

Othering the Foreign Language in the West African Europhone Novel

'Othering,' a discursive habit in descriptive ethnology, and its antecedent, the portrait of manners and customs, is now used in Africanist criticism¹ of travel writing on Africa for European consumption.² Othering refers to the codification, homogenization, and reification of the Other's difference. The one who does the othering is unmistakably European whereas the Other is the *sui generis*, iconic African. The theory of Otherness has underwritten theories of difference pertaining to gender and the psyche, but has also imbued analyses of the colonial discourse as it depends on the concept of "fixity."³ The Other, who has been seen lurking in the periphery of certain circles, has become so ubiquitous lately that some academics have been holding their breath, refraining from stepping on ants or eating vegetables, in case they may be Others (Fromm).

If one extends the act of othering to linguistic difference, the Other's language, whether it is the indigenous or auxiliary African language, falls prey to a colonial fixity or tyrannical homogeneity. This language is either simplified, as in the hypocoristic renditions of Pidgin English or *français tirailou*, ridiculed, exoticized, or backgrounded and misrepresented, as in the non-sub-titled speech of the 'restless natives' in colonial films. Othering thus assumes different functions when the Other's language is European and the

one who 'others' is the West African writer. Accustomed to his own language being 'othered,' that is, codified as patois, dialect, *charabia*, *baragouin*, the writer needs to come to terms with the otherness of the foreign European language before othering it. I will refer to the otherness of the European language, as opposed to its foreignness, for its otherness may linger after the original, primary foreignness has been dispelled through verbal mastery and oral proficiency in the process of second-language acquisition.

I propose here to examine the othering discourse in and, accessorially, outside of the West African novel of English and French expression. Presumably, this discourse is moving toward self-apprehension, a quality which Wole Soyinka singled out as "the most precious in the African writer of our times who is besieged by demands to apprehend himself in the terms dictated by others" (xi-xii). I distinguish four steps in the process of othering, its 'degree zero' being the colonialist acceptance of the European language as it is found in its "ancestral home," to adapt Achebe's words, that is, not "in communion with its African surroundings" (1975, 102).

The first step is that of relexification, as in the Nigerian Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964), which holds that the European language can convey African culture. The twin methods of 'cushioning' and 'contextualizing' constitute the second step and are used concurrently with relexification but negate its premise and point toward othering. This is best exemplified in the works of the Nigerian novelists, Chinua Achebe and Nkem Nwankwo, the Senegalese Ousmane Socé Diop and Jean Gerem Ciss, and the Ivorian Amadou Koné and Jean-Marie Adiaffi. The first two steps constitute in turn what I will generally refer to as 'indigenization,' that is, the attempt at subverting the linguistic difference or otherness of the European language by indigenizing it. As both a method and a decolonizing strategy, it attempts to convey the concepts, thought-patterns and even linguistic features of the African language through the European tongue.

The third step is that of seeking new outlets for the expression of African culture outside of the relexified novel, in another medium altogether such as film. Although the long history of theatre performances in Africa provides the earliest sources for my theoretical conjectures, I chose not to dwell on theatre and film as genres. Ousmane Sembène's novelistic and filmic itinerary only serves the purpose of highlighting the linguistic pitfalls of fiction. The fourth step or ultimate othering is to be found in the practice of translation and auto-translation, as dramatized by the Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o. The as yet tiny albeit buoyant body of literature in Pidgin and Atlantic Creoles is part of the othering process but is too problematical to be covered here.

1 Some parts of this paper have been expanded into the "Conclusion" of my book, *The African Palimpsest* (1991).

2 Mary Louise Pratt applies the term "otherness" to some nineteenth-century travel writing chiefly about Africa in her article, "Scratches on the Face of a Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen" (1985).

3 The theory of otherness (also *Alterität* or *Anderssein*) has underwritten the Hegelian-derived metaphysics of the Existentialists and the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss as well as much feminist analysis since Simone de Beauvoir's critical citation of Levinas' *Le Temps et l'autre* in her introduction to *The Second Sex*. Cf. Mandy Merck (1987) and Homi K. Bhabha (1983). In this paper, Bhabha questions the mode of representation of otherness.

Relexification⁴ — our first step — is an imaginative, world-creating attempt at forging a new literary-aesthetic medium or 'third code' out of the alien, dominant (European) lexicon. It is also an attempt at appropriating the Other's language in order to make it one's own and bend its otherness or fixity to artistic and ideological exigencies.

The West African writer's relexifying innovations, whether they affect the semantics or the syntax, may not reflect variations in current oral usage in West Africa. For instance, Igbo people today use "eleven" instead of "ten and one" (Igbo: *iri na otu*), which Achebe used in *Things Fall Apart* to render the traditional Igbo counting system (TFA 37).

As a diachronic practice, relexification differs from mother-tongue interference, calquing and loan-translation, as is the case with the Nigerian Amos Tutuola's often felicitous but unwitting calquing from his mother tongue, Yoruba.⁵ Many West African writers like Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Aminata Sow Fall have relexified the European language from Igbo, Fanti, Wolof respectively. I have singled out Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* because it is thus far the only conscious experiment in syntactical relexification in West African literature. The textual violence here comes, not from English as Ijò people may use it in the social arena, but from the very texture of the Ijò language. The novel is replete with morphosyntactic innovations such as the postponement of the verb or of the negative, characteristic of Ijò.⁶

The engine-man Okolo's said-things heard (VO 70).

inziñtá-òwéi bẹ̀ Òkòlò ghàwèrèṃ nàṃè

[Engineer the Okolo said-things heard];

Who are you people be? ... If you are coming-in people be, then come in (27).

