the strategies used to map on to the target texts the nine culture-specific literary and stylistic devices in Oyono Mbia's source texts examined in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), reveals that except for the ideophones, some of which have been partially adapted into English, while others have been retained untranslated in the target texts, all the other eight culture-specific devices have been integrally preserved in the target texts through borrowing, transcription, literal translation and calque.

Considering that the above strategies are essentially foreignizing in nature, it can therefore be asserted that in the translation of his source texts from French into English, Oyono Mbia had as principle the adoption of a default foreignizing strategy which preserves in the target texts the exotic culture of his native Bulu society depicted in his source texts. This preservation and foreignizing strategy can best be explained and understood in the light of the prevailing literary creative trend and attitude of Cameroonian and, indeed, African writers at the time Oyono Mbia's plays were written and translated, and also in the light of the ambivalent situation of the Cameroonian and African writer writing not in his native language but rather in a European language.

5.2. Oyono Mbia's plays in the context of the prevailing literary trend and attitude of Cameroonian and African writers

As pointed out by Ade Ojo (1986:296), under the colonial educational system in Africa, every educated indigene was restricted to the learning of the language of the

colonizing master and the classics (Latin and Greek). As a result, no educated African, trained especially in his native country, could be proficient in two languages of colonization. The effect of this on the African literary scene was that translators were virtually non-existent before the advent of independence as from the fifties. This situation therefore explains why in Cameroon, for example, no translations of Cameroonian literary works existed before the fifties which could have served as models for Cameroonian creative writers and translators whose creative and translation activities really began to flourish only as from the sixties.

Coupled with this situation was the fact that the indigenous African languages were not codified or reduced to writing (as even today, most of them have still not been reduced to writing). As a result, it was impossible for African writers to write in their mother tongues. There thus arose the need for the writers to write in the languages of the colonizers, a situation which gave rise to African literature written in European languages. Indeed, today, this form of African literature expressed in European languages can be considered to occupy a unique position in the world literary landscape and the African writers who are at the origin of this literature can be considered to constitute a special kind of bilingual creators. This situation gave rise to certain consequences, the first being that because historically these writers found themselves placed in such a linguistic situation, they tended to consider the colonial languages as mere tools or means to achieve their objectives and they started striving in their writings to destroy the stereotypical images of Africa and to project their own African world view.

As pointed out by Adejunmobi (1998:168), there developed a move to reflect or portray Africanness in their writings, undoubtedly motivated by a desire to compensate for certain consequences of the colonial encounter. The marginalization of the indigenous African languages in significant spheres of life in many parts of contemporary Africa lies at the heart of this move, and modification of European languages in their writings as a response to this state of affairs has, today, become an established tradition in African writing. The writings thus reveal a conscious attempt at

literary decolonization through the language of writing and it can be said that by choosing to Africanize, that is, to translate their languages and models into the European languages by appropriating the latter, the African writers question the historically established authority of the European languages and establish their languages as equally viable means of producing literary discourse. In this context there emerged a distinct attitude of the African writer vis-à-vis the European language. Based on the declarations of some African writers, Chevrier (1979:49) was able to observe that:

L'attitude de l'écrivain vis-à-vis d'une langue non maternelle repose, semble-t-il, sur une certaine ambivalence, mélange d'amour et de haine, de saisie et de rejet, qui rend assez bien compte du sentiment du corps à corps avec le langage que provoque parfois la lecture des écrivains francophones.[It seems the attitude of the writer towards a language that is not his mother tongue rests on a certain ambivalence: a mixture of love and hatred, acceptance and rejection, which clearly accounts for the feeling of struggle with the language that is sometimes caused by reading the works of Francophone writers]

Another consequence of the colonial and ambivalent linguistic situation of the African creative writer writing in a European language (mainly English and French) is that he soon realized that he was confronted with a dilemma: how to reproduce equivalent cultural experiences in a European language and still retain the rhythm and structure of the oral tradition inherent in the African unwritten original language. Obiechina (1973:12) has spelled out this dilemma as follows:

The West African writer has to transfer his structure of thought, feeling an expression from a West African language into English, has to recast his material in a fundamental way if his West African experience is to remain West African, while at the same time making sure that the English in which it is expressed remains intelligible to users of the English language all over the world.

This situation is therefore very evident in and characteristic of not only the works of Oyono Mbia studied herein but also the works of other Cameroonian writers (cf. Beti 1954, Ferdinand Oyono 1956, Philombe 1971, Mendo Ze 1987, etc.) and African writers (cf. Laye 1953, Achebe 1958, Boni 1962, Soyinka 1963, Okara 1964,

Kourouma 1970, etc.). In this regard, according to literary critics (cf. Koné 1992:80) Boni is, among the West African Francophone novelists, “celui qui témoigne le mieux de la difficulté mais aussi de la volonté d'utiliser une langue qui tente d'exprimer de façon satisfaisante l'imaginaire de son ethnie qu'il entendait valoriser » [the one who testifies best to the difficulty but also the will to use a language that attempts to express in a satisfactory manner the imagination of his ethnic group that he wishes to project]. Boni's objective as clearly outlined in the Foreword to his novel is to describe African culture, more specifically, his native Bwamu culture. And since he wanted to address a specifically European audience that had sought to deny Africa's history and culture, he felt obliged to write in French. However, realizing that the French language was inadequate to convey his Bwamu imagination, he was obliged to use purely African expressions from his native Bwamu language. Concerning Boni's use of his native Bwamu language, Gassama (1978:223) observes that:

Il n'y a pas une seule page de *Crépuscule des temps anciens* où l'on ne rencontre une expression ou un mot africain ou une tournure de langue maternelle judicieusement ou maladroitement transposée en français. [There is not a single page in *Crépuscule des temps anciens* where one does not come across an African word or expression or a turn of phrase from the mother tongue judiciously or clumsily transposed into French].

Gyasi (1999:77) too, in an analysis of Boni's novel, has cited some concrete examples which illustrate how this writer has tried to resolve the difficulty of rendering exactly his African ideas, thoughts and feelings in French by using, for instance, French words whose meanings depend on the significations that these words have in his native Bwamu language. For example, after breaking an amphora as a testimony of his love for Terhé, Hakani, the heroine of the novel, reassured herself by saying that her mother would not scold her: “La vieille n'avait-elle pas fait son soleil?” [Hasn't the old woman passed her sun?] (Boni 1962:67). The word “soleil” in this sentence obviously does not have the same signified in French and in the Bwamu language. Still on the same page of the novel, the narrator recounts as follows: “Un devin, un jour, remit au jeune homme un oeuf. Il lui spécifia que cet oeuf contenait sa ‘silhouette’ c'est-à-dire son double, plus exactement **Mako**, son âme » [One day, a seer gave the young man an egg. He made it clear to him that the egg contained his ‘shadow’, that is, his double,

more exactly **Mako**, his soul.]. As it is evident from this example, when Boni realized that the French synonyms were not enough to convey his native Bwamu concept, he felt compelled to use the exact word **Mako** in his mother tongue.