Òmíní túbànlí ò? ... ó sáá bómíní kímíamọ̀ àbá sáá bó

[You who you are ... if coming-in people are come in]

Shuffling feet turned Okolo's head to the door (26).

Sísírf sísírf wèñbùwàṃ Òkòlò tìbì wàimò wáribùṃ òtámè

[Shuffling moving-feet Okolo's head turned door faced]

Okara does not translate in that he does not seek equivalency, nor does he aim at recoding the original according to the norms of the target language.

Unlike translation, relexification does not operate from the language of one text to the other but from one language to the other within the same text. Okara has described the process of ideation behind relexification but, unlike some writers, he has never admitted to the possibility of an African-language *original* which, under the guise of carelessly jotted notes or elaborate literary fragments, is not visible in the record of literary history. The West African relexified text can be compared to a palimpsest in that, behind the scriptural authority of the target European language, the earlier, imperfectly erased remnants of the source language are still visible. The critic's task is therefore to decypher the West African palimpsest and to recover not so much the source language as its *trace*. Significantly, Okara's experiment had no substantial following. Relexification inevitably leads to an artistic impasse.

I will now discuss the second step in the othering process in more detail because, unlike relexification, these methods point toward othering the foreign language. The West African writer's alternative to simulating the African tongue in a Europhone narrative (of which we only see the *trace*) is to intersperse the text with African words or phrases in the original.

When African words or phrases describing culturally bound objects or occurrences cannot be transparently conveyed (translated or relexified) in the Europhone text, the writer resorts to the methods of 'cushioning' and 'contextualizing.' These methods — our second step — antedate and will outlive relexification because the Europhone writer will always be compelled to provide areas of immediate context (contextualization) or tag an explanatory word or phrase (cushioning) onto the West African word. Both methods are heir to burdensome informational digression verging on anthropological description.

Some writers relegated that factual information to a footnote or glossary. As early as 1911, the Ghanaian Casely-Hayford provided a glossary of Akan words at the end of *Ethiopia Unbound* and, more recently, Soyinka appended a glossary of Yoruba expressions at the end of *The Interpreters* (1965). The authorial or editorial footnote is generally favored over the glossary; it has the virtue of clearing the text of reams of obtrusive material, but it has not always been used economically. An early novel like Ousmane Socé Diop's *Karim* (1948) contains more than eighty notes. Most of these extra-textual comments are addressed to the primary readership of those times, that is, a European, French-speaking audience. Thus an indigenous title of sovereignty like "Samba linguère" (*Karim* 23) is defined in terms of the pre-Revolution French aristocracy when, in fact, both the Senegalese aristocrat and even the *Garni* of noble descent are below the rank of the *Samba linguère*, who is a prince born from the *Linger* or Queen Mother.

In *Karim*, a Wolof sentence such as "Dina mat[e], ak ... dou mat[e], boul diokhe sa lokho" is foregrounded in the text and then translated in a

4 Loreto Todd refers to the "relexification of one's mother tongue, using English vocabulary but indigenous structures and rhythms" (303 note 22).

5 For a detailed discussion of Yoruba calquing in Amos Tutuola, see Zabus (1989).

6 In order to ascertain the degree of relexification from Ijò, I consulted Mr. Gabriel Okara. Professor Kay Williamson of the U of Port Harcourt provided the diacritics.

footnote: "(Mord-il? ne mord-il pas? Abstiens-toi!)" (*Karim* 63). Incidentally, we should note that Socé does translate according to the dominant language's norms, since the literal meaning of *boul diokhe sa lokto* is "do not give your hand." Curiously enough, the following saying by the Senegalese sage, Kocc Barma Fall — "Aime la jeune femme, mais ne te fie pas à elle!" — is foregrounded in the text in French and translated in Wolof in a footnote: "Djiguene diou ndaw sopal te boul volou" (*Karim* 52). In this 'translation' back into Wolof, the modern Wolof reader is struck not only by its obsolete, Frenchified orthography but also by the exogenous element *diou* which is not part of the traditional saw. Confronted with the conflicting authorities of the original word vs. the translated word, Socé attempts to dispel this inconsistency by attaching a French explanatory tag to a Wolof phrase — "Dieureuf-dieuf/(je te remercie)" (*Karim* 32) or to a Peulh/Pular saying: "Niaye ala Gayenago/L'éléphant n'a pas de berger" (*Karim* 28), where the Wolof would say *Naala Gaynako*. At times, a relexified formula such as "tu es mon âme!" is cushioned with its Wolof equivalent "Ya di sa ma nafsou!" which is in turn relegated to a footnote, with the Wolof phrase foregrounded and flanked by its 'translation': "Ya di sa ma nafsou: Tu es mon âme" (*Karim* 50). Peter Young refers to this method as "cushioning," coined after the common device used by translators and compilers to "cushion" Middle French medical terms with their Latin equivalents or calques.⁷