Boni's effort at imprinting the French language with the mark of his native language, like many African writers of his generation (including Oyono Mbia), is a conscious attempt at sustaining an authentic African discourse albeit in a foreign language. He, like the other African writers of his generation, made a conscious attempt at literary decolonization through the language of writing and saw a major role for literature as the expression of African cultural authenticity.

These writers thus use the words of the European languages as they like and from the perspective of their own cultural and intellectual background thereby altering the European languages to suit their new African environment. The result of this is that they have so localized the use of their acquired European languages by passing them through the matrix of their own cultural background and some of them have even pushed the phenomenon so far that much of their work could be lost to the uninitiated non-African reader or translator. For instance, Kourouma's *Les soleils des independences* (1970) could prove 'knotty' to the non-Ivorian/African translator. Similarly, Soyinka's interlarding of most of his works with Yoruba words and expressions, as Oyono Mbia equally interlards his works with Bulu words and expressions, will definitely create enormous headaches for the non-Yoruba or non-Bulu-speaking translator respectively. Okara's *The Voice* (1964) too could be really difficult to transfer into a different European language by a non-Ijaw/African translator. Consider the following example:

Shuffling feet turned Okolo's head to the door. He saw three men standing silent, opening not their mouths. "Who are you people be?" Okolo asked. The people opened not their mouths. "If you are coming-in people be, then come in" (Okara 1964:20).

As it is very evident from the above passage, Okara has endeavoured to let his native Ijaw tongue speak in the English language. When Okara makes his characters speak or think, he pushes them to literally translate their language.

In effect, what is common to the writers mentioned above (i.e. Oyono Mbia, Ferdinand Oyono, Philombe, Mendo Ze, Beti, Soyinka, Achebe, Kourouma, Laye, Boni and Okara) as well as all the others of their generation, in varying degrees, is a form of translation that takes place from the African language into the European language given that it is the African languages that give form and meaning to modern African writing in European languages. In this regard, the critic N'Gal (1989:118-119) asserts that:

S'il faut chercher une spécificité, disons une particularité de l'écrivain africain, c'est que son écriture est travaillée, fécondée par sa langue maternelle d'abord et par les langues africaines. Les romans ... ne peuvent être compris avec profit que si l'on connaît le contexte linguistique de ces romans. Certains passages, les noms des personnages ... sont une traduction. [If one has to look for a distinctive characteristic or feature of the African writer, it is because his writing is shaped or enriched first of all by his mother tongue and then by other African languages. The novels ... can only be really understood if one knows the linguistic context of these words. Certain passages and the names of some characters ... have been translated]

African writers writing in European languages could thus, in effect, be qualified or described as creative translators and their works as creative compositional translations. This point seems to be corroborated by Briere's (1988:34) observation with respect to Laye's *L'Enfant Noir* (1953) that this author's work is not simply an African novel in French but the author's attempt to translate into French the essence of his life as a Malinké as well as the Malinké society and culture. Some African writers too have explicitly described the process involved in their writing as translation. For instance, the Nigerian writer Gabriel Okara (1963:15) states:

As a writer who believes in the utilisation of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as his medium of expression. I have endeavoured in my works to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a

sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people.

In the same vein, the Ivorian writer Ahmadou Kourouma declares as follows:

J'ai pensé en malinké et écrit en français en prenant une liberté que j'estime naturelle avec la langue classique ... J'ai donc traduit le malinké en français en cassant le français pour trouver et restituer le rythme africain. (In Koné 1992:83) [I think in Malinké and write in French, taking what I consider to be natural liberties with the classical tongue. I have thus translated Malinké into French by breaking up the French language so as to recreate an African rhythm]

Similarly, other African writers writing in European languages even very consciously want the reader to know that they are first and foremost translators by adopting a technique that reveals their original identity as translators. For instance, in Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* (1956:14), one reads as follows at the beginning of the novel with respect to the main character Toundi's diary:

Il [le journal de Toundi] était écrit en ewondo, l'une des langues les plus parlées au Cameroun. Je me suis efforcé d'en rendre la richesse sans trahir le récit dans la traduction que j'en fis et qu'on va lire. [It (Toundi's diary) was written in Ewondo, one of the most widely spoken languages of Cameroon. I have endeavoured in my translation of it, which we are about to read, to convey its richness without betraying the story].

Even where the writers themselves have not expressly described their writing by reference to the practice of translation, an analysis of their works still reveals convincing evidence of this activity in their creative texts. For instance, analyses reveal undeniable abundant instances of translation from African to European languages in the works of African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Camara Laye, Gabriel Okara, Ahmadou Kourouma, and Amos Tutuola (cf. Ade Ojo 1986:294-5, Olubunmi Smith 1993:219-221, Adejunmobi 1998:164-9, Gyasi 1999:78-85). It can even be asserted without any fear of contradiction that such translation activity is unavoidable and, indeed, the fact of the matter is that, although by his educational exposure and intellectual experience the African writer has acquired a metropolitan literary inheritance and in most cases has mastered the European

language of his literary composition, his head and ears have remained tuned to the rhythm and expressions of his indigenous language which he transliterates into the European language. This means therefore that the literary work of the Cameroonian/African writer writing in a European language released to the public by the publisher on behalf of the writer is a combined version of other literary by-products resulting from an indigenous speech pattern, thinking pattern and world view, all of which are transliterated into the European language. However, this translated version still retains vernacular expression, local names of objects, places and human beings which are untranslatable but which succeed in informing every reader of the text of the peculiarity of the society which has given birth to the literary object (cf. works of writers cited above as well as those of Oyono Mbia). Furthermore, the contextual translation or explanation of local terms, customs and concepts is also done as can be seen in the works of Oyono Mbia studied herein and those of other Cameroonian writers such as René Philombe, Ferdinand Oyono, Gervais Mendo Ze and Mongo Beti cited above. Finally, in the works of African writers writing in European languages it is also observed that while almost every one of them resorts to footnotes when and where necessary, some others such as Oyono Mbia (1964), Philombe (1971) and *Were Were Liking* (1979) equally incorporate glossaries and appendixes into their works by way of explaining culture-bound elements. The Africanness of their works is, apart from the themes and characters in the works, created by images, figures of speech and other rhetorical devices drawn from the African orature and environment which they thus map on to the European languages through all the above translation strategies. With regard to Oyono Mbia's translation strategies, therefore, it can be asserted without risk of contradiction that the English version of his plays reflect what has been (and still is to a large extent) the rule rather than the exception in the translation of African literature written in European languages during the postcolonial period in Africa.

Not only does the recourse to the above strategies by this category of African writers writing in European languages clearly reveal their desire and determination to faithfully portray in their works their social and cultural phenomena but such strategies

equally reveal the problems encountered. If fidelity to the transfer of the African social and cultural phenomena poses a problem for African creative writers writing in European languages it can be asserted that the non-African translator is faced with an even more difficult task. Not only is he to be faced with the African version of the European language that he is to translate from, but he has to do a very thorough study of the socio-cultural backgrounds against which the source text is written and where the target text will be read, that is, African. These major difficulties have been encountered by some non-African translators of African literary works (cf. Olubunmi Smith 1993:219-224, Suh 1995:170-181). Such was also the case, although not admitted, in the English translations of Guinean writer Camara Laye's *L'Enfant Noir* (1953) by James Kirkup and Ernest Jones, and the English translation of Cameroonian writer Ferdinand Oyono's *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956). The first translation of *L'Enfant Noir* entitled *The Dark Child* (1954) was made for a North American audience by James Kirkup and Ernest Jones while the second, which was more accurately, titled *The African Child* (1955), and destined for a British audience was by James Kirkup alone. It is evident from this second title that James Kirkup realised a year later following their translation of the first version that they had failed to capture certain vital information in that version about the African culture by focussing mainly on the colour of the main character rather than on the culture and society of which he is a product. This notwithstanding, the second version still revealed inaccuracies in the representation of the Malinké culture. The misreadings of the Malinké culture and the resulting mistranslation of these two English versions of *L'Enfant Noir* annotated in an essay by Briere (1988:33-39) irrefutably reveal the inadequacy of the translators' sheer technical linguistic fluency in transferring into English those Guinean realities which are expressed in French. Briere (1988:39) noted that the numerous discrepancies between the English translations and the French original "cannot be blamed on the shortcomings inherent in translation since the translational errors were due to several causes, among them errors pure and simple, misreadings of Malinké culture ... lack of equivalents in English, and infelicitous lexical choices". Similarly, in a study of John Reed's English translation of Ferdinand Oyono's *Le vieux nègre et la médaille*, Suh (1995:170-181) has annotated major shortcomings in the translated version resulting

mainly from the translator's misreading of the author's native Bulu culture, his failure to take into consideration the strategies employed by the author himself in his original creative compositional translation to map his native Bulu culture-specific realities into French, and finally his adoption of what could be referred to as a purely Eurocentric approach in the translation of this African literary text. It thus seems important for the translator to constantly bear in mind that African writers writing in European languages systematically adapt the European languages to the African reality. In effect, it is evident from the authors' translational creative writing strategies that if the translator wants to capture the African culture as well as express the African imagination portrayed in this category of African literature; he cannot put aside the African language in favour of an academic European language.

5.3. Oyono Mbia's source text and target text strategies

The translation of Cameroonian/African literature written in European languages may be viewed from the perspective of two scenarios: the translation of this literature from African languages (written and unwritten) into European languages and then its translation from one European language into another. Oyono Mbia's creative compositional translations in his source texts from his native unwritten Bulu language into French reveal the first scenario and his translations of the source texts from French into English reveal the second scenario. From the examination of Oyono Mbia's strategies in his source and target texts, it can be concluded that the problems inherent in the second scenario and the corresponding translation strategies to circumvent them are contingent upon those of the first scenario. Consequently, it seems reasonable to assert that it is of vital importance for the translator in the second scenario to first of all identify and analyze the problems encountered and the corresponding strategies and solutions adopted by the author in the first scenario before embarking on the translation, particularly where the ultimate primary target audience in both scenarios is the same, that is, African. This is the case, for example, when a work in French written for French-speaking Cameroonians/Africans is to be translated into English for English-speaking Cameroonians/Africans or vice versa. It

could also be posited here that whereas in the translation of an African text for a Western audience where the difference between an African and a Western audience could constitute a major factor, in the case where the source and target audiences are both African, the question of audience, though important, is the least problematic of concerns in translating such texts. Furthermore, it can be asserted in such a case that since, for the most part, the African content and form have already been captured by the African author in his European language of writing, what the translator in the second scenario simply needs to do is to carry across into the target European language the same African content and form. In other words, the critical translator has to be alive to the socio-cultural systems involved in the African text as well as to the specific strategies mobilized within the text by the author to convey its Africanness, so that his translation will be able to carry the African aesthetic into the other European medium of expression.

An interpretative analysis of Oyono Mbia's translation strategies, first from his native Bulu language into French in the source texts and then from French into English in the target texts definitely points to the need for translators of African literature written in European languages to guard against adhering too closely to the tenets of translation theories developed in the West such that their translated texts rather end up giving primacy to the European languages that the African writers had sought to subvert in their act of writing. In effect, contemporary African writers constantly seek new ways to sustain a discourse that can be called African.

From the comparative analysis of Oyono Mbia's source and target texts, it is observed that the translation strategies employed in the target texts are the same as those employed in the source texts by the author in the process of his creative translational compositions in French, given that in the target texts he equally resorts to borrowing, transcription, literal translation and calque to transfer the culture-specific elements of the source texts. Thus, the heavily pervading presence of Oyono Mbia's native Bulu language and culture in his source texts has equally been carried over to the target texts through the same strategies employed in the source texts. One could therefore

justifiably conclude that both the source texts and target texts are meant to be read as if they were really written in the indigenous Bulu language, although the fact remains that both the source and target texts are essentially and substantially written in other languages (French and English) than Bulu.

With respect to his first play *Trois Prétendants ... Un Mari*, it is observed, however, that Oyono Mbia has employed fewer strategies in the target text than in the source text. For instance, whereas he resorts to a glossary, which he includes at the end of the source text, he does not do same in the target text and he does not provide the target readers with the information contained therein through other means whereas his stated objective for including the glossary is to shed light on the “expressions locales ne s’expliquant pas par le contexte”, that is, to shed light on the local expressions whose meanings are not elucidated by their context (cf. Oyono Mbia 1988:119). Similarly, whereas he provides in the glossary approximate translations into French of the local songs in the plays (which he says it is impossible to give their exact translation into French), he does not provide such approximate translations to the readers of the target text. It is, however, worth noting that Oyono Mbia himself states in the glossary, with respect to the songs, that “le sens a beaucoup moins d’importance que la musique et la danse auxquelles elles se rapportent et, surtout, l’atmosphère créée” [the meaning is not so important as the music and dance they relate to and, especially, the atmosphere they conjure up] (Oyono Mbia 1988:119). This probably explains why he simply transferred them untranslated to the target text, considering particularly that his primary objective is to build up a certain atmosphere rather than to convey some specific information that is part and parcel of his message. With such prioritization of his creative objective, Oyono Mbia probably considered translating the songs into English time consuming and probably costly, and in any case not indispensable to the achievement of the Bulu/African aesthetic in the English version of the play. By not providing elucidation in English, at least in a glossary, for the local expressions explained in the source text glossary and by not equally providing approximate English translation of the songs, it can be concluded that such unexplained local elements confer on the target text an even greater foreignizing character whose effect

is consequently felt more by the target text readers than the source text readers, particularly the non Bulu/African readers. In the light of Oyono Mbia's preservation and foreignizing strategies, therefore, it is necessary to examine the reception of his target texts in the target culture.