We may infer from the overlapping and inconsistent use of such devices in *Karim*, to take only one example, that cushioning originated as an attempt to do away with the ubiquitous footnote or the informational digression that ultimately transformed the novel into a cultural handbook or a language lesson. As its very name indicates, the authorial footnote stands at the bottom of a page as an additional piece of information or a 'sub-text' of a sort whereas a glossary conventionally lists and explains the meaning of technical or special terms at the end of a work. Topographically located outside of the text and, by the same token, outside of writing, such notes constitute a reading rather than a writing practice. As a result, the Europhone/African writer will often come in deadlock with the reader-receptor. In that respect, the Ivorian novelist Jean-Marie Adiaffi concurs:

Ce que je n'aime pas c'est lire un livre où il y a trop de notes en bas. Ça brise le plaisir de la lecture. Je préfère jouer à une espèce de bilinguisme, en prenant les mots africains. Si je ne peux pas les traduire, je les garde et les traduis à côté. Utiliser les deux mots, m'arranger pour expliquer les deux mots, le mot français étant mis en

apposition au mot agni pour expliquer. C'est pour le confort du lecteur. (Riesz et al. 45)

Nkem Nwankwo's in-text use of cushioning in *Danda* (1964) could then be considered an improvement on the footnote or glossary. Here, the Igbo or English word is cushioned with its equivalent: "izaga-stilt-spirit" (*Danda* 22); "music (egwu)" (103); "Question! (Ajuju!)" (120); "biko (please)" (158); "Danda, nwa amul n'ego ekenemwo! (Danda, son born in money, I greet you)" (185); or "Nwayo bu ije" — slow be your journey" (36), literally "Gentleness is your journey," and "an mgwu ageleba or ozo staff" (18). In the latter example, Nwankwo has cushioned the Igbo phrase "mgwu ageleba" with "ozo staff." Nwankwo may expect the non-Igbo reader to guess what an ozo staff is from the anthropological accounts of early Igbo novelists like Onuora Nzekwu and Clement Agunwa, who exoticized Igbo culture for the European readership.⁸ But the non-Igbo reader is certainly justified in being perplexed by this tag, which may turn into an *ignotum per ignotius*. Needless to say, the double-edged efficiency of this transitional device is to be found in medieval (and present-day Western) medicine, deliberately couched in mysterious undecidables. The Latin explanatory tag aimed at avoiding the abrupt presentation of an unusual or obscure term, but it further mystified the signifying term that people would gloatingly swallow in order to be cured.

Before Nwankwo, Achebe, in addition to providing a glossary of recurrent Igbo words, made ample use of the explanatory tag, being of the type "obi or hut" or "hut, or obi" in *Things Fall Apart*: "the elders, or *ndichie*" (*TFA*, 9); "eze-agadi-nwayi, or the teeth of an old woman" (25); "the rope, or *tie-tie*" (39); "jigida, or waist beads" (49).

Cushioning "obi" with "hut" and *vice versa*, to take the commonest example, is effective in preventing the use of culturally misleading expressions like "reception hall" and "sitting room" introduced in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* and *The Great Ponds*, which lack the element "obi." However, the use of "reception hut" in *The Concubine* (e.g. 32) is probably more felicitous than a transfer according to the dominant cultural (European) norm, and certainly more felicitous than in cases when the well-meaning translator makes the African *pagne* into the Brazilian *tanga* or string and the thin-walled clay *canari* into a yellow-feathered song-bird (see Hale and Pigeon 77-83).

Achebe, Amadi, and Nwankwo have resorted to cushioning in order to fill the gap between, for example, *obi* and hut. Condemning an essentialist view

8 See, for instance, the pieces of burdensome factual information in the description of an *ofo* staff in *Wand of Noble Wood* (1961) and of the *nyi-uwa* in his *Blade Among the Boys*.

7 See Howard Stone (1953) and K.A. Sey (1973).

of language in post-colonial texts, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* have warned against considering the word *obi* as an untransferable cultural sign and a metonymy standing for the whole Igbo culture and thereby "carry[ing]" the oppressed culture" (*Empire* 53). More significant than the word or its referent is the gap in-between, which is metonymic of the breach that resulted from the clash between two worlds that were forcefully brought in contact, as shown by the conjunction or connecting both worlds. As such, the forceful proximity of both items represents the failure to achieve cultural symbiosis or reciprocal creolization. In attempting to name the gap between autotelically inter-referential signs, writers take the reader along a tortuous route marked with gaps and blanks.

The main drawback to cushioning is that the brief tag may not encompass the full cultural significance of the transferred item and that it may defer understanding or overstimulate the reader's mind. The synonymous pairs are functionally very much like what Wolfgang Iser called "the blanks" that suspend "good continuation," a concept which he borrowed from the psychology of perception and applied to the act of reading. Those blanks which syncope the reading and break up the connectability of a text, he goes on, "condition the clash of images, and so help to hinder (and, at the same time, to stimulate) the process of image-building" (Iser 187).

The recurrence of several tags explaining the same word (at times on the same page) testifies to the author's uneasiness. So "double" and "vital" in Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances* (116, 120, 123), "silhouette" in Boni's *Le Crépuscule des temps anciens* (178) and "ombre" and "double" in Adiaffi's *La Carte d'identité* all serve as explanatory tags for the Malinke concept of *jd* or the Agni concept of *wawie*.