5.4. Reception of Oyono Mbia's target texts in the target culture

As Upton (2000:4) has pointed out, the British attitude of cultural imperialism, particularly with respect to drama, has not been challenged by the advent of the postcolonial general intercultural, intellectual and moral climate of the era. In that society, an unfamiliar subject is apparently more readily accepted than a foreign aesthetic. She equally points out that, despite the theatre's age-old tendency to adopt material from other cultures, the British sensibility has been inclined to underplay the foreignness of its inspiration. Thus, translations and adaptations, having been thoroughly domesticated, have entered the repertoire almost surreptitiously under the guise of British versions. With respect to this attitude of the British towards the "other", the *Guardian* theatre critic Billington (1993:108) in an article entitled "Britain's Theatrical Chauvinism" equally states as follows:

We are still ignorant of the past riches of world drama. We see very few of the best new plays from other countries. And when some foreign company is rash enough to accept an invitation to visit London, it is usually greeted with a cold and patronizing derision [...] And anything non-English, unless it be an American musical or a solo performer, is regarded as some kind of cultural letter bomb.

However, as Upton (2000:5) equally points out, such a picture of the situation in Britain is not to say there has been no improvement at all as there are some notable pioneers of innovative theatre in translation. For instance, the Almeida, The Royal Court Theatre, the Gate, to some extent the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company consciously strive to make productions of interesting and often unfamiliar foreign drama available in translation to British audiences. In view of the above situation, therefore, and coupled with the fact that Oyono Mbia in his translations adopted a foreignizing strategy that conferred on the plays a rather strong

foreign effect, it is evident that even though his first two plays, *Trois Prétendants ...Un Mari* (*Three Suitors: One Husband*) and *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* (*Until Further Notice*) were translated into English in England and published by Methuen (one of the most important publishers of drama), it can be posited that the above prevailing context in Britain militated against their acceptability by the British audience as well as their integration into the literary polysystem of that culture. In effect, while there is clear evidence that *Three Suitors: One Husband* was performed in Britain at the University of Keele by the Keele Drama Group and *Until Further Notice* performed at the Y.W.C.A Hall, Randolph Place, Edinburgh by the same drama group, these plays were not (and have not) been performed for a much wider British audience in any of the renowned British theatres mentioned above. Furthermore, they do not constitute part of English literature and there is no evidence either that they have at any given period been on the British syllabus and were studied in British schools as are other few foreign playwrights. For instance, Ibsen is represented on at least one English A-level syllabus (cf. Upton 2000:4). Where then were (and still are) Oyono Mbia's English versions of his plays consumed?

A systemic examination of the reception in Cameroon of the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays based on the literary landscape, the political and socio-cultural circumstances surrounding the target texts as well as critics' statements relating to them reveals that at the time Oyono Mbia's translations were published by Methuen in 1968, literature of English expression in the English-speaking part of Cameroon was virtually non-existent (cf. section 2.2 above). Consequently the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays, being also Cameroonian productions came to fill the paucity and to enrich the heritage of Cameroonian literature in English. There was therefore a predisposing and conducive environment to receive Oyono Mbia's target texts in the English-speaking part of Cameroon. Furthermore, the discourse and subject of the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays fitted into and were in harmony with the mainstream themes of Cameroonian Anglophone writing of the time. On the whole, in the English-speaking part of Cameroon, Oyono Mbia's target texts performed (and continue to perform) a literary, cultural, social and academic function like the other

works of English expression written by Cameroonian Anglophones. Indeed, the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays are not treated as foreign plays by the English-speaking population of Cameroon but as Cameroonian plays.

Another factor that greatly enhanced the acceptability and integration of Oyono Mbia's English versions into the Cameroonian Anglophone culture can be attributed to the changes in the country's political and social landscape. In effect, with the advent of independence and reunification of Cameroon whereby the former distinct Anglophone and Francophone Federal States were dissolved, there was free movement and intermixing between the various ethnic groups of the national territory. As a result, Oyono Mbia's target texts whose cultural content could have been considered by the Anglophones as foreign or exotic ceased to be so as they became familiar with the source text culture and realized they even shared it.

Finally, another predisposing factor which favoured the acceptability, consumption and integration of the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays into the Cameroonian Anglophone culture and literary polysystem could be attributed to the state of translation in the country at the time the target texts were published. Apart from the translations of Cameroonian novelist Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* (1956) as *House Boy* (1966) and *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956) as *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967), there were no already existing translations of literary works in the English-speaking part of Cameroon at the time Oyono Mbia's translations were published which could have served as a model against which Oyono Mbia's target texts could have been judged and possibly rejected in the case where they failed to meet or to conform to the expectations and stereotypes of the receiving Anglophone target readers/audience.

Consequently, while it could be said that the impact of the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays, as a source of cultural and literary enrichment, on the British culture is virtually null or at best insignificant, the contrary obtains with respect to their impact on the English-speaking part of Cameroon. The Anglophone population of Cameroon

are indebted to the translations of Oyono Mbia's source texts and definitely find in them a source of literary and cultural enrichment as these translations filled an expressed need in the embryonic and creation phase of Anglophone literature of English expression and, today, not only are they in the curricula of Anglophone schools at the Secondary, High School and University levels but are considered as classics alongside other celebrated Cameroonian literary works of English expression. The integration of these works into the literary polysystem of Cameroonian literature of English expression is further exemplified by the abundant paratexts in English accompanying them. The various paratexts in English, some of which are listed in the bibliography to this study include critical articles in journals, literary criticisms, commentaries, postgraduate diploma and M.A. dissertations on various aspects of the works and hand-outs on the target texts circulated in the academic milieu and aimed at preparing students for various examinations. In view of all the above considerations, it can thus be asserted without risk of contradiction that even though Oyono Mbia's plays were translated into English, published by Methuen and performed a number of times in Britain, the objective was not to integrate these plays into the British theatrical and literary polysystem. The English versions remain African literature and are identified with the literature of the African continent and that of Cameroon in particular where they are classified under Cameroonian literature of English expression.

Aaltonen (2000:38) has asserted that the duality of dramatic texts as elements of both the literary and theatrical systems affects the ways in which foreign drama becomes integrated into the domestic systems, as both the literary and the theatrical systems have their own norms and conventions which regulate text-generation in them. In view of Oyono Mbia's translation strategies and considering that the target texts have been integrated into the literary polysystem of the receiving Cameroonian Anglophone culture, it is, therefore, necessary to examine to which system the target texts belong in this culture. In other words, based on the translation strategies adopted by Oyono Mbia, can his target texts be characterized as page or stage translations on the basis of

what scholars have identified and determined to be the characteristic features of each of the above types of translation?

5.5. Oyono Mbia's target texts as page and stage translations

Studies carried out by scholars (cf. Aaltonen 200, Espasa 2000, Merino 2000, Upton 2000 and Moravkova 1993) reveal that for stage translations which belong to the theatrical system the strategies range from deletion, omission, adaptation, to other manipulations to conform to specific acting fashions. On the contrary, in page translations which belong to the literary system the main strategy is a very close, although not literal, translation of the original, such that the target text when compared with its original every utterance of the original has its counterpart in the translation. The page translations favour the source culture and try to make the reader to approach the source author and play (cf. section 2.1.4.2 above). It is therefore necessary to examine to what extent Oyono Mbia's target texts conform to the above observed dichotomy and distinction in strategies.