Cushioning in Kourouma's *Monné* has engendered problems of a semantic and scriptural order. For instance, the *jd* is etymologically related to "double" but is relexified into or cushioned with "shadow" (*Soleils*, e.g., 106, 120) or "vital [principle]" (*Monné* e.g., 200) when in fact the vital principle is the *nl*. Some Maninka words are flanked by their French "shadows": *sêto*, a singular word, is cushioned with "nattes de paille" (mattings of straw) in the plural. Conversely, such expressions as "mari de groupe d'âge" (*Monné* 137) or "frère de plaisanterie" (36) appear without their Malinke "doubles," that is, *ffu/lanké* and *sinankun*, respectively. Also, the French translation does not always correspond to the Maninka semantic field. For instance, in "Kabako (extraordinaire)!" (24), *kábako* is a noun derived from the verb *kaba* (to wonder/to be astounded) and *kó* ("event"), which means "prodigy, miracle, marvel." A word such as *ton* [tón] is translated by "association des circoncis" [*solimaton*] when, in fact, it means, in a restricted sense, "law, rule" and, in a more general sense, an association of young people entrusted with the application of rules in social life. The Maninka orthography is often

Frenchified; for instance, "naikasso" (230) instead of *nègè'gésó* is used to designate the "iron-horse" or the bicycle. Or, the orthography is simply not formally acceptable. Such is the case with "*monné bobelli (monné invengeable)*" (162) from *mònebòbali*, that is to say, "devoid of vengeance," *báli* being a derivative which indicates "the absence of."⁹

The cleavage between French and Maninka is deliberately entertained for humorous purposes. Kourouma has thus surfeited the role of the interpreter, Soumaré. The latter is the linguistic mediator between the White man and the King who appointed him with the aim of maintaining some degree of misunderstanding between himself and the White man (232). Thus Djigui Keita, the King of Soba, stops attending the French courses organized by the De Gaulle Administration after the teacher read a French sentence — "Le chat voit bien même la nuit" — which he understood as the Maninka: *Zan ba biè na nogo* meaning the "vagina of Zan's mother — sticky sauce" (232). However, this kind of irony can backfire. If one omits the tonal marks and separates, as Kourouma did, *na* from *nògò* in *Zan bá biè nánògò [sticky sauce]*, it means "will be stained/dirty." Kourouma's authorial intention is defeated by the "ear of the Other," which picks up sounds that Kourouma had not anticipated and points to another type of dissembler, the discrepancy between Maninka as it is heard/spoken and Maninka as it is written (see Derrida 93-161).

Peter Young has argued that when cushioning an African word, the writer is "not so much influenced by his mother tongue as being compelled by simple denotational necessity" (25). Although cushioning should not be confused with mother-tongue interference, "denotational necessity" hardly justifies the saturation in some dialogues with African words or phrases and their equivalents. Let us consider the Ivorian Amadou Koné's "Traites," the first part of *Les Blakoros*: "*Dô di, Mamadou. Amake djougou manye, ce n'est rien de grave*" (*Blakoros* 40).¹⁰ Here, French is (at least quantitatively) minorized by the italicized Jula words.

The discursive minorization of French is at times accompanied by its quantitative minorization. Every page in Senegalese Jean Gerem Ciss's *Le*

9 I owe these comments on the Maninka to Professor Claire Grégoire and Dr. Moussa Diaby. [Note by the Editor: Currently available fonts (typefaces) in the IBM compatible word-processing programs and which the CRCL/RCLC is using in its recent desktop publishing capacity cannot reproduce all African diacritics. Work is underway to rectify this shortcoming of current electronic software.]

10 Note that *blakoro* is the proto-Malinke word *bila kòró*, that is, "who is under [kòró] the (very brief) slip [bilá]," hence the connotation of "non-initiated," "non-circumcized," which Ahmadou Kourouma calls in *Monné* a scam (In French "un garment"). I owe this remark to Professor Claire Grégoire. The comments on Maninka and Jula have been provided by Dr. Karim Traore.

Cri des anciens is saturated with parenthetical tags in French attached to the word or phrase in Ndût, Ciss's native tongue and a minor language from the Cangin language family in Senegal:

Les champs de *gël* (sol *joor*) ... ni pendant le *tij* (hivernage) ni pendant le *sëk* (automne), ni non plus pendant le *petàkàn* (printemps), mais uniquement ne reverdir que dans le *yox* (hiver).... (Cri 25)

Ciss here complicates the cushioning process by rendering the Ndût *gël* by the French *sol* juxtaposed with the Wolof word *joor*, which designates a type of coarse sand suited for peanut farming. Through that juxtaposition, French and Wolof seem to share the same hegemonic power of interpretation of a minor-language item. A statistical count would reveal that one third to one half of the dialogues appear in Ndût:

Yhé yi bhal (qu'est-ce que ceci)?

N'avez-vous jamais vu un *xanèèl* (hôte)?

Géfi dhuf bhux (allez au diable: lit = allez au cul de chien)! (Cri 84)

Or, in Peulh, which, Ciss tells us, he merely transcribed from what he heard the character say, "as if in a movie":¹¹

Miin mi loriima (malheureuse que je suis!)...

Idi

Yèèv (oui)

Ekotaki xina voyaz (pourquoi maman pleure-t-elle?)

Mi anda (je ne sais pas). (Cri 133)

The impulse behind the use of cushioning by Jean Gerem Ciss clearly goes beyond "denotational necessity" and inhibits the liveliness of the dialogues and the general drift of the narrative. It eliminates technical credibility and indicates an almost pathological yearning for the mother tongue, which may transform the text into a "schizo-text." The device also inhibits the reader's aesthetic response; the reader is left with the sense of reading a text with interlinear translation. Cushioning is therefore not always effective in what it purports to do, that is, in avoiding the use of obscure terms in translation. At its worst, the method can be so ineffective that the tags stand out as the rejects of an unsuccessful transplant onto the Europhone text.