It was observed above that on the whole Oyono Mbia's translations are close to the originals and that he adopted a default preservation/foreignizing strategy (cf. section 5.I). It was also observed that this strategy was initially adopted in the source texts before being subsequently carried over to the target texts. And bearing in mind that it has been argued in this thesis that Oyono Mbia's source texts are in effect translations from his native Bulu language which could be referred to as "creative compositional translations" (cf. section 5.2 above), it is perhaps interesting, therefore, to first of all examine to what system his source text strategies positioned the source texts in the first place.

It is very evident that the performance dimension was at the forefront of Oyono Mbia's concerns at the time he wrote his source texts as testified by his assertion that it is almost impossible to give a play its final publishable shape without one actually seeing it on stage and adding such essential things as adequate stage directions without which

no producer, however imaginative, could properly tackle a piece of drama (cf. Oyono Mbia 1979:11). Furthermore, the glossary at the end of *Trois Prétendants ...Un Mari* which is a translation strategy and normally supposed to be intended for and to satisfy the expectations of a reading public thereby positioning the play in the literary system is rather intended for those involved in the theatrical system. In effect, the playwright justifies the inclusion of the glossary by stating that « Le glossaire placé à la fin de l'ouvrage permettra aux metteurs en scène de trouver des équivalents des expressions 'bulu' utilisées, et de saisir un peu l'esprit des chansons populaires qui font partie du texte » [The glossary included at the end of the play will provide producers/stage directors with equivalents to the Bulu expressions used and enable them to at least capture the spirit of the popular songs which form part of the play] (cf. Oyono Mbia 1964:9). Similarly, in the Foreword to one of his plays he cautions the casual reader and makes it very clear to him that he is not normally expected to get much out of the work if he does not also try to see it on stage or at least to visualize it as something that was essentially meant to be performed (Oyono Mbia 1979:10). It can, therefore, be concluded that the source texts, as published, were already shaped for the stage and destined for the theatrical system. In reality these plays, especially *Trois Prétendants ...Un Mari*, enjoyed regular performances in Cameroon for over two decades in the seventies and eighties. Today they are still among the most performed plays in the country.

However, today, they are equally widely consumed by the reading public and have come to belong to the literary system for two main reasons. The first reason is attributed to the acute shortage of theatre buildings in the country, a situation which Oyono Mbia (1979:11) himself strongly decries when in reaction to drama criticism in the country, he emphatically says, "Let us not therefore glibly talk and write about insufficiencies or inadequacies in the field of dramatic writing without paying attention to the vital problem of the absence - and keenly felt absence too - of theatre buildings. There should be at least one such building in every major centre in Cameroon." In effect, while, Yaounde, the country's political capital can only boast of four theatre buildings and, Douala, the economic capital also four, Bafoussam, the

chief town of the West Province, has only one, while the chief towns of the other seven of the country's ten provinces do not have a single theatre building. This, therefore, means that the populations in those provinces do not have the opportunity to watch plays performed in theatre houses except when the plays are occasionally performed by itinerant troupes in improvised locations and structures. The second reason why Oyono Mbia's plays have also come to belong to the literary system is that the works are on the literature curricula of the country's academic institutions such as the universities, high schools and especially the very many secondary schools spread to the very remote parts of the country. Consequently, they have generated and continue to generate a significant body of paratexts that have greatly enriched them as works of art in the literary system.

As a translator of his own works, Oyono Mbia was equally concerned with the performance dimension of his target texts into English. That is why *Three Suitors: One Husband* and *Until Further Notice* were performed shortly afterwards in Britain where they were translated and published by Methuen (cf. section 5.4.). In this regard, Aaltonen (2000:39) cites contemporary England as an example of a culture where the contemporary theatrical system exercises some influence over the publication of drama, and where the most important publisher of drama, Methuen, prefers stage to page translations, that is, translations where the focus is on the expectations of the receiving stage rather than on the careful repetition of the details of the source text. It is equally worth noting that when the plays were performed in Britain by the Keele Drama Group, as mentioned earlier, the cast was entirely British (cf. Oyono Mbia 1968). This, therefore, probably explains also why in the target texts Oyono Mbia partially adapted some of the ideophones, particularly when one considers further that a theatre production is always closely tied to its audience in a particular place at a particular point in time. However, notwithstanding the context of publication and Methuen's requirements, Oyono Mbia still produced, as already established in this study, translations that are very source text bound and foreignizing in nature. In Cameroon, the English versions of Oyono Mbia's plays, just like the French versions, were also frequently performed in the seventies and eighties and to a lesser extent

today. However, they too have come to belong to the literary system for the same reasons advanced above with respect to the French versions.

Even though Oyono Mbia's intentions and assertions as highlighted above situate his plays as belonging to the theatrical system, an examination of the paratexts surrounding the source texts, particularly *Trois Prétendants ...Un Mari* also seems to suggest that the plays are meant for three types of targets: an audience interested in watching the play on stage, casual readers interested only in reading them and scholars/students interested in studying them for academic/research purposes. In the comparative source text-target text analysis above it was observed that there were disparities in the paratexts surrounding the source and target texts, particularly with respect to *Trois Prétendants ...Un Mari* and its English version *Three Suitors: One Husband*, and *Jusq'à Nouvel Avis* and *Until Further Notice* (cf. section 4.2.). The absence of corresponding paratexts immediately surrounding the target texts, therefore, seems to exclude them from some of the targets mentioned above. For instance, *Trois Prétendants ...Un Mari* is accompanied by a glossary and commentaries whereas these are absent in the target text *Three Suitors: One Husband*. One could, therefore, be tempted to consider the English version, unlike the French original, to be destined only for the stage and not also for a reading public, and that it excludes, or at least does not sufficiently take into account the expectations of the third category of targets (i.e. scholars and students). However, such extrapolation could be erroneous given that, in reality, such absence in the target text does not hamper in any significant way the life of the translations in the literary polysystem of Cameroonian Anglophone literature given that there now exist many critical works and commentaries on these plays in English and for a long time now the plays have been used for literature courses in English at various academic levels of the Anglophone educational system in Cameroon. Oyono Mbia's source and target texts thus belong to both the theatrical and literary systems given that they are used both as stage and page editions.

5.6. Oyono Mbia's strategies in the mainstream of those outlined by translation scholars

The main translation strategies (i.e. borrowing, transcription, literal translation and calque) used by Oyono Mbia to translate the English versions of his plays in the sixties are among the numerous strategies that have been proposed, outlined or highlighted by translation scholars and practitioners (cf. section 3.4.2.) for resolving specific translation difficulties. They are foreignizing rather than domesticating in nature and as can be noted, they are not specific to the translation of the drama genre alone but are equally used for the other literary genres. In the context of the prevailing literary trend and attitude of African writers described above (cf. section 5.2.) these strategies appear to be those most often resorted to in the translation of African literature written in European languages, whereby the focus is on the source text and there is careful repetition of the details of the source text thereby favouring the source culture and trying to make the readers/audience approach the source author and play. These strategies are very manifest in other translated works on African literature such as *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967), the English version of Ferdinand Oyono's novel *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956) or *Le Lion et la Perle* (1968), the French version of Soyinka's famous play *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963). It could, therefore, be said that these strategies are characteristic of a given type of literature, that is, African literature written in European languages wherein their foreignizing nature is clearly revealed.

With regard to Oyono Mbia's target texts, their foreignizing nature seems more marked than in the source texts, particularly for the non-Bulu/Cameroonian target readers/audience. This is especially the case with his first play *Trois Prétendants ... Un Mari* where, as already pointed out above, the playwright provides at the end of the play a glossary which defines and explains some of the local words and expressions whose meanings cannot readily be grasped in context or which could be wrongly interpreted. The glossary equally includes an approximate translation into French of the Bulu songs accompanied by supplementary explanations on their significance and analysis of their rhythm and poetic charge (cf. section 4.2.1.). Considering that this

glossary is not included in the target text it can, therefore, be asserted that the absence of a corresponding glossary in the target text confers on it a foreignizing characteristic which is even more pronounced than in the source text. However, whereas this foreignizing aspect could be considered significant for the non-Cameroonian/African readers/audience it would be less so for the Cameroonian/African ones who, quite often, belong to and share the same culture and realities as the source text author. Given this foreignizing characteristic of Oyono Mbia's plays, it is perhaps interesting to examine to what extent he demonstrates consistency in his use of the specific strategies highlighted above which conjure up a foreignizing effect on the target texts.

5.7. (In)Consistency in Oyono Mbia's translational behaviour

As already pointed out above (cf. section 4.3.2.), Oyono Mbia partially adapted some of the ideophones but preserved some of them untranslated in the target texts. It may be argued that his decision and subsequent choice of strategy to partially adapt the sounds were not influenced by already existing translations that have handled the same culture-specific aspect. In effect, the sound **Yé é é é é** equally features abundantly in Ferdinand Oyono's novel *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956) and is preserved untranslated in the translated version *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967) by John Reed. It is worth noting that both Ferdinand Oyono and Guillaume Oyono Mbia are from the same Bulu tribe and the translated versions of their literary works were both published in London by Heinemann and Methuen respectively. While Ferdinand Oyono's work was published a year earlier in 1967, Oyono Mbia's own was published a year later in 1968. The handling of the above culture-specific aspect in some instances through partial adaptation by Oyono Mbia, himself a trained translator (cf. section 2.2.2.3.), therefore, leads one to wonder whether he was not at all aware of how the translator of Ferdinand Oyono's work had handled the culture-specific aspects of his native Bulu society in the work or whether he was indeed aware of it but deliberately opted for adaptation instead of preservation. It is possible that he had as immediate concern the purely British cast that was to perform (and which effectively performed) the first performance of the English version of the play. However, as

pointed out earlier (cf. section 4.3.2.) the adapted sounds are hybrids that are neither Bulu nor English and are not easily pronounceable by actors.

Not only may this partial adaptation be considered to be at variance with the prevailing literary trend and attitude discussed above (cf. section 5.2.) but it is not also in phase with his handling of the other culture-specific aspects. In certain instances the partial adaptation even results in failure to accurately convey the emotions carried by the sounds. For instance, the sounds **Yé é é é é** and **Eé é é é é** have been rendered respectively in the same way in the target text (*Three Suitors: One Husband*) as **Yee aah** for different intensities of the same emotion (cf. section 4.3.2. above). It is worth noting, however, that he has preserved untranslated in his target texts the sound **Yaaaaaaaa** which also features in Ferdinand Oyono's *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956) and which was equally preserved by John Reed in the English version, *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967). Thus, while it can be said that John Reed has been consistent in translating the Bulu ideophones into English through preservation, Oyono Mbia has not. However, since he did not omit or delete these sounds but rather faithfully reproduced in the target texts every instance of their occurrence, it may be considered that while he did not retain the sounds of the original, he nevertheless reproduced their effects that depend on the emphasis of sound and the rhythmic cadences such as alliteration and assonance for the target texts to constitute plays in their own right.

With respect to the translation of the abundant instances of forms of address in the source texts, it was observed that in *Three Suitors: One Husband*, out of the 51 occurrences of the Bulu forms of address in the source, 47 (i.e. 92.2%) were preserved untranslated in the target text and they were omitted only in 4 instances. This, therefore, leaves the target texts with an overwhelmingly foreignizing effect, thus raising the question as to why Oyono Mbia decided to omit the four instances considering that the effect produced by such omission is very insignificant. In the second play *Until Further Notice*, out of the 45 occurrences of the forms of address, 25 (i.e. 55%) were preserved untranslated in the target text as against 20 which were

omitted. With respect to this culture-specific aspect, there seems an attempt here by the playwright to strike some balance between foreignizing and domesticating the target text. However, considering that both first and second plays were translated, published and performed the same year (1968) it is difficult to explain the author/translator's decision to overwhelmingly foreignize the first play and the second only to a relative degree. This is particularly so as both plays were effectively published at the same time before being performed. As such, it cannot be concluded that the overwhelming foreignizing effect in the first play was reduced in the second as a result of the negative/unfavourable response of the British actors and audience to the "otherness" in the first play.

In the third play, *His Excellency's Special Train*, all the 68 occurrence (i.e. 100%) of the Bulu forms of address were preserved untranslated in the target text (cf. section 4.3.2. above). This 100% preservation could probably be attributed to the fact that the English versions of this third play was translated by the author while in Yaounde, situated just a few kilometres away from his native village, where he could have been very much under the immediate and compelling influence of the local/indigenous cultural practices of his native Bulu village compared to an attitude of relative detachment he probably maintained while translating the first two plays far off in Britain. In effect, this target text was published in Yaounde by Editions Clé together with the source text in the same volume as a French-English bilingual edition with the Francophone and Anglophone components of the country as the primary target readers/audience. Indeed, on the whole, the target text when compared with the source text reveals a very close and careful repetition of the details of the source text not only with respect to the culture-specific elements discussed in this study but also as concerns sentences and smaller syntactic units, such that the translation is manifested as accurate and close to the original. The only instance where there is some distancing from the source text is the partial adaptation of the sounds discussed above. The partially adapted sounds in this third and closely translated play may be considered not as the result of inconsistency on the part of the author/translator but could rather be explained by the fact that the principle of partial adaptation already adopted in the first

two plays was equally extended to it precisely for consistency. Whatever the case, these partially adapted sounds as they appear in all the target texts can be considered to have a rather strange and greater foreignizing effect on the Cameroonian Anglophone target readers/audience than do the source text sounds on the Cameroonian Francophone target readers/audience as they are neither English nor Cameroonian indigenous sounds. Oyono Mbia's translational behaviour in the three plays with respect to the translation of the Bulu forms of address may thus be considered inconsistent. But then, as it is evident statistically, the impact of this inconsistency on the overall foreignizing character of the target texts put together may be considered to be insignificant, particularly when one takes into consideration the fact that out of the nine culture-specific aspects highlighted in his plays eight of them have been carried over to the target texts untranslated.