11 From an informal interview with Jean Gerem Ciss, Dakar, July 10, 1989. In the following excerpt, let us note that *Yèèv* literally means "Look!" and that the current spelling for *Mi anda* is *Mi amdaa*.

In Amadou Koné's *Jusqu'au seuil de l'irréel* (1976), areas of immediate context are provided for Jula words like *daba* and *dolo* which are never translated. So a word like *botoi* is first introduced in the White Commandant's question to his boy: "Qu'est-ce que 'botoi'?" to which the boy replies that they are locusts, so that when we reach the chapter "Où l'on parle de botoi," all references are self-explanatory. Similarly, in Koné's "Les Traites," the novelist takes pains to alert the non-Jula reader so that he/she should comprehend the following passage without difficulty:

Allah ait pitié de la déchéance du monde sous le pouvoir des Blakoros, des filles tarées et ... si le *mogoya* [first introduced on p. 42 as "une grande considération des relations humaines"] n'a pas atteint les *blakoros*, il a quitté beaucoup de vieilles personnes, surtout les riches. *Naforo* (cf. 40 "l'argent") les a étourdis et ils s'amusaient à torturer les pauvres. Et où mettent-ils le *soulamaya* [sic: *silamaya*], la solidarité entre les croyants? (*Blakoros* 51)

Building upon Young's earlier research, Hugh Brown demonstrates that "by and large, the Igbo words are used successfully" in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (77). According to Brown, Achebe introduces Igbo words to the non-Igbo reader either by explaining them within the dialogue or by having the reader infer from the context or the syntax or both whether the Igbo word is a noun phrase, an adverbial or a nominal construction and then what it means. This riddling device, which we identified as contextualization, involves the non-Igbo reader in a guessing game which, judging by Brown's presentation of its rules, requires supernatural insight. For instance, in a conversation between Ezeulu and his friend Akuebu, Ezeulu drives home a point about his forebears' achievements: "Did not my grandfather put a stop to *ichi* in Umuaro? He stood up in all his awe and said: We shall no longer carve our faces as if they were *ozo* doors" (AG 149). Brown contends that Achebe achieves a double effect: "Not only is it clear that *ichi* refers to the practice of scarification, but it is also clear that *ozo* doors are special; they are ornamented (77).

"Contextualization by inference," as we shall now call it, holds greater promise than cushioning but it may prove equally ineffective. Let us consider another passage from *Arrow of God* in which "alusi" is, according to Brown, felicitously contextualized:

"What is the story I hear then — that you are carving an *alusi* for a man of Umuagbu?"

"Who told you?"

"Who told me? Is it true or not is what I want to know, not who told me?"

"I want to know who told you because I don't think he can tell the difference between the face of a deity and the face of a Mask."

"I see. You may go, my son. And if you like you may carve all the gods in Umuro." (4G 5)

With his customary dismissal of any difficulty, Brown comments that "there can be little doubt in the mind of a reader that *alusi* means god or representation of a god" (72). But an *alusi* is not a god. Austin Shelton explains:

Some missionaries have called *alusi* "devils," reflecting their wish to break down Ibo traditional religion in order to convert the Ibo people; some young Ibo refer to *alusi* as "angels," reflecting their desire to praise *alusi*. Anthropologists tend to call *alusi* "spirits," which is as inexact as the other translations. An *alusi* is an *alusi*, and can be described in English, although many words would be required. One solution might be the adoption of the term as an English word, just as Igbo itself has taken over many neologisms from English — e.g. *katikizim*, *yurivasiti*. (403)

But the bilateral *métissage* or reciprocal creolization of which we can already see the beginnings in the "Wolof métissé de français" (*Karim* 109) or in Sembène Ousmane's more recent "franwolof" has not started yet. If it has started in the West African sociolinguistic context, it has not yet been creatively represented in the literary text.¹² The glottopolitical pattern of dominance may dictate that the repressed yet hospitable African language integrate more European words than *vice versa*. One can only surmise at this point that the time has not yet come when the West African Europhone writer will be able to insert an African word or refer to an African cultural event in the same manner in which a French writer can throw in his text German, English or Latin locutions and refer to Jupiter, Mozart, and Nietzsche without explanation.

The number of untranslated words in West African Europhone novels is therefore infinitesimal. The refusal to gloss, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* argue, "forces the reader into an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these terms have meaning." As an ineluctable "sign of a post-colonial discourse," the untranslated word is "first a sign of distinctiveness ... [and], more importantly, ... an endorsement of the facility of the discourse situation, a recognition that the message event, the

12 See Gabriel Manessy and Paul Wald (1984, 70). On reciprocal creolization, see L.

Bouquiaux (1969). Let us note, however, that on the Anglophone side, Ken Saro-Wiwa (1985), for instance, has his protagonist speak a strange, lawless lingo on the verge of creolization, which is made of Kana-informed Nigerian Pidgin, "broken English," and standard idiomatic English. These registers have been amalgamated into "rotten English," which is meant to be the discordant voice of post-Civil War Nigerian society. However, a full discussion of the Pidginized medium in novels lies beyond the scope of this paper.

'scene of the Word,' has full authority in the process of cultural and linguistic intersection" (*Empire* 65).