However, viewed from a more global perspective, Oyono Mbia's translational behaviour can be considered generally to be consistent and in phase with the prevailing literary trend and attitude of his time. For instance, the stylistic device of distorted words and names he makes use of in his plays is also observed in the works of other Cameroonian writers such as Ferdinand Oyono, René Philombe, Gervais Mendo Zé, etc. (cf. Tabi Manga 1988:173-180). For example, all the distorted words and names in Ferdinand Oyono's novel, *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956) have been carried over untranslated to the target text *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967) by John Reed. Similarly, distorted words and names are also observed in the writings of other African writers. Such is the case, for instance, in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) translated into French by Laburthe-Tolra and J. Chato as *Le Lion et la Perle* (1968). In the translated version of this play the above translators have equally preserved all of them untranslated. Another feature in the above cited works (as it is the case in Oyono Mbia's plays) is the use of words from the African indigenous languages. John Reed has carried them over untranslated to the English version of Ferdinand Oyono's novel just like Laburthe-Tolra and J. Chato have preserved them untranslated in the French version of Soyinka's play. It seems, therefore, important to note that with respect to Oyono Mbia's handling of culture-specific aspects in his

source and target texts, his translational behaviour can be considered on the whole to be consistent in that his essentially source text-oriented strategies in his target texts are the same as those employed in his creative compositional translations and that their overwhelming foreignizing effect on both the source and target texts is produced not only by the preservation and presence of individual culture-specific elements but also by their contribution to the overall textual effect such that there is a converging and powerful cumulative foreignizing effect produced by all the different types of culture-specific elements taken together.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to establish the fact that Oyono Mbia's strategies in his creative writings in the European language (French) are the same as those employed by his contemporaries, in other words, that Oyono Mbia's strategies were (and still are) in tune with the prevailing attitude and trend that characterized and still characterize African creative writers writing in European languages. This chapter has also highlighted the fact that the strategies used by Oyono Mbia in his creative compositional translations from Bulu into French are the same ones that he has retained and used to translate his plays from French into English. Furthermore, it has been illustrated and the point made that the main translation strategy observed in this category of African literature is a default preservation and foreignizing strategy. Finally, this chapter has sought to underscore the fact that the strategies used in their creative compositional translations by African writers (including Oyono Mbia) writing in European languages are in effect translation strategies as have been defined and explained by translation scholars (cf. section 3.4.2.). In this respect, examination of Oyono Mbia's strategies shows that they are not specific to the drama genre alone as it is evident from the review of translation strategies made in the section mentioned above that these strategies could equally be resorted to by the translator in the translation of the other genres.

It has also been established in this chapter that in the works of African writers writing in European languages there is often a deliberate intent on the part of these writers to indigenize the European languages wherein the European languages are re-appropriated and given expression in the imagination of the African writer. In effect, African authors who write in European languages have tended to adopt a foreignizing mode which preserves African culture-specific aspects in their works. Such intent has a direct incidence on the translation of the works of these authors as the strategies employed therein by them would to a large extent condition those of the translator translating from one European language into another. In this regard, it has thus been argued and asserted in this chapter that in the translation of this category of African literature, since for the most part, the African content and form have already been captured by the African author in the process of creative compositional translation in his European language of writing, what the translator moving from one European language to another simply needs to do, is to carry across into the target European language the same African content and form.

The preservation and foreignizing strategies adopted in their creative compositional translations by African writers writing in European languages clearly reveal that these authors encounter real difficulties in their attempt to faithfully portray in their works their social and cultural phenomena. That is why, in this regard, it has also been argued and asserted here that if fidelity in the transfer of the African social and cultural phenomena poses a problem for African creative writers writing in European languages then the non-African translator translating for a primary African target audience is faced with an even more difficult task. In effect, not only will he be faced with the African version of the European language that he is to translate from but he has to do a very thorough study of the African socio-cultural backgrounds against which the source text is written and where the target text will be read.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. The aims of the study

Having discussed the findings of this study in the previous chapter, it may be recalled that this thesis had as main objectives to identify and analyze the culture-bound literary and stylistic devices used by Oyono Mbia in his source texts, to perform a comparative text analysis of his source and target texts in order to determine the strategies used to convey the various devices in the target texts, to examine these strategies in the light of those that have been proposed by translation scholars and practitioners for handling such aspects, and finally to seek possible explanations that underlie Oyono Mbia's choice of strategies. In order to achieve these objectives, the approach adopted has been two-fold: analytical and descriptive.

With respect to the analytical aspect of the research carried out in Chapter 4, in order to affect a close and comprehensive scrutiny of the texts, the sociological, formalistic and semiotic approaches to literary criticism were resorted to. The sociological approach informed the analysis about the original circumstances surrounding the composition of Oyono Mbia's plays such as the historical situation in which the author wrote and the response of the contemporary audience, and the relevant context comprising biographical, social, historical as well as other relevant facts and information necessary for the understanding of the plays and from which their intent can be inferred. The formalistic approach on its part concentrated on the aesthetic quality of the plays and was chiefly concerned with the internal analysis of the plays with respect to the various figures of speech, literary and stylistic devices used. Finally, the semiotic approach enabled the analysis to be informed about the meaning conveyed by the non-verbal signs in the plays such as gestures, accessories and the numerous conventionalized social practices like eating with the fingers or with forks, drinking palm wine or illegally produced spirit drinks, dancing, etc. The analysis of the

plays from these three perspectives thus enabled a comprehensive mapping of their distinctive characteristics.

With respect to the descriptive aspect of the research also effected in Chapter 4, a comparison of the source and target texts was made based on models outlined for source-target text comparison within the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). Within this framework, therefore, the basis for the source and target text comparison was first determined and then the plays were compared at both the macro and micro-textual levels. The findings ensuing from the comparison and their incidence on the translation phenomenon have been explained in Chapter 5.

However, as a preliminary to and in order to underpin the above analysis, description and explanation, a survey was first of all made of the main issues that, today, characterize drama and drama translation as well as the main translation strategies that have been outlined or highlighted by translation scholars and practitioners for handling culture-specific aspects. Some of the main issues discussed and underscored in this study with respect to drama and drama translation included performability, speakability and the drama text as an incomplete entity. With regard to this last issue, it has been argued and asserted in this study that the drama text is indeed an incomplete entity and that, though operating at different stages of the drama communication chain, the communication roles of the drama translator and the director/producer are distinct but identical and that the relationship between these key persons in the chain ought to be viewed from the perspectives of collaboration and complementarity rather than of inferiority or superiority of status. This is particularly so given that, in the final analysis, the message and the full aesthetic potential of the original play as received by the audience in the target language/culture is the result of their joint transfer endeavour. Furthermore, it is argued that rather than continuing to discuss in abstraction the difficulty (and even the impossibility) of transferring the performability and speakability dimensions of the drama text, the drama translator and drama translation scholar definitely stand to gain deeper insight into what directors and performers actually do to the text for it to be performable or for it to be performed by getting really involved in the process of transforming the translated text into a

dramatic event. Finally, and still with respect to performability, it has equally been argued in this thesis that since drama is essentially rooted in a given culture, universal applicability of a set of criteria to determine performability need not be the main issue and that rather the focus could be on the predictability of such established criteria for a given culture, period or drama type (such as ritual drama, song and dance drama, masquerade drama, secular/civic drama, etc.).

It can be said, at the end of this study, that the research objectives stated above have been attained as Oyono Mbia's source text culture-bound literary and stylistic devices were identified and analyzed, the translation strategies used to transfer them from French into English were determined, they were examined in the light of existing strategies, and possible explanations provided for the motives that underlie Oyono Mbia's choice of those strategies. It can be concluded at the end of this study that the findings have validated the hypothesis of the research which stated that in his translated versions Oyono Mbia has produced a realistic and convincing portrait of his traditional Bulu/Cameroonian society depicted in the source texts. In effect, it has been clearly established in this study that in his target texts Oyono Mbia has used the same preservation and foreignizing strategies he used in the first place to map the same culture-specific aspects of his native Bulu language/culture on to the French source texts.

6.2. Contribution of the present study

The contribution of this work to translation and literary discourse could first of all be situated at a more restricted and specific level in the framework of the case study of Oyono Mbia's works that constituted the focus of this project. In effect, it was pointed out above (cf. section 1.1.) that Oyono Mbia is one of the most prominent Cameroonian writers whose influence on the Cameroonian literary landscape, particularly on the Cameroonian dramatic scene has been profound and extensive. It was equally pointed out that several aspects of his works (socio-political, anthropological, literary, stylistic, etc.) constitute the subject of numerous research

papers, postgraduate dissertations and other scholarly write-ups in French and English by Cameroonian Francophones and Anglophones respectively. Unfortunately, no study has been carried out on Oyono Mbia's works from a translation perspective whereas the translated versions of his plays have entered into the Cameroonian Anglophone literary system so completely that they have ceased to be regarded as translations. Today, an investigation of those factors that account for such a situation in particular and the factors that condition the acceptability and integration or not of literary works in general into the receiving system, ought to be at the centre of the translation scholar's preoccupation. It is thus expected that by exploring the translation dimension of this playwright's works this study would contribute to enrich not only the already existing body of paratexts surrounding his works but also the body of literature on case studies in the area of translation studies.

At a more general level, therefore, this case study on Oyono Mbia could equally contribute to enhancing understanding on the reception of translated African literature in the West in that it provides possible explanations as to why African literature written in European languages or translated into those languages does not usually actually end up being integrated into the literary polysystems of those European cultures but rather remains and belongs to the African culture where it is integrated. In this regard, the study points to the need for assessments and evaluative judgements of translated African literature to be made not against Western models and standards but rather against African ideals and models.

Furthermore, this study could provide a useful analytical framework to the translation critic as well as the translator of African literature in that not only does it use the case study to explain and circumscribe the perspective from which African literature written in European languages should be viewed and tackled, but it also exposes the researcher and practitioner to the critical interpretative approach and close analysis of such texts required to substantiate his choices and strategies as well as qualitative evaluative judgements.

By examining and characterizing Oyono Mbia's translational behaviour and translation strategies, and by placing them within a broader framework of African literature written in European languages, this study has sought to underscore predictability in the translational behaviour and choice of strategies by the translator of this category of African literature. This study could thus serve as a stepping-stone for further investigations to arrive at results that would enable greater predictability and generalization with respect to the translator's translational behaviour in the African context.

In the course of this study, it was observed that there is a glaring absence of a theory for the translation of African literature written in European languages despite the fact that this category of literature accounts for a major part of the body of literature that makes up the continent's literary heritage. It is therefore hoped that this study could serve as stimulus to translation scholars interested in the translation of African literature to evolve a theory of translation for the translation of African literature written in European languages.

This study opted to focus on the cultural dimension in the translation of Oyono Mbia's plays, and by extension the translation of African literary works, because it is believed that in keeping with the prevailing literary trend and attitude of African writers writing in European languages whereby the objective is to maintain a truly and authentic African identity and mode of expression in a literature that can be identified as specifically African although written in European languages, in transferring the message and the aesthetic of these African creative writers, therefore, the main aim of the translator should be to preserve, as much as possible, the cultural value systems of African thought. In other words, the translated version of the source text should equally be imbued with the flavour of Africanness as well as possess the style of the writer. In this regard, therefore, Oyono Mbia's translation strategies in his source and target texts seem to serve as a model to be emulated by the translator, particularly the non-African translator, of this category of African literature.

6.3. Suggestions for further research

The use of African local languages and culture-specific elements inscribed within a paradigm of cultural and literary emergence carries with it a number of specific problems, only some of which have been examined in Oyono Mbia's works and with respect to only English and French. Even though the situation of the African writer in the former Spanish and Portuguese African colonies could be extrapolated from that highlighted in this study concerning writers in the former British and French African colonies, the fact remains that the discussion in this study did not include African literary works written in the Spanish and Portuguese colonial contexts. The limitations of this study, as that of most case studies, therefore, is that it is restricted in scope considering that for the findings of such studies to be sufficiently generalizable, it is necessary for the sampling to be representative enough. Thus, while this study has examined Oyono Mbia's works in a French-English context and has related them to works by other African writers written in French or English, it has not been possible, for reasons of lack of language proficiency, to broaden the scope to include the works of other African writers writing in the other European languages such as Spanish or Portuguese. Other studies carried out in the latter contexts could complement the present study.

Oyono Mbia's translation strategies have been examined against a background in Africa where European languages have had to pay a certain price as vehicles of communication which is the Africanization or indigenization of those languages. Such Africanization or indigenization definitely has an incidence on the translation of African literary works and on literary translation in Africa in general (including the translation of European literary works into African languages). There is, therefore, need for translation scholars to investigate this phenomenon in greater detail by carrying out comprehensive and interdisciplinary studies which would enable them to articulate a theory of literary translation in this paradigm of Africanization or indigenization. Thus, from the translation, literary and linguistic perspectives, for

instance, such studies could examine and map out how the European language is re-appropriated and given expression in the imagination of the African writer.

This study has not examined other subtle and diverse manipulations involved in the creative compositional translation behaviour of African writers (such as Oyono Mbia) writing in European languages. In this regard, some scholars assert that when an African writer writing in a European language sets out to write, in effect, not only does he literally “carry across” but his activity involves “transportation or transmission or transposition but also transformation and transmutation” (cf. Gyassi Kwaku 1999:80). There is, therefore, a need for translation scholars to also articulate a theory on how translation functions as a critical and as a creative activity in African literature written in European languages.

Finally, the translation phenomenon evident in the creative writings of African writers writing in European languages when considered at all tends to be regarded as a process which is covert, semantic and secondary (cf. Bandia 1993:58) rather than one which is overt, communicative and primary. However, the contrary is equally clearly revealed in the present case study of Oyono Mbia’s translation strategies from French into English which are the same strategies employed in his source texts (i.e. in his creative compositional translations from his native unwritten Bulu language into written French). In effect, the overall effect of Oyono Mbia’s source text-oriented strategies can also be considered and characterized as overt, communicative and primary as demonstrated by the reception and integration of his target texts into the Cameroonian Anglophone cultural and literary polysystem. Indeed, this may be considered to also hold true, in general, for the translation of African literature written in European languages where both the African source and target text readers/audiences share the same cultural background. Further studies to complement this project could therefore be carried out in order to clearly characterize the defining features and impact on the translation phenomenon in general of the translation techniques involved in African creative compositional translations.

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