A potential result of eradicating footnotes, cushioning, and contextualization by reference is that the text becomes inaccessible to the non-African reader, therefore possibly worthy of respect, in the same way that the literature of the academy, for instance, has become increasingly inaccessible linguistically to the speaker lacking special training. Conversely, this very inaccessibility may confirm the non-African reader's 'colonial' suspicions that the African tongue is barbaric.

Whatever the case may be, it would seem that the reader of West African literature and, by the same token, of other post-colonial literatures, will increasingly be involved in a guessing game, which takes him/her beyond this other guessing game, which is the interpretation of literary works. While the latter interpretation ends in some kind of appropriation or *Aneignung*, that is, "the process of making one's own (*eigen*) what was other, foreign (*fremd*)," the former hermeneutical process gives the reader "a new capacity of knowing himself/herself" when faced with this new "fusion of horizons" (after Gadamer's *Horizontverschmelzung*) in the post-colonial world (Ricoeur 106-07). Although it is unwise to speculate over the future acts of reading by a reader of world literature, we can catch a glimpse of the post-colonial reader's 'burden' when faced with increasingly hybridized poetics. Only the future will tell whether such a reader will be reading African Europhone or African-language texts.

In recent times, writers have refrained from giving into ethnology and have made alternate or complementary use of footnotes and explanatory tags while contextualizing by inference. The footnote continues to be popular. The Wolof logos, in particular, has been the object of a notorious *chassé* of interpretations. In *L'Appel des arènes*, the Senegalese novelist Aminata Sow Fall seems to make up for a general lack of verisimilitude in dialogues by providing footnotes on Wolof culture and even on Wolof syntax. Whereas her novel contains 25 footnotes, Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate* (1981) contains 54. We are not far from the earlier immoderate use of the footnote as in Socé's *Karim*.

As methods, contextualization and cushioning have been ironized, which testify to the novelist's ultimate self-consciousness and uneasiness with the device. In *La Carte d'identité*, Jean-Marie Adiaffi thus hammers the meaning of the Agni word, "Floco," into the reader's presumably thick skull: "Floco veut dire: celui qui n'est pas circoncis, donc un idiot, un lourdaud, un homme vil, un va-nu-pieds, un fils de chien, un pauvre bâtarde qui ne comprend vraiment rien à rien." (CI 7) Adiaffi opposes the dialectic, frustrating function of the footnote to the plushness of cushioning, which is

meant to make the act of reading more comfortable and thus heighten the pleasure of the text.

It is probably because Achebe sensed a similar discomfort that he deleted one sentence in Igbo from the revised version of *Arrow of God* (Brown 77). In this name-calling match, a girl is answered by her brother: "It kills little girls," said Nwafo. "I did not ask you, ant-hill nose." "You will soon cry, *Usa bulu Okpiti*." (AG 3) We may presuppose that Achebe deemed *Usa bulu Okpiti* ("the moon kills little boys") too burdensome and, in a later edition, he sacrificed the Igbo retort to ensure clarity for the non-Igbo reader. Contextualization may prove ineffective mainly because of its reliance on the non-indigenous reader's act of reading and the ill-defined character of the readership it purports to reach.

Plagued with semantic and scriptural problems, the twin methods of cushioning and contextualization thus reveal the ultimate untransferability of the African logos within the confines of the Europhone narrative. A text which relies heavily on these methods belies the general premise of indigenization, namely, that the European language can be the conveyor of African culture. These methods thus other the European language by fixing its function to that of providing an area of immediate context "cushioning" the African word or phrase.

As with relexification, these methods presuppose the existence of an original of which the African word, whether cushioned or contextualized, would only be a trace. The African word is thus both the ubiquitous symbol of the unadulterated African culture and a linguistic debris that belongs along with the *membra disjecta* of the West African relexified text.

Indigenization is thus an ambivalent enterprise, for relexification points to a stasis whereas the twin methods of cushioning and contextualization point toward further othering the European language. This ambivalence, however, is gradually being subsumed into a healthy coexistence of the 'othered' European language and the African language outside of the indigenized novel.

This progression toward 'othering' the foreign language is reflected in the post-independence glottopolitics which have aimed at reducing the two main colonial and postcolonial functions of English and French as media of instruction and official languages. The premise is that the once demoted and repressed African languages can be rescued from colonial domination and glottophagia and that their rehabilitation will lead to the liberation of the African people. Present glottopolitics seem to be moving toward dissolving the ambivalence discussed above by othering the European language altogether. For instance, Senegal's new *politique linguistique* argues for a "balanced bilingualism and demotion of the status of the European language to that of 'foreign tongue'" (See AUPELF Report 6. My translation). On the

other hand, Nigeria's new policy will make the English language "an 'associate' official language [which] will be studied as a second language from primary to secondary level" (Fagunwa 466-68). This signals the rehabilitation and promotion of major West African languages as media of instruction and, possibly, as media of literary expression.

From these recent language policies, we can conclude that the European language is gradually being relegated to a peripheral role. The glottopolitical "othering" of the European language is paralleled in the new options that West African writers are envisioning within and outside of Europhone writing.

Egejuru's interviews of African writers in her *Towards African Literary Independence* confirm that writers are

now writing in their mother tongue or at least introducing their own local expressions into their works without footnotes. For instance, Sydney Onyeberichi of Nigeria has ... published [in 1980] a collection of poems in which Igbo words and expressions are freely used without translation. Robert Mukuni of Zambia writes in Shona. Chinua Achebe indicated that he was writing an important poem in Igbo, while Cheikh Hamidou Kane said that the book he is now writing would be very different from his *Ambiguous Adventure* because he intends to introduce a lot of words and expressions from his mother tongue — [Pular] Peulh. (7)

To this list, we could add that the Malian Amadou Hampaté Bá writes in Fulfulde and Peulh and then translates his text himself; Alexis Kagame writes in Kinyarwanda and translates himself into French; Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo wrote in Malagasy and is translated from the Malagasy; Charles Mungoshi from Zimbabwe writes in Shona and in English; Catherine Acholonou writes in both Igbo and English; Mazi Kunene writes in Zulu and translates himself into English; Anicet Kizamura from Tanzania writes in Kikerebe and is translated into Kiswahili (Ricard 11).

However, the artful synchronization of an increasingly "othered" Europhone writing and a new African-language writing may result in an infernal binarity. Some writers may seek an outlet in another medium more consistent with socio-political radicalism, such as film. Through film, Sembène Ousmane solves the scriptural impracticality of rendering bilingual strategies such as a speaker's code-switching between two languages. More importantly, he moves closer to his proper target audience. Already Baako, the Ghanaian "been-to" of Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments* had thought of giving up writing because "film gets to everyone ... doing film scripts for an illiterate audience would be superior to writing ... it would be a matter of images, not words. Nothing necessarily foreign in images, not like English words" (*Fragments* 114-15). We have now reached our third step.

Sembène's itinerary from his early novels to cinema reflects the progression implicitly outlined here, from Europhone writing through relexification to a new African-language writing or other genre. Sembène's first novels, *Docker noir* (1956) and *O Pays, mon beau peuple* (1957) have recognizably French titles with the contemporaneous colour tag "noir" as in Senghor's "Femme noire" and Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir* and Sembène's own early short subject, "La Noire de...". The title *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, on the other hand, is relexified from Wolof: "banti-mam-yalla" (Tine 46) whereas his *Véhi-Ciosane* (1964) is cushioned with the French tag "Blanche Genèse." Already *Véhi-Ciosane* has been made into his second short subject in French, *Niaye*, but it has a Wolof title, which, Sembène insists, "est au singulier en Wolof. Les colonialistes l'écrivaient au pluriel" (19).

Following in this trajectory, *Le Mandat* (1968) has become the feature length film, *Mandabi*, a word that Sembène had to coin by using the definite article *bi*, as in Wolof suffixation: "Faut-il forger un nouveau mot? Je crois qu'il faut prendre le mot français que tout le monde connaît et l'intégrer au Wolof" (Tine 46). After this intermediary phase, titling moved exclusively in Wolof, which has now been legitimized through the filmic medium. Thus *Xala* (1971) stands on its own in Wolof (it means "the curse resulting in sexual impotence") without the French tag. The movie, *Xala*, is a bilingual version in French and in Wolof, which appropriately precedes *Ceddo*, both a novel and a movie conceived entirely in Wolof, now a potential *langue de culture*.¹³ Incidentally, the bilingual version of *Xala* calls to mind Malian Bartholomé Koné's novel in progress, which, Mouralis tells us, will be "a bilingual novel in French and Bambara" (Mouralis 132). Yet, such films as Sembène's remain silent for non-Wolof speakers but still very African audiences. That silence may be overcome through the ironic form of French and English subtitles, which would complete the process of othering by relegating the European language to a subtitle, the way the African language was relegated to a footnote or 'sub-text' in the Europhone novel.

This progression from French titling through relexified and cushioned titles to Wolof titling reveals that relexification and cushioning are strategically poised half-way between French and Wolof titling. The African-language titles function as 'requests to the floor' that we can also observe in the turn-taking procedure in other speech-acts such as story-telling or conversations (Pratt 114). Titling in the novel and film of French expression is a more forceful 'request to the floor' than in its Anglophone counterpart.

13 *Ceddo*, both the movie and the novel, were banned in Senegal supposedly because of the Government's opposition to its orthography, the doubling of the "d," as prescribed by *Kaddu* (meaning "speech, discourse"), a Wolof journal founded by Sembène and the linguist, Pathé Diagne.

The glottopolitics of repression in Francophone Africa which, in the sociolinguistic arena, allowed only for the partial pidginization of French, resulted in the spasmodic occurrence of African words in the cushioned text and in movie titles. It also forced the Francophone novelist, whose progress in language experimentation has allegedly trailed that of Anglophones, to seek outlets for expression outside of the novel.

In light of Sembène's cinematographic pilgrimage, his last novel (if we except his recent short stories, *Niiwam*), *Le Dernier de l'empire*, written and titled in French, stands as the last bastion of linguistic imperialism in his fictional work. With its air of finality, it recalls Ngugi's farewell to English in *Decolonising the Mind*, and appropriately so, since both books in their own way are manifestos advocating the promotion of indigenous languages in all spheres.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's own itinerary, although it occults the phase of relexification, is charted along a similar course, from romantic individualism to a truly epic form, and confirms the progression from Europhone writing to a new African-language writing. In this case, the outlet for expression is writing in Kiswahili and in Gikuyu, where there was no tradition of narrative writing. This does not preclude the filmic medium, since Ngugi believes that the non-atavistic return to orature and to the masses as a source of inspiration and stamina is feasible through radio, video and film.

The ultimate "othering" takes place in auto-translation. Although Ngugi is not the first African writer to practise it, he is the first African writer to dramatize it as a stage beyond Europhone writing. It is in this way that his odyssey is relevant to the West African othering discourse. He reverses the missionary enterprise by translating his own novels from source to target, from Gikuyu into English. He indeed translated his Gikuyu novel *Caïtani-Mutharaba-Ini* into *Devil on the Cross* and the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (written with Ngugi wa Mirii) into *I Will Marry When I Want*. He thereby sets himself up as the translator of his own original and revises the dichotomy between mother tongue and other tongue in the practice of auto-translation. Let us note, however, that his latest play, *Matigari* (1987) was translated from the Gikuyu by his compatriot Wangui wa Goro. The translation is into English, a now 'othered' exolect.

Ghanaian Kofi Awoonor, to a lesser degree, takes a similar stand when translating his poem, "I Heard a Bird Cry," originally written in Ewe. About the English version he submitted to *Black Orpheus*, he has this to say:

Some kind of transference of perception takes place. I move from one linguistic dimension into another totally different, sometimes violently different one.... Within me these two things exist side by side so I can move across these boundaries with, I hope, absolute ease. So at times ideas that exist in the Ewe, or that have taken place in the

Ewe poems, either get mutated or expanded or contracted, whatever, depending upon words and what technical mode I want to use in English. (49)

Unlike the relexifier and the translator of the Other's work, the auto-translator ceases to be an eternal guest in his own work, and feels 'at home' in the mother tongue. He also encourages his people's participation in an African-language literature and sets the stage for both the simultaneous development of African writers and their proper audience, and for his own development, after Rilke, Beckett and Julien Green, as author *qua* translator *qua* author. In this secure, unambivalent position, the auto-translator thus completes the othering process by redefining the dialectics of mother tongue vs. other tongue, bridging the gap between culture and language, and possibly the literary diglossia between the early ethno-literary and folkloric modes of African orature and European-language writing.

Auto-translation does not preclude translation in its interpretive aspect, since Ngugi himself hopes that "through the age-old medium of translation [he will] be able to continue dialogue with all" (1986, xvi). Auto-translation (and, by extension, translation) moves beyond the mere recovery of the trace left by the African word in the Europhone text to recover the *original* itself. Instead of a relexified palimpsest, two separate texts emerge: the African text and the Europhone translation, which will host the trace of a visible *original*.¹⁴ The hybridized African-language text and its translation comment on and refract *each other* in that the African language is the One and the European language the Other.

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14 Note that translation is here understood in its most orthodox sense as the linguistic operation that consists in transporting meaning from one language to another. This differs from the unorthodox sense that Heidegger ("Übersetzung"), Benjamin, Derrida, Blanchot, and Khatibi gave to the word: "an operation which allows for the presence within one linguistic system of several tongues, an operation of thought through which we must translate ourselves into the thought of the other language, the forgotten thinking of the other language" (Derrida 1985). On translation between a bilingual writer's two L1s, see Green (1985) and Wolfson (1970).

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*TIMOTHY J. REISS. *The Uncertainty of Analysis: Problems in Truth, Meaning and Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1988. Pp. xiv + 312 + 29. US\$ 29.95

Le dernier ouvrage de Timothy J. Reiss fait d'une certaine façon suite logique et chronologique à son magistral *Discourse of Modernism*. C'est cependant un livre d'une tout autre nature puisqu'il est largement composé d'une suite d'articles antérieurs (certains remontant à 12 ans), de discussions sur des pensées ou des thèses et paradigmes particuliers qui, de Peirce et Frege à la critique 'déconstructionniste,' témoignent de la crise de la raison discursive 'moderne,' sans que l'auteur cherche à couvrir systématiquement toutes les expressions de cette crise ni à poser, sinon en conclusion (mais on verra les difficultés que j'éprouve à cet égard) un diagnostic synthétique global.¹

On l'a fréquemment suggéré: tout chercheur ne poursuit sa carrière durant qu'une seule 'idée,' il avance dans une seule interrogation fondamentale dont il renouvelle les termes et les lieux d'application, creusant indéfiniment les mêmes intuitions premières. Ceci ne veut aucunement dire qu'une pensée développée n'est qu'une inlassable répétition, qu'il n'y a à y entendre qu'une sorte d'*Urmelodie* qui soutiendrait en basse continue la variation des 'motifs.' Au contraire, les moyens, les paradigmes qui se construisent, changent, au point qu'on trouverait des incongruences, des contradictions aussi bien que des progrès d'un ouvrage à l'autre, mais c'est comme le Couteau de Jeannot: on remplace la lame, puis le manche et c'est toujours le même couteau, c'est-à-dire cela sert aux mêmes fins lesquelles ne sont pas immanentes aux caractères des lames et manches successifs. *The Uncertainty of Analysis*, poursuit, développe certaines interrogations qui déjà revenaient 'hanter' son précédent *Discourse of Modernism*. On pourrait dire que l'ouvrage actuel est la suite d'un projet historiographique qui nous conduirait maintenant à étudier les avatars et la 'décomposition' du discours

1 Reiss l'indique dans sa Préface, l'ouvrage recensé ici n'est au fond qu'une partie de développements qui se complèteront dans deux autres livres à paraître: *The Meaning of Literature* et, ce qui devrait être une tentative de synthèse, *Discourse and Society*.